

Richmond aims to create thousands of new child care spaces by 2031 ^[1]

Current demand for child care spaces in Richmond significantly exceeds the supply

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EXCERPTS

Only 30 per cent of Richmond children who need child care have a spot, but the city is hoping to add thousands more over the next decade.

There are currently more than 7,000 licensed child care spaces in the city, but current demand “significantly exceeds the supply,” according to a city staff report.

Under the proposed 2021 – 2031 Richmond Child Care Action Plan, the city is aiming to add around 3,700 care spaces within 10 years.

However, a recent report, published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, ranked Richmond as one of the most expensive cities in Canada for toddler care – costing parents a median fee of \$1,300 a month.

Families with infants also pay a median monthly fee of \$1,300, while parents of preschoolers were paying a median monthly fee of \$1,028.

High child care fees have “been a problem from day one,” said Coun. Carol Day, Richmond’s child care liaison.

“I do believe that, like with anything, it’s supply and demand. You increase the supply and you’re by default going to have lower pricing.”

Spaces for infants are also one of the hardest to find in Richmond, said Day, with child care centres only able to care for so many infants at once – contributing to high fees for that age group.

Of the new spaces proposed under the action plan, there would be 563 spaces for children under 36 months, and 1,087 spaces for children aged 30 months to school age.

Meanwhile, 1,974 spaces would be created for school-aged children.

Currently, there are no centres that offer extended hours – hours outside of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. – or overnight care. There’s also a lack of flexibility for parents who work part-time or do shift work, which Day said there was “a great need” for in Richmond.

To counter this, the plan is to develop two occasional care programs, each for up to 16 children, while 24 licensed child minding spaces for immigrant and refugee parents would be created by 2031.

A multi-age, overnight child care program with up to eight spaces is also planned.

“That’s a huge change,” said Day.

The city report also states there’s an insufficient number of spaces either in schools or on school property. Because of this, the action plan proposes having child care spaces for school aged children that are on-site or within walking distance of all elementary schools – both public and independent – by 2031.

The city received \$25,000 in funding from the Union of BC Municipalities to create the 2021 - 2031 Child Care Action Plan.

The action plan is on the agenda for Wednesday’s planning committee meeting.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: space ^[4]

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