



# The City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region Child Care Action Plan

March 2020

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

Quality child care is vital to the overall health of a community. This City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region Action Plan was developed in response to challenges faced by the community, as well as recognition that this may be the most opportune time to invest in child care. Analysis of various sources of data provided the context for the strategic directions proposed in this report, which include specific child care targets and detailed recommendations.

The child population in the City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region is declining. However, the rate of vulnerability among children is increasing, as are the number of children with special needs. One in five children are living in poverty, one in four come from lone-parent families, and one in four are Indigenous. The ratio of child care spaces per 100 children in the study area is 15.1, whereas the British Columbia average is 18.4. The age groups with the most challenging ratios were school-age children and infants and toddlers. Three quarters of the child care spaces in the community are privately run, and very few are co-located with public services. Most child care programs are found in the City of Quesnel, while some outlying areas have none.

More than half of parents felt child care fees were unsustainable for their family, and eight of ten felt there was inadequate supply to meet their needs. In terms of staffing, there is a limited supply of qualified front line child care providers to choose from, and providers noted retention was difficult because of a lack of full-time work in quality early childhood education. Eight in ten child care facilities had children living in poverty, but child care providers generally found they were able to support the developmental needs of vulnerable children.

Human resource limitations further inhibit the expansion of affordable, accessible, high quality child care in the region. There are challenges recruiting and retaining qualified staff because those who work in the field are underpaid, are at risk of burn out, and do not feel valued as professionals.

To address these gaps, SPARC BC recommends:

Adding 86 child care spaces over five years to reach the BC average ratio of 18.4 child care spaces per 100 children.

- Focusing on increasing the number of child care spaces for school-age children and the infant and toddler age group.
- Convening the Early Years Table with relevant partners to share this report and begin the relationship building process;
- Forming a dedicated partnership with the Quesnel School District to explore the option of co-locating child care programs in elementary schools;
- Consider offering a child care grant and subsidy program, including allowing permissive property tax exemptions for not-for-profit child care programs;

- Increasing the number of publicly funded child care spaces; and
- Exploring opportunities for making Early Childhood Education programs more accessible, affordable and enticing to address the human resource challenges.

Improving child care services in the North Cariboo Region will not be an easy task; however, it is possible. With concerted and coordinated efforts, the City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region can achieve its child care goals, for the benefit of the whole community.

## 2.0 Introduction

Child care is a vital part of a community's social infrastructure. In addition to helping the children and families using it, child care benefits the broader population by contributing to the economy, and enhancing the overall health and well-being of the community.

Recognizing the importance of child care and the serious challenges being faced with respect to child care delivery in the North Cariboo Region, the City of Quesnel commissioned the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) to prepare a child care action plan tailored to the region.

The City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region Action Plan ("Action Plan") is organized into eight sections and two appendices as follows:

- Section 1.0: Executive Summary
- Section 2.0: Introduction
- Section 3.0: Methodology
- Section 4.0: Broad Child Care Context
- Section 5.0: Quesnel: Community
- Section 6.0: Child Care Space Targets
- Section 7.0: Strategic Direction and Recommended Actions
- Section 8.0: Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting
- Appendix A: Municipal Processes
- Appendix B: Key Findings and Promising Practices

In addition to this Action Plan, SPARC BC developed a regional Needs Assessment which is attached as an additional document.

This Action Plan will provide the City of Quesnel and its partners with evidence-based, concrete and actionable recommendations to improve its child care services for the betterment of the community.

## 3.0 Methodology

This Action Plan is an evidence-based report that synthesizes the best in child care research and places it within the Quesnel context. Primary and secondary data from the City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region (“study area”) provided the basis for recommendations, which were then refined using promising practices from other British Columbian municipalities and a strong literature evidence base from BC, Canada, and abroad. See the Literature Review in Appendix B for a detailed look at the evidence.

This Action Plan is a made-for-Quesnel initiative. It draws upon relevant Statistics Canada data, City of Quesnel and Cariboo Regional District files, vulnerability scores derived from the Human Early Learning Partnership (“HELP”) Early Development Instrument (“EDI”),<sup>1</sup> BC government and Northern Health Authority information, and parent and child care provider survey data. To inform this Action Plan, the consultants used three primary methods of data collection and analysis and prepared one background report. These are outlined below.

### Data Collection Methods

#### *Review of Relevant Child Care-Related Data*

Data compiled through the Union of BC Municipalities (“UBCM”) Inventory, the Northern Health Authority as well as data derived from the HELP EDI were reviewed to understand current childhood vulnerabilities and the presence of child care services and needs across the study area. Identifying childhood vulnerabilities, along with the full range of child care service options and locations, provided a consolidated picture of neighbourhood needs for the work of setting child care targets and strategies for the region. The consultants also included tax filer, City of Quesnel and Cariboo Regional District documents, and regional census data for this profile.

#### *Parent Survey*

To understand child care service needs and experiences, SPARC BC developed a *Parent Survey Regarding Child Care* (“Parent Survey”). This survey was intended for current and potential parents and guardians who currently are (or will be) accessing child care services in the study area. The survey was available online from July to August 2019 on the City of Quesnel website and Facebook page, and responses were solicited from community partners, Parent Advisory Councils, and elementary schools. The survey elicited 217 responses from current or potential parents and guardians.

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<sup>1</sup> The [Human Early Learning Partnership](#) is a collaborative and interdisciplinary research network located within the School of Population and Public Health at UBC, and they developed the Early Development Instrument to measure the developmental health of the kindergarten population across British Columbia. The EDI measures child vulnerability rates in five key domains: physical health and well-being, social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communications skills and general knowledge.

### *Child Care Provider Survey*

SPARC BC also developed an online *Child Care Service Needs, Spaces, and Childhood Vulnerabilities Survey* (“Provider Survey”). This survey was geared towards key stakeholders (e.g., executive directors, managers/coordinators of child care service organization) and asked for their views on current child care services, gaps in services, current and anticipated child care populations receiving services, and spaces to deliver services. This survey was available for completion July through August 2019 and had 35 respondents.

### *Focus Groups*

It should be noted the SPARC BC sub-contracted another organization to conduct local focus groups with community organizations, child care providers, families, City staff, and other stakeholders to provide further qualitative insights. In November, 2019 there was one meeting with the Early Years Table and one focus group with six (6) care providers, as well as another meeting of the Early Years Table to review the draft action plan.

## **Background Report**

### *Needs Assessment*

The City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Child Care Strategy Needs Assessment Report (“Needs Assessment”) presents socio-demographic information pertaining to child vulnerability levels, as well as child care spaces and services across neighbourhoods in the North Cariboo region. The report is based on Statistics Canada Census data, files from the City of Quesnel, information from the BC Government and the Northern Health Authority, childhood vulnerability data collected by HELP, and results from the 2019 Parent and Provider surveys. The Needs Assessment is included as a separate document.

## **4.0 Broad Child Care Context**

Child care is an intricate part of the social infrastructure in Canada, with no one jurisdiction or entity responsible for its planning, funding, and delivery. Child care involves many parties playing various roles, which means it requires dedicated relationships and collaboration between jurisdictions and other partners. Key partners include the federal government, provincial governments, First Nations, municipalities, regional districts, regional public bodies (e.g., health authorities and school districts), child care providers and operators, not for profit organizations, parents, as well as the broader community. To quote an African proverb, it takes a village to raise a child.

### **Federal Government**

Advocates have long been calling on the Federal Government to develop a national strategy for child care. While that has not happened, the Federal Government initiated a [Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#) in 2017 to guide the Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments on child care matters. The Framework articulates the commitment of both levels

of government to invest in increasing quality, accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and inclusivity in early learning and child care, placing priority on those with the greatest needs.

Funding commitments to provincial and territorial jurisdictions were outlined in the 2017 Federal Budget and include \$540 million in 2018-2019 and \$550 million in 2020-2021. The Federal Government's commitment to British Columbia is approximately \$155.6 million over three years, and these funds are being used to support initiatives set out in the Province's Childcare BC plan (discussed below). The funding has and will continue to target increasing the number of infant and toddler child care spaces in areas of highest need, providing low-cost infant and toddler child care spaces, supporting culturally appropriate care for Indigenous families, and facilitating other initiatives to help vulnerable families.

### **Provincial Government**

The Provincial Government has historically played several roles concerning child care, including:

- Development of legislation, policy, and regulations;
- Funding supportive programs and services (e.g., Child Care Resource and Referral programs, Supported Child Development program);
- Providing Major and Minor Capital Grants to eligible child care providers; and
- Providing fee subsidies and program supports for families with low incomes.

In Budget 2018, the Provincial Government announced over \$1 billion in new investments for child care and early learning over three years, under the umbrella of the [Childcare BC](#) initiative. The funding constituted the single largest commitment to child care in BC history and is intended to set the foundation for universal child care in this province. Selected highlights from the Childcare BC plan are below:

#### *Affordability*

- Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF)
  - [CCOF Base Funding](#) assists licensed child care providers with the day-to-day costs of running a facility
- Under the [Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative](#), if a provider signs up for the program, parents are eligible for fee reductions for group and family infant/toddler care, and group and family care for children aged three to Kindergarten. Under the [Affordable Child Care Benefit](#), additional affordability relief is available for families with annual incomes up to \$111,000, including a complete fee waiver for most families earning less than \$45,000 annually with children in licensed child care aged under three years.
- [The Young Parent Program](#) helps young parents under the age of 25 up to \$1500 per month to cover the cost of childcare while they finish high school.

#### *Quality*

- Under the [Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy](#), early childhood education (ECE) professionals working on the front lines were promised two wage lifts

over two years each at \$1 per hour. The first wage lift was effective January 2019, and the second will be effective April 2020.

- ECE professionals will also receive a range of enhanced education supports, including expanded bursaries, paid practicums, professional development opportunities and more spaces for post-secondary ECE training.
- The Childcare BC Maintenance Fund helps to cover the costs of licensed facilities to renovate or relocate to address maintenance issues impacting children’s health.

### *Accessibility*

- Capital funding is available to support the creation of a total of 22,000 new licensed spaces (24,000 spaces with federal funding) over the three years beginning in 2019. Priority is placed on public partnerships (e.g., with school districts, local governments).
- Grants are also offered to support child care planning processes at the community level.
- Funding is offered to assist with facility maintenance costs, move unlicensed spaces into the licensed sector, expand options for families working non-standard hours, and increase resources for young parent programs and children with additional support needs.

In Budget 2019, the Provincial Government increased its investment in child care and early learning by announcing the BC Child Opportunity Benefit, which replaces the previous Early Childhood Tax Benefit. Starting in October 2020, families could receive up to \$3,600 per year, depending on their income and the number of children. Further, the 2019 Budget introduces a \$3 billion revenue-sharing agreement with First Nations over 25 years, with almost \$300 million provided in the first three years. Although not directly related to child care, the increase in funds to First Nations’ can be used to provide early learning and child care resources to their communities.

### **Local Governments**

Under Provincial legislation, local governments do not have an assigned child care role. They also do not have the mandate and resources of their senior government counterparts to address child care needs.

