



2020

# **CITY OF PRINCE GEORGE CHILD CARE ACTION PLAN**

---



CITY OF  
PRINCE GEORGE

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The data collection, data analysis, and report preparation for this project were completed by consultants Larine Sluggett and Marieka Sax, with support from staff at the City of Prince George.

We would like to acknowledge the Union of BC Municipalities, who provided the grant funding necessary to complete this project.

We would like to thank the Prince George Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) and especially, Alisha Wilson, for her assistance with circulating the child care providers survey, for assisting with the completion of the child care inventory, and for providing the CCRR space, as well as her time, to hold the focus group for child care providers. We also thank Lynette Mikalishen from the YMCA and Kim Rud from the Prince George Native Friendship Centre who assisted with the development and promotion of the surveys and provided space to hold project engagement activities. Other organizations who provided venues for engagement activities include the South Fort George Family Resource Centre, the Prince George Public Library, and Save On Foods #968 – Hart Highlands. We are also grateful to the parents and child care providers who participated in pilot testing the surveys.

We would also like to thank the many community members who generously provided their time to offer their thoughts on child care. This includes individuals who provided their time during interviews, child care providers who completed the provider survey and/or participated in the focus group, and many parents who took the time to share their thoughts and ideas in the parent survey and poster displays. Finally, last, but certainly not least, we thank all the children who waited patiently while their parents participated in this process.

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	2
List of Tables .....	4
Executive Summary .....	5
Background .....	6
Data Collection .....	7
Child Care Inventory .....	7
Parent Survey.....	8
Provider Survey .....	9
Poster Display .....	11
Interviews with Key Stakeholders .....	12
Focus Group for Child Care Providers.....	12
Assessment of Need .....	13
Current State of Child Care in Prince George and Assessment of Trends .....	15
Child Care Space Utilization Patterns .....	15
Underserved Populations.....	31
Plan, Bylaw, and Policy Review .....	43
Action Plan Targets and Goals .....	45
The Role of the Municipality .....	45
Space Creation Targets .....	46
Additional Recommendations and Actions For Consideration.....	49
Conclusion .....	53

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographics of Parent Survey Respondents.....	8
Table 2. Comparison of Survey Sample to Child Population of Prince George .....	9
Table 3. Types of Child Care Delivered by Child Care Provider Survey Respondents .....	10
Table 4. Summary of Poster Display Locations .....	11
Table 5. Population Projections for Ages 0–12 in Prince George 2019–2029.....	13
Table 6. Number of Child Care Spaces and Programs in Prince George.....	15
Table 7. Child Care Spaces and Ratios Per 100 Children.....	20
Table 8. Types of Child Care Preferred by Parents .....	21
Table 9. Child Care Schedules that Parents Were Unable to Access .....	21
Table 10. Summary of Child Care Spaces for Statutory Holidays, Overnight, and Extended Hours .....	22
Table 11. Arrangements Made When Regular Child Care Provider Was Not Available .....	22
Table 12. Schools in Prince George with Co-Located Child Care.....	25
Table 13. Child Care Operations in Prince George Co-Located with Family Services .....	27
Table 14. Child Care Issues Affecting Parents in Prince George .....	29
Table 15. Child Care Preferences and Needs Parents Were Unable to Access .....	29
Table 16. Staffing Issues Experienced by Prince George Child Care Providers .....	30
Table 17. Median Parent Fees for CCOF Funded Facilities in Prince George and BC .....	39
Table 18. Space Creation Targets Across Age Groups.....	48
Table 19. Short Term Proposed Space Creation Targets Across Age Groups.....	48

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Child Care Action Plan for the City of Prince George was developed as part of the Community Child Care Planning Program Grant from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. This funding was used to develop a Child Care Action Plan for the City of Prince George. As a result of a variety of community engagement and data collection activities, several central findings about child care in our community became evident:

**Families in Prince George are struggling to access child care.** While there appear to be shortages for child care spaces for all children, spaces for infant and toddler care (ages 0–36 months) and school age care (6–12 years) are particularly scarce. Other important child care issues in Prince George include affordability, location, timing/schedules, quality, and ability to access specific types of child care and programming. Importantly, there are several groups who are especially underserved by child care, including children who require extra supports, Indigenous families, low income families, families from minority language and culture groups, and young parents; these groups have even greater challenges accessing child care.

**Child care providers are experiencing a staffing crisis, with a critical shortage in Early Childhood Educator (ECE) trained workers available in Prince George.** These staff shortages resulted in providers being unable to hire substitutes needed due to illness, vacations, and professional development time. In many cases, providers were forced to close their child care operations during these periods. Shortages of ECE trained child care providers also increased barriers for accessing child care for underserved populations. For example, ECEs with specialized training for caring for children with special needs can reduce the pressure on the long waitlists for accessing external support staff.

In light of these issues, this report provides recommendations regarding the development of new child care spaces, including specifics on how we can better meet the child care needs of families in Prince George.

## BACKGROUND

The Province of British Columbia is working to address shortages in access to child care through investments in child care space creation, the building of quality child care facilities, and in the training of early childhood educators. This expanded investment in the child care sector will represent \$1 billion over three years. This includes \$237 million to create 22,000 new licensed child care spaces across British Columbia. The Community Child Care Planning Program administered by the Union of BC Municipalities is one of several BC government initiatives designed to improve access to child care for British Columbians. This program supports municipalities to undertake child care planning activities and create a child care action plan.

This report presents the results of the City of Prince George's child care planning activities. We include an examination of the current state of access to child care in Prince George, including the availability of spaces according to age, license type, location, timing and schedule, child care preferences and needs, and access to child care for underserved populations. We describe the results of an inventory of licensed child care spaces in Prince George, followed by space creation targets for the next decade. The report concludes with recommendations and actions regarding space creation targets.

