

# Council champions child care concept <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

Prince George will add its name to the list of B.C. municipalities in support of affordable child care.

During Monday night's meeting, city council endorsed the \$10 per day child care plan as presented by the Coalition of Childcare Advocates of B.C.

According to Sharon Gregson, 19 other municipalities throughout the province have already subscribed to the group's solution created to solve the "child care crisis facing B.C. families."

The problems include high child care fees, parents' low wages, few space and commercial child care chains Gregson referred to as the "Costco of childcare."

"We don't think that's the solution," she said.

The plan aims to reduce daily parent fees for full-time early care to \$10, which Gregson said would be cheaper for the province than the tax credits currently offered.

Funding would also raise the average wage for early childhood educators to \$25 per hour, plus benefits.

"We'll never have a quality childcare system if we never have quality people working there," said Gregson.

Members of council called the proposal and their endorsement an overall win.

"It's clear to me there's overwhelming good sense in this proposal... and I'm sorry we haven't gotten to it sooner," said Coun. Dave Wilbur.

The city has nothing to lose by encouraging the province to adopt the plan, said Coun. Garth Frizzell. "I think it's a win and to see that there's already four provinces in Canada that have gone this direction and three territories says a lot."

The province of Quebec has a \$7 per day childcare model, which B.C. advocates are looking at as a success.

In 2010, the average amount of operating support per childcare space in B.C. was \$1,278 per year, compared to \$5,200 in Quebec.

Also, supporting a plan that promotes returning parents to the workforce, "dovetails nicely" with the coming development boom and the skilled labour shortage in the region, Wilbur added.

Another key component of the plan is to put more of a focus on early learning and to move childcare from the Ministry of Children and Family Development into the Ministry of Education.

This change wouldn't mean that children would start school earlier or that all early care programs would be located in schools, according to the plan.

Rather, the Ministry of Education would "need to establish an Early Care and Learning Division with responsibility for stable funding, transition planning, licensing and regulatory frameworks and workforce development."

While Mayor Shari Green said she was unsure the Quebec model would necessarily work for B.C., but was curious to see what the best practices look like.

"Is \$10 affordable? That's a question I can't answer," she said. "I think for some people it's a necessity and for others they can afford to pay more."

-reprinted from the Prince George Citizen

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** advocacy <sup>[3]</sup>

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