

Child Care Action Plan 2025 Update

RECOMMENDATION:

That Committee of Council direct staff to update the Child Care Action Plan that will review targets for new licensed spaces, demographic groups and opportunities to further support the creation of new spaces.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL/COMMITTEE ACTION

February 27, 2024 – Committee of Council received the 2024 Child Care Action Plan target update.

December 6, 2022 – Committee of Council received the 2022 Child Care Action Plan target update.

May to September 2021 – Committee of Council endorsed an implementation strategy for the Child Care Action Plan, adopted the Child Care Policy and amended the Processing of Development Applications Policy, the Zoning Bylaw and Parking and Development Management Bylaw to support the creation of additional child care spaces.

December 8, 2020 – Committee of Council received the Child Care Action Plan.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides Committee of Council with an update on the number of new licensed child care spaces in relation to the targets set out in the 2020 Child Care Action Plan (the “Action Plan”) and summarizes the implementation status of Action Plan items. Staff note most action items have now been implemented, and many contextual factors have changed since the Action Plan was drafted; a refresh is recommended to update targets, assess current barriers to space creation and to revise the priority actions to ensure the City is effectively supporting child care facilities and the creation of new child care spaces.

BACKGROUND

The Port Coquitlam Child Care Action Plan was drafted between 2019-2020; the Plan identifies gaps, sets targets for new licensed child care spaces and recommends 30 actions to reach these targets. In 2021, Council endorsed a strategy to implement the Action Plan, resulting in updated City bylaws, policies, and processes; additional advocacy, partnerships, and dedicated staff resources to support the creation of new licensed child care spaces within the community; and ongoing monitoring and reporting out on implementation of the child care related actions and achieving targets for new licensed child care spaces.

Staff have since provided several update reports on progress in meeting the targets and implementing actions, noting success of the bylaw and policy changes in supporting the creation of

Child Care Action Plan 2025 Update

additional spaces and interest from child care operators and opportunities arising from changes to Provincial funding programs and mandates and school district policies.

Staff have also noted that child care facilities continue to be challenged by matters largely outside of municipal influence, including rising construction and land costs, availability of staff and senior government licencing requirements. Provincial housing mandates and legislative changes to municipal authority are also anticipated to impact both the need for and feasibility of creating new child care spaces. These changes also provide additional tools, such as the Amenity Cost Charge and Density Benefits Bylaws, to support the creation and funding of spaces.

New licensed spaces: The Action Plan recommended targets for the creation of new licensed child care spaces in three age groups, as shown in the table below, to improve accessibility. These targets focus on group programs and exclude part-time preschool spaces or multi-age daycares within the operators' homes.

Table 1: Recommended Targets for New Child Care Spaces

	2019	2030 Target	New Spaces Needed
Children under 3 years	15 spaces/100 children	33 spaces/100 children	348 spaces
Children 3-5 years	44 spaces/100 children	75 spaces/100 children	525 spaces
Children 6-9 years	23 spaces/100 children	42 spaces/100 children	576 spaces
TOTAL	-	-	1449 spaces

The targets are further broken down into short-term (by 2022), medium-term (by 2025) and long-term (by 2030). The Action Plan recommended the City target adding 281 new spaces by 2022, 450 additional new spaces by 2025 and 718 additional new spaces by 2030 for a total of 1449 new spaces (approximately 145 new spaces each year).

When the Action Plan was drafted in 2019, Port Coquitlam had a total of 2,245 licensed child care spaces (including spaces in preschools and multi-age programs in operators' homes). While some facilities have closed, the overall number of licensed spaces has increased by 697 spaces to 2,942 by the end of 2024 which works out to approximately 139 new spaces per year.

New spaces created in 2024 are primarily attributed to the opening of phase 1 of Dream Builders Early Learning Centre on Prairie Avenue and new before and after school care at Blakeburn and Kilmer Elementary Schools. As well as the expansion of Honeybees Child Care Centre near Lougheed Highway.

Child Care Action Plan 2025 Update

Table 2: Child Care Spaces by Program

Group Program by Age	2019 Spaces	2023 Spaces	2024 Spaces	Difference (2023-2024)
Infant/Toddler (under 3 years)	272	425	457	+ 32
Preschooler Age (3-5 years)	655	816	879	+ 63
School Age (6-9 years)	689	936	965	+ 29
Other programs (Multi-age, etc.)	629	651	641	- 10
TOTAL	2,245	2,828	2,942	+ 114

In addition, a number of potential child care facilities are either under construction or under review, which could create approximately 150 new child care spaces in the next few years. Additional child care facilities/spaces are anticipated which could increase the number to 395, but proposals are still in the enquiry stage.

Action Plan Implementation: Most of the recommended actions in the Action Plan have been completed or ongoing (see Attachment 1). Previous update reports identified outstanding items to include robust OCP policies (to be included in the OCP update), collaboration with SD43 to increase opportunities for child care on school grounds (in process/ongoing) and exploration of opportunities to site child care within City lands and facilities (some implementation, ad-hoc basis).

DISCUSSION:

In staff's opinion, the Action Plan has been successful in identifying meaningful actions which influence and increase the creation of child care spaces; the City has seen almost 700 new spaces created since 2019 which is close to the established targets.

However, staff note that child care operators continue to face significant challenges in trying to create more child care spaces. These include financial (increasing property values; high development costs particularly for infrastructure and building code upgrades; and limited spaces with affordable leases) as well as operational (lack of spaces with a suitable area for outdoor play space; finding and retaining qualified staff; and meeting provincial licensing requirements). Several anticipated child care facilities are currently on hold or have been abandoned for one or more of these reasons.

There have also been a number of changes since the Action Plan was developed from all levels of government, including additional municipal supports/elimination of many regulatory barriers, provincial direction for School Districts to include before and after school care, increases in provincial and federal funding and support programs for child care, national focus on providing more housing (including provincial housing targets), changes to the provincial legislative framework for development and financing, and the release of new demographic information. This context impacts child care needs and the ability for new spaces to be created, and influences the types of actions and opportunities which would have meaningful impact to support child care in Port Coquitlam.

Child Care Action Plan 2025 Update


Staff believe a targeted refresh of the Child Care Action Plan is warranted to update targets for new licensed spaces, identify underserved age or demographic groups, as well as explore opportunities to support creating/funding child care facilities through provision of tools such as the Amenity Cost Charges and Density Benefits Bylaws and increased collaboration with Fraser Health Authority and School District 43. This process could also better structure how the City may wish to consider opportunities for child care facilities on municipal lands or within future municipal developments.

The refresh would be limited in scope, seeking input, updates and advice from key interested parties and professionals. Staff would coordinate this work with other ongoing policy and strategic planning projects and report to Committee in early 2026 with recommendations for updated targets and implementation actions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with this work would be funded through existing consultant and project budgets.

OPTIONS (✓ = Staff Recommendation)

	#	Description
	1	Direct staff to proceed with the refresh of the Child Care Action Plan that will review targets for new licensed spaces, demographic groups and opportunities to further support the creation of new spaces.
	2	Request staff provide additional information prior to making a decision, or proceed with a revised scope of work for the Child Care Action Plan refresh.
	3	Defer any updates to the Child Care Action Plan at this time.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Summary of Child Care Action Plan Recommendations

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