Municipalities, including regional districts, are the level of government closest to the people, however, and they generally have the most in depth understanding of the local context. Municipalities and regional districts can also play a vital role in facilitating the establishment of quality child care in their communities.<sup>2</sup> Examples of supportive actions taken by municipalities in BC include:

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<sup>2</sup> Note that before the completion of this Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy, the [Union of BC Municipalities](#) (UBCM) was inviting applications for two programs: the Community Child Care Space Creation program (funded through the Federal Government) and the Community Child Care Planning program (funded through the Provincial Government). The application deadline for the Community Child Care Planning Program is January 31, 2020. Although The UBC-M has not announced details regarding further rounds of funding, it is likely there will be another round. When those details become available, information from this document should provide child care stakeholders in the City of Quesnel and North Cariboo with the information they require to pursue these opportunities.

- Adopting municipal child care policies;
- Convening child care planning tables;
- Advocating to senior governments on local child care needs;
- Undertaking child care needs assessments;
- Providing grants to child care providers;
- Amending zoning bylaws to facilitate the development of child care spaces;
- Making space available in municipal facilities, at nominal or below-market rates, for the provision of child care;
- Securing built child care spaces or cash in lieu from developers through the development approval process (e.g., by providing bonus density in exchange for child care contributions);
- Supporting a child care website or link with information targeted both to child care operators and interested parent; and
- Providing recreation services that benefit families and complement licensed child care systems.

### Other

Several other parties are involved with the planning, development, support, and operation of the child care system. Examples include First Nations, regional health authorities, school districts, child care providers and operators, not for profit organizations, parents, and the broader community. Additional information on key child care partners in the study area is mentioned throughout this report.

## 5.0 Quesnel: Our Community

This section provides a summary of pertinent information concerning children and child care for the Quesnel community, including high-level details about child vulnerabilities and demographic characteristics, current child care spaces, and highlights from the Parent and Provider Surveys.

### Child Population

The following points are highlights taken from the Needs Assessment, which is attached as a separate document.

- In 2016, 1,435 out of 3,240 children (44% of 0-12 years old) in the Quesnel Census Agglomeration lived in the City of Quesnel;
- In 2016, approximately 62.7% of all children in the Quesnel Census Agglomeration were school-aged (6-12 years old and half of all 5 years old);
- In 2016, the largest concentrations of children within the City of Quesnel were located in the Upland and West Riverside Neighbourhoods in West Quesnel;

- Between 2011 and 2016, the number of children (0-12 years old) in the Quesnel Census Agglomeration decreased by -140.0 children, with most of this decrease occurring among the infant and toddler (0-2 years old) population; and
- BC Stats projects that between 2019 and 2029, the number of children (0-12 years old) in the area served by the Quesnel School District will decrease by -251.0 children (a - 8.2% decrease), with reductions in all child age groups.<sup>3</sup>

### Child Vulnerabilities and Demographic Groups

The consultants collected the following highlights from HELP EDI data and Statistics Canada Census data.<sup>4</sup>

- The percentage of vulnerable kindergarten children in the Quesnel School District is increasing, with the Quesnel West EDI neighbourhood experiencing the highest percentage (46%) of vulnerable children and the physical and emotional domains being the most common types of vulnerability.
- The number of elementary school students with special needs in the Quesnel School District is increasing, with Autism Spectrum Disorder being the most common designation.
- Over one in five children (0-17 years old) in the Quesnel Census Agglomeration are living in poverty, with the City of Quesnel having the highest number and the Cariboo I Electoral Area having the highest rate.
- Over one in five children aged 0 to 5 years are living in poverty in the Quesnel Census Agglomeration, with the City of Quesnel having the highest number, and the Cariboo I Electoral Area having the highest rate.
- Approximately one in four children aged 0 to 14 years in the Quesnel Census Agglomeration are in lone-parent families.

### Child Care Inventory

SPARC BC collected the highlights below from the BC Government and the Northern Health Authority. Unless indicated otherwise, all statistics in this section were current as of September 2019.

- There were 464 child care spaces in the Quesnel School District served area (i.e., Quesnel Census Agglomeration) in 36 programs, with the largest number of spaces being group (30 months to school age) (123 group 30 months to school age spaces);
- There were 334 child care spaces in the City of Quesnel, 87 child care spaces in Cariboo A Electoral Area, 23 child care spaces in Cariboo B Electoral Area and 20 child care spaces in the Wells;

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Population projections: Custom population projections for the Quesnel School District geography received by email from BC Stats.

<sup>4</sup> Note that the Quesnel Census Agglomeration and the Quesnel School District have the same geographic areas, but the Quesnel Census Agglomeration data comes from Statistics Canada and the Quesnel School District information comes from the HELP EDI data.

- There were no child care programs or spaces in the Cariboo C Electoral Area, Cariboo I Electoral Area or any of the First Nations Reserves located in the Cariboo I Electoral Area;
- 74% of child care spaces in the Quesnel School District served area were in private facilities;
- Very few child care facilities in the Quesnel School District served area provide special schedule accommodations;
- Only 1 in 12 Quesnel School District public elementary schools had school-age group child care spaces located on-site;
- The Quesnel School District area had 15.1 child care spaces per 100 children (0-12 years old) which was lower than both British Columbia (18.4 child care spaces per 100 children) and Canada (27.2 child care spaces per 100 children);
- The age-specific child care spaces per 100 children ratios were very low for infants and toddlers (5.7group (birth to 36 months) spaces for 100 infants and toddlers) and school-age children (4.9 group (school age) spaces for 100 school-age children);

Through the engagement work completed with the Early Years Table, it was identified that there are plans to add an additional 40 child care spaces at the Neighbourhood Learning Centre and there are plans for the Quesnel Daycare Society to expand infant/toddler child care. These centres are not yet confirmed, however, a possibility moving forward.

**Figure 1: Number of licensed child care spaces, Quesnel Census Agglomeration and its subareas, September 2019**

Type	City of Quesnel	Cariboo A Electoral Area	Cariboo B Electoral Area	Wells	Quesnel Census Agglomeration
Group (birth to 36mo)	16	20	0	0	36
Group (30mo to school-age)	93	22	8	0	123
Licensed preschool	59	20	0	0	79
Group (school-age)	44	18	15	12	89
Multi-age child care	32	0	0	8	40
Family child care	90	7	0	0	97
In-home multi-age care	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>464</b>

## Parent Survey

A total of 217 current or potential parents and guardians that live in or access child care services in the City of Quesnel responded to the Parent Survey. Survey respondents were asked questions about their child care service needs including their preferences on child care schedule and locations, their views on the adequacy of the supply of child care, reasons for seeking child care for their child, as well as their experiences accessing child care services. Selected highlights from the Parent Survey are below:

- More than half respondents noted the fees they currently pay for child care are unsustainable for their family;
- Approximately eight in ten respondents indicated there is an inadequate supply of child care services in the City of Quesnel to meet their needs;
- Approximately half the respondents reported they require a full day of child care services during business hours, followed by four in ten requiring after school care, and two in ten requiring before school care;
- Only a few respondents indicated they required child care on weekends;
- Nine in ten respondents noted the primary reason for seeking child care was so they can work, and four in ten indicated they were seeking child care for their child's development;
- Almost one in four parents indicate their youngest child is on a waitlist to access child care. However, seventy-eight percent of respondents noted their youngest child was not on a waiting list of child care programs;

## Provider Survey

The Provider Survey had 35 responses for 31 facilities (some respondents coordinated more than one facility). Survey respondents answered questions about facility space, programming, staffing, child care populations, child care enrollment, child well-being, and early childhood development and capacity. Selected highlights from the Provider Survey are as follows:

- At almost half (16) of all facilities, the most common type of child care facility was residential buildings. Most of these were private family day care programs (seven or fewer children);
- Over one-third of respondents plan to expand their current facility within the next two years;
- The most common sustainability challenge was a limited supply of applicants with the right qualifications and experiences to fill positions, mentioned by eight in ten respondents;
- Child care staffing challenges included access to quality education, availability of qualified staff, limited opportunities to work full-time and flexible hours, and cost of living issues such as low wages in the child care industry;
- Only two programs were open on Saturdays and Sundays (one each of family child care and registered license-not-required);

- Approximately eight in ten child care facilities had children who come from low-income households and from lone-parent families, while over six in ten facilities answered that they had children with extra support needs;
- Most child care facilities had an adequate or very adequate ability to support the children they served, including in their physical health and wellbeing and their cognitive development, except in the cognitive development of children who live in low-income households;
- Most child care facilities had an adequate or somewhat adequate ability to contribute to the social development of the children they served, except for children who primarily speak a language other than English;
- About five in ten child care facilities were likely to have a very adequate ability to address the emotional development of each child population group that they served. This was especially true for Indigenous children and children living in lone- or one-parent families, and low-income households;
- Child care facilities are likely to have a very adequate ability to address the communication development of each child population group served. This was especially true for Indigenous children, children who live in lone-parent families or low-income households, and children with extra support needs; and
- When asked to provide recommendations to the City of Quesnel and North Cariboo, child care providers highlighted the staffing crisis; there are not enough qualified staff to fill the positions and operate at capacity, and there is a real concern for employee burnout.

## **Policies and Zoning Bylaws**

The consultants reviewed the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* (“Act”); the City of Quesnel Official Community Plan (“OCP”), and three bylaw documents: 3504 – Quesnel Fringe Area Zoning Bylaw (2019); 3505 – North Cariboo Rural Land Use Bylaw (2019), both under the auspice of the Cariboo Regional District; and the Quesnel Zoning Bylaw (2019), developed by the City of Quesnel. For a more in depth look at these bylaws, see the Municipal Processes document attached at Appendix A. The consultants also reviewed the website for supportive child care policies and other information resources. These resources will also be further discussed in Section 7.

## **Programs and Services for Underserved Populations**

In the City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region there are some programs that support the needs of underserved populations in the community. More specifically, there is an Aboriginal Support Child Development Program through the North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society and the Quesnel and District Child Development Centre has supported child development programs. These supports are incredibly important in the community to help meet the needs of underserved populations.

## 6.0 Child Care Space Targets

There are several ways to set child care space targets, but the consultants will offer the City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region two methods for consideration:<sup>5</sup> However, when reviewing potential child care space targets in this section, it should be noted that the study area is starting from the challenging position of having a very low child care space per 100 children ratio (15.4) in comparison with the rest of the province (18.4).

### Option 1: Status Quo

Status Quo determines the number of children in the future and then calculates the number of child care spaces needed to maintain current child care space ratios.

Over the next five years, from 2019-2024, the total number of children (0-12yrs) in Quesnel and the North Cariboo Region is projected to decrease<sup>6</sup> and to maintain the overall child care space ratio at the 2019 level of 15.1 spaces per 100 children, Quesnel would need to *lose* 12.1 spaces. However, as we saw in the Our Community section of this report, the 2019 overall space ratio does not adequately address the needs of any age group, with particular stress on the birth to 36 months age group (5.7:100) and the school-age age group (4.9:100). Further, the 2019 space ratio of 15.1 spaces per 100 children is below the provincial average (18.4:100 in 2016) and the Canadian average (27.2:100 in 2016).

