

The City of Vancouver



“Moving Forward”

CHILDCARE:
The Cornerstone of
Early Childhood
Development Services

Prepared By: Carol Ann Young - Childcare Coordinator
City of Vancouver Social Planning Department
515 West 10th Avenue, Vancouver BC

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DRAFT

Introduction

The *Civic Childcare Strategy* has guided the actions of the City of Vancouver over the past 10 years in building a quality childcare system for Vancouver's children and families. It has positioned Vancouver as a national leader. The purpose of this report is to provide:

- City of Vancouver senior management and Council with a brief overview of the status of childcare services now; and
- a plan of action for the next 10 years to support children and families in an urban setting.

The direction proposed in this paper is intended to continue to position the City of Vancouver as a forerunner in services for children and families. The City will play a key role through facilitation, coordination, planning, leveraging funding and services that are responsive to the unique and emerging needs of its' citizens.

The report builds on the vision set out in the *Civic Childcare Strategy* and provides a snapshot of the City's children and families, highlights current research and community opinion (based on existing documentation), and summarizes the roles of different levels of government. The later part of the report identifies some of the key challenges facing childcare and families using early childhood services in Vancouver. The report concludes with a framework to evolve City policy for children and families in Vancouver and continue Council's commitment to the *Civic Childcare Strategy*.

The framework sets out a series of broad early childhood development objectives and outcomes and describes a number of actions to strengthen childcare over the next 10 years. There are 5 key areas on which to build the action plan, they are:

- Service Coordination
- Planning and Priorities
- Stable, Flexible, Quality Childcare
- Strong Private and Public Partnerships
- Effective Communication

These directions have been developed based on a review of social trends, current research, various public consultation documents, informal dialogue with community stakeholders and observations of the past and current childcare coordinators. A process for seeking stakeholder input to guide the development of a more detailed action plan has been set out in the 'Strategies' section of this document and includes;

- dialogue with key shareholders,
- an early childhood development reference committee,
- refinement of the 10 year action plan, and
- workshops with Council.

The City will play a key role through facilitation, coordination, planning, leveraging funding and services that are responsive to the unique and emerging needs of its citizens.

Framework:

- Service Coordination
- Planning and Priorities
- Stable, Flexible, Quality Childcare
- Private and Public Partnerships
- Effective Communication

The Landscape

In 1996, there were 64,329 children between the ages of 0 - 12 in the City of Vancouver.

Projections suggest an estimated 68,500 children 0 - 12 by 2001. Children are concentrated in the Collingwood, Sunset, Mount Pleasant, and Hastings areas.

The highest birth rates are in Midtown (12.6), Vancouver North East (12.4) and South Vancouver (11).

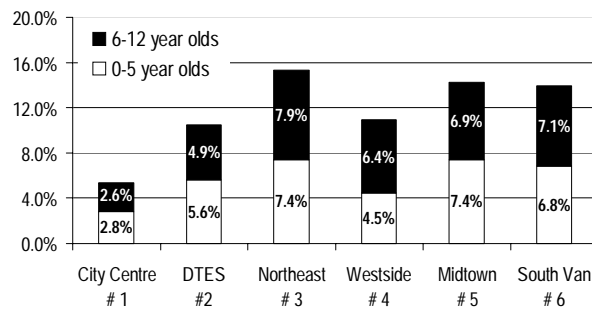
An estimated 64.8% of children under 18 who live in lone parent families headed by women, live in poverty.

Sixty-two percent of aboriginal children live below the low income cut off line.

In 1996, there were 64,329 children between the ages of 0 - 12 in the City of Vancouver. There were 30,575 children birth to 5 years of age and 33,754 children 6 to 12 years of age. Projections suggest an estimated 68,500 children 0 - 12, by 2001 of which 10-15% will have an identified special need. There is a particular concentration of children in the Collingwood, Sunset, Mount Pleasant, and Hastings areas. The overall birth rate in the City is 10 live births per 1000 population, with the highest birth rates in Midtown (12.6), Vancouver North East (12.4) and South Vancouver (11) (source VRHB - 1999). In 1996, 62% of women in Vancouver with children, were in the labour force.

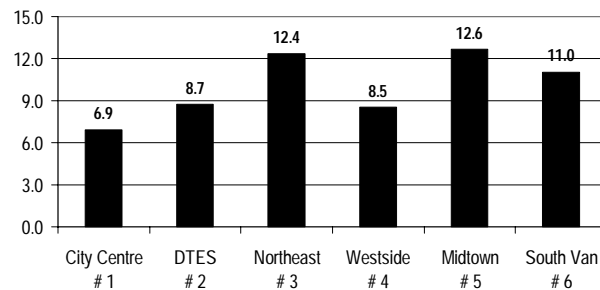
0-5 YEAR OLDS AND 6-12 YEAR OLDS AS A PERCENTAGE OF NETWORK POPULATION

Year: 2001 -- Source: VRHB



NETWORK BIRTHRATES (Live births per 1,000 population)

Year: 1999 -- Source: BC Vital Statistics Agency



There is great disparity across the City in the quality of life lead by families. Poverty risk factors are influenced by ethnicity and family composition. An average of 53% of the children have English as a second language, with more than 70 languages spoken throughout the City. An estimated 64.8% of children under 18 who live in lone parent families headed by women, live in poverty.

The City is home to the largest Canadian urban aboriginal population, many of whom live in poverty and struggle to find affordable housing and employment. While census data suggests that there were approximately 11,000

aboriginal people in Vancouver in 1996, aboriginal people suggest this in an underestimation. There are aboriginal people from nearly 200 different bands. Sixty-two percent of aboriginal children live below the low income cut off line.

The three geographic areas with the highest number of children per capita are Northeast Vancouver, South Vancouver and Midtown (VRHB - based on 1996 census).

Aboriginal families speak about their concerns of child apprehension, social isolation, abuse and the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome. Substance abuse is a significant health and social problem affecting children and youth, particularly in the Downtown-Eastside.

Childcare services in Vancouver have increased by approximately 22% in the past 10 years. The availability of licensed group childcare spaces however varies across the City from 89 spaces per 100 children to 9 spaces per 100 children (Hertzman, 2001). Average costs of full-time licensed group care range from \$886 per month for infant toddler care to \$535 per month for 3 to 5 year olds.

Childcare in the City of Vancouver is: a range of early childhood services which are supported and inclusive of all children; offered on a full, part time and flexible basis, for children from birth to 12 years; in group, family, preschool and in home settings; that serve children with extra support needs and that are culturally appropriate.

	Parent Fees			Provincial Subsidy*
	West	East	Average	
infant/toddler	\$ 870-960	\$ 825-885	\$ 886	\$ 585
18 months-3 years	\$ 715-885	\$ 650-840	\$ 808	\$ 528
3 -5 years	\$ 475-650	\$ 368-625	\$ 535	\$ 368

*Subsidy for families who qualify

December 2000

The actual cost of delivering care can range from \$1600 per month for infant/toddler care to \$733 for 3 to 5 year olds. Currently care for school age children costs parents \$7 per day, and \$14 per day on professional development and school breaks (excluding summer vacation). While some provincial funding such as the childcare compensation program helps to offset operating costs, there remains a significant shortfall between the real cost and the parent fee.

