

School board, B.C. going head to head on financial feud ^[1]

Author: Stueck, Wendy

Source: The Globe and Mail

Format: Article

Publication Date: 7 Jun 2010

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

A showdown between the provincial government and the Vancouver School Board moves to its next round on Tuesday, when the parties will meet for the first time since a special adviser's report emphatically closed the door on more money for the district.

The report - which concluded trustees were more concerned with advocacy than balancing the books - has left uncertainty over staff and program cuts.

That uncertainty extends to non-profit groups that run childcare centres on school property. In her report, B.C. comptroller-general Cheryl Wenezenki-Yolland identified leases to childcare groups as one area where the Vancouver district could generate additional revenue.

The prospect of higher rents concerns childcare operators such as Christine Hibbert.

"There is only one place to recover that, and that's through parent fees," Ms. Hibbert, executive director of Jericho Kids Club, said Monday. "There is nothing else."

Jericho Kids Club provides before- and after-school care to pupils from three Vancouver elementary schools. Like other childcare operators, the group spends most of its budget - about 80 per cent - on staff salaries. Between 70 and 80 per cent of the group's funds come from parent fees.

Jericho Kids Club leases school space for about \$9 an hour, Ms. Hibbert said. Fees for childcare are \$316 a month.

If schools were to hike lease rates, that added cost would be passed on to parents.

In her report, Ms. Wenezenki-Yolland acknowledged the challenge of boosting childcare costs.

"Raising rates is sensitive, affordability is an issue, public expectations are high and the board is not uniformly supportive of it," the report states.

But raising rents for child-care operators to match rates paid by other non-profit groups would generate about \$2-million, compared with current revenue of about \$234,000, the report said. The board is weighing a proposal that would phase in a flat monthly rate over a three-year period.

Higher rents inevitably result in higher fees for parents or a decline in care, said Lynell Anderson, a senior researcher with the Human Early Learning Partnership at the University of British Columbia.

"Given government's commitment to expanding early learning opportunities and recognizing that access is important, as is quality, it raises questions about how that can be fulfilled at the same time we're talking about raising the costs of those programs," Ms. Anderson said.

Child-care groups received a letter this week advising them that rental rates were under review.

Rates charged to child care groups are one of many staff and program areas under the microscope as the district faces a June 30 deadline to file a balanced budget. In her report, Ms. Wenezenki-Yolland said the shortfall amounts to \$11.8-million, less than a \$16.3-million deficit outlined by the board.

Ms. Wenezenki-Yolland's report, and the potential fallout, are being watched by school administrators and trustees around the province.

...

-reprinted from the Globe and Mail

Region: British Columbia ^[2]

Tags: budget ^[3]

affordability ^[4]

demand ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/10/06/school-board-bc-going-head-head-financial-feud>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/10/06/school-board-bc-going-head-head-financial-feud> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/budget> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/demand>