The population trends remain similar over the next ten years from 2019-2029, where BC Stats project the number of children in all age groups to continue decreasing. Overall, the total number of child care spaces needed to maintain the 2019 child care space ratio of 15.1 spaces per 100 children is projected to *decrease* by 37.9 child care spaces over this time frame. The same issues mentioned in the five-year targets above remain for this population projection.<sup>7</sup>

It is also important to acknowledge that although there is a projected decrease in the total number of children, the Quesnel School District believes there will be an increase, potentially making the need for child care greater than projected. Also, the City of Quesnel is targeting young families to move into the region, which may impact the actual number of children in the area.

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<sup>5</sup> A third approach would be to set targets that reflect the Canadian average for child care spaces per child. This method determines the number of children in the future, examines the average Canadian child care space ratios, then calculates the number of child care spaces needed to meet the national average. To meet the Canadian average child care space ratio of 27.2 child care spaces per 100 children in 2016, the City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region would need to add over 300 spaces. This number of child care spaces in 5-10 years is not achievable and therefore not recommended.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Population projections: Custom population projections for the Quesnel School District geography received by email from BC Stats, which we show in section three of the Quesnel Child Care Needs Assessment. While child care ratios are from section four of the Quesnel Child Care Needs Assessment.

<sup>7</sup> The consultants note the City of Quesnel wants to attract young families to the area. If the City is able to attract this demographic over the next five to ten years, the child care spaces it needs to maintain 2019 space ratios (or increase them, as discussed in Option 2: BC Average) will likely increase.

## Option 2: BC Average

BC Average determines the number of children in the future, examines the average British Columbia child care space ratios, then calculates the number of child care spaces needed to meet the BC average.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the British Columbian average ratio of child care spaces per 100 children is 18.4. Although BC Stats project the child population in the City of Quesnel and North Cariboo area to decrease over the next five to ten years, the City and region will need to increase its child care spaces even to reach the BC average. To meet the BC average child care ratio by 2024, 86 additional child care spaces will be needed in the Quesnel School District served area over the next five years. 55 other spaces will be required to meet the BC average child care ratio by 2029.<sup>8</sup>

With 86 new child care spaces required over the next five years to meet the BC average ratio of 18.4 child care spaces to 100 children, The City of Quesnel and North Cariboo Region will need to add spaces to all child care age categories. However, knowing what we know of the 2019 age-specific space ratios in Quesnel, it is likely that the birth to 36 months age group and the school-age groups will require the most attention. The City should prioritize these two age groups.

It will be possible to meet the British Columbia average over five-ten years, as in the 2019 Budget, the Provincial Government promised \$237 million over three years to support the creation of 22,000 new licensed child care spaces<sup>9</sup>, so there could be opportunities to increase the number of child care spaces in Quesnel in the coming years.

Besides, over one-third of the Provider Survey respondents noted they had plans to expand their current facility within the next two years. Provincial Government has earmarked capital funding to assist with facility maintenance costs and to move unlicensed spaces into the licensed sector, which may help with expenses for the expansion of facilities.

## 7.0 Strategic Direction and Recommended Actions

This section will discuss three key strategic directions of increasing accessibility, improving affordability, and focusing on quality. Each strategic direction will include an analysis of the data, a discussion of relevant promising practices in other BC municipalities,<sup>10</sup> and recommended actions presented in a table.

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<sup>8</sup> The reason for needing fewer additional child care spaces by 2029 compared with 2024 is that the child population in Quesnel is projected to continue decreasing between 2024 and 2029.

<sup>9</sup> BC Provincial Government. Making Life Better. Budget 2019. Budget Highlights. P.3  
[https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2019/pdf/2019\\_Highlights.pdf](https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2019/pdf/2019_Highlights.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Most promising practices discussed in the Literature Review were implemented in municipalities in the Metro Vancouver Region and as such, are larger than Quesnel. If pursuing any of these promising practices, Quesnel may need to scale or otherwise revise them to ensure they are appropriate to the North Cariboo region.

## Strategic Direction 1: Increase Accessibility

### *Age groups*

Based on current child care ratios and the Parent Survey responses, the birth to 36 months and school-aged children are most in need of more child care spaces. There are 457 child care spaces in the Quesnel School District served area in 36 different programs. Notably, of the 27 child care programs in the City of Quesnel, only two of them were group programs for school-aged children, and there is also only two group programs (sixteen spaces) for the infant and toddler age group (birth to 36 months).

In 2016, 62.7% of all children (2,032.5) in the Quesnel Census Agglomeration<sup>11</sup> were school-aged children between the ages of six and twelve, plus half of all five-year-olds. In 2016, there were 630 infants and toddlers (birth to 36 months) in the same area, comprising 19.4% of all children. As we saw in the previous Child Care Space Target section, the ratios of child care spaces per 100 children in these two age groups are particularly low. These data are supported by the Parent Survey, which indicated the youngest child of one in four families is on a waitlist to access child care.

### *Neighbourhoods*

Although the City of Quesnel has the highest number of children along with the most child care spaces (334), the outlying areas also have high numbers of children, and in most cases, they rely on the City of Quesnel for their child care needs.

There are five programs and 87 child care spaces servicing 895 children in the Cariboo A Electoral Area and Quesnel 1 First Nations Reserve, and two programs with 23 child care spaces servicing 500 children in the Cariboo B Electoral Area. These overall child care space ratios are very low, at 9.7 and 4.6, respectively. However, Cariboo B Electoral Area does not have group care spaces for the birth to 36 month age group, which means 95 children in Cariboo B areas are not able to access options in their home communities.

Additionally, there are no child care programs or spaces in the Cariboo C Electoral Area, Cariboo I Electoral Area or any of the First Nations Reserves located with the Cariboo I Electoral Area. This means the child population from these areas do not have any child care options in their communities.

As mentioned previously, the City of Quesnel is particularly underserved in the birth to 36 month age group (sixteen spaces in group care), as well as the school-age group (forty-four spaces in group care). The Parent Survey results support this data, as eight in ten respondents indicated there was not an adequate supply of child care services in the City of Quesnel to meet their needs.

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<sup>11</sup> A reminder that the Quesnel Census Agglomeration has the same boundaries as the Quesnel School District served area.

It should be noted that only 1 in 12 Quesnel School District public elementary schools (Bouchie Lake Elementary School in Area B) has school-age group child care spaces located on-site, with 15 spaces. None of the elementary schools in the City of Quesnel (Carson, Dragon Lake, Riverview, and Voyageur), nor the three in Area A (Kersley, Lakeview, Red Bluff), nor the other three elementary schools in the region, Barlow Creek (area C), Nazko (area I), Wells-Barkerville (District of Wells), have group school-age child care spaces. The new school planned at the Maple Drive site, does include plans for child care spaces, though number and type are to be determined at the time of writing this report. As we have seen, these areas are in particular need of child care to serve this age group. These areas are geographically large and it can take over an hour to drive to the City of Quesnel. For example, the community of Nazko, located at the approximate geographic centre of the Cariboo I area, is over 100km from the City of Quesnel. Further, most respondents (61%) from the Parent Survey indicated they wanted their child care services to be located near outdoor parks (all elementary schools have parks), and we know from the literature that outdoor space is valuable for the development of children. Furthermore, as the City of Quesnel is targeting young families to move into the region, it is even more critical that the supports for families, such as child care, are available.

### *Hours*

Very few child care facilities in the area served by the Quesnel School District provide special schedule accommodations. Only two facilities are open on statutory holidays, one facility had overnight care, and two facilities had extended hours. According to the Provider Survey, only two programs were open on Saturdays and two on Sundays. Yet, according to the Parent Survey, 20% of parents indicated they required child care on Saturdays and 13% require child care on Sundays. Weekday child care programs most commonly have opening times between 7 am and 8 am and closing times between 5 pm and 6 pm. However, almost one in five parents indicated they required child care in the evening between the hours of 6-11pm, and half of the parents noted they need early morning care between 6-9am.

Most programs offer school professional day programming (79% of programs), spring break programming (79%), and summer break programming (83%). Most also offer Winter break programming. On the Parent Survey, respondents indicated they needed and used these special schedule accommodations.

### *Policies and Zoning Bylaws*

The Cariboo Regional District zoning bylaws and the City of Quesnel zoning bylaws are consistent with respect to child care provisions. Both Cariboo Regional District bylaw documents state home occupations can accommodate “10 or fewer children”, and section 4.17.8 of the Quesnel Zoning Bylaw provides that home-based businesses shall not include child care uses where “more than 10 children” are cared for. However, section 4.17.7 of the Quesnel Zoning Bylaw also provides that permitted home based businesses include family day care services for a “maximum for seven (7) children.”

Notably the OCP, revised in December 2019, does not mention child care, other than to state they can be considered in medium and high-density residential buildings. There is a statement (Section 6.5) about the health and social well-being of populations, including vulnerable children, but nothing specific to child care. In addition, the City of Quesnel website does not have a child care resource directory or any supportive child care policies. (Note: the City of Quesnel does not have *any* directories on their website at this time, due to capacity).

### *Promising Practices*

The City of Quesnel and Cariboo Regional District is a rural community and across British Columbia, there has been little research done on promising child care practices in rural settings. As a result, the examples provided below need to be considered from a rural perspective. The City of Quesnel has an opportunity to be a child care leader in Northern BC and can undoubtedly learn from promising practices in urban communities.

Of the 21 municipalities in the Metro Vancouver area, almost half have stand-alone child care strategies. By contracting this Needs Assessment and Child Care Strategy Report, the City of Quesnel has taken the first step in understanding the strengths and gaps in child care in its region and working towards a child care action plan

Building partnerships is the way, “municipalities can make the most of their resources to address child care issues”<sup>12</sup> and the City of Richmond has decided to focus on partnerships with school districts, local organizations, and the provincial government. Specifically, there is precedent for municipalities creating strong collaborations with School Districts. For example, the City of Burnaby developed a Child Care Facilities Memorandum and Agreement (MOA) in 2014 with School District 41 to, “build up to twelve child care facilities in modular buildings on School District lands.”<sup>13</sup> This agreement was one of the first of its kind across the province. Also, priority for the Provincial Government’s capital funding is being placed on public partnerships, so there may be funds earmarked for these endeavours.

Both the City of Vancouver and the City of New Westminster have provided funding through grants which enable not-for-profit centres to expand, renovate, or repair child care facilities. The City of Richmond has proposed to follow suit. Also, three-quarters of Metro Vancouver municipalities provide public building space, whether it is rent-free, subsidized, or market lease. This funding, in turn, provides families with more access to quality, accessible, and affordable child care.

More than half of Metro Vancouver municipalities identify child care facilities as a community amenity in the development approvals process and almost half of them offer property tax exemptions for child care facilities.

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<sup>12</sup> City of Richmond. (2016). 2017-2022: Richmond child care needs assessment and strategy. Pg. 23.

<sup>13</sup> (City of Richmond, p.23 2016)

*Strategic Direction 1: Increase Accessibility - Recommendations<sup>14</sup>*

When taking into consideration the recommended actions, it is important to note that municipalities, including Quesnel, have limited resources to advance social services such as child care. Municipalities can play a role in many ways such as convening groups, engaging in municipal social planning, liaising with partners, building strategic relationships and advancing the efforts of others. The table below, and tables in subsequent sections, include partners that could be involved in the work, and the municipality does not hold sole responsibility for implementing the recommended action items. The specific roles for partners have not been defined, however, a separate column has been established to clearly distinguish the proposed municipal role.