Population growth in Vancouver, increased density with young families, economic disparity, affordable housing, immigrant and refugee settlement needs or new comer needs, urban aboriginal needs, suggest a Vancouver based response to supporting children in an urban environment.

What Have We Learned ?

Over the past 30 years we have seen a remarkable shift in social policy specific to the care of young children. Childcare policy in the 60's viewed the care and well being of children as the sole responsibility of parents. It was based on the adult relationship with the labour force and was founded at a time when families typically had one "bread winner" and one "caretaker" in the home. Policy initiatives included tax breaks, maternity leave and paternity leave. Financial assistance through childcare subsidies were targeted to low income families. This form of social policy facilitated limited choice, however, parents paid the

Paradigms Shift in Childcare Policy:

- 1960's childcare policy based on one "bread winner" and one "caretaker" at home.
- 1990's childcare policy shift to positive outcomes for children as a shared responsibility.

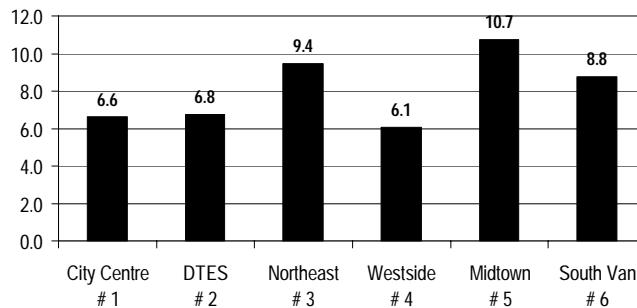
Parents should be able to choose from a range of options from the "Family Responsibility Paradigm", while emphasizing high quality non-parental childcare and early childhood development from the "Investing in Children Paradigm".

cost and were dependent on a limited availability of quality licensed childcare. For low income families, the level of assistance often did not cover the cost of care.

During the late 80s and well into the 90's a shift in policy which focused on positive outcomes for children as a shared responsibility emerged. This policy was influenced by a growing body of research around positive early childhood development opportunities. It was also influenced by the growing number of children living in poverty and the shift to dual income earning families (a necessity of a strong economy). This policy shift envisioned a responsibility for investing in children that was shared between parents and the community. Examples of this policy included the National Child Benefit and the National Early Childhood Development Strategy. Both paradigms exist today with a move

afout to blend paradigms. Parents should be able to choose from a range of options from the "Family Responsibility Paradigm", while emphasizing high quality non-parental childcare and early childhood development from the "Investing in Children Paradigm".

NUMBER OF CHILDREN 0-12 PER NETWORK CHILDCARE SPACE
Year: 2001 -- Source: BCSTATS, Westcoast Childcare



There are approximately 8500 licensed childcare spaces serving children 0-12.

Wait lists for licensed care in some areas have 400 families waiting for space.

Childcare provides the basis for childhood development opportunities, early intervention for children "at risk" and supports labour force participation. There is a growing body of research that suggests high quality, financially viable childcare environments, that are flexible and inclusive of all children at a cost that families can afford, are essential to building healthy communities. Childcare in the City of Vancouver means: a range of early childhood services which are supported and inclusive of all children; offered on a full, part time and flexible basis, for children from birth to 12 years; in group, family, preschool and in home settings; that serve children with extra support needs and that are culturally appropriate.

There are approximately 8500 licensed childcare spaces serving children 0-12 in the City (Westcoast Childcare Resource and Referral - 2000). While there has been significant growth in the licensed/regulated childcare sector over the past 10 years, the majority of children continue to be cared for in unregulated settings, where quality of care is unknown. Growing wait lists in childcare programs throughout the City, some as high as 400 families, demonstrates the need and desire of parents to access licensed childcare.

It is also well documented that families prefer childcare that is conveniently located to home or work. This further impacts the demand on childcare in Vancouver with the growing development of high tech industries which are employee intensive and the work/live developments in the City.

Research tells us that quality childcare provides intellectual and social enhancement that builds on later success in school and future citizenry. Conversely, unhealthy emotional and social environments during early childhood can have lifelong consequences. There is now documented evidence that a child's brain development in the first six years of life sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health. There is substantial evidence that the quality of early childhood experiences has long term effects on an individual's performance in the education system, their behaviour in adult life and their risks for chronic disease in adult life (Mustard & McCain, 1998).

Positive early childhood experiences increase school readiness and later school success. Lack of readiness puts children at risk of academic, social and behavioural difficulties in school. There is an increased likelihood of children dropping out of school, becoming pregnant as a teen and becoming addicted to alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. School failure affects future success and well being in the workplace. Quality childcare in environments in the early years can reduce the risk that young children today will become dependent citizens of tomorrow.

Quality is based on high adult child ratios, small group sizes, well trained caregivers, consistent and stable caregiving; standards of health, safety, and physical environments that are regulated; adequate wages and working conditions and job satisfaction. Based on Canadian research, conservative estimates suggest that for every dollar invested in high quality childcare there is a two dollar benefit to children, parents and society (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998).

Various longitudinal studies in the United States such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, the North Carolina Smart Start and the Chicago Child-Parent Centre found significant relationships between crime reduction, reduced teen pregnancy, reduced behaviour problems in school, school success and or employability, and positive quality daycare experiences in the early years.

While families continue to have the primary responsibility for their children, they require a range of supports from extended families and their community. Families require early childhood opportunities for various reasons, not only in order to work or go to school. While these variables impact the demand for childcare, families also choose childcare to provide developmental opportunities for their children. Many stay-at-home parents, extended family caregivers and family childcare providers utilize playgroups and/or preschools for the same reasons. Childcare also provides an excellent foundation for early intervention opportunities for children 'at risk' developmentally.

Communities which provide a holistic approach that includes connections to formal and informal supports that families can draw on when needed, have a greater likelihood of positive outcomes for their children. This includes a service continuum which is coordinated and collaborative and includes health, education, childcare, recreation, social services.

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There is substantial evidence that the quality of early childhood experiences has long term effects on an individual's performance in the educational system (Mustard & McCain, 1998).

Quality childcare environments in the early years can reduce the risk that young children today will become dependent citizens of tomorrow.

Longitudinal studies show the benefit of quality childcare experiences in the reduction of crime, teen pregnancy, aggressive behaviour in adolescence.

For every dollar invested in high quality childcare there is a two dollar benefit to children, parents and society (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998).

W h a t H a v e W e H e a r d ?

