

program locations (Middle Years afterschool program) that support children during the critical afterschool hours.

Parents have reported missing and being stressed at work or leaving the workforce due to child care concerns. Low-income families on child care subsidy and children who require extra support are often turned away. Some children are missing school to care for younger siblings and there are reports of children in self-care after school. Grandparents are often expected to provide child care for their grandchildren.

DISCUSSION

High quality, comprehensive child care is a key integrative resource in the community with many benefits:

- Supports the health, safety, wellbeing, learning and long-term success of young children;
- Early intervention strategies for children requiring extra supports and stability for children in fragile families or high risk situations;
- Easy referral of families to other community resources;
- Mothers' participation in the paid labour force;
- Employee recruitment, retention and productivity;
- Employment opportunities, business sustainability and positive economic development;
- Poverty reduction; and
- Positive community connectivity and citizen engagement.

The Province, through the Office for the Early Years has recognized child care as integral part of their Early Years strategy. A current provincial review of local ECD planning has highlighted the need for local child care plans that respond to the local context and needs of individual communities.

Surrey needs a collaborative Child Care Action Plan that focuses on a comprehensive child care approach that draws upon the skills of local public, private and community agencies, and is supported by adequate provincial funding. Our goal is to have enough quality and affordable options for childcare in Surrey, including before and after-school care in public amenities such as the City facilities and in schools.

The City has valuable expertise in land-use, community amenity planning and community consultation as well as the City's own experience in child care partnership projects with OPTIONS, Alexander House and the YMCA. Also, Surrey has access to the expertise and experience of other municipal governments and has existing strong connections with the business and development community.

The City as Co-Chair, would garner interest at the provincial level, as the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) is interested in having municipalities participate in the childcare discussion. Co-Chairing the Task Force ensures Surrey is ready to take advantage of child care funding opportunities and will be a key champion for the community with senior levels of government. Co-Chairing the Task Force will allow the City to play an influential role in shaping the recommendations and will bring credibility, profile and accountability to the process.

Daljit Gill-Badesha, Section Manager Newton Community in the Community and Recreation Services Division is the staff designated to Co-Chair the Task Force on behalf of the City should Council adopt the recommendations of this report. Ms. Gill-Badesha also sits on the Provincial Child Care Council Advisory Committee for Minister Cadieux. The Task Force will be comprised of representatives from the non-profit sector, Surrey School District, other levels of government and private child care operators.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Co-Chairing the Child Care Task Force will assist in achieving the following Socio-Cultural Pillar action items in the City's Sustainability Charter:

SC5: Improve the Social Well Being of Surrey Residents

- Supporting children in the early years and during critical after school hours by making services more accessible to Surrey residents.

SC12: Adapting to Demographic Change

- 73% of families have both parents in the workforce and Surrey needs to adapt services to accommodate this demographic change.

SC17: Crime Reduction Strategies

- Research shows that investing in the early years has the greatest collective impact on improving social outcomes for children and the residents of Surrey.

CONCLUSION

This collaborative approach will allow us to create long lasting change in child care for Surrey residents. Surrey Co-Chairing the Task Force will demonstrate strong commitment to children and families and supports other City initiatives such as the Child and Youth Friendly Strategy and as a family friendly employer.

Laurie Cavan
General Manager
Parks, Recreation & Culture