

Two multi-million dollar childcare centres coming to Prince George ^[1]

City is receiving \$5.3 million in grants for Malaspina and Dagg Road projects

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EXCERPTS

More daycare spaces could be coming to Prince George, as two multi-million-dollar daycare projects have now been added to the city's financial plan thanks to grant funding from the province.

The city applied to the province's BC New Spaces Fund and received \$5,380,311 for two new childcare centres, one to be located in the Hart and the other in College Heights.

The city received \$2,381,493 to develop a 60 space childcare centre to be operated by the Prince George Native Friendship Centre (PGNFC). This would be developed on city-owned land in the Hart at 677 Dagg Road.

Funding of \$2,998,818 was also approved to develop an 83 space childcare centre, to be operated by Kool Cats Kid Care run by College Heights Community Association. This project would be developed on city-owned land at 8008 Malaspina Avenue.

In both cases, the city applied for the funding on behalf of the non-profit organizations to ensure they would be eligible for the total project costs in grant funding.

"Without the involvement of the city the total funding envelope they applied for would have been 50 per cent, so they would have only been eligible for \$1.5 million," explained the city's director of strategic initiatives, Chris Bone at Monday night's (July 12) council meeting.

"To have the expertise of both of these non-profits to make these spaces come to fruition in our community is a good thing and it is one of the reasons the city took responsibility for being the primary applicant."

The city also intends to enter into a development and construction agreement with the PGNFC which contractually obligates the non-profit to construct the Dagg Road centre according to plans approved by the province.

This would also require PGNFC to be responsible for all costs that exceed the budget.

"I have every confidence that they will be able to manage this. They have built a lot of buildings and done a lot of incredible work in this community and they have the ability to manage it," said Coun. Murry Krause.

For the Malaspina Centre, the city has not yet fully committed to proceeding on the project but intends to contract an external project management firm to confirm costing as an initial phase in the project.

However, Bone said the city has advised the province that in the best-case scenario construction for both projects will begin next spring.

"This is really great news and it is much needed in our community and we have been hearing it more and more families are struggling to find spaces for their kids," said Coun. Kyle Sampson.

The city's downtown childcare centre, the YMCA Park House Care and Early Learning Centre operated by the YMCA of Northern B.C. is currently under construction and scheduled to open in late 2021.

Located along Queensway next to the Park House Condominiums, the centre is set to provide 85 childcare spaces including 12 infant and toddler spaces, 25 group childcare spaces and 48 school age spaces.

In September 2020, the City of Prince George received a total of \$4 million in grant funding from the province's Childcare BC New Spaces Fund (\$3 million) and the Union of BC Municipalities (\$1 million) to construct the project.

In May 2021, the province announced it's investing in 182 licensed childcare spaces in the city.

The announced investments also included three new childcare centres:

- Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George's new 40 space child care facility that is connected to its affordable housing

development serving the urban Indigenous community which is under construction and set to open spring 2022.

- Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS), in partnership with the City of Prince George, is also building a daycare with 38 new, licensed child care spaces including 16 infant/toddler spaces and 22 spaces for children aged three years to kindergarten set to open this year.
- The Lheidli T'enneh First Nation and Exploration Place are partnering to open a new facility to be completed by March 2022. It will create 75 new child care spaces, including 24 for infants and toddlers, 25 for children aged three years to kindergarten, and 26 for school-aged children.

The city's Childcare Needs Assessment, completed in 2019, identified a high degree of need among residents for increased childcare spaces for all ages groups.

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