Expand existing services rather than create new ones	The Windows of Opportunity committee is a community partnership committee comprised of various stakeholders, including funders (e.g., Health Canada, Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD), Ministry of Human Resources, City of Vancouver and Vancouver School Board), Aboriginal and Ethnocultural communities and representatives from all six networks (e.g., networks are geographic boundaries which were established by MCFD and continue to be used for the purpose of planning childcare). Windows of Opportunity facilitated a public consultation with over 2500 families in the City of Vancouver. This resulted in actions on which to build a city-wide vision of services for children, families and youth. Some of the highlights included:
Need for flexible and emergency childcare.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Expansion and improvement of services/resources rather than the creation of new ones, including flexible and emergency childcare, increased parenting programs and coordination of services.</i>
Reduce risks for preschoolers though early childhood development services, accessible childcare and positive parenting opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Effective Support Systems, supports to parents, children and youth including more services in all areas relevant to parenting and transitions.</i>• <i>Strengthening community building.</i>• <i>Policy changes and lobbying including the development of a universally accessible childcare system.</i>• <i>Schools as a community hub.</i>• <i>Development of national and provincial childcare strategy.</i> <p>In "Healing Ways", a Vancouver Richmond Health Board report, aboriginal agencies speak of the need to reduce risks for preschool children through more early childhood development service, accessible childcare and positive parenting opportunities.</p>
Higher staff ratios for inner city childcare.	<p>"Facing the Facts": Childcare Needs In Vancouver's Inner City" suggests that a significant number of group, out of school and preschool programs have inadequate funding to provide food, clothing exchanges, supplies, transportation, and wages, to meet the needs of the children they served. They also indicated that staffing ratios were inadequate to support "high need" children and families.</p>

T h e R o l e O f G o v e r n m e n t s

Municipal

There are a number of municipalities throughout the lower mainland who support the development of quality childcare. For example, North Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby and New Westminister all have childcare policies and provide space in city-owned buildings. All except Burnaby, provide childcare grants and have planners to address childcare issues.

The City of Vancouver has been a leader through it's vision for improving the quality of life for children, youth and families. It has established a number of policies to keep families in Vancouver and better serve children, youth and families. This is demonstrated though the creation of affordable housing units,

libraries, community centres, the development of a children’s policy, civic childcare and youth strategies and support to various community services (e.g., family place, childcare). The City has not only provided leadership but has contributed significant resources to building healthy communities for children and families, over the past 10 years.

The *Civic Childcare Strategy*, adopted unanimously by City Council in October 1990, included childcare policy statements with a detailed action plan covering five areas; planning for childcare, capital programs, operating assistance, program support, development and administrative support, and advocacy.

The City has done considerable work in furthering these objectives and has contributed funding to stabilize and provide service where no other funding has been available. It has been instrumental in leveraging provincial and federal funding. Some of the highlighted accomplishments include; production of *Childcare Design Guidelines* and *Steps to Developing a Childcare Center in Vancouver*; relocation of existing childcare services, funding to infant/toddler programs, civic childcare grants, and the development of a new non-profit childcare organization to administer city-owned centers (see Appendix I - Civic Childcare Strategy Update).

In 2000, the City contributed to childcare services through capital funding of approximately \$350,000 and operational funding of \$676,100, in-kind services, funding of a designated social planner position, a childcare maintenance program for childcare in city owned buildings, and through progressive policies (e.g., community amenity contributions and development cost levies). In addition, Park Board provided free space and assisted community associations with operating and administration costs to deliver preschool, out of school and kindercare programs at various community centers. Park Board staff also provide supervision and support to these programs. Of the approximately 8500 childcare spaces in the City, over 2000 are supported by the Park Board.

Provincial

The British Columbia Provincial Government spends approximately \$188 million on childcare and will invest an additional \$291 million over the next five years as part of the federal/provincial partnership (Early Childhood Development Strategy - ECDS). Parents contribute approximately \$1.35 billion each year to childcare. Other early childhood development services such as family support, healthy baby programs, family places and parenting programs also receive additional funding from the Province. The provincial contribution for Vancouver for the 2000/2001 fiscal year was approximately \$13.4 million.

The *Childcare BC Act*, passed in early 2001, set out the requirements for a publicly funded childcare system by 2004. In January 2001, the Province implemented the first step of *Childcare BC*, a financial assistance program to assist affordability of childcare for parents of children from kindergarten through age 12 in licensed group care. This also provided base funding to help stabilize childcare. This was a contribution of approximately \$16 million in 2000/2001. Parents pay a maximum of \$7 per day for out of school care and \$14 per day for kindergarten age children in licensed group care.

Recently, however, the Provincial Legislature repealed the sections of the legis-

The Civic Childcare Strategy (1990)

- planning for childcare
- capital programs
- operating assistance and program support
- development and administrative support
- advocacy

BC STATS:

- **Parents Pay:**
\$1.35 billion
- **Province:**
\$188 million
\$291 million new \$ over 5 years
- **Provincial portion in Vancouver:**
Approx. \$13.4 million

lation that facilitated a publicly funded childcare system. In addition, the Minister announced that existing contracts for school age care will be honoured until July 2002.

Federal

In preparation for the First Ministers' conference in Fall 2000, a number of national research groups (e.g., National Council on Welfare, Caledon Institute) wrote and/or spoke to the need for resources in early years and identified childcare as the cornerstone to early childhood development. The First Ministers affirmed their commitment by signing the *Early Childhood Development Strategy* to support the well being of children and announced a contribution of \$2.2 billion over five years to be invested in a vision of early childhood development, nationally. Funding will support healthy baby programs, parenting and family support programs, early childhood development, including preschool and childcare and community support programs aimed at integrating family and children services. This recognizes that future social viability and economic prosperity depends on the opportunities that are provided to children today.

Early childhood development
Strategy - a vision of early childhood development

The Continuing Challenges

While childcare has made significant gains over the past 10 years, a number of challenges continue, for example, a shortage of quality childcare spaces, access for children with special needs, financial stability of programs, affordability for families and coordination with other early childhood development services/ programs.

Shortage of Quality childcare

- Capital funding and the availability of suitable sites to build and maintain childcare services often presents a barrier to new space development. Limited provincial capital grants, available only on an annual basis and dependent on partnership funding, sets limitations.
 - Currently City funding through development cost levies are limited to geographic areas. While Council has recently approved the move to a city-wide DCL policy, it will take 5 to 10 years before there are sufficient funds to create new spaces.
 - Quality affordable childcare is least available in those areas where the greatest number of children reside.
 - There is no systematic approach to facilitating quality care beyond health and safety regulations. While childcare in British Columbia scored highest in the country on a national quality study, there is still room for considerable improvements.
- Shortage of quality childcare
 - Accessibility
 - Stability
 - Affordability
 - Coordination and partnerships

Accessibility

- Many families can't afford the cost of licensed childcare or are unable to

find vacancies in licensed childcare of their choice.

- Flexible, emergency and extended hours of care are not provincially funded and/or face regulatory barriers.
- Newcomers are often unaware of childcare services or are unable to access information in their first language. When childcare is available, the cultural appropriateness of some service models, and communication between care-givers and extended family, may present challenges. In addition, families with a number of young children may not be able to access services in one location due to wait lists or cost.
- Programs within the City of Vancouver are often not well resourced or equipped to meet the individual needs of children who require additional supports (e.g., children at risk developmentally due to organic, environment, social and/or emotional challenges).
- Limited provincial funding (e.g., resources to provide additional supports), lengthy wait lists for early intervention services, lack of outreach services for childcare programs and families, few family support services to provide service coordination, all contribute to the challenge of including children with special needs in childcare.

Stability

- Financial viability of infant/toddler and 3 to 5 year old programs is often fragile because operating costs are higher than parent fees which are the primary source of operating revenue. The cost would be unaffordable to most families if the "real cost" of care determined the parent fee.
- Stand alone non-profit childcare programs run with parent boards struggle with board membership turnover.
- Demands placed on administrators (many who have no or little designated administration time) have become significant in recent years with the number of funder reporting requirements and human resource issues increasing.
- Limited availability of provincial capital dollars, the timing and availability of funds (e.g., once a year applications), inadequate subsidy rates for low income families (e.g., no increase since 1994 in rates), lack of childcare compensation funds to new childcare programs (e.g., wage enhancement dollars), all impact the development of viable and stable childcare services, both new and existing.

