

# Preschool change pleases parents <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS:

A group of Port Moody parents won't be lining up in the cold next week to get their kids into a preferred time slot at a city-run preschool.

But the issue has prompted local politicians to look at the crunch for preschool space in a city with a growing population of families.

The issue came up at Tuesday's council meeting, after a group of parents asked the city to change the signup process at Rocky Point Park daycare, which is run through the city's child recreation program.

Some of the parents of preschoolers in the three-yearold morning class want to have a guaranteed spot for the four-year-old morning class that starts in September.

The city runs two preschools, one at Rocky Point Park and one at the Glenayre Community Centre.

Under current rules, the kids in the three-year-old class are guaranteed a spot in the four-year-old class, but a preferred time is not guaranteed. There are 16 spots available for each session.

Not having a guaranteed spot would mean parents like Jeff McLellan or his wife would have to spend the night lining up to get their daughter in a class with the rest of her friends.

"It's a flawed system," he told the Tri-Cities NOW, adding the process is even harder on single parents, who have to find a way to stay out all night. "For a city funded program, it's insane."

McLellan said he had no issue with lining up last year to secure a spot for his daughter the first time, but was surprised to learn if he wanted the coveted morning spot for a second year, he would have to line up again.

But after a lively debate, council voted in favour of a motion that would allow the three-year-olds to keep their time slot for next year.

It was a welcome relief for McLellan, who praised council for the decision.

"If we hadn't shown up, nothing would have happened," he said.

But even the Port Moody father admits parents with a child in the current afternoon program might not be happy they won't get a chance at the morning session.

While the vote was unanimous, several councillors expressed concern with changing the process for this year. "Somebody is always going to complain that it's not fair," said Coun. Rosemary Small, suggesting a lottery process might be fairer.

Mayor Mike Clay noted the city has used the same process for years without a complaint, adding council hadn't spoken to anyone on the other side of the issue before making a decision.

"We have fairness in this right now as best it could be and we're moving away from fairness," he said.

City staff told council the process of having parents line up for preschool registration has been in place for some time, adding the city has made improvements over the years. Staff also told council the city probably couldn't offer an online registration option because the age of the preschoolers has to be validated in person.

Some councillors were quick to support the change requested by parents.

Coun. Gerry Nuttall argued if the city recognizes holding a spot for the three-year-olds to move into the next year is valid, the program should be able to recognize keeping a preferred time is also fair.

He also suggested children at that age want the comfort of knowing they're going back to the friends they made the previous year.

Council also voted in favour of striking up a task force to look at the bigger issue of preschool needs in the city.

Coun. Rick Glumac, who proposed the task force, said the issue reveals there is a severe shortage of preschool programming.

"Maybe we need to look at putting a little bit more resources into that," he said.

McLellan said he'd like to see programming expanded and improved where possible, and is looking forward to being on the task force.

He suggested the creation of the task force is an even better reward for the effort parents put into fighting the registration process.  
-reprinted from Tri-Cities Now

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

**Tags:** pre-school <sup>[3]</sup>

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