## DATA COLLECTION

Data sources for this project included administrative databases, surveys of parents and child care providers, interviews with key stakeholders, an open house, poster display engagement sessions, and a focus group for child care providers. These data collection activities were carried out from September to December 2019.

## CHILD CARE INVENTORY

We developed a comprehensive inventory of licensed child care spaces in Prince George. The inventory was populated from databases held by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Northern Health, Prince George Child Care Resource and Referral, and the City of Prince George. Data from community engagement activities were also used to complete the inventory. Data were extracted from databases and compiled into the inventory from September to December 2019. A limitation of the child care inventory is that the number of spaces listed in the inventory could be higher than the number of actual spaces available. For example, it is possible that child care providers could close their facility temporarily while continuing to maintain their license, or could decide not to accept the maximum number of children possible under their particular license.

## PARENT SURVEY

The parent survey was disseminated online using Simple Survey electronic survey software. The survey content was first developed by consultants, and then revised after feedback from City staff and several experienced providers of child care. The survey was then pilot tested by six parents, and was further revised. The survey took about 5–10 minutes for parents to complete. We promoted the survey via a number of channels, including setting up a display table at the City of Prince George Active Living Market and promotion via City of Prince George communication channels, including the City’s website and Facebook page. The survey was also advertised in the City of Prince George School Break Flyer, and at our community engagement poster display sessions. The survey was open from September 7 to October 29, 2019.

We received a total of 805 surveys containing at least partial data. These 805 surveys represented an estimated 1401 children who need or use child care, or about 10% of the 13,782 children aged 0–12 in the City of Prince George<sup>1</sup>. We do not have exact numbers for how many children were represented in each age category because we had a “4 or more” category when we asked parents how many children they had that required child care. However, there were only five respondents who selected “4 or more” for any of the age groups, so our estimate of 1401 children is likely to be very close to the actual number of children represented by the survey.

**Table 1. Demographics of Parent Survey Respondents**

Characteristic	n=805
Gender	%
Female	91.4
Male	8.5
Gender diverse	0.1
Number of parents in household	
1	12.8
2	86.3
Other	1.0
Age	
Under 25	3.7
25-34	53.1
35-49	42.3
50+	1.0
Is currently attending post-secondary education	10.4
Indigenous identity	6.1
Language spoken at home	
English	98.1
French	0.8
Other	1.1
Length of time lived in Canada	
Born in Canada	93.7
10+ years	4.4
5-10 years	1.1
0-5 years	0.8

<sup>1</sup> BC Stats, 2019. Population Projections – 2019–2029, Prince George Census Agglomeration – Custom Tabulation.



The ages of the children represented by the families in the survey sample differed from the actual population proportions for Prince George. Compared to the actual number of children in Prince George, the sample proportions were overrepresented for children ages 0–2 (44.5% in the survey vs. 20.7% in the actual population), were closer for children ages 3–5 years old (26.1% in the survey vs. 22.2% in the population), and underrepresented for those age 6–12 (29.5% in the survey vs. 57.2% in the population).

Table 2. Comparison of Survey Sample to Child Population of Prince George				
	Survey		Population, 2019 <sup>2</sup>	
Age group	N	%	N	%
<b>0 to 2 years</b>	623	44.5	2846	20.7
<b>3 to 5 years</b>	365	26.1	3055	22.2
<b>6-12 years</b>	413	29.5	7881	57.2
<b>Total</b>	1401	100	13782	100
<b>*Note: Proportion totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.</b>				

<sup>2</sup> BC Stats, 2019. Population Projections – 2019–2029, Prince George Census Agglomeration – Custom Tabulation.

## PROVIDER SURVEY

The provider survey was also delivered electronically through the Simple Survey software platform. As with the parent survey questions, the provider survey questions were initially developed by consultants, reviewed by City staff, pilot tested by several child care providers and revised again based on the feedback received. The provider survey was distributed by email to child care providers via the Prince George Child Care Resource and Referral Centre's database of child care providers. The survey link was also posted on the Prince George Child Care Resource and Referral Facebook page and was circulated at our community engagement poster display sessions. The provider survey was open from October 7 to October 29, 2019. We received a total of 64 responses with at least partial data.

Table 3. Types of Child Care Delivered by Child Care Provider Survey Respondents	
Type of Care	% (n=64)
Family Child Care	48.4
School Age Care	17.2
Group Child Care	14.1
In-Home Multi-Age Child Care	12.5
Preschool	12.5
License-Not-Required Family Child Care	4.7
Other	4.7
Occasional Child Care	1.6
*Note: If summed together, the proportions will equal over 100% because providers could select one or more types of care. For example, some providers work in multiple settings/facilities.	

## POSTER DISPLAY

The general public were invited to provide feedback on child care in Prince George via a poster display. The poster included four questions about child care, as well as a map of Prince George where people could place a sticker in the location they would like more child care. The display was exhibited at six locations. Firstly, we held an open house at the Prince George Family Resource Centre. Other displays were scheduled during events and/or at locations around Prince George where families with children were expected to be present, including the City of Prince George 'Talktober' event, a parenting presentation at the Prince George Native Friendship Centre, 'story time' events at both public libraries in Prince George, and Save-On-Foods at the Hart Highlands location.