Affordability for Families

- Income dictates children's access to quality childcare. For example, prior to attending school, children from higher income communities are three times more likely than lower income families to have access to quality early childhood opportunities.

- Often programs located in “high need” areas require additional staffing to meet the individual needs of the children. This has a direct impact on parent fees or is a cost burden on the organization.
- A greater portion of childcare subsidy in the east side goes to family and informal childcare (e.g., not licensed or registered) arrangements.
- Subsidy rates do not cover the full cost of licensed care and low income families are unable to pay the extra costs.
- Families with more than one child requiring care may find the costs of service prohibitive.

Service Coordination and Partnerships

- Early childhood development services are currently fragmented and poorly coordinated with other childcare and family services, in part due to policy and funding mechanisms (see diagram I).
- There is little incentive for planning in a coordinated way.
- Partnerships between the City, the health and school boards, along with the province, need strengthening in order to plan and deliver resources in a more efficient and effective manner.
- Communities need up-to-date and accurate information for planning, and need to partner with funders in establishing funding priorities and creating a community vision.

Moving Forward - A Vision

By 2010, the City of Vancouver will have facilitated the development of a number of early childhood development hubs and enhanced service coordination. With a comprehensive range of childcare services as the cornerstone, families will be

Diagram I. Existing System



able to access parenting programs, drop-in services, family resource services, community information, toy lending and/or early intervention services in one place or through a coordinated approach. These hubs will be nonprofit childcare service agencies and may be linked to schools, neighbourhood houses, community centres and/or family serving non-profit organizations. These early childhood development hubs will build on existing community services and provide a range of supports for families and children ages birth to 12 years. A conceptual diagram of this vision is provided below (diagram 2) as a guide. It is understood that communities will shape services to meet the unique needs of their neighbourhoods. Diagram 3 provides an overview of the various support services for families and children. Through interagency committees and/or agreements, services can enhance coordination to hubs.

Diagram 2. **Vision**
Early Childhood
Development Hub
(ECD)

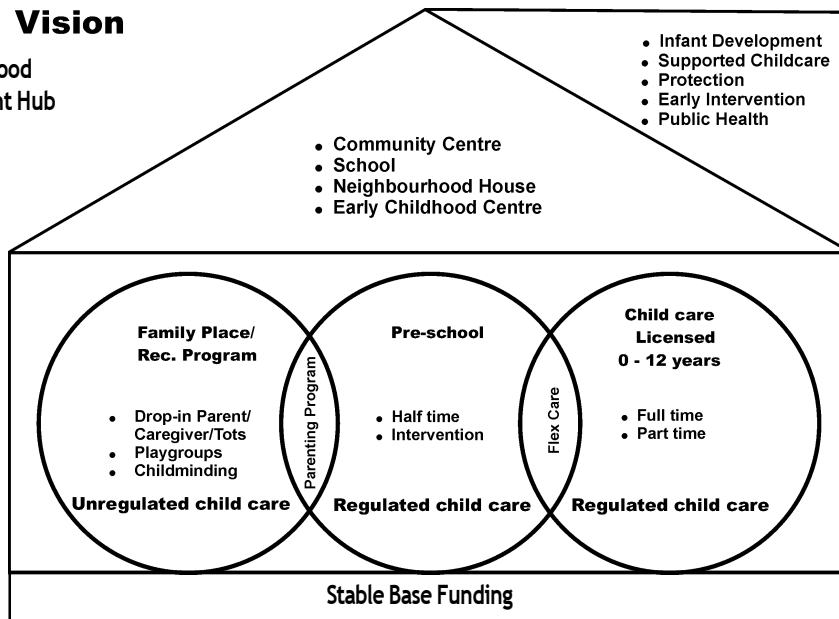
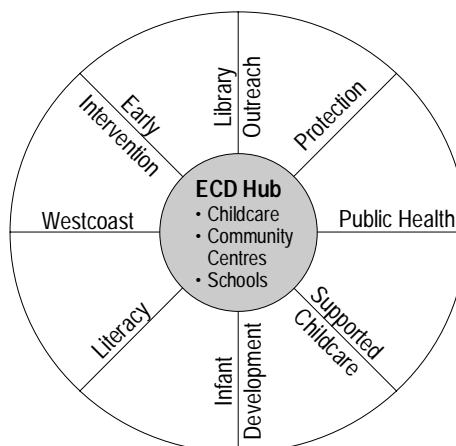


Diagram 3. **Vision**
Early Childhood Development Hub:
Service Coordination



Framework

The City will influence and direct its actions to support the development of early childhood hubs.

Set within the context of the existing *Civic Childcare Strategy* and its objectives, the City of Vancouver will continue to build healthy communities where children are valued. The planning, development and support of services will be done within a framework that builds on:

- **Improving Service Coordination**
- **Establishing Priorities and Planning Process**
- **Facilitating Stable, Flexible, Quality Childcare**
- **Strengthening Private and Public Partnerships**
- **Facilitating Effective Communication**

The strategies set out in this document are a starting point. Considerable dialogue needs to occur with various stakeholders to flesh out a comprehensive and complete set of strategies. Objectives and outcomes set out a vision of what we would like to see happen in childcare in Vancouver. The City's role is to influence and direct actions which support these outcomes. Specific actions of the City are set out in the strategies.

Improving Service Coordination

Objectives

- *To facilitate a more coordinated and comprehensive range of neighbourhood-based early childhood development services for families and children 0 to 12 years of age.*
- *To strengthen coordination among City, education, health, recreation and social services.*

Outcomes

- *A range of regulated and/or supported group and family childcare programs for children 0 to 12 years of age which include family places, play groups/drop-ins, toy lending and/or early intervention programs for children and families.*
- *A system of early childhood development services that are integrated with neighbourhood hubs (e.g., neighbourhood houses, schools, community centres, family serving non-profit organizations).*

Establishing Priorities and Planning Process

Objectives

- *To create a systematic and transparent approach to planning and setting priorities.*
- *To strengthen municipal processes to support the development of a comprehensive range of early childhood development services.*
- *To develop an equitable needs-driven expansion plan for sustainable childcare.*

Outcomes

- *Allocation of funding/resources based on vision and established priorities.*
- *Planning process which is inclusive and transparent to the community.*
- *Delivery of services which are responsive to community needs.*

Facilitating Stable, Flexible, Quality Childcare

Objectives

- *To influence the publicly funded system and keep childcare paramount on the federal and provincial agendas.*
- *To facilitate a mechanism for improving the quality of childcare.*
- *To develop new support systems which increase the financial and administrative stability of non-profit childcare centers over the next 5 years.*
- *To identify a model and funding strategies for delivering flexible childcare.*

Outcomes

- *Financially and administratively viable childcare system.*
- *Positive learning/care environments for children and families.*
- *Services responsive to parent needs at the neighbourhood level.*
- *Improved school readiness*

Strengthening Private and Public Partnerships

Objectives

- *To articulate and promote a common vision of early childhood development services which is comprehensive and coordinated for children 0 to 12 years.*
- *To strengthen partnerships among community, City, education, health, social services and recreation.*
- *To facilitate partnerships between the private and public sector.*

