

District eyes daycare incentive ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Municipal officials are looking into ways to cut red tape for new daycares - businesses that are sorely needed in a community in which 340 babies were born last year, says councillor Susan Chapelle.

There are 624 daycare spaces in Squamish, Chapelle told District of Squamish officials at a council meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 19. Of those, 24 are registered as license-not-required, meaning a care provider is watching her or his own children plus up to two more children or a sibling group.

Ninety-one Squamish daycares fall under the licensed family childcare, which is similar to a license-not-required facility, but allows for seven children other than the care provider's own children. It also stipulates the age groups within their care.

The numbers come from this month, Chapelle said, noting she approached the Sea to Sky Community Services to acquire them. Chapelle put forward a motion for district staff to examine developing policy to incentivize the creation of daycare spaces. When you add the community's birth rate to the number of new families moving to town, the daycare spaces quickly fill up, Chapelle said. Squamish has the highest percentage of residents in B.C. under 14 years.

"You have to put your child on the list before it is born," she said, noting many places have a two-year waitlist.

With the exception of Mayor Rob Kirkham, council backed the motion after re-crafting its wording. The original motion pinpointed building permits and business licensing fees as possible incentives. Without knowing the financial implications, the initial motion was difficult to support, Coun. Ron Sander said.

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