**Table 4. Summary of Poster Display Locations**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date and Time</b>
City of Prince George 'Talktober' Event	Prince George Civic Centre	October 1-2, 2019, 12-2pm
Family Resource Centre Open House	South Fort George Family Resource Centre	October 5, 2019, 2-5pm
Dr. Vanessa LaPointe presentation	Prince George Native Friendship Centre	October 7, 2019, 6-8pm
Story Time at Nechako Library	Prince George Public Library - Nechako Branch	October 16, 2019, 10am-12:30pm
Family Story Time at Bob Harkins Library	Prince George Public Library - Bob Harkins Branch	October 19, 2019, 10am-12:30pm
Table at store entrance	Save-On-Foods - Hart Highlands location	October 23, 2019, 12-2pm

## INTERVIEWS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Interviews with key stakeholders involved in child care in Prince George were conducted in order to gather input into child care use patterns and concerns in Prince George. An initial list of organizations was developed based on their involvement with child care in Prince George; individuals in decision-making and managerial roles in these organizations were then approached for an interview. A total of 21 organizations, agencies, and governing bodies were contacted. Rather than a private interview, three organizations chose to participate in the provider focus group. Eight organizations either did not respond, or a time for an interview could not be arranged within the project time frame. Between September 25 to October 30, 2019, we conducted 13 interviews involving 23 people from 10 different organizations. Organizations interviewed included Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern BC, Carney Hill Neighbourhood Centre Society, The Child Development Centre of Prince George and District, Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Northern Health Licensing, Prince George Child Care Resource and Referral, School District 57, the UNBC Nursing Research Group, and the YMCA of Northern BC.

## FOCUS GROUP FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

A focus group was also designed to gather input regarding barriers to accessing care for underserved populations, including children who require extra supports, Indigenous families, minority cultural and language groups, low-income parents, and young parents. The focus group took place on November 4, 2019 at the Prince George Child Care Resource and Referral office and included eight individuals representing six child care facilities. The insights from the focus group originated from people working on the ground in child care; as such, the results of the focus group represent grounded practitioner knowledge of barriers underserved populations face in accessing child care in Prince George.

## General Profile of Prince George – 2016 Census, City of Prince George Census Agglomeration<sup>3</sup>

In order to provide context for this child care needs assessment, we first present sociodemographic information about the City of Prince George. Unless stated otherwise, data presented in this section are from the 2016 Census and are based on the boundaries for the Prince George Census Agglomeration.

**Population and Age Structure.** From the 2016 Census, the City of Prince George has a total population of 86,622, representing an increase from 84,230 in 2011. The average age of residents is 39.4 years old. 17.5% of the population are 0–14 years old, 68.4% are 15–64, and 14.1% are over 65. From 2011 to 2016, there was a modest increase in overall population; there was also concurrent modest growth in the child population aged 0–12. Moving forward, population projections indicate that although the overall population of Prince George is expected to continue growing over the next decade, the population of children aged 0–12 is expected to decline<sup>4</sup>.

Table 5. Population Projections for Ages 0-12 in Prince George 2019-2029											
Age	Year										
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
0-36 months	2846	2731	2644	2631	2639	2618	2596	2559	2513	2466	2427
3-5 years	3055	3055	3021	2888	2790	2688	2681	2667	2648	2626	2591
6-12 years	7881	7716	7696	7657	7527	7460	7286	7077	6983	6825	6685

**Family Structure.** The population of Prince George includes 34,515 households. Of these households, 37.8% have children. 17.8% of families are lone-parent families, with 13.4% residing with a female parent, and 4.3% residing with a male parent. Of families with children, 19.0% had one child, 20.3% had two children, and 8.4% had three or more children.

**Culture, Language and Immigration.** The majority of Prince George residents speak primarily English at home (94.7%). Other primary languages spoken include Punjabi (1.1%), French (0.2%), Mandarin (0.2%), Cantonese (0.2%), and

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016. Census Profile – 2016 Census, [Prince George Census Agglomeration](#).

<sup>4</sup> BC Stats, 2019. Population Projections – 2019–2029, Prince George Census Agglomeration – Custom Tabulation.

Tagalog (0.2%). 0.1% primarily spoke an Aboriginal language at home. 89.2% of Prince George residents were born in Canada. Of the 10.8% who were not born in Canada, 1.4% were recent immigrants who immigrated between 2011 to 2016, and 0.8% immigrated between 2006–2010. Non-permanent residents make up 1.0% of the population. Immigrants in Prince George were primarily from Asia (34.8%), with 13.2% from India, 9.0% from the Philippines, and 4.3% from China. Other common locations of origin include the United Kingdom (13.8%), United States (10.3%), Germany (5.7%), and African countries (4.6%).

***Aboriginal Identity.*** 14.6% of the Prince George population identify as Aboriginal, with 8.3% identifying as First Nations, 5.9% Métis, and the remaining identifying with multiple categories.

***Income and Employment.*** In 2019, the unemployment rate for Prince George was 5.6%<sup>5</sup>. The leading areas of employment in Prince George include Health Care and Social Assistance (13.1%), Retail (12.9%), Construction (8.3%), Manufacturing (8.0%), Accommodation and Food Services (7.6%), Education (7.1%), Transportation and Warehousing (6.4%), and Public Administration (6.0%). About 12.6% of the population are considered ‘low income’ based on the low-income measure after tax (LIM-AT). Most residents are living in homes they own (72.2%).

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada, 2019. Labour Force Characteristics by Census Agglomeration, Annual, Table 14-10-0102-01. Available from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410010201>

## CURRENT STATE OF CHILD CARE IN PRINCE GEORGE AND ASSESSMENT OF TRENDS

This section describes the current state of child care in Prince George, including an assessment of child care space availability, child care utilization patterns, and current issues and concerns regarding child care. Next, we summarize some of the programs and services that currently exist in Prince George to meet the needs of underserved populations. This section concludes with a description of the programs and services that are most needed in Prince George to meet the child care needs of underserved groups.