Outcomes

- *Effective use of existing and new resources.*
- *A collective vision of city-wide early childhood services for maximum funding.*

Facilitating Effective Communication

Objectives

- *To provide ongoing opportunities for dialogue with the community which informs and responds to emerging and unique needs of neighbourhoods.*
- *To increase the profile of the early childhood development services in Vancouver.*

Outcomes

- *Documented strategy for early childhood development services.*
- *Informed community, local and provincial government.*

Strategies

Improving Service Coordination

1. Prioritize future development, capital and operating funds to facilitate “Hub” concept delivered by neighbourhood houses; new early childhood development hubs; schools and/or recreation hubs.
2. Examine the viability of establishing interagency agreements where service agencies commit to collaborative operations, and/or develop new initiatives that link early childhood development services to other community services.
3. Create a city-wide interagency advisory committee which includes key stakeholders from the community and funders to assist in the development and coordination of early childhood development hubs. This committee would provide input into the reference group (identified below).
4. Work with Park Board childcare programs to develop a consistent approach to planning and development.
5. Examine and test strategies for linking licensed family childcare with group care.
6. Improved planning and priority setting process.

Establishing Priorities and Planning Process

1. Conduct community dialogues to facilitate input into priority setting and vision. This will be conducted through existing committee structures, forums and key informant interviews. A series of discussion questions will be developed to seek input from stakeholders and community partners on the proposed framework. Dialogue would occur with a number of internal staff (e.g., Directors of Planning, Park Board, Housing, City Manager), and partners such as funders, range of social service providers (e.g., family resource programs) childcare providers (e.g., including family childcare and license-not-required), community association representatives, developers, researchers, advocates and parents. These dialogues would be conducted by Social Planning staff and an independent consultant throughout the Fall/Winter 2001.
2. Establish an early childhood development reference committee to review dialogue findings, advise on; priorities, data needs, action plan for Council and determine outcome measures. This committee would meet six times a year for the next two years and would include membership from Park Board, Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, Vancouver School Board, Ministry of Human Resources, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services and Ministry of Children & Family Development, a researcher, Neighbourhood House, consumers, caregivers and childcare organizations. In the second year, the committee would assist in problem solving implementation challenges and advise on issue specific papers (e.g., phase out strategy for endowment funding). The efficacy of this committee would be evaluated at the end of the second year.
3. Review a new criteria for the reallocation of grant funding while linking funding to the City vision and priorities. Priorities will be based on existing demographic and profile information. Based on review, changes would be reported to Council.
4. Conduct a workshop with Council to set out a strategic direction for the next 10 years. A report back to Council would be conducted to share dialogue findings and seek approval on new funding priorities and a more detailed implementation in Winter/Spring 2002.
5. Review and develop existing and new childcare/City policies necessary to facilitate the new approach (e.g., linkages with four pillar approach, review the design guidelines, community vision process, major projects steering committee) .
6. Establish a mechanism for reviewing successes and challenges on an annual basis in order to plan for improvements in subsequent years.

7. Examine feasibility and parameters for building early childhood development services and facilities on parkland.
8. Prepare and revise annually childcare profiles by network for planning purposes.

Facilitating Stable, Flexible, Quality Childcare

1. Define how larger organizations can support small stand-alone organizations and describe the relationships, roles, responsibilities and obligations. Link grant funding to organizations which demonstrate administrative partnership.
2. Encourage new and/or strengthen existing multi service organizations (e.g., similar to the Vancouver Society of Children's Centers, Neighbourhood Houses) to operate and/or administratively support a number of childcare/early childhood programs in each network.
3. Link childcare centers with family daycares, family places, parent groups, drop in and playgroups into their existing space (e.g., evening and weekends) to support viability and increase community access to early development opportunities. Resources will be allocated to support more comprehensive models.
4. Develop a systematic approach to assessing, implementing, evaluating and improving quality of childcare in the City. Identify best practices and create mechanisms to assist childcare in achieving best practices that are culturally sensitive.
5. Work with building management to standardize the maintenance of city-owned childcare facilities. Create a protocol between childcare societies and the City outlining city services.
6. Develop a long term strategy for replacing and repairing existing city-owned childcare portables on city land.
7. Explore desirability of collaborative training between City and Park Board childcare staff.
8. Explore with VRHB nutritionists a systematic approach to food security programs for childcare.
9. Develop lease and operating agreements for all city-owned childcare.

Strengthening Private and Public Partnerships

1. Establish a funders network to develop strategies specifically to enhance coordination of funding.
2. Develop a strategy for private-public partnership to fund early childhood development services. Building on a social venture capital model, a separate fund would be created to further the early childhood development vision.
3. Examine the feasibility and implications of combining Development Cost Levies and Community Amenity Contribution funding to create greater flexibility in the funding of early childhood development services. Revise funding policies, where necessary, to support the vision.
4. Review and update childcare calculations for rezonings.

Facilitating Effective Communication

1. Renew the system of communication with key stakeholders utilizing current newsletter (e.g., Westcoast Post), information bulletins, annual reports, web site and through information bulletins.
2. Assist the community in showcasing services in Vancouver and delivering a strong collective message to funders.
3. Host an annual innovation symposium with community partners and funders.
4. Plan and deliver scheduled briefings with key senior officials and decision makers.

Appendix 1

Civic Childcare Strategy 1990 to 2000 (Written by: Penny Coates, January 2000)

The *Civic Childcare Strategy*, adopted unanimously by City Council in October 1990, included a detailed action plan covering five areas:

- Planning for Childcare
- Capital Programs
- Operating Assistance and Program Support
- Development and Administrative Support
- Advocacy

Over the last ten years, considerable work has been done to further the City's childcare objectives. This document provides an overview of the actions proposed in 1990 with an update on the status of each action as of February 2000. At the end of each section is a commentary highlighting some key issues that have arisen and new directions that have emerged. It is intended that this document be used as a backgrounder for the development of a new action plan for the next ten years.

1. PLANNING FOR CHILDCARE

Development Cost Levies

Action: Design and implement necessary policies and procedures for assessing, collecting and spending development cost levies for childcare, as part of an interdepartmental task force.

Status: Development Cost Levies are currently being collected for childcare in six areas: Downtown South, Burrard Slopes, Triangle West, Cedar Cottage/Welwyn, Oakridge/Langara and the Arbutus Lands. Council recently approved the move to a city-wide DCL policy. The rate and percentage available for childcare has not yet been confirmed. As of December 31, 1999, a total of \$17,695,971.99 had been collected for future childcare projects. These dollars must be specifically spent within the DCL areas where they were collected. It will take at least another five to ten years before there is sufficient funding to develop specific projects unless other sources of capital funding become available.

Childcare as a Condition of Rezoning

Action: Require when appropriate, construction and equipping of childcare facilities as a condition of rezoning.

Status: Childcare requirements have been negotiated and confirmed in legal agreements for False Creek North, Coal Harbour, Citygate, Bentall V, Collingwood Village, Langara College, the Finning Development and BC Women's and Children's Hospital. To date, childcare facilities have been built at Collingwood, Citygate, Bentall V, David Lam Park, Quayside and Langara.

