

Editorial: New childcare spaces a step in the right direction^[1]

It has been a banner year for parents in the Cowichan Valley looking for childcare.

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EXCERPTS

It has been a banner year for parents in the Cowichan Valley looking for childcare.

It was announced last week that three new childcare centres will be opening in the Cowichan Valley in September of this year.

They will be school based — at Palsson Elementary in Lake Cowichan, Alexander Elementary in Duncan and Mill Bay Elementary in Mill Bay — and have come about through provincial funding.

These centres will provide nearly 120 new childcare spaces.

This comes on top of a previous announcement in June 2019 of three other new centres that were slated for completion early this year, one at Cowichan Valley Open Learning Co-operative, one at Chemainus Elementary, and one at Khowhemun Elementary. Those are to provide 160 new childcare spaces. These were also courtesy of the province's Childcare BC New Spaces Fund.

Whew! When was the last time the Cowichan Valley saw this kind of investment in childcare?

Childcare is a huge hurdle for parents when they want, or need to go back to work. Many have no choice but to head back into the job market in order to pay the bills, which have gone up with a new child in the home. Others want to continue with their careers as they raise their families.

Either way, there has historically been a huge shortage of childcare options available. Parents should be able to have options, so they can choose an environment for their children that they feel complete confidence in, not just have to go with whatever they can find.

In general, childcare is something that hasn't gotten enough respect in our society, in spite of the fact that everyone will tell you that raising our next generation is perhaps the most important job we all collectively have.

And yet, wages for childcare workers have historically, and remain, relatively low compared to other professions, in spite of how hard the job is and the education required. Much like teaching, some simply view it as babysitting (in itself a challenging gig, as anyone who has done it will attest). But there is much more to providing a truly enriching environment for children of a wide range of ages as they grow. Let's face it, these are places where our children will spend long hours, and it's important that they are a quality experience.

We view this funding as a mark of respect for the profession.

Due to the dire nature of the situation before these centres were available, it's doubtful that they will entirely solve the problem. But it is a step in the right direction.

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