### CHILD CARE SPACE UTILIZATION PATTERNS

The child care space utilization rate is a comparison of the number of child care spaces that are currently being used to the total number of licensed spaces. To assess child care utilization, we accessed several data sources, including accessibility ratings from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), our inventory of child care spaces in Prince George, and surveys of parents and providers. Table 6 describes the number of child care spaces and programs in Prince George across the various licence types.

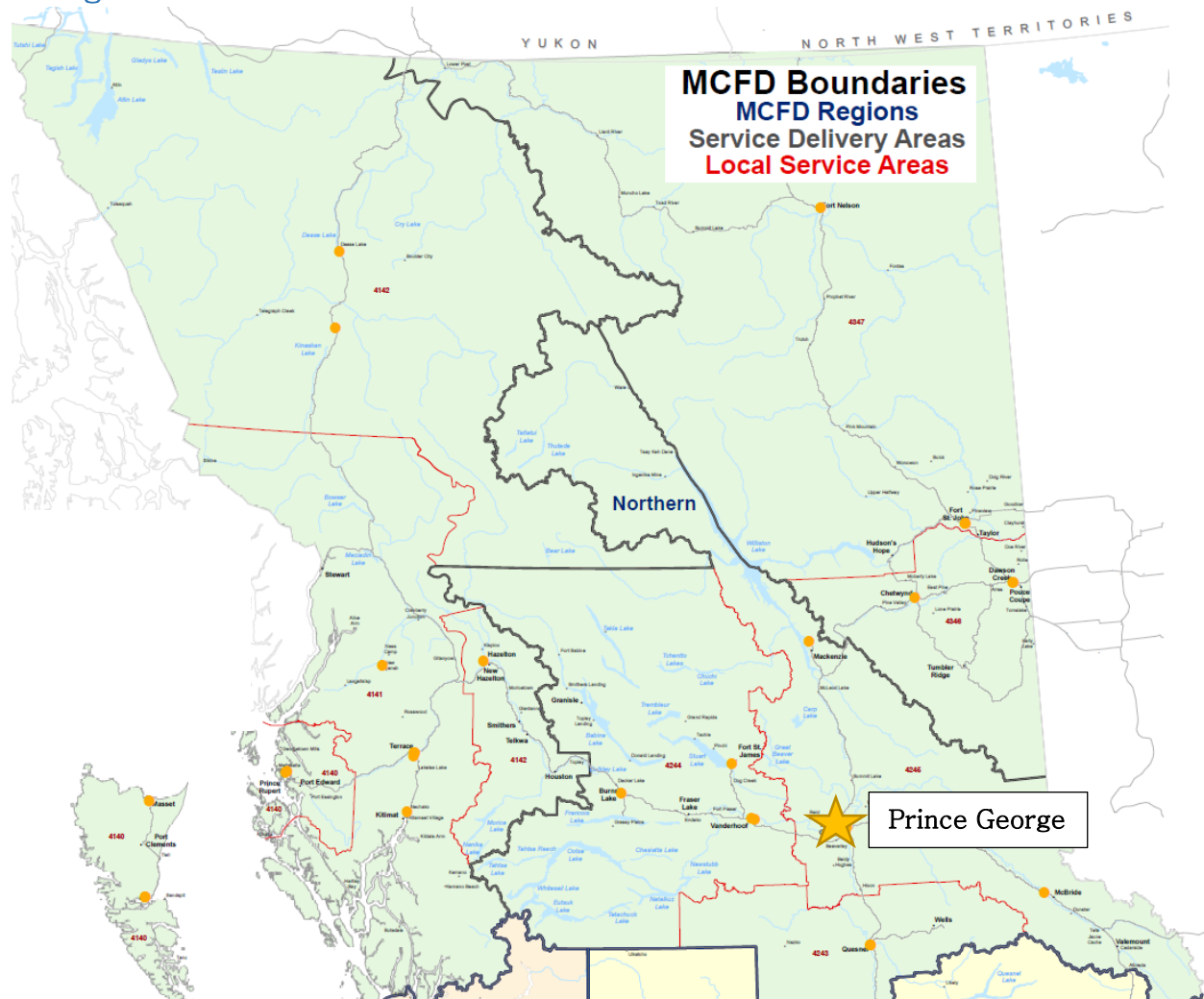
Table 6. Number of Child Care Spaces and Programs in Prince George								
License type	Group (0- 36 Months)	Group (30 Months to School Age)	Licensed Preschool	Group (School Age)	Multi-Age Child Care	Family Child Care Spaces	In-Home Multi-Age Child Care	Total
Number of Programs	8	15	15	33	8	99	16	194
Number of spaces	92	358	312	909	82	693	128	2574

In summary, there are 194 licensed child care programs in Prince George representing 2574 child care spaces. Based on 2019 child population estimates<sup>6</sup>, Prince George currently has **18.7 spaces per 100 children**.

<sup>6</sup> BC Stats, 2019. Population Projections – 2019–2029, Prince George Census Agglomeration – Custom Tabulation.

Assessments of the accessibility of child care are conducted by the Ministry of Children and Family Development and are available at the Local Service Delivery Area level. The City of Prince George is located in the Prince George Local Service Delivery Area which extends east to include McBride and Valemount, north to Mackenzie and Tsay Keh Dene, south to Hixon, and west about halfway to Vanderhoof (Figure 1)<sup>7</sup>.