Childcare needs are also included in the calculation of Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) negotiated in smaller rezonings. A formula for allocating the CAC funds is still to be developed. Triangle West CAC funds may be used for renovating and expanding the existing Pooh Corner Daycare.

Calculating Childcare Requirements

Action: Establish and implement consistent formulae for calculating childcare requirements.

Status: Childcare demand formulae have been developed for local areas and industrial, commercial/retail,

general residential and family housing developments. The formulae are part of the information used for rezoning and bonusing negotiations, to calculate CAC levels, to inform the setting of DCL rates and to determine childcare targets for local area plans.

Childcare Target

Action: Establish targets for the number, type and location of childcare services required to meet the current need.

Status: Based on the type of new developments projected, the overall anticipated population growth and the community input regarding their existing and future childcare needs, the preliminary childcare targets are refined during the local planning process, and potential strategies for meeting the existing and new needs are identified.

COMMENTS AND ISSUES ARISING:

The childcare formulae and targets established for Vancouver are conservative. They assume that the needs of 50% of children requiring childcare will be met through licensed childcare and that all other families will choose extended family or informal care arrangements. Despite considerable childcare expansion over the past ten years, there is still a significant childcare space deficit. In particular, infant and toddler care spaces remain in short supply throughout Vancouver and some schools do not have any licensed school-aged care spaces. For the 2000 -2002 Capital Plan, expansion of spaces in Hastings Park and Southeast Vancouver have been identified as key priorities.

The two greatest barriers for expansion are the lack of suitable sites and ensuring sufficient support for operating costs so that user fees are affordable for lower income families. The City has attempted to address the issue of suitable sites through development negotiations and the use of City property. Operating funding is primarily the responsibility of the Province and to date the provincial daycare subsidy has been the main funding mechanism. Unfortunately, provincial subsidy levels have not been raised since 1994 and there has been a tightening of the interpretation of the subsidy policies. This has created problems for low income parents and inner-city childcare operators. In February 2000, Council called upon the provincial government to shift provincial funding away from a subsidy approach to a core funding approach.

In the megaprojects like False Creek North, the size of the childcare demand created by the new development continues to warrant requiring the developers to provide appropriate sites and build new childcare facilities. The facilities opened to date in the megaproject areas are operating at capacity with long waiting lists. Recently the City has been approached by developers interested in looking at the provision of childcare as part of density bonusing in the downtown area. Expansion through development opportunities requires careful planning because of critical timing issues related to the strength of the economy, construction efficiency, peak enrollment periods and the availability of provincial operating support.

Addressing the childcare implications of densification and population growth in other parts of the City has been more challenging. The capital funds collected through DCLs and CACs will take considerable time to accumulate sufficiently to cover the costs of new childcare construction. To keep pace with the projected growth in childcare demands, City, Provincial and community capital dollars will be required to supplement the funds obtained through new development. Again the issue of operating dollars and affordable user fees is paramount and City initiatives need to be planned closely in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security (MSDES).

2. CAPITAL PROGRAMS

Portable Purchase Program

Action: In each of the next 2 years, the City will allocate a capital budget for the purchase and placement of portables designed for childcare programs.

Status: Through the Childcare Portable Purchase Program, over 225 childcare spaces in 6 facilities were created serving over 400 families (Strathcona, Thunderbird, Grandview, Bobolink, Duke Street, and Playhouse). Three other high need neighbourhoods were designated to receive portables but appropriate sites could not be found. An alternate solution was achieved in Mount Pleasant by adding a childcare program to the new neighbourhood house. In the Downtown Eastside a childcare space expansion at Ray Cam Community Centre has been funded. It is still hoped that a new childcare program for the Riley Park area can be accommodated through the re-development of Little Mountain Neighbourhood House.

Land Inventory

Action: Undertake a review of publicly held land to develop an inventory of sites that could reasonably accommodate childcare facilities.

Status: A preliminary list of potential City properties has been developed, but needs further review.

Daycare Design Guidelines

Action: Adopt and begin implementing design guidelines for childcare centres being constructed in high density developments, as a condition of rezoning and development permit approval.

The City of Vancouver Childcare Design Guidelines were approved and have been successfully used for the design of all new permanent centers. The Guidelines are overseen by the Vancouver Richmond Health Board CCFL consultants. A review of the guidelines is now due.

Licensing Procedure Brochure

Action: Produce a brochure which outlines the process, childcare licensing and building requirements for the full range of childcare programs.

Status: In December 1995, brochures were developed and published - *Steps for Establishing a Childcare Centre in Vancouver (Existing Building)* and *Steps for Establishing a Childcare Centre in Vancouver (New Construction)*. These are currently being updated.

Neighbourhood House Childcare Facilities

Action: Provide capital funding and/or technical assistance for the inclusion of childcare facilities in Collingwood Neighbourhood House.

Status: The Collingwood Neighborhood House now includes a 69 space childcare centre, a kindercare program, a childminding room and a family place. Opportunities for childcare expansion have occurred within Kiwassa, Frog Hollow, and Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Houses. Little Mountain Neighborhood House re-development plans also include a new childcare program. Cedar Cottage Neighborhood House has undertaken expansion of their school-aged childcare programs in partnership with local schools and South Vancouver Neighbourhood House is exploring ways to provide more childcare in their area.

Other Capital Projects

Actions: Construction of facilities with funds collected through Development Costs Levies. Response to possible matching of federal and provincial capital programs. Overseeing the construction of the facilities negotiated in Official Development Plans.

Status: Development Cost Levies are being collected but as of yet no facilities have been constructed with DCL monies. Every opportunity has been taken to access matching capital funds from senior levels of government (e. g. the childcare portables, the Library Square Children's Centre). The first facilities negotiated as a part of the False Creek North Official Development Plan have been built (e. g. the Dorothy Lam Children's Centre and the Quayside Children's Centre).

COMMENTS AND ISSUES ARISING

Since 1991, the number of childcare spaces has increased by 22%. Childcare expansion has been a significant part of the Civic Childcare Strategy work to date, although there has been a move away from the portable purchase approach to the inclusion of childcare within larger City projects because portables have not been found to be an easier or cheaper solution. In addition to City funded projects, the Childcare Co-ordinator has also worked with other organizations and individuals to support their childcare expansion efforts. Also the Childcare Co-ordinator has been exploring ways that the City might support licensed family childcare expansion, with an initial project in Molehill area. As noted in the section above, two major challenges have arisen, (i) finding appropriate sites with access to suitable outdoor space and, (ii) parking and securing equitable provincial operating funding for new programs. In some neighbourhoods, there has been initial resistance to the opening of a new childcare program but if the project proceeds, re-notification of the neighbourhood a year later rarely uncovers any complaints.

A significant piece of work not envisaged under the Civic Childcare Strategy Action Plan is the relocation of existing programs. A number of existing programs have been forced to relocate out of schools because of the increased demand for elementary classroom space. Programs located in church space also seem to be very vulnerable because of changes in congregational priorities. Considerable time has also been spent on the relocation of Crabtree Corner to achieve a better quality of space and the Beach daycares because the City wishes to sell the property where the existing childcare portables are located. Funding for relocation is extremely scarce and the process of finding licensable space is difficult and time consuming. Consequently there have been some closures which have been extremely difficult for the parents involved, particularly in areas of the City where there are already significant waiting lists.