Recommended Action	Time Frame <sup>15</sup>	Role of Municipality	Partners
Policy and Planning			
1.1. Set the child care space target at an additional 86 spaces over the next five years (2019-2024), in order to meet the BC Average. Once the population projections are updated to reflect the current population reality, review how many spaces will be needed in the next 10 years.	Short; ongoing	Consider how the City of Quesnel can take advantage of the existing funding opportunities with the Province to create new child care space.	Quesnel School District, Child care providers; College of New Caledonia
1.2. Focus on the infant/toddler when increasing child care spaces, as they are the most underserved age groups throughout the North Cariboo Region	Short; ongoing	Establish incentive opportunities for family child care centres to operate infant/toddler care.	Child care providers

<sup>14</sup> All recommendations will have knock-on effects in other areas (e.g. accessibility recommendations will affect affordability as well). The recommendations were included in the area where they would have the greatest direct impact.

<sup>15</sup> Short = <2 years; Medium = 2-5 years; Long = 5-10 years

1.3. Make Sections 4.17.7 and 4.17.8 of the Quesnel Zoning Bylaw consistent. Currently, it's unclear whether a home-based business is allowed eight, nine, or ten children	Medium	Update the Quesnel Zoning Bylaw.	
1.4. Increase evening (6-11 pm) and weekend programming in the City of Quesnel, particularly on Saturdays	Short; ongoing	Partner with businesses and organizations such as hospitals to explore childcare solutions for shift workers, ideally to increase evening and weekend programming.	Child care providers, Community partners; College of New Caledonia
<b>Collaboration and Partnerships</b>			
1.5. Convene the Early Years Table and additional partners to meet quarterly to monitor the implementation of these recommendations and brainstorm further actions.	Short	Attend Early Years Table convened by the Child Development Centre	First Nations, Quesnel School District, post-secondary institutions, Cariboo Regional District, Northern Health, BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, community partners
1.6. Solicit buy-in for this Action Plan from North Cariboo regional partners so the strategy can be genuinely region-wide. Focus on streamlined processes within the region to reduce duplication of effort and improve effectiveness.	Short	Share the Action Plan with North Cariboo Regional Partners and Early Years Table and establish streamlined decision making processes	Cariboo Regional District, First Nations
1.7. Form a dedicated partnership between the Quesnel School District and	Short	Liaise with the Quesnel School District	Quesnel School District

the City of Quesnel to explore the option of co-locating child care programs in five elementary schools in the City as school age groups are one of the most underserved.			
1.8. Facilitate collaboration between the outlying North Cariboo regions with the Quesnel School District to discuss co-locating child care programs in elementary schools, particularly those in the most underserved and vulnerable areas: two schools in the Cariboo C area, and one in the Cariboo I area	Short, medium	Partner with the outlying North Cariboo regions within the Quesnel School district and facilitate collaborative processes.	Quesnel School District, Cariboo Regional District
Information Sharing			
1.9. Review the option to include an information sheet specific to owning and operating a child care in Quesnel on the business page of the City website	Short, medium	Create a child care specific information sheet	Child Care Resource and Referral
Advocacy			
1.10. Liaise with the Provincial and Federal Governments on capital and operating funding opportunities for enhancing child care services in the City (e.g. for renovations/expansion of existing facilities, development of new facilities, augmenting programs)	Short, ongoing	Partner with the Federal and Provincial Government	Federal Government, Provincial Government, Child care providers

## Strategic Direction 2: Improve Affordability

Child care is expensive across BC, and Quesnel is no different. More than half of the Parent Survey respondents noted the fees they currently pay for child care are unsustainable for their family, and for nine out of ten respondents, the primary reason for seeking out childcare was so they can work. Since almost one in four of all children (0-14yrs) are from lone-parent families, and nearly one in five of all children (0-17yrs) come from low-income households, it is not difficult to see how child care fees could become too challenging to manage.

The BC government offers two major Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) programs to licensed child care providers. CCOF Base Funding assists eligible licensed providers with the day-to-day costs of running a facility. In addition, under the BC Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative, if a child care provider - offering one or more of the following types of child care – applies, the BC government will subsidize the provider so the savings can be passed on to the parents.

Type of Child Care Program	Fee Reduction
Group infant/toddler care (birth to 36 months)	Up to \$350/month
Family infant/toddler care (birth to 36 months)	Up to \$200/month
Group care for children three years to kindergarten	Up to \$100/month
Family care for children three years to kindergarten	Up to \$60/month

In addition, affordability relief for parents is available under the BC Affordable Child Care Benefit and the Young Parent Program. See Section 4 for more information.

### *Promising Practices*

Along with the Provincial Government’s influx of capital funds to create 22,000 new child care spaces, municipalities across British Columbia are tackling this issue by providing subsidies and grants. In addition to the promising practices noted in the previous section, other methods include: offering grants for child care capital projects (as offered by six municipalities in Metro Vancouver), and offering grants for care operating costs (as offered by four municipalities in Metro Vancouver). Meaningful grant funding may be beyond the capacity of a community the size of Quesnel.

*Strategic Direction 2: Improve Affordability -Recommendations*

All recommendations throughout this report will indirectly, but positively, affect the affordability of child care. The recommendations presented below are those that will have a direct impact on affordability.

<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Time Frame<sup>16</sup></b>	<b>Role of Municipality</b>	<b>Partners</b>
<b>Policy and Planning</b>			
2.1. Work with the Northern Development Initiative Trust and other potential funders to provide subsidy to non-profit child care providers across Northern BC.	Medium	Lead the advocacy campaign in partnership with the Early Years Table	Northern Development Initiative Trust, Early Years Table
<b>Advocacy</b>			
2.2. Early Years Table to continue to work with the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC to advocate for a universal child care system	Short; Long (ongoing)	Support the advocacy work	Early Years table, Child care providers, Child Care Resource and Referral
<b>Direct Support</b>			
2.3. Facilitate the process for child care providers to apply for the BC Child Care Reduction Initiative and other programs that would assist child care providers in charging lower fees	Short, ongoing	Community Development Coordinator to lead this process.	Provincial Government
2.4 Apply for the UBCM Child Care Space Creation grant to create more child care spaces	Short, ongoing	Apply directly for grant	

<sup>16</sup> Short = <2 years; Medium = 2-5 years; Long = 5-10 years

### Strategic Direction 3: Focus on Quality

The research tells us that elements of a quality child care program include building quality indoor and outdoor spaces, developing relationships with families, creating a positive work environment, and implementing a structured curriculum. The figure below provides an excellent overview of what a quality child care system entails.



(Source: Martha Friendly and Jane Beach, (2005). Elements of a high quality early learning and child care system. Childcare Resource and Research Unit.)

### Private vs. Public

Of the 464 child care spaces in the Quesnel School District served area in 36 different programs, three quarters are in private facilities, and (97) are family child care spaces. Family child care is private, for-profit child care where the caregiver does not require an ECE certificate. The research demonstrates that publicly funded programs have the highest quality care, and that private, for-profit programs have the lowest quality child care.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that the City of Quesnel does not provide permissive tax exemptions to not-for-profit child care providers because it may create advantage over for-profit providers<sup>18</sup> is relevant to this discussion because the policy likely results in fewer, better-quality child care programs and spaces in the community.

<sup>17</sup> See the Appendix B for more information.

<sup>18</sup> Personal communication between City Staff and consultants, November 2019.

### *Ability to Support Vulnerable Populations*

The Parent and Provider Surveys told us that child care programs in the Quesnel region are generally able to provide for the needs of the children and families they serve. Even though eight in ten child care facilities had children from low-income households and from lone-parent families, and six in ten facilities answered that they had children with additional support needs, most child care facilities felt they could support the children they cared for. For most EDI domains (emotional, communication, physical, etc.), child care providers said they were able to provide adequate support for Indigenous children, children living in lone-parent families, children from low-income households, and children with extra needs. The most significant exception to this was that providers indicated they did not have a good ability to support the cognitive development of children from low-income households, which equates to inadequate support for one in five children.

### *Staffing*

A positive work environment means that staff are paid a fair wage, are able to take sick time, receive health benefits, have the potential for flexible or part-time work, and allow the opportunity to increase their educational qualifications. When staff are more educated, feel appreciated, and are well supported, the quality of care increases.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common staffing challenge from Provider Survey responses was a limited supply of applicants with the right qualifications and experiences to fill positions (eight in ten respondents). Other issues included a lack of access to quality education, limited opportunities to work full-time and flexible hours, and cost of living issues such as low wages in the child care industry. There is a real concern for employee burnout. All these aspects affect the quality of care. That said, the respondents noted a strong desire to improve their quality by decreasing waitlists, providing sick time for staff, and by providing quality programming.

The Provincial Government's new Recruitment and Retention Strategy will assist with some of these concerns by offering wage lifts to front line workers, in addition to other education supports. See Section 4 for more information.

### *Promising Practices*

Relationship-building is at the heart of quality child care. Still, collaborations and partnerships must be robust and consistent to enable the eight elements of quality in child care we mentioned above. When we look to other municipalities, we see a few shining examples of effective collaboration: The City of Vancouver established the Joint Child Care Council (JCC) in 2004 which brought together the City, the Vancouver Parks Board, the Vancouver Board of Education, Vancouver Coastal Health and the Vancouver Public Library, along with community agencies and business representatives to create quality child care. As a result, the JCC has collaborated on the creation of over 1000 new child care spaces including the creation of a number of child care spaces at schools.