**Figure 1. Ministry of Children and Family Development Boundaries for Prince George Local Service Area.**

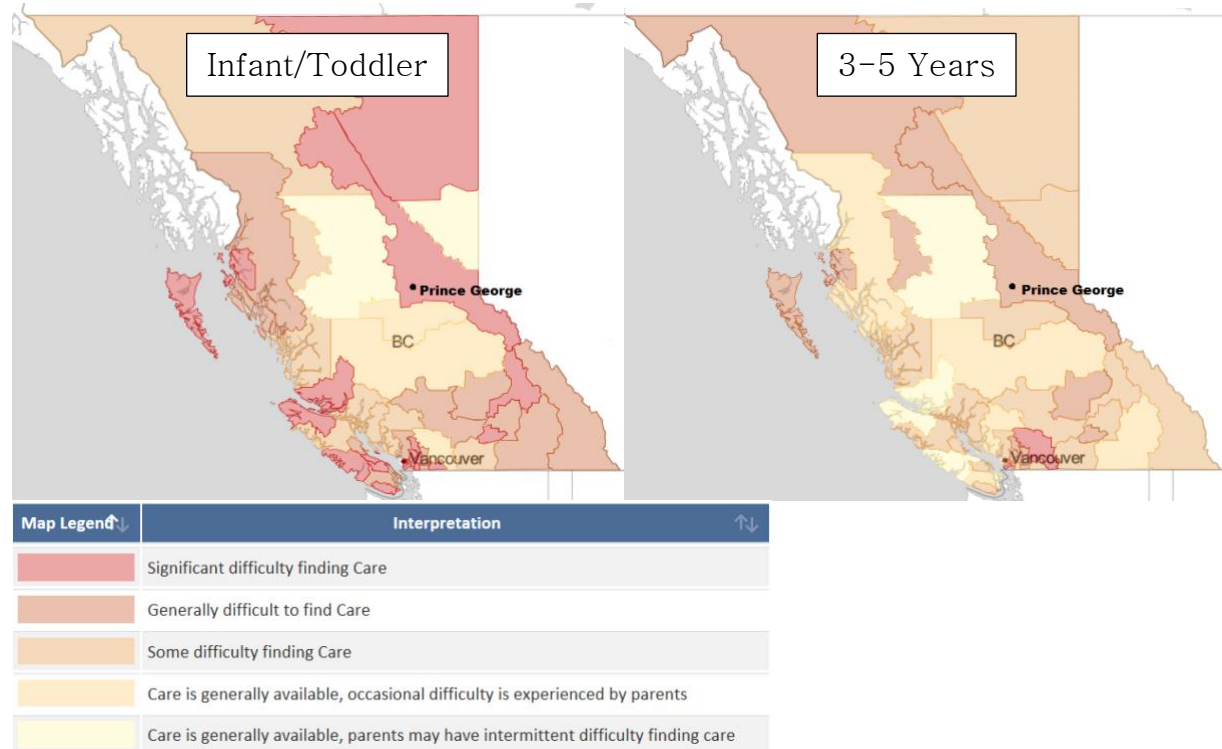


<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2019. British Columbia MCFD Boundaries. Available from: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/service-delivery-area-search/map\\_office\\_locations.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/service-delivery-area-search/map_office_locations.pdf)



According to 2017/18 assessments of child care accessibility for group infant/toddler care from the Ministry of Child and Family Development (Figure 2), the Prince George Local Service Area falls into the least desirable category, indicating that families have ‘Significant difficulty finding care’. Group Care for children aged 3–5 years is marginally more accessible, receiving a ranking of ‘Generally difficult to find care’.

**Figure 2. Accessibility of Group Care for Infant/Toddler and 3–5 Years in Prince George Local Service Area.<sup>8</sup>**



<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2018. 2017/18 Early Years Performance Indicators. Available from: <https://mcfcd.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/early-years/performance-indicators>

---

## DOES PRINCE GEORGE HAVE ENOUGH CHILD CARE SPACES?

### Child Care Age Configurations for Children Over 12 Months:

#### Family Child Care:

1. A provider may care for two children who are between 12 months and 24 months old, two children who are between 24 months and 48 months old, and three children who are between 48 months and 12 years old.
2. A provider may care for one child who is between 12 months and 24 months old, three children who are between 24 months and 48 months old, and three children who are between 48 months and 12 years old.
3. A provider may care for one child who is between 12 months and 24 months old, one child who is between 24 months and 48 months old, and five children who are between 48 months and 12 years old.

#### Multi-Age Child Care

1. A provider may care for three children who are between 12 months and 36 months old, and five children who are between 36 months and 12 years old.
2. A provider may care for two children who are between 12 months and 36 months old, six children who are between 36 months and 12 years old.
3. A provider may care for one child who is between 12 months and 36 months old, and seven children who are between 36 months and 12 years old.

Prince George has a total of 2574 licensed child care spaces for 13782 children aged 0–12 years old, or 18.7 spaces per 100 children. From the MCFD graphics above, and feedback from our various engagement methods, we have heard that currently, there are not enough child care spaces in Prince George to meet demand. For example, in our parent survey, 85.6% of parents said they had difficulty accessing child care due to no spaces available or long waitlists. Similarly, amongst child care providers, 48.3% reported long waitlists as an issue.

To be more specific about the number of spaces we need to create for the different age groups, ideally, we would know exactly how many spaces are currently available for the various age groups. However, because licensing regulations allow for a variety of configurations of permitted spaces for the different age groups,<sup>9</sup> it is not possible to calculate the exact number of spaces available for the different age groups (see sidebar for an example of possible age configurations for child care programs with children over 12 months old)<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> BC Laws, 2011. Community Care and Assisted Living Act, Schedule E: Group Sizes and Employee to Children Ratios. Available from:

[http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/332\\_2007#ScheduleE](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/332_2007#ScheduleE)

<sup>10</sup> BC Government, 2019. Child Care Licensing Regulation. Available from:

[https://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2008/Child\\_Care\\_Licensing\\_Regulation.pdf](https://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2008/Child_Care_Licensing_Regulation.pdf) p. 12.