Another issue that has emerged is ensuring the ongoing structural maintenance of childcare facilities. Given the capital costs of building new childcare facilities (\$100 - 200 a square foot depending on location, the type of construction and the type of childcare) and the liability implications if a City-owned childcare facility is not being properly maintained, a childcare facility maintenance program for all the City owned childcare centers has been developed. This program is managed very successfully by the Building Maintenance department in consultation with Social Planning. In addition some civic capital funds have been given to City-owned facilities to undertake renovations addressing health and safety concerns. Some non City-owned childcare programs have also received civic capital grants to improve their program space.

3. OPERATING ASSISTANCE AND PROGRAM SUPPORT

Operating Assistance as a Condition of Rezoning.

Action: Approve, in principle, the option of obtaining agreement from developers to the construction of childcare facilities and establishment of an ongoing operating fund to subsidize childcare services, as a part of the rezoning process.

Status. In April 1991, Council approved, in principle, the option to require ongoing childcare operating subsidies as a condition of rezoning, but in May 1991, rather than require an operating subsidy for the Bentall V project, it was decided to take a payment in lieu of construction totaling \$850,000, to use for operating purposes. In February 1993, Council again chose an option of taking payment in-lieu of childcare spaces. Developers in Coal Harbour and False Creek North are now required to providing fewer on-site childcare facilities than originally negotiated, but also to contribute funds in-lieu of cashed-in spaces and \$2,000 per space contribution for start-up cost. A Childcare Endowment Fund has been established to hold these monies with the goal of building up a fund that could generate sufficient interest to pay operating subsidies. Approximately \$1.6 million is currently in the fund, plus interest is annually accrued on the Bentall contribution. Payouts have been limited to eligible infant and toddler programs in an attempt to make these programs more affordable for families. The issue of the long term sustainability of the Childcare Endowment Reserve has been the subject of several reports. In January 2000, Council approved the winding down of the existing Childcare Endowment Reserve and instructed staff to work with Vancouver Society of Children's Centres regarding a long term plan for funding the centers negotiated as a condition of rezoning but not yet built.

Program Stabilization and Enhancement

Action: Allocate \$300,000 in the 1991 Operating Budget to provide *Program Stabilization and Enhancement Grants* to non-profit daycare societies.

Status: These grant categories are still in place, although they now represent a smaller percentage of the overall City Childcare Grants Program budget because there has been a shift to supporting high need inner-city centres (see below).

Direct Operating Support

Action: Develop and implement a City program which provides direct operating support for childcare services.

Status: Phase 1 of Inner-City Sustaining grants was established in March 12, 1992 with new monies. Because of civic budget constraints and new provincial funding for childcare staff wages, Phase II has not yet been put forward to Council for consideration. The percentage of the budget for this category has grown even though there has been no significant growth in the overall childcare budget since 1992. This has been achieved by slowly shifting funds out of the Enhancement and Stabilization categories. Approximately 20 inner-city programs annually receive inner-city funding to support staff and food supplement costs. Additional funding is needed to ensure enhanced "headstart" and family support components for these programs to meet the extremely high needs of the children and families. The Childcare Co-ordinator has been involved in exploring options with Federal, Provincial, School Board and Health Board staff.

COMMENTS AND ISSUES ARISING -see next section

4. DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Administration of City-owned Childcare Facilities

Action: Develop and contract (\$25,000 in 1991) with a single-purpose, non-profit society to be responsible for the development and administration of childcare facilities which will be owned or held on a long-term lease by the City as a result of rezoning, bonusing or Development Permit approval requirements (\$12,500 after C. A. P.).

Status: The Vancouver Society of Children's Centres (VSOCC), was created in December 1994. An annual grant is now provided for administrative costs. VSOCC currently operates Library Square Children's Centre, Dorothy Lam Children's Centre and the Quayside Children's Centre. The Citygate facility is currently operated by the YWCA but could be transferred over to VSOCC at a future date, if necessary.

Program Development

Action: Allocate \$50,000 in the 1991 Operating Budget for Program Development Grants to non-profit societies and encourage the establishment of a community-based Childcare Development Resource Group (\$25,000 after C. A. P.).

Status: These funds have been extremely useful in supporting community childcare expansion initiatives. However in 1998 for the first time no money was allocated to this category because it was felt to be unwise to encourage further expansion until the freeze on provincial operating funding for new programs has been lifted. This provincial freeze has now been lifted and the Childcare Co-ordinator is working closely with MSDES Vancouver region to identify the new service priorities for the next three years. It has not been necessary to proceed with specific funding for a Childcare Development Resource Group because Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre has been able to take on a number of these functions within existing provincial and civic funding. The City Childcare Co-ordinator and the Childcare Licensing Consultants with the Health Board also provide groups wishing to open new centres with support and information as part of their regular workloads.

Increased Support to Existing Support Services

Action: Maintain and increase, as possible, support to existing community-based support services.

Status: A *City-wide Support Services Grant* was established in 1992. The Childcare Coordinator has worked closely with Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre to develop, expand and refine support services for the Vancouver childcare sector. Westcoast has successfully negotiated additional contracts with the provincial government to expand their services in Vancouver and across the Province.

Special Needs Daycare Resource Team

Action: Establish, within the Vancouver Health Department, a team of appropriate professionals and practitioners to provide assessment, consultation, and treatment for education purposes, and to support integration of children with special needs into "typical" daycare settings.

Status: Prior to the transfer of the Health Department to the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, Council requested that City work with the relevant provincial ministries to achieve this goal because they felt the resources required fell outside the City mandate. The Childcare Co-ordinator spent considerable time on this issue, encouraging and supporting provincial and community representatives to develop and implement a new provincially funded supported childcare approach. A Supported Childcare Service, funded by the Ministry of Children and Families, is now in place and provides a consulting/resource service to childcare providers so that children with special needs can be successfully included in their neighbourhood childcare programs. The lack of preschool mental health supports continues to be a serious problem, aggravated by the loss of the preschool psychologists. After considerable lobbying by the Childcare Coordinator and service providers working with children with preschool mental health needs, the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board and MCF did fund the development of a preschool mental health plan. To date no new services have been developed. This issue remains a high priority for childcare providers.

Family Daycare Support

Action: Participate in an advisory capacity and monitor the implementation of a Family Daycare Support Program.

Status: The Childcare Coordinator is an advisory member of the Vancouver Childcare Resource and Referral program which recruits and supports family childcare providers. Pilot programs which provide family daycare training in Punjabi, Spanish and Cantonese have been established through collaboration with Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre and the Vancouver Childcare Support Program. Initial funding came from the City. A policy is currently under development for potential use of CAC and DCL monies for expansion of family childcare options with a first project proposed at Molehill.

City-wide Administration Infrastructure

Action: Facilitate, within the early childcare community, the development of an administrative structure for the delivery of childcare programs.

Status: City funding supports an administrative and financial management support service at Westcoast Childcare Resources Centre. Westcoast has also successfully negotiated with the province to expand its services province-wide.

