

Vancouver opens new child care spaces with developers ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

The City of Vancouver is working with condo developers to open two new child care centres, but advocates say there is still a severe shortage of places.

The new child care centres will open in downtown Vancouver this fall, with space for 74 children and were mandated under development permits issued by city hall.

But advocates say the waiting list for child care in downtown Vancouver alone is still 2,000 names long and child care is at a crisis point in the province.

Sharon Gregson, spokeswoman for the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., says she wants to make child care an election issue.

"The role of the provincial government is to put forward a plan that extends child care the way we expect our public education system to be offered to children and their families, so we need spaces that are available, that are high quality, that are affordable for families," she said.

Stephanie Cadieux, Liberal candidate for Surrey-Cloverdale, said the party's goal is to create 13,000 spaces over the next eight years, while the NDP has also promised new spaces and says it would reduce child care rates by 20 percent.

Gregson, whose organization is pushing for \$10-a-day child care, says neither the NDP, nor the Liberals have a plan that will satisfy her, but the NDP plan is a good first step.

For now, it is cities like Vancouver that are taking the initiative.

Coun. Andrea Reimer, who co-chairs the city's Joint Childcare Council, says requiring developers to include child care facilities is a tool the city has been using more and more over the last few years.

"Generally speaking we have been over the last four to five years now really focused on where we can put new ones into developments or community centres, trying to value-add developments that are happening anyway and trying to make sure that child care is part of that equation," she said.

But Reimer said the equation isn't always simple, because development permits are also tied to other community amenities, like social housing or green space, and there are limitations on how much developers can be asked to provide.

"We're trying to provide arts and culture and child care and housing and parks and community centres and libraries, and that all comes out of the same pot."

Sandra Menzer, executive director of the Vancouver Society of Children's Centres, which will operate the two new centres, says the new spaces are a good start.

"We're really excited. We think it's a great partnership with the city and the developers," said Menzer.

Reimer said there could be as many as six new centres opening before the end of the year.

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Region: British Columbia ^[2]

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