Using our inventory of child care spaces in Prince George, we have created estimates of available spaces per 100 children based on the following ‘typical’ scenario:

- Family Child Care: 4 children aged 0–36 months and 3 children aged 3–5, or 7 children total.
- Multi-Age Child Care: 3 children aged 0–36 months and 5 children aged 3–5. The remaining multi-age spaces were assigned to children ages 6–12 years old.
- We excluded licensed preschool spaces from the estimates because most preschool programs are not long enough to allow parents to work.

***Infant/Toddler Care (0–36 months).*** Based on the aforementioned assumptions, we estimated there are 560 spaces for the 2846 children aged 0–36 months in Prince George, or 19.7 spaces per 100 children. This number is likely an overestimate of the number of actual spaces available, because not all providers will decide to accept the maximum number of children under 36 months. Because of licensing restrictions for Family and Multi-Age providers for different age groups under 36 months (e.g., under 24 months and under 12 months), we can also infer that the younger the child, the more difficult it is to find a space. The increased difficulty in accessing spaces for infants and younger toddlers was also reinforced through findings from our interviews with stakeholders and the focus group with child care providers.

***3–5 Year Old Care.*** Excluding licensed preschool spaces, Prince George has 775 spaces for 3,055 children aged 3–5 years, or 25.4 spaces per 100 population aged 3–5 years old.

***School Age Care.*** We had an estimated 927 school age spaces for 7,881 children aged 6–12, or 11.8 spaces per 100 population aged 6–12. There are likely some additional spaces for this age group available within the Multi-Age and/or Family licensing categories; therefore, these numbers are likely an underestimate of the number of actual spaces available for this age group.

Table 7. Child Care Spaces and Ratios Per 100 Children										
License type	Group 36 Months	Group - 30 Months to School Age	Licensed Preschool	Group Child Care (School Age)	Multi-Age Child Care	Family Child Care Spaces	In-Home Multi-Age Child Care	Total	Census Population*	Spaces per 100 children
Actual number of spaces	92	358	312	909	82	693	128	2574	13782	18.7
Estimated spaces for ages 0-36 months	92	-	-	-	24*	396*	48*	560*	2846	19.7*
Estimated spaces for ages 3-5	-	358	-	-	40*	297*	80*	775*	3055	25.4*
Estimated spaces for ages 6-12	-	-	-	909	18*	-	-	927*	7881	11.8*
Number of Programs	8	15	15	33	8	99	16	194		
<b>Notes:</b> *Population sizes and spaces are based on the Prince George Census Agglomeration All totals and ratios are estimated based on 'typical' age and space configurations typical for child care providers.										

To place these numbers in context, Prince George's overall ratio of 18.7 spaces per 100 children compares to 18.4 for British Columbia overall, and 27.2 nationally.<sup>11</sup> Within British Columbia, Richmond had 22.4 spaces per 100 population, and the City of Vancouver had 18.5.<sup>12</sup> Amongst the provinces, Quebec had the highest ratio, at 55.1, followed by New Brunswick (29.2), Prince Edward Island (23.2), and the Northwest Territories (22.2).<sup>10</sup> On the lower end were Saskatchewan (8.4), Nunavut (10.9), Newfoundland (12.9), and Alberta (16.0).<sup>10</sup>

Based on survey responses regarding waitlists from parents and providers as well as accessibility assessments by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, we assume that the vast majority of the 2574 licensed spaces are filled. Based on this assumption, fewer than 1 in 5 children in Prince George are currently using child care.

<sup>11</sup> Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2016. Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2016. Available from:

<https://www.childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-in-Canada-2016.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> City of Richmond, 2017. 2017-2022 Richmond Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy. Available from: [https://www.richmond.ca/\\_shared/assets/2017-2022\\_Richmond\\_Child\\_Care\\_Needs\\_Assessment\\_and\\_Strategy48036.pdf](https://www.richmond.ca/_shared/assets/2017-2022_Richmond_Child_Care_Needs_Assessment_and_Strategy48036.pdf)

---

## DEMAND FOR DIFFERENT LICENSE TYPES

In the parent survey, families were asked about the types of child care that they prefer for their children. Group care was the most frequently identified license type with over half (60.5%) selecting group care. In-Home Family/Multi-Age care was the second most commonly selected license type, at 53.1%.

Table 8. Types of Child Care Preferred by Parents	
Type of care	% (n=805)
Group Care	60.5
In-Home Family or Multi-Age Care	53.1
School Age	43.4
Preschool	28.3
Occasional	17.8
License-Not-Required	11.9

Our respondents overwhelmingly preferred licensed child care, with only 11.9% of respondents stating that they prefer License-Not-Required child care. Although licensed care is most preferred, discussions with stakeholders and child care providers indicated that parents may choose unlicensed care for several reasons, including having a lack of awareness around the differences between licensed and unlicensed care, and also using unlicensed care as an interim measure due to the unavailability of licensed spaces.

---

## TIMING/SCHEDULES FOR CHILD CARE

Regarding the timing of child care, many families report that it is difficult to find care that works for their schedules. Over half of parents of parents stated that they were unable to find care for the hours or days needed (52.3%). Among these parents who had difficulty getting care for the times they needed it, schedules that were difficult to access included extended hours (59.3%), followed by full-time (42.2%), part-time (35.8%), and school closures (33.3%).