*Strategic Direction 3: Focus on Quality - Recommendations*

<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Time Frame<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>Role of Municipality</b>	<b>Partners</b>
<b>Policy and Planning</b>			
3.1. Encourage City of Quesnel and CRD departments to apply a child care lens to various plans and policies, noting that the development of a community's children affects the community as a whole	Short; Long (ongoing)	Include a child care lens in decision making processes.	Cariboo Regional District
3.2. Consider allowing permissive property tax exemptions for not-for-profit child care centres	Medium	Implement the property tax exemption and monitor the impact on not-for-profit centres	Community partners, child care operators
3.3. Develop an inventory of publicly owned buildings, land, and parks that can be used to house or build child care programs, and determine whether the rent/lease can be subsidized	Short	Create the inventory and review feasibility of creating new centres	Community partners, Child care operators; District; Hospital; College of New Caledonia, School District 28, etc
3.4. Consider including specific provisions for child care in an update of the City of Quesnel's Official Community Plan (OCP)	Medium	Review the OCP and include specific provision for child care	N/A
<b>Direct Support</b>			
3.5. Help identify training and professional development opportunities for child care providers to enhance their ability to support children with extra support requirements and special needs.	Medium	Work with the College of New Caledonia and Child Care Resource and Referral to establish training and professional	Child Care Resource and Referral, Community Care Licensing, College of New Caledonia;

<sup>19</sup> Short = <2 years; Medium = 2-5 years; Long = 5-10 years

		development opportunities	Child Development Centre; North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society (aka Longname)
Collaboration and Partnerships			
3.6. Liaise with MCFD to identify and advocate for more funding opportunities to train staff	Short, ongoing	Liaise with MCFD	Child Care Resource and Referral, Community Care Licensing, College of New Caledonia; Child Development Centre; Aboriginal Child Care Society
3.7. Focus on developing the partnerships that allow for an increase in publicly funded child care spaces	Short, ongoing	City of Quesnel to lead the relationship building process	North Cariboo Electoral Areas, Cariboo Regional District, First Nations
3.8. Explore opportunities for making ECE employment and training more accessible, affordable, and enticing for child care workers in the City of Quesnel and the North Cariboo region (e.g., professional development delivered in Quesnel, enhanced online or video conferencing options, health benefits, wage benefits, pension etc.);	Long	Work with the College of New Caledonia and Early Years table to establish goals related to improving ECE employment	Province of BC, Local post-secondary institutions, child care providers, Early Years Table
3.9. Collaborate with the Northern Health Community Care Licensing to continuously improve the availability of information and training materials for child care providers	Medium	Collaborate with the Northern Health Community Care Licensing	Community Care Licensing

and parents, as well as for City staff and local community groups involved in child care			
3.10. Partner with the Quesnel School District to establish ECE programs in high schools	Long		College of New Caledonia, Quesnel School District, child care operators
Information Sharing			
3.11. Invite other municipalities of similar characteristics from the Northern Health service area (e.g., Fort St. John, Terrace, Prince Rupert, etc.) to participate in information sharing, knowledge translation and development of best practices at the Early Years Table meetings, and vice versa; and	Medium	Invite other municipalities to share their learnings and work thus far in order to learn from one another	Other municipalities
Advocacy			
3.12. Advocate for a National Child Care Strategy from the Federal Government and provide public education around the importance of quality ECE	Short; Ongoing	Council advocacy through UBCM	Early Years Table, Community Partners, Strongstart, CRD
3.13. Request the province to establish a wage grid for ECE employees to be paid a living wage	Short; Ongoing	Council advocacy through UBCM	Early Years Table, Community Partners, child care operators, CRD

## 8.0 Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

The City of Quesnel and its partners need to take a coordinated approach to effectively advance the recommendations presented in this Action Plan. The North Cariboo Region is geographically large and is governed by multiple bodies (e.g. Cariboo Regional District, First Nations, City of Quesnel), yet, it relies heavily on one area – the City of Quesnel – for its child care needs. Considering these challenges, it is difficult to imagine the local government, community partners, and businesses of the City of Quesnel being able to meet the child care needs of the entire region independently. That is partly why collaboration between the City and other partners is essential. In order to be truly effective, the whole region will need to step up and contribute.

To that end, and as indicated in Section 7.0, it is recommended that the North Cariboo Early Years Table expand its mandate to:

- Share and obtain buy-in for this Action Plan;
- Invite additional community partners to the table;
- Exchange information;
- Collaborate on joint initiatives;
- Collect and evaluate data on the child population, child care inventory, and parents' and providers' needs;
- Pursue continuous improvement by implementing initiatives in response to the data; and
- Prepare annual reports on child care services in the region.

Proposed members include:

- Child Development Centre (convener)
- North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society
- Quesnel Tillicum Friendship Centre
- Quesnel Child Care Resource and Referral
- City of Quesnel;
- Local First Nations governments;
- Quesnel School District;
- Local post-secondary institutions (College of New Caledonia, UNBC);
- Cariboo Regional District;
- Northern Health;
- First Nations Health Authority;
- BC Ministry of Children and Family Development; and
- Other relevant community partners.

Updating the Terms of Reference for the Early Years Table is essential, given the geographic and governance characteristics of the area. Buy-in from relevant partners is also important; because

as mentioned above, the City of Quesnel cannot undertake these improvements alone. Further, early convening will enable a coordinated and collaborative approach to applying for funding from the Provincial Government, which may be the impetus to achieving some of the recommendations contained in this Action Plan.

In closing, advancing the recommendations included in this document will be difficult. Quesnel is beginning this journey from a challenging position relative to the rest of the province given the difficulties associated with living in a northern, rural community. However, this also means that Quesnel has the benefit of being able to learn from other municipalities and partners. With concerted and coordinated efforts, the City of Quesnel and Cariboo Regional District can achieve its child care goals, for the wide-ranging benefit of the whole community.

## 9.0 Appendix A: Quesnel and North Cariboo Region Municipal Processes

Population (2016)	City of Quesnel: 12,064 (GOC Census) Quesnel Census Agglomeration: 23,146 (GOC Census)
Zoning Bylaw Definition – City of Quesnel <sup>20</sup>	<b>COMMUNITY CARE FACILITY</b> means a facility for the care of more than 3 persons who are not related by blood or marriage under the <i>Community Care and Assisted Living Act</i> . <b>DAY CARE, FAMILY</b> means a <b>building, part of a building or premises</b> licensed for a family child care program use pursuant to the <i>Community Care and Assisted Living Act</i> which provides for a maximum of seven (7) children. <b>DAY CARE, GROUP</b> means a <b>building, part of a building or premises</b> licensed for a group child care program, preschool, child minding, out of school care, or special needs day care use pursuant to the <i>Community Care and Assisted Living Act</i> .
Zoning Bylaw Definition – Quesnel Fringe Area (same as below)	<b>COMMUNITY CARE FACILITY</b> means a licensed establishment of daycare providing for the care, supervision and protection of ten or more children. Establishments for ten or fewer children may be permitted to operate as a home occupation. Otherwise, a community care facility shall be interpreted in accordance with the provisions of the <i>Community Care and Assisted Living Act</i> .  <b>CHURCH</b> means a building or structure or part thereof dedicated to religious worship or organized religious services and associated accessory uses which may include a church hall or auditorium, Sunday school, nursery school, day care centre, parish hall or other related non-profit organization uses, an accessory dwelling unit and a cemetery.
Zoning Bylaw Definition – North Cariboo Area Rural Land Use (same as above)	<b>COMMUNITY CARE FACILITY</b> means a licensed establishment of daycare providing for the care, supervision and protection of ten or more children. Establishments for ten or fewer children may be permitted to operate as a home occupation. Otherwise, a community care facility shall be interpreted in accordance with the provisions of the <i>Community Care and Assisted Living Act</i> .  <b>CHURCH</b> means a building or structure or part thereof dedicated to religious worship or organized religious services and associated accessory uses which may include a church hall or auditorium, Sunday school, nursery school, day care centre, parish hall or other related non-profit organization uses, an accessory dwelling unit and a cemetery.
Zones Permitting Child Care – Quesnel Zoning Bylaw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family day care centres permitted as home based business in all areas permitting one and two family dwellings (A-1, RR-1, CR-1, CR-2, RS-1, RS-2, RS-3,).</li> <li>• Group day care centres permitted as accessory use in RM-1, RM-2, RM-3, and RM-4 multi-family residential areas.</li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> The City of Quesnel recently updated its Official Community Plan (OCP) and Zoning Bylaws. The information summarized above has been cited from the new OCP and Zoning Bylaws, as posted on the City’s website in January 2020.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group day care centres permitted as principal use in C-1, C-2, C-2A, C-3, and C-3R commercial areas and P-1 (Civic Assembly and Institutional) areas.</li> </ul>
Zoning Bylaw Conditions – City of Quesnel	<p>4.17.7 Permitted <b>home based businesses</b> include but are not limited to the following:  (f) <b>family day care</b> services with not more than seven (7) children, licensed pursuant to the <i>Community Care and Assisted Living Act</i>;</p> <p>4.17.8 A <b>home based business</b> use shall not include:  (a) Child care uses where more than 10 children are cared for;</p>
Other Requirements	N/A
City of Quesnel OCP Parameters	<p>Section 5.1.6, point 9: Support institutional uses in Medium Density Residential like a home based day care business.</p> <p>Section 5.1.7, point 6: Support institutional uses in High Density Residential like a daycare facilities.</p> <p>Section 6.5: Health and Social Well-Being. Several positive general statements re: the City’s concern for health and social well-being, including targeted towards vulnerable children, but nothing specific re: child care.</p>
Supportive Policies	Nothing on City website.
Planning and Networking Structures	<p>Quesnel Healthier Communities Committee (external): created a youth app and reference guide in the past, but this was aimed at an older demographic than 0-12yrs.</p> <p>Policy and Bylaw Committee (internal): New or amended policy and bylaws would be addressed here first</p> <p>The Early Years table group at the Child Development Centre</p> <p>Supported Child Development Program at Child Development Centre  <a href="https://quesnelcdc.com/programs/childdevelopment/">https://quesnelcdc.com/programs/childdevelopment/</a></p> <p>&amp; others not “officially” related to the City of Quesnel corporate body</p>
Information Resources	<p>No directory provided by the City.</p> <p>Child Care Resource and Referral Program  <a href="http://www.childcarechoices.ca/main/North/Quesnel/">http://www.childcarechoices.ca/main/North/Quesnel/</a></p> <p>Quesnel and District Child Development Centre  <a href="https://quesnelcdc.com">https://quesnelcdc.com</a></p>

## 10.0 Appendix B: Key Findings from Research & Promising Practices

### Introduction

Municipalities across British Columbia are developing childcare strategies and action plans to address each communities' childcare needs. In order to better understand current promising practices and key research findings related to quality childcare systems and the role of municipal governments in childcare this document and literature review was undertaken. The purpose of this review is to answer the following guiding questions:

1. What are the elements/indicators of a high-quality early learning and childcare system?
2. What does the research tell us about Quality Childcare at the Individual Program Level?
3. What does the research tell us about auspice –who is operating the childcare programs?
4. What is the broader context for childcare in Canada?
5. What does the research tell us about the role of local governments in the delivery of a high quality childcare system?
6. What are some examples of promising practices for local planning and service delivery?

By reviewing each question, municipalities will be equipped with information to inform their childcare strategies and action plans.

### What are the indicators/elements of a quality early learning and childcare system?

#### Overall

There is an innate benefit of having a system in place in order to meet the needs of the community, families, and individuals. A system can be defined as an established framework that creates interrelationships between and among different groups with the purpose of meeting an identified need, in this case, quality, affordable and accessible childcare.<sup>21</sup>

It is well accepted that there are eight elements of a quality early learning and childcare **system**: (1) Ideas, (2) Governance, (3) Infrastructure, (4) Planning and policy development, (5) Financing, (6) Human resources, (7) Physical environment, (8) Data, Research and Evaluation.<sup>22</sup> Each element is interconnected and fit together to create a strong system, but individually do not have as much impact. These eight characteristics are the basis of a quality childcare **system, and**, strong public policy is needed to provide the foundation to build the system. Furthermore, in Canada, childcare is viewed as a provincial jurisdiction. Canada presently does not have comprehensive public policy on quality childcare and therefore childcare is in Canada

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<sup>21</sup>Arnold, R.D., & Wade, P.J. (2015). A definition of systems thinking: A systems approach. *Procedia Computer Science*, 44, 669-678.

