

# CORPORATE REPORT

NO: R226 COUNCIL DATE: November 16, 2015

# **REGULAR COUNCIL**

TO: Mayor and Council DATE: November 12, 2015

FROM: General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Culture FILE: 0360-20

SUBJECT: Child Care Task Force Co-Chair

#### RECOMMENDATION

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department recommends that Council:

- 1. Receive this report as information;
- 2. Support one City of Surrey staff participating as Co-Chair of the Surrey Child Care Task Force as generally described in this report; and
- 3. Forward a copy of this report to the Parks, Recreation and Sport Tourism Committee and the Social Policy Committee for their information.

#### INTENT

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the City to Co-Chair a Child Care Task Force and collaboratively develop a Child Care Action Plan for Surrey.

# **BACKGROUND**

A delegation with representatives from Options Community Services, YMCA, and Alexandra Neighbourhood House appeared at the May 25, 2015 Council-in-Committee meeting requesting the City Co-Chair a Child Care Task Force and collaboratively develop a Child Care Action Plan for Surrey. The community partners expressed the importance of the City's role in developing the Action Plan and acquiring child care spots for children in Surrey.

There has been a major shift in demographics from over 60% of families having one stay at home parent in 1976 to 73% of families having both parents in the workforce in 2012. In the past decade, the need for two incomes has become critical to satisfy the economic needs of many families. Average family incomes have flat-lined, but family expenses have increased; child care fees have become the second largest expense in a family's budget.

Research shows that there are only 12.4 spaces for every 100 children in Surrey aged 0-12 years with a particular deficit in after-school care and care for toddlers less than 3 years old. To complicate matters, very few facilities are serving more than 1 age group causing parents to have to pick up their children at different locations. In an effort to bridge the 0-6 child care gap, Surrey has introduced extended preschool hours to assist parents in the workforce and 8 MYzone

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:

SC<sub>5</sub>: 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

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