

Day care rents to rise up to 600% [CA-BC] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

After much hand wringing, three motions and much professing to love day cares in public schools, Richmond school trustees voted to up the rent child-care providers have to pay.

Kindercare programs are looking at a three-fold increase.

"It will put some of our programs into question, for sure," said Susan Low, general manager of the YMCA child-care program that operates in 11 schools in Richmond.

"Rents would increase between 160 per cent and 600 per cent during the school year ... For the summer, we project our cost to increase by 700 per cent," she said at Monday's school board meeting.

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Secretary Treasurer Ken Morris noted that there is a demand for school facilities, and other community groups have to pay the \$19 per room.

After the meeting, Low added, "We don't want to have to pass these costs on to our parents, but we can only absorb so much."

Smaller centres will be hit even harder under the new fee schedule because it charges by room instead of by child, said Amin Bhatia, owner-operator of Spice of Life, which operates out of Kidd elementary.

Trustee Donna Sargent said she regrets having to increase the rent, but that as a trustee her responsibility is to the schools.

"I support day cares, but that's not our mandate."

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Trustee Sandra Bourque also argued that the increase should be reduced but she also advocated for school staff's third option, in which all operators pay slightly more so that smaller centres that have to pay for extra custodial fees would not be hit disproportionately hard.

Bourque's motion also failed to pass.

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Staff presented four options to the board, the first and third of which put the revenue to schools at \$150,000. The second and fourth options would restore the revenue to the full \$300,000.

The difference between the first two options and the second two options was that in the latter two the extra cost of custodial fees in the early morning that would affect only 13 sites, would be shared among all the centres.

The board supported the first option, which would restore revenue to schools to \$150,000, and the cost of custodians not be shared among the centres.

Bourque supported that option, but said it was "entirely, entirely regrettable" that smaller centres were unfairly penalized.

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Bhatia said day-care operators "aren't looking for a free ride, but the increases will force some centres to close down completely."

According to Bhatia's calculations, families will be charged an additional \$50 a month per child. He also noted that many of his families are on a tight budget.

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- reprinted from the Richmond News

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