

# Seeking to expand Kelowna, West Kelowna child care resources

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Central Okanagan Public Schools to apply for \$18 million in provincial funding to build new child care facilities at six school sites

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## EXCERPTS

Central Okanagan Public Schools will seek \$18 million in provincial funding to create new child care facilities at six school sites.

The facilities, each 5,000 sq.ft. in size, will accommodate both daycare and pre- and after-school programs.

The school district is pursuing \$3 million for each project, having partnered with three local child care service providers in the various funding applications – YMCA (two schools), Boys and Girls Club (three) and Clubhouse (one).

The money can cover construction, furniture and equipment.

It's a template similar to how the school district and Okanagan YMCA partnered on the first call for applications in May 2020 to seek funding for a child care facility on the grounds of George Elliot Secondary, which was awarded a \$3 million grant.

The schools involved in this proposal for funding from the Childcare BC New Spaces Fund are elementary schools Black Mountain, North Glenmore, Ellison, Anne McClymont and Hudson Road, along with Okanagan-Mission Secondary.

Ryan Stierman, school district secretary-treasurer/CFO, said school district staff put in an immense effort within a tight time frame, led by assistant superintendent Rhonda Ovelson, to have the proposals ready to be endorsed by the Central Okanagan Board of Education at Wednesday's school board meeting and meet the November funding submission deadline.

Stierman noted one additional aspect to the Hudson Road application is the school is within the Agriculture Land Reserve and would require approval from the Agricultural Land Commission for the child care structure to be built.

"If that approval is not forthcoming, then we would drop the Hudson Road application and focus on the other five schools," he said.

Okanagan-Mission school students would not utilize a childcare facility, but it was selected due to land availability, access to major corridors and close proximity to Ecole Dorothea Walker Elementary.

Kevin Kaardal, Central Okanagan Public Schools superintendent/CEO, said the combination of public schools and child care facility resources is a philosophy that was adopted by the previous NDP government and is expected to continue moving forward.

"The (education ministry) has come out and said an upcoming policy on child care will be mandated for each school district because it is an important need in the community," Kaardal said.

Stierman added the school district will be aggressive moving forward in looking for other opportunities to secure child care facility expansion where a need is identified at other school site areas.

Kaardal said the idea came from a school trustee conference session in Victoria attended by him and board of education chair Moyra Baxter where discussion about the child care facility advocacy efforts of school districts such as Burnaby and Victoria were shared.

He said sharing that knowledge and incentive is the value that counters the public concerns and complaints often registered about the cost of school trustees attending provincial conferences.

"We do have an active program within our school district with 17 child care sites," noted Kaardal.

"But we came back and talked with our staff about what we could do more, and that's what gets the ball rolling."

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