<sup>22</sup> Friendly, M., & Beach, J. (2005). High quality early learning and childcare system. *Child Resource and Research Unit*, 1-8.

is described by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as, “Fragmented, often of dubious quality and characterized by unequal access.”<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, within the literature and amongst early childhood professionals, consensus has been reached on the important aspects of an early learning and childcare system. Notably, the Province of British Columbia has committed to an ambitious “systemic” approach to universal childcare with a focus on quality, affordability, and accessibility. [Childcare BC: A New Day for Families & Providers in B.C](#) is a provincial plan specifically focused on establishing a quality childcare system and adheres to the eight elements outlined by Friendly and Beach (2005). The following graphic presents a summary of each of the eight elements of a quality childcare system<sup>23, 24</sup>:



(Source: Martha Friendly and Jane Beach, (2005). Elements of a high quality early learning and child care system. Childcare Resource and Research Unit.)

As stated, planning and policy is one of the eight elements of a quality system and an important driver for social change. In 2012, the OECD released the [Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for](#)

<sup>23</sup> Friendly, M., Doherty, G., & Beach, J. (2005). Quality by design: What do we know about quality in early learning and childcare, and what do we think? A literature review. *Childcare Resource and Research Unit*, 1-32.

<sup>24</sup> Region of Waterloo Children’s Services. (2016). *Early Learning and Childcare Service Plan: 2016-2020 Executive Summary*. <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/resources/Documents/Childrens-Services-/ELCC-Service-Plan-Executive-Summary-access.pdf>

[Early Childhood Education and Care](#) which is a document that includes, “five policy levers that are likely to enhance quality” of childcare.<sup>25</sup> These categories are:

- Policy Lever 1: Setting out quality goals and regulations;
- Policy Lever 2: Designing and implementing curriculum and standards;
- Policy Lever 3: Improving qualifications, training and working conditions;
- Policy Lever 4: Engaging families and communities; and,
- Policy Lever 5: Advancing data collection, research and monitoring.

This toolbox could be used when considering implementing policy that is aimed at creating quality childcare. In addition, this toolbox should be referenced to support policy decisions at the municipal level especially, when developing an action plan that recognizes the importance of quality childcare.

### **Inclusion and Accessibility**

When developing a quality early learning and childcare system, it is critical to ensure the system meets the diverse needs of children, in particular, children who statistically belong to vulnerable and/or marginalized groups. While there is no “one size fits all” framework that can be implemented, there are promising practices that consistently arise when inclusivity and accessibility are put into practice. For example, a comprehensive global literature review that has been conducted on the accessibility of early childhood education for children from ethnic minority and low-income families, documents some of these promising practices.<sup>26</sup> Based on the literature review, Vanderbroeck and Lazzari (2012) propose three levels from which an inclusive and accessible system can be built:

1. Policy Level: Ex. availability of services, quality regulations, monitoring;
2. Provisions level: Ex. services available for irregular work hours, number of spaces meets the demand, waitlist criteria
3. Parental level: Ex. access to informal network and information about ECE, language, and cultural considerations

To address challenges associated at each level, there are five principles of good practice to be considered:<sup>27</sup>

1. Availability – Do families have access to childcare in their neighborhood?
2. Affordability – Are fees based on income?

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<sup>25</sup> OECD. (2012). Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264123564-en> )

<sup>26</sup> Vandenbroeck, M., & Lazzari, A. (2012). Accessibility of early childhood education and care (ecec) for children from ethnic minority and low-income families.

<sup>27</sup> (Vanderbroeck & Lazzari, 2012)

3. Accessibility – Are there language, cultural, and/or physical barriers? Is outreach being conducted to reach marginalized and vulnerable population groups who might not have access to information or a trusting relationship with childcare centres?
4. Usefulness – Are there flexible opening hours? Are families involved in the childcare centre decision making processes?
5. Comprehensibility – Are the values, beliefs and educational practices of the organization comprehensive and reflected of diverse needs? Do diverse staff work at the centre?

Furthermore, in Canada, there has been a national Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare Framework developed to ensure childcare systems meet the needs of Indigenous children and families. This Framework was created with Indigenous partners across Canada through a national engagement strategy and culminates with nine principles that strengthen Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare. This Framework can be found here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/indigenous-early-learning/2018-framework.html>

## Workforce

A strong quality workforce is required in order to operate a quality childcare system. In recent years, there have been many studies and reviews on what constitutes a quality workforce.<sup>28, 29</sup> The latest, comprehensive, national labour market review on a quality childcare workforce, which was completed in 2004, determined, “a skilled, stable workforce is the critical determinant of high quality in childcare settings, and the quality of childcare environments influences child development outcomes.”<sup>30</sup> Despite this clear outcome statement, the present day workforce still faces similar challenges workers faced over fifteen years ago at the time of the last national literature review. Bertrand (2004) highlighted that workers were negatively impacted by many factors such as low wages, which resulted in a lack of incentive to obtain higher education, increasing job stress, and difficulty meeting the needs of all children. These issues were compounded with the fact that there was a lack of public investment to mitigate the negative experiences the workforce encountered, resulting in childcare that lacked quality<sup>31</sup>. Over recent years, however, there have been childcare advocates that continue to

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<sup>28</sup> (Bertrand, J. (2004). Working for Change: Canada’s Childcare Workforce. *Childcare Human Resources Sector Council*, 1-75. ; Early Childhood Educators of BC. (N.D.). BC Childcare Sector Labour Market Partnership: Phase 1 Final Engagement Report. Retrieved from

[https://www.ecebc.ca/programs/files/1218\\_Childcare%20SLMP%20-%20Final%20Report%20.pdf](https://www.ecebc.ca/programs/files/1218_Childcare%20SLMP%20-%20Final%20Report%20.pdf);

<sup>29</sup> Forer, B. (2018). 2018 Wages and working conditions survey: Vancouver Centre-Based Childcare Programs, Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre and the City of Vancouver. Retrieved from

[https://www.wstcoast.org/application/files/1215/3776/1533/WCCRC\\_Vancouver\\_child\\_care\\_wage\\_survey\\_exec\\_sum\\_web\\_10\\_pg\\_Sept\\_19\\_2018-web.pdf](https://www.wstcoast.org/application/files/1215/3776/1533/WCCRC_Vancouver_child_care_wage_survey_exec_sum_web_10_pg_Sept_19_2018-web.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> (Bertrand, p.13, 2004)

<sup>31</sup> (Bertrand, 2004)

strive towards a creating a childcare system that is considered, “high quality.” Fundamental to a high-quality system is a workforce that is appropriately remunerated, has access to affordable education and professional development opportunities, and is supported through public policy.<sup>32</sup>

Recently, the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement funded a study on the [BC Childcare Sector Labour Market Partnership](#) and the City of Vancouver completed a survey on [Wages and Working Conditions in Vancouver centre-based childcare programs](#). Both of these studies validated the findings from Bertrand’s 2004 literature review: low wages remain, education and professional development are difficult to obtain, and retaining or recruiting skilled employees is a challenge.<sup>33</sup> In an attempt to address the concerns raised by the early childhood educator workforce in BC, the Ministry of Children and Family Development created an [Early Care and Learning Recruitment Strategy](#). The strategy outlines a plan to:

1. Increase compensation for ECE’s working in facilities that are participating in BC’s Childcare Fee Reduction Initiative,
2. Expand funding to the ECE post-secondary programs, bursaries available to students, and funds to facilities to support employees while they participate in education/training, and;
3. Create more professional development opportunities.

Creating a more sustainable and supported workforce will take time, however, the path forward is clear based on the ample research conducted nationally, provincially and locally. Investment in the childcare workforce is essential in creating a quality childcare system.

## **What does the research tell us about Quality Childcare at the Individual Program Level?**

Much has been written about quality at the individual child or program level, but as discussed in the last section, there is increasing recognition that there are essential elements at the broader systems level necessary to ensure that quality at an individual or program level is the norm rather than the exception. These systems level elements include infrastructure, financing, governance, planning, human resources, physical environments, research, data collection and evaluation. Most aspects of quality fall within provincial jurisdiction and are outside the scope of a local municipal government, however it is important to recognize what indicates quality childcare at the individual program level.

High quality at an individual program levels means honouring children where they are at, supporting children and giving them opportunities to develop and learn through play and a safe

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<sup>32</sup> (Bertrand, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> (BC Childcare Sector Labour Market Partnership: Phase 1 Final Engagement Report, 2018; Forer, 2018).

environment.<sup>34</sup> In 2019, the British Columbia Ministry of Education released an [Early Learning Framework](#) that outlines the key factors that contribute to quality programs including different practices that can be implemented to advance child learning. This framework should be referenced when developing or evaluating childcare programs. Furthermore, extensive research has been done to establish the contributing factors that foster a high-quality program which Friendly, Doherty, and Beach (2005) briefly outline in their literature review of quality childcare. For instance, at a relational level, reporting of positive relationships between families and providers, among colleagues, and between children and staff is indicative of quality care. Additionally, when staff are more educated, feel appreciated and are well supported, the quality of care increases. Planned programming and a strong curriculum that is tailored to meet the diverse needs of children further enhances the quality of care.

In addition to establishing an overall positive environment for children, employees and families, along with the implementation of a strong curriculum, there has been evidence that illustrates the importance of a well-designed indoor/outdoor space in supporting the development of children under five<sup>35</sup>. Although standards for childcare spaces are developed provincially, municipalities are able to establish childcare design standards that are more in line with best practices, such as the “7C’s” (character, context, connectivity, change, chance, clarity, and challenge). For example, the provincial standards recommend less than 7m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor space per child, but the City of Vancouver, in their [Design Guidelines](#) has increased that requirement to 14m<sup>2</sup> per child (globally, standards are as high as 32m<sup>2</sup> per child). The City of Vancouver has also recognized the correlation of well-designed outdoor space with quality individual programs and has taken important steps to improving childcare quality through municipal policy. The design of indoor spaces is important, as, “the arrangement of furniture, structures, and objects in a space sends messages about how people can move and relate to others.”<sup>36</sup> How space is designed and used, inevitably impacts the individual program quality.

As demonstrated, the research indicates that there are several factors contributing to the development of high quality individual childcare programs. Centres that focus on building quality indoor and outdoor spaces, developing relationships with families, creating a positive work environment and implementing structured curriculum have greater success in meeting the needs of children and establishing a quality childcare centre.

## **What does the research tell us about auspice – who is operating the childcare programs?**

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<sup>34</sup> British Columbia Early Learning Framework. Ministry of Education. 2019

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/teach/early-learning-framework>

<sup>35</sup> Herrington, S., Lesmeister, C., Nicholls, J., & Stefiuk, K. (N.D.). 7Cs: an informational guide to young children’s outdoor play spaces. Retrieved from [file:///T:/10-RC/Current%20Projects/1-E515 City%20of%20Coquitlam Child%20Care%20Action%20Plans 080719/Lit%20Review/Quality%20at%20Program%20Level/7Cs%20Outdoor%20Playground%20Research%20%20Herrington.pdf](file:///T:/10-RC/Current%20Projects/1-E515%20City%20of%20Coquitlam%20Child%20Care%20Action%20Plans%20080719/Lit%20Review/Quality%20at%20Program%20Level/7Cs%20Outdoor%20Playground%20Research%20%20Herrington.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Education, p.23, 2019

Doherty, Friendly, and Forer (2002)<sup>37</sup> describe the term ‘childcare auspice’ as those who run or operate the childcare market service. Research has shown that the operator of childcare facilities plays a major role in the quality of provision. In Canada there are 3 types of childcare auspices<sup>38</sup>:

1. Not for-profit childcare services;
2. For-profit childcare services; and,
3. Publicly operated childcare services (i.e. services directly operated by a public entity. Example, a city government or a board of education).