Table 9. Child Care Schedules that Parents Were Unable to Access	
Time or Schedule	% (n=407)
Extended hours – Before 7:30am or after 5:30pm	59.3
Full time – Monday to Friday	42.2
Part-time – Less than 5 days per week	35.8
School closures – e.g., Spring Break, Non-instructional days	33.3
Emergency and/or drop-in care	29.3
Before and/or after school	28.6
Weekends	26.7
Statutory holidays	21.3
Part days – Either mornings or afternoons	14.5
Overnight	10.8

According to our child care inventory, there are currently 21 providers who offer care during extended hours, 17 who are open on statutory holidays, and five providers who offer overnight care. Table 10 describes the number of spaces available for the various licensing types in Prince George for statutory holidays, overnight, and extended hours.

Table 10. Summary of Child Care Spaces for Statutory Holidays, Overnight, and Extended Hours				
	Multi-Age spaces	Family spaces	In-Home Multi-Age spaces	Total
<b>Statutory holidays</b>	26	91	24	141
<b>Overnight</b>	0	28	8	36
<b>Extended hours</b>	26	119	24	169

Occasional child care is valuable for several situations, including times when a regular child care provider is closed, during emergencies, or for irregular events such as medical appointments. Flexible hours are also especially important for shift workers, single parents and people who work on-call. Although we don't have exact numbers, there appears to be very few drop-in spaces available in Prince George, with only one out of the 64 child care providers who responded to our survey indicating that they provide occasional child care.

Parents were also asked about times when their regular child care provider was closed or unavailable (Table 11). Only 2.7% of respondents said they were able to access drop-in care when their regular provider was closed or unavailable. More often, parents took time off work (90.6%), asked family or friends for help (73.7%), or hired a babysitter (21.4%).

Table 11. Arrangements Made When Regular Child Care Provider Was Not Available	
Arrangement	% (n=805)
Took time off work	90.6
Asked family or friends for help	73.7
Hired a babysitter	21.4
Provider closed permanently – had to find new child care arrangement	12.3
Took time off school	10.0
Other	5.5
Used drop-in child care	2.7



## LOCATION OF CHILD CARE

While driving times for many Prince George residents are relatively short, and many families expressed that they were willing to travel to access their preferred child care, feedback from families and stakeholders also indicated that there are scenarios where the location of child care becomes particularly important. For people living rurally in locations such as Beverly, Ness Lake, Nukko Lake, Pineview and Lheidli T'enneh reserve, driving times can be significant, so the location of child care is important. Even for people who work a fairly 'average' nine hour work day, travel times could put them at risk of picking their children up late, or being late for work. Travel time can also become significant when siblings are not able to attend the same child care program, and parents must drive to drop children off at different places. Relatedly, long travel times can also result when a family's home, child care, and workplace are all located in different parts of the city. Finally, location is also an important issue for people who do not have their own personal transportation. Child care available within walking distance or on public transportation routes was considered beneficial, especially to low income families who may not have access to a vehicle.

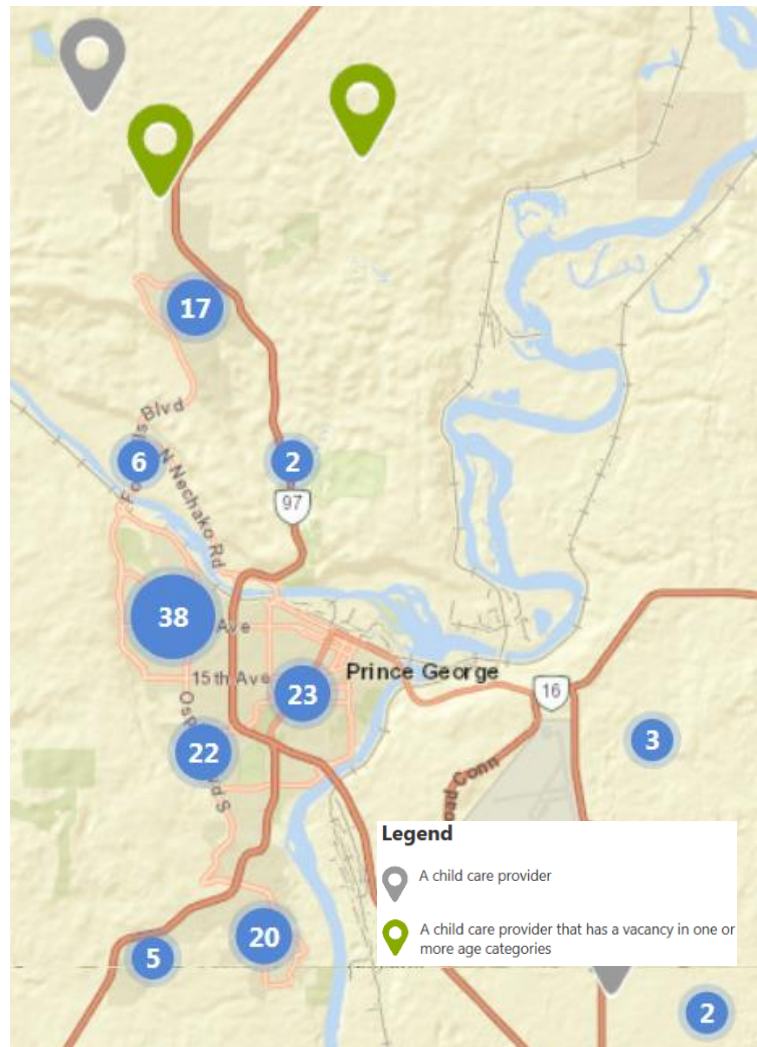


Figure 3. Locations of Child Care in Prince George, from BC Child Care Map: <http://maps.gov.bc.ca/ess/hm/ccf/>

In our survey of parents, 44.0% of respondents stated that they could not find child care in the location they preferred. The majority of survey respondents preferred their child care to be located close to their home (77.2%). Other

preferred locations included close to parent's workplace (58.6%), close to child's school (39.4%), and close to the parent's educational institution (6.3%). When asked about which neighbourhoods in Prince George were most favoured for child care, the downtown and 'bowl' area was most commonly mentioned (59.0%), followed by College Heights (32.4%), Hart (26.0%), and Other (27.8%).