The Childcare Co-ordinator, in partnership with the large Vancouver childcare providers, facilitated the development of a City/Community regional delivery pilot project (Regional Umbrella Group - R. U. G.) funded through federal/provincial cost shared monies. This project helped to strengthen the leadership capacity of the larger childcare operators and highlight the importance of developing neighbourhood clustering and collaboration of childcare services. A small amount of money from the city-wide Support Services Grant category of the Childcare Grants Program now supports a city-wide and network based structure that encourages and facilitates collaboration amongst childcare services within each network. It is hoped that this structure will lead to the future development of a city-wide childcare group that will work with the City and the Province to plan and co-ordinate a comprehensive system of childcare in Vancouver.

COMMENTS AND ISSUES ARISING

The Childcare grants program has been a key component of the Civic Childcare Strategy's success in stabilizing childcare programs serving high need neighbourhoods or struggling to provide the expensive, but desperately needed infant and toddler care. In 1992, the childcare grant program was re-organized to include some childcare related support services that previously had been funded under the Community Service Grant program, and additional funds were approved by Council to initiate an inner-city childcare program.

In 1999, Council approved 54 grants that directly supported and enhanced the quality of over 2,500 licensed childcare spaces. Through the City-wide Support Services funding, parents, caregivers, childcare boards and community groups from across the city were also able to access essential information about childcare, receive consultative and referral services and participate in activities, events and workshops which promoted and strengthened quality childcare. City funding was key to accessing additional provincial funding for a number of organizations.

The overall childcare budget for 2000 is \$679,300. It includes 7 categories: Program Enhancement, Program Stabilization, Inner-city Childcare, Innovations and Policy Development, Program Development, City-wide Childcare Support Services and Administration of City-owned Childcare Facilities. The annual grant funding ceiling report sets the priorities, eligibility criteria, timelines and the funding guidelines for each category. The Childcare Co-ordinator reviews and recommends all grant allocations with the support of the Social Planning analyst. Childcare grant reports are submitted to Council at least three times a year though the bulk

of the funding is allocated prior to the summer break.

There is a continued need to develop and support neighbourhood clustering of childcare programs so that parents have increased access to a co-ordinated continuum of care options for their young children in the area where they live or work. The experience of the Vancouver Regional Delivery Pilot Project, as noted above, has clearly demonstrated the value of increased coordination/networking/administrative support amongst childcare centres for parents and childcare operators. The network based monies allocated in 1999 as part of the City-wide Support Services Grant category, are to assist with this work.

The Childcare Co-ordinator has also been involved in the development of the 'Windows of Opportunity', in partnership with representatives from the Vancouver School Board, the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, the Vancouver Regional Operating Agency of MCF and a growing number of community groups. This project has childcare as an integral component. Opportunities are also being explored by the United Way for the development of an "early years investment" fund which would support neighbourhood-based non-profit organizations that develop services which provide development enrichment activities for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers and enhance the capacity of families and caregivers to meet the needs of children in this age group.

The ongoing lack of preschool mental health supports for children with emotional and behavioural challenges remains a serious service gap. Pressure needs to be placed on the Ministry of Children and Families and the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board to implement the recently developed service plan.

For the past three years, the Childcare Co-ordinator has been developing a close working relationship with key aboriginal and immigrant settlement groups learning about the unique needs of the young children in these communities. Affordable, culturally appropriate childcare has been identified as a key service for supporting successful school entry for the children and improved economic status for the families. Council approved funding for the development of an aboriginal family daycare training model and Westcoast, with the support of City funding, has provided excellent multicultural and ESL training materials to many childcare providers, but more work is needed to develop new very low cost, flexible childcare services required by these communities.

5. ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN

Provincial Task Force on Daycare

Action: Participate in the provincial task force on daycare and advocate for provincial action on direct operating grants. A clear provincial mandate with regard to childcare, increased subsidy rates to reflect the actual cost of care, increased eligibility levels, a capital program, funding for childcare development and administrative cost of care, increased eligibility levels, a capital program, funding for childcare development and administrative services and increased training programs.

Status: Vancouver's first Children's Advocate participated as a member of the 1990 Provincial Childcare Task Force which made 52 recommendations for improvements to the childcare system, many of which were acted upon by the provincial government. The Childcare Coordinator later participated on the Provincial Childcare Council for 3 years and continues to liaise with the provincial government officials responsible for childcare. Provincial funding freezes, which seriously affected the progress of the provincial childcare strategy between 1995 and 1998, have now been partially removed except in the daycare subsidy program. However the fall-out from the 1999 childcare strike and the joint bargaining process may yet cause more funding difficulties.

Council in its response to the recently released discussion paper "Building a Better Future for British Columbia's Kids," has called for core funding of childcare and has encouraged other municipalities and school boards to give feedback to the Province on its proposed childcare directions.

National Childcare Strategy

Action: Actively lobby the federal government to implement a national childcare program and to adopt policies that protect existing childcare from negative impact of the Goods and Services Tax.

Status: Ongoing lobbying is required. The Childcare Coordinator and the Child and Youth Advocate have been actively involved in discussions re: development of a national childcare agenda, but to date nothing has materialized. The recent federal budget referenced potential discussions with the Province and the possibility of a national early childhood strategy by December 2000.

Greater Vancouver Regional District

Action: Encourage coordination of municipal childcare initiatives at the regional level.

Status: There has been regular contact with other municipalities regarding childcare issues. Presentations have been made to the GVRD Social Issues Committee and the Childcare Co-ordinator has participated in inter-municipal childcare networking discussions as appropriate.

Employer-Supported Childcare

Action: Encourage and facilitate employer support of childcare programs for their employees by constructing on-site childcare facilities; providing ongoing program operating support to these facilities; providing financial assistance to employees for childcare fees and supporting childcare programs in public schools.

Status: While there has been interest expressed in this area by public employers like hospitals and colleges, and private employers such as hotels, law firms, manufacturers, banks, high tech firms, the movie industry and Hastings Park Racetrack personnel, only three on-site employer initiatives have been established (eg: an expansion of the Langara College childcare services, a 49 space facility serving Vancouver General Hospital and a pilot project at Hastings Racetrack). Some employers have also been exploring other family friendly options such as enhanced childcare information services, flexible work schedules, and extended parental leaves.

COMMENTS AND ISSUES ARISING

With the transfer of the provincial childcare mandate from the Ministry of Women's Equality to the Ministry for Children and Families and then most recently to the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security, the City Childcare Co-ordinator has spent a great deal of time bringing regionally based provincial staff up to date on childcare issues in Vancouver and ensuring that any transition difficulties are addressed promptly so as to minimize the negative impacts on local childcare operators. While childcare was a part of MCF and because the budget of that ministry also included the funding of inner-city and community schools, the health and mental health budget for children and youth, as well as new dollars for an early intervention home visiting program, there was a unique opportunity to link childcare into the broader continuum of health, education and social services for young children. These links will require nurturing if they are to be maintained.

Connections have also been forged with Health Canada staff because the Childcare Co-ordinator provided information and support during the first phase of the CAPC Program and has helped to problem solve some recent difficulties regarding the Aboriginal Headstart Program. Several fact sheets and short articles were prepared and brochures updated. Special information packages are also needed for public presentations to groups like employers, businesses and media.

There continues to be an urgent need to raise the profile of the childcare issues with federal politicians. B. C. also needs to be pushed to take a leadership role in the upcoming federal/provincial discussions on childcare. The City of Vancouver, in partnership with community groups and other municipalities across the country, has an important advocacy role to play both publicly and behind the scenes.

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