There is a substantial amount of research on these 3 auspices from Canada, the United States, Britain, and New Zealand where childcare is delivered as a market commodity. Analysis of research data from Canada-wide studies on the quality of licensed childcare centres have indicated that as a group:

- a) For profit centres were of lower quality than not for-profit and publicly operated centres<sup>39</sup>;
- b) For profit centres lower quality is not only related to lower access to public funds and resources but also due to a multitude other issues related to for-profit care<sup>40,41</sup>, and;
- c) The highest quality childcare was found in municipally operated public childcare centres<sup>42</sup>.

Research on auspice has consistently demonstrated that for-profit centres are of lower quality and perform worse on global evaluation scales compared to not-for-profit and publicly operated centres.<sup>43,44</sup> Using British Columbian data, researchers found that for-profit centres are disproportionately more likely to close, and not-for-profit centres are, 97% times more likely to continue to operate<sup>45</sup>. Table 1 shows that in contrast to not-for-profits, for-profits provide less teaching support, salary schedule, staff policies, job performance appraisals, and grievance procedures. These contributing factors could result in the high staff turnover and lower morale present within for-profits.

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<sup>37</sup> (Doherty, G., Friendly, M., & Forer, B. (2002). Childcare by default or design? An exploration of differences between non-profit and for-profit Canadian childcare centres using the “You Bet I Care!” data sets. *Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Centre for Urban and Community Studies*, 75).

<sup>38</sup> (Doherty, Friendly, & Forer, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> (Doherty, Friendly, & Forer, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> (Childcare Resource and Research Unit, (2011). Briefing Note: What research says about quality in for-profit, non-profit and public childcare. Toronto: Author).

<sup>41</sup> (Cleveland, G., & Krashinsky, M. (2009). The nonprofit advantage: Producing quality in thick and thin childcare markets. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 28(3))

<sup>42</sup> (Cleveland, G. (2008). *If it don't make dollars, does that mean that it don't make sense? Commercial, nonprofit and municipal childcare in the city of Toronto*. Toronto: City of Toronto, Children's Services Division).

<sup>43</sup> (Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> (Kershaw, P., Forer, B. & Goelman, H. (2004). Hidden fragility: Closure among childcare services in BC. Vancouver: Human Early Learning Partnership, University of British Columbia).

<sup>45</sup> Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2011.

**Table 1 Comparison between Non-Profit and Commercial Childcare Written Policies and Formal Procedures\***

Variable	Auspice	Average percent %
Teaching staff have written job descriptions	Non profit	73.4
	Commercial (for-profit)	46.5
Teaching staff have written job contracts	Non profit	41.7
	Commercial (for-profit)	22.2
There is a written salary schedule	Non profit	29.2
	Commercial (for-profit)	12.1
There is a staff manual outlining staff policies	Non profit	70.9
	Commercial (for-profit)	57.2
Teaching staff receive regular written job performance appraisals	Non-profit	38.5
	Commercial (for-profit)	11.2
There is a formal grievance procedure	Non- profit	31.5
	Commercial (for-profit)	15.3

\*Table Source: Staff questionnaire from both *YBIC!* data sets for all centres in Alberta, British Columbia and New Brunswick combined. From Doherty, Friendly and Forer (2002). Note: Data from 147 non-profit and 163 commercial centres.

Other reasons that for-profit centres have higher turnover and lower morale is because they have a higher proportion of untrained staff, lower wages, higher child to staff ratios<sup>46</sup>, and minimal benefits concerning sick leave. Less in-service training, holidays and pensions, are additionally noted<sup>47</sup>; therefore, staff turnover rates are lower in not for -profit, non-religiously affiliated centres and highest in for-profit independent centres.

Lastly, the highest quality childcare auspice was found in municipally operated public childcare centres. According to Doherty, Friendly and Forer’s (2002), municipal centres actively support non-profit agencies that serve their residents and therefore, have the best quality across all age groups. Further, Section 25 of the BC Community Charter <sup>48</sup>states that there are legislative prohibitions on local government assistance to businesses, and due to this, city owned childcare facilities can only be operated by the municipality or by not for -profit operators, and not by for-profits.

## What is the broader context for childcare?

<sup>46</sup> (Doherty, Friendly, and Forer, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> (Penn, H. (2012) Childcare markets: Do they work? Occasional Paper No. 26. Childcare Resource and Research Unit)

<sup>48</sup> (British Columbia (2019). Community Charter, SBC 2003 Chapter 26.)

Understanding the broader context for childcare is a key pillar to developing a childcare strategy that is feasible at a local, municipal level. This part of the review will examine the broader international context for childcare, the federal role in childcare and the provincial role of childcare provision. By having a full picture of the childcare context, local governments can be more equipped to adequately position themselves in the conversation.

## International Context

Accessing childcare and establishing childcare arrangements is a universal need for families and, as a result, multi-country studies have been conducted to contribute to the global childcare context.<sup>49 50</sup> From these international studies, there are key findings to be gleaned. Most notably, when Canada participates in international reviews, the country is determined to have an unfavourable system and receives among the lowest scores on quality childcare. For example, in 25 OECD countries, childcare systems were reviewed on 10 benchmarks, and Canada tied for the lowest score with Ireland. Sweden was the only country to reach all benchmarks. The benchmarks were as follows<sup>51</sup>:

1. A minimum entitlement to paid parental leave: At least 1 year at 50% of salary, with provision for unemployed or self-employed individuals;
2. A national plan with priority for disadvantaged children;
3. Minimum level of childcare provision for children under 3 years of age: Subsidized, regulated services for at least 25% of children under 3;
4. Minimum level of access for 4-year-olds: At least 80% of 4-year-olds participate in publicly subsidized and accredited early childhood services for at least 15 hours/week;
5. Minimum level of training for all staff:
  - a. At least 80 per cent of staff having significant contact with young children have relevant training;
6. A move towards pay and working conditions in line with wider teaching or social care professions: At least 50% have a minimum of at least three years of post-secondary education, with recognized qualification in early childhood;
7. Minimum staff to children ratio: Maximum group size of 24 for 4-year-olds;
8. Level of public funding for children 0-6 of at least 1% of GDP;
9. Child poverty of less than 10%;
10. Universal outreach.

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<sup>49</sup>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2019). Early childhood education and care-country information. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/ecec-country-information.htm>

<sup>50</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. (2008). The childcare transition: A league table of early childhood education and care in economically advanced countries

<sup>51</sup> UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2008. Proxy measure for basic health services: the rate of mortality less than 4 per 1,000 live births; proportion of low birthweight babies is less than 6%; the rate of immunization for children 12-23 months is greater than 95%.

When these benchmarks are reached, countries experience greater gender equality, lower poverty rates and ultimately protect the rights of children. As quality, accessible, affordable, childcare systems and services are being developed in British Columbia and implemented at a municipal level, it is imperative for municipalities to understand the positive impacts reaching these validated benchmarks has on communities and strive to create environments where reaching these milestones are possible.

**Figure 2 Early Childhood Services Report Card - UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre report *The Childcare Transition***

Benchmark		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Number of benchmarks achieved										
	Parental leave of 1 year at 50% of salary										
	A national plan with priority for disadvantaged children										
	Subsidized and regulated child care services for 25% of children under 3										
	Subsidized and accredited early education services for 80% of 4 year-olds										
	80% of all child care staff trained										
	50% of staff in accredited early education services tertiary educated with relevant qualification										
	Minimum staff-to-children ratio of 1:15 in pre-school education										
	1.0% of GDP spent on early childhood services										
	Child poverty rate less than 10%										
	Near-universal outreach of essential child health services										
Sweden	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Iceland	9		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Denmark	8	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Finland	8	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
France	8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Norway	8	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Belgium (Flanders)	6		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Hungary	6		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
New Zealand	6		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Slovenia	6	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓
Austria	5		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	
Netherlands	5		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
United Kingdom*	5		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Germany	4		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Italy	4		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Japan	4		✓		✓	✓					✓
Portugal	4		✓		✓	✓	✓				
Republic of Korea	4		✓		✓	✓	✓				✓
Mexico	3		✓			✓	✓				
Spain	3				✓	✓	✓				
Switzerland	3					✓		✓		✓	
United States	3			✓			✓	✓			
Australia	2			✓			✓				
Canada	1						✓				
Ireland	1						✓				
<b>Total benchmarks met</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

\*Data for the United Kingdom refer to England only.

## Federal Role

Although childcare in Canada is primarily a provincial responsibility, the Federal Government plays an important role in the childcare system. For instance, the federal government provides direct childcare funding support to three specific population groups: First Nations, Metis and Inuit children and families; families serving in the Canadian military; and some newcomers to Canada enrolled in language programs. Different levels of support are provided for each population group. Some examples include providing resources for Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve program, emergency childcare for military families, and childcare for immigrant or newcomers enrolled in language classes. The Federal government furthermore provides maternity and parental benefits through Employment Insurance to eligible parents. These benefits enable eligible people to stay home with their newborn for up to 18 months, with a reduced rate. Additionally, the Federal government has allocated funds to implement the [Multilateral Early Learning and Childcare Framework](#) and the [Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare Framework](#). BC has a Bilateral agreement and received \$153 million in 2018, with the following priority areas of investment<sup>52</sup>:

1. Enhance the accessibility of childcare options by increasing the number of spaces;
2. Increase affordability of childcare, beginning with Infant/Toddler care;
3. Enhance the quality of licensed childcare programs by supporting the training and professional development of early childhood educators;
4. Enhance equity through targeted investment in underserved communities – Indigenous families, families with children with special needs, and young parents completing their secondary education – improving access to inclusive, affordable, and flexible childcare programs

## Provincial Role

In Canada, provinces and territories maintain primary responsibility for childcare oversight and management. In British Columbia, the system is complex and spans across three main ministries: The Ministry of Children and Family Development, The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. Table 2 outlines the different responsibilities across each Ministry.

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<sup>52</sup> Government of Canada. (2018). Canada-British Columbia Early Learning and Childcare Agreement Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/british-columbia.html#h2>

**Table 3 Provincial Ministry Responsibilities**

Ministry of Children and Family Services Responsibilities	Ministry of Health Responsibilities	Ministry of Education Responsibilities
1. Childcare policy including cooperating on the Early Learning Framework	1. Childcare legislation	1. Led the development of Early Learning Framework
2. Childcare programs and services funding	2. <a href="#">Licensing and Monitoring</a> (implemented by regional Health Authorities, follows the BC Childcare Licensing Regulation)	2. StrongStart BC
3. Fee subsidies		
4. Early Childhood Registry		
5. Capital funds		

After the 2017 provincial election, creating universal, affordable, quality childcare was established as a priority. Since the election, the government has completed/created the following:

1. Committed to reconciliation by providing funding for Aboriginal Head Start programs to include childcare;
2. Developed the [Childcare Fee Reduction initiative](#);
3. Created [The Affordable Childcare Benefit](#);
4. Committed to create 22,0000 new spaces by 2021;
5. Established [Universal Childcare Prototype Sites](#);
6. Distributed Capital funding via:
  - a. [Childcare BC New Spaces Fund](#);
  - b. UBCM Community Childcare Space Creation Program;
7. Announced wage increases for Early Childhood Educators.

