

Council endorses much needed childcare action plan

(Penticton, BC – January 20, 2021) – Penticton City Council has taken an important step forward in improving local childcare by endorsing a plan identifying opportunities the City and its partners can take to increase the number of childcare spaces available, while also increasing the affordability of childcare overall. Specific actions to be undertaken include:

- coordinating information sessions with Interior Health, the Penticton Fire Department and City departments to host workshops to help interested parties open a child care centre;
- advocating to other orders of government the need to reduce the cost of child care; and
- working with the school district and Okanagan College to explore training programs for prospective early childhood educators.

Before presenting the action plan to Council during their January 19 meeting, City staff worked with the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia to conduct various feedback opportunities including surveys, interviews, workshops and one-to-one engagements with families, parents, childcare providers and community partners. The plan endorsed by Council was the result of approximately 500 individuals participating in these conversations. Key feedback included:

- of the families who took part in the survey, 83 per cent indicated that it's hard to find childcare in Penticton;
- 81 per cent of the participating childcare centres indicated they have a waitlist of at least six months; and
- businesses indicated that the lack of childcare is hampering their growth and ability to recruit and retain new employees.

"I'd like to thank everyone who participated their ideas and time to make this action plan possible", said Penticton Mayor, John Vassilaki. "We still have a way to go as a community before the challenges that parents face around childcare are successfully solved, but thanks to the development of this plan and the actions it sets out for the City and its partners to complete, I hope to start seeing progress very soon in terms of more available space and more affordability."

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