

NPA approves childcare review: City's strict standards limiting spaces [CA-BC] ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

City childcare standards are too strict and may be limiting the number of childcare spaces in the city, says an NPA (Non-Partisan Association) city councillor.

"It's time to take a fresh look at these standards," said NPA Coun. Kim Capri. "I want to review the guidelines and create some new options."

In a close vote decided along party lines, council agreed to review long-standing childcare standards, and Capri hopes future changes will move Vancouver's childcare system into the 21st century.

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Council had previously signed off on a so-called EcoDensity strategy to encourage denser neighbourhoods, which would create more populated areas in need of more childcare spaces.

Capri pointed to the recent case of Vancouverite Natacha Beim, whose application to create a childcare in her building was denied by the city because the building did not have a continuous space--an indoor and outdoor play area--on the same floor.

"Her proposal met and exceeded provincial standards but fell short of the city's standards," Capri said.

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Vision Vancouver Coun. Heather Deal joined other Vision and COPE councillors in opposing the motion after her amendment, that she described as guarding against any weakening of the current standards, was rejected in a council vote.

"When you review standards, and you don't put in a hard and fast line that they won't be weakened, you can get into trouble in the future."

Deal, who was also unsure of standards specifics, said the NPA's strategy threatens to downgrade the quality of childcare in the city, and she was quick to refute Capri's claims that Vision and COPE are responsible for denying spaces to childcare providers like Beim.

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- reprinted from the Vancouver Courier

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