The Province plays an important role in advancing accessible, affordable, quality childcare programs and the current government has demonstrated a desire to enhance the existing system in British Columbia through a multitude of new initiatives. Ultimately, however, childcare services are provided at a local, community level and municipalities hold immense responsibility in fostering a system that provides affordable, accessible, and quality childcare.

### **What does the research tell us about the role of local governments in the delivery of a high quality childcare system?**

The local government plays an important role in the delivery of high-quality childcare systems. Planning, managing, designing, and implementing programs are common roles and responsibilities of the local government<sup>53</sup>. Similarly, school districts collaborate with the local

<sup>53</sup> (Friendly, Doherty, & Beach, 2005).

government to create policy documents and strategic plans in order to implement change at the district level.<sup>54</sup> Local community members are encouraged to voice their opinions and concerns in regards to the services offered within the community.<sup>55</sup> By collaborating with community partners, local governments are able to determine the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps present within the services and address change accordingly.<sup>56</sup>

Research suggests overtime, local governments roles within the childcare sector in Canada have diminished, allowing provincial governments to act as key decision makers.<sup>57</sup> Within Canada, most provinces, except Ontario, only allow local governments to participate in select decision making processes. For example, in British Columbia, municipalities can choose to invest in childcare, but there is no legislated municipal role. This poses challenges for the local government when trying to meet the demands of the local citizens.<sup>58</sup> Challenges such as, accessibility, affordability, and equality are barriers preventing local governments from providing high quality childcare services.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, evidence suggests that building strong intergovernmental relationships can help eliminate many of these challenges and help local governments provide more equitable, high-quality childcare services.<sup>60</sup>

Several [recommendations](#) have been made by the Province, for municipalities to help support the local childcare needs.<sup>61</sup> These include:

1. Having experienced staff members who are familiar with the processes and municipal requirements for childcare providers;
2. Updating bylaws in accordance with legislation to help eliminate confusion;
3. Creating land bylaws to increase new childcare spaces;
4. Work with school districts to promote joint use of space; and,
5. Assemble a cross-sectoral childcare planning team.

Evidence suggests, lowering municipal fees and increasing the numbers of not for -profit childcare facilities can help support local childcare demands. Other actions that municipalities can take include drafting childcare plans, creating a childcare planning body, streamlining

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<sup>54</sup> (Provincial Office for the Early Years. (N.D.). Early years in BC school districts: A scan of promising practices)

<sup>55</sup> (Friendly, Doherty, & Beach, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> (Friendly, Doherty, & Beach, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> (McNeil, C., & Cory, G. (2017). The future of childcare in London: Devolving funding for greater affordability, access and equality. *Institute for Public Policy Research*, 17-27).

<sup>58</sup> (Jenson, J., & Mahon, R. (2002). Bringing cities to the table: Childcare and intergovernmental relations. *Canadian Policy Research Network*, 26, 2-9).

<sup>59</sup> (McNeil, & Cory, 2017).

<sup>60</sup> (Jenson & Mahon, 2002)

<sup>61</sup>(Provincial Office for the Early Years. (N.D.). Municipalities: Top 13 actions to support local childcare needs.

<http://nanaimoearlyyears.org/resources/Research%20and%20Resources/municipalities%20top%2013%20actions%20for%20child%20care%20needs.pdf> )

processes, and offering employees childcare services.<sup>62</sup> By following these recommendations, municipalities can help create high quality, accessible, and affordable childcare services.

## What are some examples of promising practices for local planning and service delivery?

In Canada, municipalities have implemented a variety of strategies to plan for and provide quality childcare. To date, no research has been completed on “best practices” of childcare in Canadian municipalities, but in this section, “promising practices” will be explored. To begin this section, promising practices across Canada will be explained followed by promising practices currently underway in British Columbia.

### Promising Practices in Canada

Insights about quality childcare can be acquired from municipalities around Canada. Although provincial legislation largely dictates the role of local municipalities, the Region of Waterloo and City of Toronto are two cases of municipalities that have taken initiative in creating a quality childcare system at the local level. For instance, the [\*Region of Waterloo’s Early Learning and Childcare Service Plan \(2016-2020\)\*](#) is a prime example of a quality focused childcare plan in action. Waterloo created their childcare plan around four pillars: availability, affordability, accessibility, and accountability.<sup>63</sup> Action items were then developed that centred around those four pillars. The action items prioritize inter-government relationship, reducing fees for families, supporting diverse needs, and building relationships with school boards to offer public childcare. In regards to public delivery of childcare, the City of Toronto is one of the highest providers of publicly operated centres.<sup>64</sup> Toronto was able to become a leader in public childcare by financing, “20% of the budget for fee subsidies, wage grants, families resource programs and resources for special needs children, and 50% of administration costs.”<sup>65</sup> The province subsequently pays the remainder of costs. The Region of Waterloo and City of Toronto are two municipalities that have leveraged provincial legislation to meet the needs of their respective communities regarding quality childcare.

Furthermore, across the country, municipal governments are hoping to foster environments that create quality childcare. In 2016, the Muttart Foundation in Alberta developed a report: [\*Engaging Alberta Municipal Level Governments in Support of Early Learning and Care\*](#) which served the purpose of building a conversation around promising practice for municipal governments. This report takes a comprehensive look at municipal practices in Alberta, Ontario, and Saskatchewan, and culminates in offering suggestions about Albertan municipal roles and responsibilities around regional management and planning, support for services and service

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<sup>62</sup> (Provincial Office for the Early Years, N.D)

<sup>63</sup> (Region of Waterloo, 2016)

<sup>64</sup> (Public childcare profile: Toronto, Ontario, 2009)

<sup>65</sup> (Public childcare profile: Toronto, Ontario, p.1, 2009)

delivery, and research and public awareness.<sup>66</sup> This report can be used by municipalities to understand the context of promising practices in municipalities nationally.

When reviewing promising practices in Canada, it is vital to recognize that city planners play an important role in creating quality childcare. Holt (2018) has summarized some of promising practices surrounding planning policies and their effect on childcare development. Although the report is geared towards Winnipeg, Holt (2018) effectively explores the impact of policies, financing, zoning and regulatory requirements and partnerships have on the childcare system at the municipal level and stated the following as trends in promising practices<sup>67</sup>:

1. Municipalities recognized that access to early learning childcare services contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of communities; it helps to support families, healthy child development and future economic growth and prosperity;
2. Municipalities provided financial incentives to support childcare services;
3. Municipalities took steps to encourage ELCC spaces through land use and zoning regulations; and,
4. Collaborations and partnerships played a vital role in creating quality childcare.

### Promising Practices in British Columbia

Many municipalities in British Columbia have undertaken important steps towards building quality childcare. In Metro Vancouver, in order to better understand landscape of municipal childcare policies and regulations, the [Municipal Survey of Childcare Spaces and Policies in Metro Vancouver](#)<sup>68</sup> was conducted. Key findings from this report were as follows<sup>69</sup>:

- 8 Metro Vancouver municipalities have a stand-alone childcare strategy;
- 11 municipalities identify childcare facilities as a community amenity in the development approvals process;
- 15 municipalities support childcare through the provision of municipal building space (rent-free, reduced lease, or market lease); the space may be made available on a single property or on multiple sites;
- 6 municipalities offer grants for childcare capital projects; 4 municipalities offer grants for childcare operating costs; and
- 15 municipalities provide space for childcare in municipal facilities; and
- 8 municipalities offer property tax exemption.

Three examples of municipalities with childcare strategies include the [City of New Westminster](#), [City of Richmond](#), and [City of Vancouver](#). These strategies can be used to review promising

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<sup>66</sup> (The Muttart Foundation. (2016). Engaging Alberta Municipal Level Governments in Support of Early Learning and Care).

<sup>67</sup> (Holt, C. (2018). Planning for childcare: The impact of planning policies and strategies on the development of early learning and childcare spaces in winnipeg, manitboa.

<sup>68</sup> (Metro Vancouver. (2019). 2019 survey of licensed childcare spaces and policies in Metro Vancouver.)

<sup>69</sup> (City of Richmond. (2016). 2017-2022: Richmond childcare needs assessment and strategy.)

practices at the local level and help inform future childcare plans. The most recent plan was developed by the City of Richmond and within this plan is a municipal promising practices review focused on the City of Vancouver and City of New Westminster. This review examines strategies these municipalities have used to create spaces, inform planning and policy developments, and build partnerships. In order to inform planning and policy developments, prior to action plans being created, conducting a needs assessment within the municipality is a key promising practice which was undertaken both by New Westminster and Richmond. When needs assessments are conducted, municipalities are able to have a better understanding of existing gaps and strengths.<sup>70</sup> In regards to space creation, both the City of Vancouver and New Westminster have provided funding through grants which enable not for -profit centres to expand, renovate, or repair facilities and Richmond proposed to follow suite in their action plan. This funding, in turn, provides families with more access to quality, accessible, and affordable childcare.

The final promising practice discussed in the Richmond childcare strategy was to focus on building partnerships and collaborate across sectors (Ex., school districts, local organizations, provincial government). Arguably, building partnerships is the way, “municipalities can make the most of their resources to address childcare issues.”<sup>71</sup> Notably, the City of Vancouver and the City of Burnaby have made relationship building a priority. Vancouver established the Joint Childcare Council (JCC) in 2004 which brings together the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Parks Board the Vancouver Board of Education, Vancouver Coastal Health and the Vancouver Public Library, along with community agencies and business representatives in order to create quality childcare. As a result, the JCC has collaborated on the creation of over 1000 new childcare spaces including the creation of a number of childcare centres at schools.

Furthermore, the City of Burnaby developed a Childcare Facilities Memorandum and Agreement (MOA) in 2014 with School District 41 in order to, “build up to twelve childcare facilities in modular building on School District lands.”<sup>72</sup> This agreement is one of the first of its kind across the province and a pivotal relationship in establishing quality childcare. In addition, in October 2019, the Burnaby School District confirmed a partnership to increasing the number of before and after school childcare spaces, as outlined in their project definition report [Before and After School Childcare: Creating a Plan for Childcare Opportunities within the Burnaby School District](#)<sup>73</sup>.

Although each municipality across British Columbia has unique needs, there are many trends and promising practices which can be applied to any municipal childcare plan. By reviewing existing plans, municipalities are able to better understand the promising practices that will

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<sup>70</sup> (City of Richmond, 2016)

<sup>71</sup> (City of Richmond, p.23 2016)

<sup>72</sup> (City of Richmond, p.23 2016)

<sup>73</sup> (Burnaby School District 41. (2019). Project definition report: Before and after school childcare: Creating a plan for childcare opportunities within the Burnaby school district.)

meet the childcare needs of their community, and strive towards creating a quality, affordable and accessible childcare system.

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