

Childcare needed while balancing needs around public spaces ^[1]

City of Cranbrook

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Excerpt

There is a desperate need for childcare in Cranbrook as there is in most areas across the province for young families and working parents with children. This includes both before and after school care, as well as all-day childcare.

The Government of B.C. is offering grants to build childcare buildings, covering all the costs for the design and construction of these facilities, and only require the land be provided. The grant application has been submitted before the deadline of Friday, August 2.

Local childcare providers approached the city for help, and in turn, the city began talks with School District No. 5 as the Ministry of Education was combined with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to create the new Ministry of Education and Childcare, to provide childcare for the citizens of Cranbrook.

After a year of meetings and letters, the School District notified the city that it was not moving forward on all-day childcare, instead opting to move forward with before and after school care. We agree this will help to fill part of the needs of many young families, but it does not meet the needs of dozens of families struggling to find all-day care.

The city stepped up to take this on because there is a significant need for all-day child care locally, and no other local agencies or organizations took the lead, to try to take advantage of these grant dollars.

In 2020, the city released a Child Care Action Plan revealing that only 20% of children under 12 had access to licensed childcare. The greatest need was identified for children aged 0-3 and school-aged children.

A 2024 follow-up assessment confirmed this shortage, revealing a continued need for all-day childcare for 262 local families, which represents eight per cent of the overall 25 – 44 age cohort. Although the School District has committed to providing 60 new before and after school childcare spaces between Steeples Elementary and Gordon Terrace for the upcoming school year for school age children, there has been no increase in spaces for children aged 0-3.

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