

Victoria schools could get 300 child-care spots ^[1]

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Source: Times Colonist

Format: Article

Publication Date: 3 Oct 2018

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About 300 new affordable child-care spaces could be coming on stream in the city, says Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps, who has been leading a group looking for child-care solutions.

A funding application has been submitted to the province to create 300 new child-care spaces on school properties in Victoria starting next year, Helps said.

"In early 2017, a number of non-profit child-care providers came to me and they said: 'We know this isn't really your jurisdiction, but we really need help because there aren't enough spaces,' " Helps said.

Funding for child care is expected in the next provincial budget.

Working with non-profit child-care providers, the Greater Victoria School District, the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce and Island Health, they developed a plan to use modular units on school properties for child care, Helps said.

"We said, what can we do with the resources we have, i.e. land? And having licensing and Island Health at the table was so great, because these modular learning studios are pre-designed to meet licensing specifications," said Helps, who called the proposal "quite innovative."

The school district would provide modular units on school properties throughout the city, making it easier for parents with a child in daycare and a child in school by creating a single drop-off spot. It will also make an easier transition for young children from daycare to school.

"The school district land has been sitting around for years and now here's an opportunity to create spaces that are going to work equally well for parents and children," Helps said.

Subject to provincial funding, the plan is as follows:

- Victoria West Elementary School in 2019. Two units plus the gym divider (32 plus 25 for 57). It could hold up to 75 new spaces depending on programming.

All the following schools would have one unit, with space for 16 to 20 young children plus 25 school-age — potentially 45 new spaces at each site, depending on programming and licensing.

- Fairfield, Sir James Douglas Elementary School in 2019-2020
- Fernwood, George Jay Elementary School in 2020
- Oaklands Elementary School in 2020
- South Park Family School in 2021
- James Bay Community School in 2021

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