



NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BUSINESS COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING

INFORMATION SHEET

DATE: Wednesday March 3, 2021
TO: Business Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
SUBJECT: Childcare Strategy

Background:

There have been a number of ongoing questions related to the current status of childcare provision in the District. This memo is intended to provide a brief overview of the current status and next steps for the District.

Discussion:

For a number of years the District has supported a number of childcare providers (mainly before and after school care) on school sites. Ages 0-5 childcare is significantly different than before and after school care due to the required adult to child ratios, square footage requirements per child and the type of certification adults providing the services require. The requirements for before and after school care are less onerous. These ratios mean that the economics of providing before and after school care are more attainable than the more expensive age 0-5 care (the younger being even more expensive).

As the Board is aware, NLPS has recently began expanding the footprint of childcare on our sites. Currently, Forest Park, Chase River, Ladysmith Primary and Rock City are in the process of expansion using modular units to provide both 0-5 care and expanded before and after school care using Ministry of Children and Families capital funding. In addition, we have received funding to expand similar opportunities at QQS. However, we are still in the process of discussions with SFN with respect to the infrastructure. We have also applied for 5 additional sites including Cilaire, Georgia Ave, Pleasant Valley, Quarterway (only Before & After Care) and Seaview. In exchange for the funding, the District has committed to the services being provided for 15 years.

With respect to the services, the District has created a Request for Interest and Qualification to provide the services at the expanded sites. This process is nearing completion. The idea would be that the District would choose non-profit partners to provide the services at the expanded sites. The rationale for this course of action is as follows. Given the noted economic reality that age 0-5 care carries a significant

cost, before and after school care is used by the providers to balance those costs and make care affordable for parents. The District has not seriously considered providing age 0-5 care due to a lack of expertise and a significant lack of human resources and human resources support. This was exacerbated by the pandemic. The District has considered providing before and after school care. However, because of the economic reality as well the human resource issues and COVID impacts, the District has not yet pursued the before and after school care opportunity.

The LRFP also has recommended the creation of a childcare strategy.

We note that in the event that we were to attempt to provide before and after school care there are human resource issues, labour relations issues, financial issues and management issues that would have to be addressed. Currently, the expansion of childcare is already taking significant amounts of staff time that normally would be focused on k-12. There is no additional funding for this purpose.

In addition, the Ministry of Education will be taking responsibility for childcare by 2023. To date there has been no update on what this may look like. For instance, it could be completely separate from K-12, similar to libraries (which are under the Ministry of Education). Alternatively, it could be directly provided by Districts. This would involve resourcing dollars. We also note that it would involve a major infrastructure investment and take time for such a transition.

Next Steps:

Staff would recommend the following next steps:

1. Continue to expand infrastructure at our schools;
2. Have the LRFP committee draft a childcare strategy for Board review;
3. Proactively work with CUPE to identify labour relations issues associated with the service provision while we wait for direction from the Ministry;
4. Work with our non-profit community partners in ensuring services are available upon the completion of childcare infrastructure; and
5. Monitor the direction of the Ministry of Education with respect to childcare.