



# Municipalities: Top 13 Actions to Support Local Child Care Needs

Provincial and local government, along with school districts, businesses, child care providers, faith organizations and parents all play an important role in meeting local demands for child care. This document focuses on what municipalities can do to help support the creation of child care in their communities. The Provincial Office for the Early Years thanks those municipal staff who have helped us generate this list.

## 1. Assign a single staff member to help all child care providers navigate municipal requirements

The process of opening or expanding a child care facility can be very complex. Lend a hand by ensuring there's ready access to a knowledgeable staff member who has experience introducing child care providers to municipal requirements and processes.

## 2. Ensure bylaws reflect up-to-date legislation

Laws regulating child care have changed, but not every municipality's bylaws have changed along with them. This creates a conundrum for some child care providers, who find themselves facing a legislative catch-22. By reviewing your bylaws, you can help ensure they're not inadvertently causing problems for potential child care providers.

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The *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* came into force in 2004, replacing the *Community Care Facility Act*. In the years following, the Child Care Licensing Regulation was replaced with a regulation of the same name that changed the number of children that could be cared for in different types of facilities (for more information, see [goo.gl/EnfSfZ](http://goo.gl/EnfSfZ)). If your bylaws refer to capacities and classifications from the old regulations, they may be inadvertently complicating the process for some providers.

Also note that s. 20 of the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* creates a right to operate licensed home-based child care for eight or less children, despite any bylaw to the contrary (as long as it complies with fire and health requirements). Eliminating unenforceable bylaws that say otherwise is another way to reduce confusion for child care providers.

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## 3. Review land use bylaws to ensure they support new child care spaces

If you have unmet demand for child care in your community, it may be time to reconsider where child care is allowed. You might decide that some land use decisions made when child care needs were lower need to be revisited in order for the local supply of quality child care to meet your current residents' needs.

## 4. Review municipal fees charged to child care providers who are developing or expanding their facilities

Child care providers typically enter the business of child care because they want to help children learn and grow, not because they are likely to earn a lot of money. Many providers must construct a facility with very limited financial resources, relying on friends and family to pitch in. The costs of rezoning and permit fees may represent a significant hurdle to these providers. Consider establishing lower rates for child care providers where possible to help ensure local child care demands are met.

## 5. Consider supporting non-profit child care facilities through in-kind contributions

By offering land or space in a municipal building to a local non-profit child care provider, you could help them create quality, affordable child care spaces.



**6. Work with your regional health authority to establish document protocols and other ways of streamlining the process for child care providers**

Licensed child care providers have to work with both their regional health authority and their municipality to successfully launch or expand their operation. Consider addressing potential bureaucratic roadblocks by ensuring your process doesn't conflict with your regional health authority's—or better yet, work to integrate them.

**7. Spread the word—tell councillors and staff about why child care is important to your community**

Support from elected officials and staff is important in moving forward with the actions on this list. If you think child care should be a municipal priority, let others know why!

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*Why should municipalities care about child care?*

Responsibility for child care does not fall to municipalities. However, municipalities are responsible for land use planning, business licensing, and other decisions that can affect the local supply of child care.

Local economies rely on child care to allow resident parents to be employed, to start businesses that employ others, and to spend what they earn locally. Research indicates that for every job created in a child care facility, 2.15 additional jobs are created in that community (Child Care Coalition of Manitoba).

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**8. Encourage municipal staff to streamline processes for child care providers**

Child care providers often have to deal with multiple departments within their municipal government. Consider arranging for building and fire inspectors to convene and walk through the processes and rules that child care providers currently face, looking for redundancies and conflicts. Also consider how the permitting and business licensing process can be streamlined.

**9. Assemble a cross-sectoral child care planning team**

By bringing together municipal staff, child care providers, the business community, parents, and/or other stakeholders, you could create a child care planning advisory body. Members could design a needs assessment, find ways to collaborate to increase child care, and/or draft a child care plan (see below).

**10. Draft a child care plan**

Many communities have drafted child care plans that map out future actions that the municipality will take in order to help ensure an adequate local supply of child care. These plans are often informed by parent surveys or needs assessments. A child care plan can be part of a broader social plan or can stand alone. Committing to regular progress reports can help motivate staff to follow through. For examples of child care plans, see below:

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New Westminster Child Care Strategy and 2012 Child Care Strategy Progress Report [goo.gl/wbcV5C](http://goo.gl/wbcV5C)

Richmond 2009-2016 Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy [goo.gl/hBHN5x](http://goo.gl/hBHN5x)

Kamloops 2009 Social Plan (see pages 21-22) [goo.gl/aKcN64](http://goo.gl/aKcN64)

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**11. Offer your employees child care**

If municipal staff are short on child care, consider partnering with a non-profit provider to establish a new facility for use by municipal staff. In addition to adding new child care spaces to your community, you could decrease employee stress and absenteeism.

**12. Work with your school district**

Consider signing a protocol with your school district agreeing to promote the joint use of space and/or take other actions that will help encourage the creation and maintenance of quality, affordable child care spaces.

**13. Include a focus on the early years and/or child care in your Official Community Plan**

Young children are the future of your community, and child care is a foundational component of your local economy. Consider revising your OCP to ensure it reflects your commitment to children and their families and enables you to implement some of the ideas discussed above. For example, an OCP might include the following policy:

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Policy 111—Support access to affordable quality licensed child care (including preschool) by:

- Ensuring zoning bylaws provide maximum potential for the provision of child care facilities
  - Developing policies and targets for provision of child care space in new large-scale development projects that reflect the needs of existing and new residents
  - Partnering to create child care spaces in unused spaces in City facilities
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