

Plan pitched to use city tools to open more Calgary childcare spaces ^[1]

Gondek wants to leverage planning tools to encourage childcare space development

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EXCERPTS

Three Calgary city councillors are hoping to pave the way for more affordable childcare spaces with city-specific tools to do so.

The proposed notice of motion is coming to Tuesday's Priorities and Finance committee for approval. From there it would head to a future meeting of council.

Recently, childcare has been in the spotlight with \$10/day childcare plans being supported in British Columbia and Nova Scotia. It would be underpinned with \$30 billion in federal funding over five years. Alberta is examining its options and currently negotiating with the federal government, according to CTV Edmonton.

Coun. Jyoti Gondek, who sponsored the Calgary motion, along with Couns. Druh Farrell and Gian-Carlo Carra, said the city can look at this the same way they do affordable housing.

"Given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women, it is the responsibility of all order of government to foster great opportunity for women's labour force participation though the tools available in each jurisdiction," the notice of motion reads.

Gondek said it's important the city have its own strategy to boost labour force participation. That includes access to childcare. She said the city incentivizes the creation of affordable housing. She hopes Calgary would look at a similar approach to affordable childcare.

"It can be a city solution," she said.

The creation of affordable housing stock in larger developments allows the builder to access density bonusing – the ability to increase density for that project.

"Is it possible for us to do that with affordable childcare as well – it's something we need to look at that's 100 per cent within our purview," she said.

Creative solutions needed: Public Interest Alberta

Bradley Lafortune, executive director of Public Interest Alberta, who has been running a campaign to advocate for the \$10/day childcare, said cities are taking control of the issue.

He's already been having similar conversations with candidates in Edmonton's municipal election around childcare.

"The same kind of questions are being asked about how we can really leverage the city's powers to encourage more childcare spaces," he said.

"There's way more creative ways that municipalities can be thinking about how to use spaces, or to encourage or make easier decisions for developers to include those spaces."

Lafortune is concerned to hear the rhetoric from the province over a potential cookie-cutter solution to childcare with the federal cash.

"That leaves us feeling pretty concerned," Lafortune said.

"I think if there are creative ways that the city says 'hey we can step in and we certainly understand the value of this investment' we're not going to let it go to waste.

Streamlining land use changes and opening up other land use districts to childcare is also included in the motion. As is having federal childcare funding flow direct to cities – similar to the way the funds flowed for the rapid housing initiative.

Gondek said the plan would mean that developers have to demonstrate that they're including some form of subsidized daycare in the location.

The motion goes to committee for approval before being debated at council at a later date. Gondek expected it might return for the September council meeting.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: expansion ^[4]

spaces ^[5]

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