

East Vancouver daycare avoids closing thanks to local funding ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A prominent East Vancouver daycare that was set to close its doors this month has announced it will remain open for now thanks to financial support from the municipal government and a local charity.

The operators of the Phil Bouvier Family Centre daycare sent a letter to parents in June citing financial "problems and hardships" for the closure.

"As a not-for-profit society, there is only so much we can do with the funding we are given and unfortunately the daycare has proved to be incapable of running at a sustainable financial level," said the letter from the Vancouver Native Health Society, which runs the daycare.

"This has led to an untenable situation where we are not providing you with the level of service originally contemplated when the daycare opened."

Located on Princess Avenue in the city's Strathcona neighbourhood, the daycare centre currently has 49 spaces.

The news triggered outcry among parents concerned that they'd be left scrambling to find child care in a city where families can be forced to wait years for a new space to open up.

Luckily, City Council has stepped in with a \$42,000-grant the centre says will keep it going until new provincial initiatives aimed at offsetting costs for daycare operators come into effect in September.

These include an opt-in program for licensed child care providers that could cut as much as \$350 a month from the cost of a daycare space.

"Making sure that families have access to affordable childcare is a key priority for the city and we therefore shared the concerns of parents over the closure notice of the Phil Bouvier Family Centre Daycare," Sandra Singh, the city's general manager of arts culture and community services, said in a statement. "Keeping the 49 valuable child care spaces available to families who need them most was a priority for us, and by working with our partners we are pleased that the centre will stay open."

The Central City Foundation, which works to fund solutions to problems in the community, has agreed help with some of the costs and the Ministry of Children and Family Development has committed to helping the daycare access provincial funding programs.

Parents and union officials also raised questions last month about the daycare's decision to close its doors just days after 37 of its employees moved to become part of a union.

"I don't understand the timing of this," Stephanie Smith of the British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union told CTV News at the time. "If you were to look at what throwing out babies with the bathwater would look like, this would be an example."

The VNHS did not mention the status of its workers on Tuesday.

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