

City developing plan to improve access to child care

(Penticton, BC – August 10, 2020) – The City is starting work on a plan to improve access to child care in Penticton. The Penticton Child Care Action Plan will assess child care needs in the city, establish space targets and identify actions to meet the demand for care.

"Child care and early childhood education are essential to Penticton's economic and social well-being," said the City's Social Development Specialist, Adam Goodwin. "Quality child care allows many families to work and ensures children have an environment in which to thrive physically, emotionally and socially. Through the creation of this strategy, we want to make sure all parents and caregivers throughout our community have access to quality and affordable child care."

Working in partnership with the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC) and community partners, the goal is to identify strategies to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of child care programs in Penticton. This initiative is supported by a \$25,000 grant provided by the Province of B.C. and administered by the Union of BC Municipalities as part of its Community Child Care Space Creation Program.

Starting today, the City is asking local parents, guardians and child care providers to complete a survey to share their experiences with finding or providing child care. Available at shapeyourcitypenticton.ca, the **Parent and Caregiver Survey** is open to parents or guardians of children up to age 12 who live or access child care in Penticton. Secondly, the **Child Care Provider Survey** is to be completed by the director, manager or owner of child care facilities located in Penticton. Both surveys will remain open until Sunday, Aug. 30.

"If child care has been an issue for your family, we encourage you to share your story. This is an opportunity to confirm the shortages we're facing throughout Penticton and to create a new action plan to stimulate positive change," said Penticton Mayor, John Vassilaki.

In addition to the surveys, SPARC BC is gathering information on existing child care spaces to create an inventory, assessing the needs through stakeholder engagement activities and will develop a community profile with set targets and recommended strategies.

"Our data shows a clear demand for more child care spaces in Penticton. This study will help identify the exact need and determine how the community can achieve its goals," said Tanya Behardien,

Executive Director with OneSky Community Resources, which operates Penticton's Child Care Resource and Referral.

Earlier this year, the City entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with OneSky Community Resources in support of developing a new child care facility at Kiwanis Park. An application for a grant worth up to \$3 million has been submitted towards a daycare facility to replace the Edmonton Avenue Centre. The Ministry recently announced it will notify communities in the fall regarding the status of applications.

For those who use child care facilities outside of Penticton, note that the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen will also release a regional child care survey next month in partnership with SPARC BC. This will also cover the municipalities of Keremeos, Oliver, Summerland and Princeton.

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