

Pilot project for \$10 daycare extended to April 2021 ^[1]

Lexie's Little Bears' Childcare has plans for new building, making room for 16 more kids

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EXCERPTS

The 80 Victoria families benefiting from the \$10 a day daycare pilot program will be receiving daycare at that same price until April 2021.

Lexie Biegun says she recently found out that the provincial government had renewed the project for Lexie's Little Bears' Child Care Inc., one of two sites in Greater Victoria taking part in the prototype stage of universal affordable child care for Canadians.

The pilot project offers childcare for \$200 per month.

"It's such a cliché, but it's like winning the lottery," said Biegun, the owner of the daycare. "The families have been over the moon with this pilot project. Everyone wants a piece of it."

Around 2,500 parents who are clients at 53 daycares in the province benefit from this model. The pilot, announced in November 2018, is funded through a \$60-million investment from the federal government.

"We are pleased to confirm that the Province is confident enough in the signals being sent from Ottawa, to start discussions on renewing current prototype contracts for another year," said Katrina Chen, Minister of State for Child Care. "For too long investments in child care just weren't a priority. Fixing the problem won't happen overnight, but we're making progress."

Further details on the pilot project contract renewals are expected in the upcoming weeks.

Currently, the Highlands daycare is at capacity. There is a waitlist of more than 300 families, a number that was around half the size in June 2019.

"It's heartbreaking to know that we have to say 'no' to amazing families because they deserve affordable daycare," Biegun said. "I feel the pressure of this pilot project every day."

Due to overwhelming demand, Biegun is pushing to expand her facilities.

She wants to build a new additional daycare building as well as a small covered area to be used as a sheltered outside rest area for the daycare. This expansion would make room for 16 more kids.

She has written support from Members of Parliament Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands) and Alistair MacGregor, (Cowichan-Malahat-Langford) for the expansion. She's rounded up more than a dozen letters of support from parents and plans to advocate for a development variance permit from Highlands.

This permit is one of the first steps to start the process of building a new space on their four acres of forest land.

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