---

## CO-LOCATION OF CHILD CARE WITH SCHOOLS

The location of before and after school care was also identified as a particular concern. Child care that is located on school grounds is frequently preferable. Firstly, the need for transportation to and from off-site child care can result in long travel times, which were identified as a stressor for children. In particular, children attending schools in the Hart experience longer travel times due to the travel distances between Hart schools and child care centres located in the 'bowl area'/downtown. Child care located within schools can also reduce stress for children due to continuity of norms and rules, and possibly, staff/caregivers. Stakeholders also mentioned that child care on-site at schools provides the additional benefit of facilitating the development of valuable relationships amongst participating families.

Of the 33 elementary schools in Prince George and the surrounding area, 13 have child care located on the same property or bordering the same property (Table 12). At these schools, there are a total of 12 spaces for children aged 0–36 months, 81 spaces for children aged 30 months to school age, 40 preschool spaces, 396 school age spaces, and eight multi-age spaces.



**Table 12. Schools in Prince George with Co-Located Child Care**

Facility Name	School	Group (0-36 Months)	Group (30 Months- School Age)	Licensed Preschool Spaces	Group (School Age)	Multi- Age
Kids Club Beverly West Leisure Society	Beverly Elementary School	0	0	0	30	0
Big Brothers Big Sisters Lil Rascals	Blackburn Elementary	0	0	0	18	0
Cedars Child Care	Cedars Christian School	0	0	0	24	0
Service de Garde Franco- Amis	Ecole Franco Nord	0	0	0	12	0
Heart to Hart Preschool & After School Care	Heather Park Elementary	0	0	20	25	0
YMCA Immaculate Conception School Age Child Care	Immaculate Conception School	0	0	0	24	0
YMCA Lac Des Bois Care and Learning Centre	Lac Des Bois Elementary	12	25	20	64	0
Carney Hill Neighbourhood Centre	Nusdeh Yoh Elementary	0	40	0	64	8
Kool Cats Kid Care	Polaris Montessori Elementary	0	0	0	45	0
Montessori Early Learning Centre	Polaris Montessori Elementary School	0	16	0	16	0
Children's Choice Daycare	Sacred Heart School	0	0	0	24	0
YMCA Springwood School Age	Springwood Elementary	0	0	0	20	0
Busy B's Clubhouse	Vanway Elementary on bordering property	0	0	0	12	0
YMCA Westwood School Aged Child Care	Westwood Elementary	0	0	0	18	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 Schools</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>8</b>

---

## CO-LOCATION OF CHILD CARE WITH FAMILY SERVICES

Having resources co-located with child care can be beneficial for children and families, by providing convenient, seamless access to services such as recreation facilities, libraries, and social supports. Co-location can be physical, where services are located on the same property, or organizational, where services are delivered directly to the child care centre from another location, and/or fall under the same organizational umbrella. According to our child care inventory, there are 17 child care operations in Prince George that are co-located with other services (Table 13). These child care operations represent 736 spaces, or 29.7% of spaces in Prince George.

**Table 13. Child Care Operations in Prince George Co-Located with Family Services**

Facility Name	Co-located services	Group (0-36 Months)	Group (30 Months - School Age)	Licensed Preschool	Group (School Age)	Multi-Age
Kids Club Beverly West Leisure Society	Beverly West Leisure Society	0	0	0	30	0
Big Brothers Big Sisters ASC Clubhouse	Big Brothers Big Sisters	0	0	0	36	0
Big Brothers Big Sisters Lil Rascals	Blackburn Community Centre	0	0	0	18	0
Carney Hill Neighbourhood Centre	Carney Hill Neighbourhood Centre	0	40	0	64	8
Story Book Preschool	Child Development Centre	0	0	20	0	0
Caledonia Early Care and Learning Centre	College of New Caledonia	0	24	0	0	0
Teeter Tots Early Learning Centre	Columbus Community Centre	0	25	0	45	8
Elizabeth Fry Family Centre	Elizabeth Fry Society	12	0	0	0	0
Exploration Place	Exploration Place Museum	0	0	20	50	0
Power of Friendship Aboriginal Head Start Program	Head Start, Prince George Native Friendship Centre	0	0	20	0	0
Prince George Aboriginal Head Start	Head Start, Prince George Native Friendship Centre	0	0	20	0	0
Le Coin Des Petits	Le Cercle des Canadiens Francais de Prince George	0	0	20	0	0
Teddy Bear Preschool	Pineview Recreation Centre	0	0	20	0	0
Little Friends Day Care	Prince George Native Friendship Centre	8	22	0	0	0
YMCA Highland Development Centre	School District 57 Aboriginal Education Society, Northern Health Community Care	12	25	0	47	0
U.N.B.C. Child Care	University of Northern British Columbia	12	33	20	0	0
YMCA Early Learning Centre	YMCA Fitness Centre, Child Care Resource and Referral	12	25	20	20	0
<b>Total</b>		56	194	160	310	16

Relevant to this discussion of schedules and location is the topic of child care for shift workers, such as health care professionals, firefighters, police, and mill workers. Difficulty accessing care that meets the needs of shift workers was mentioned frequently in interviews, survey responses and on the poster displays. The results of the child care inventory indicated that there are very few child care operations that provide care that would meet the needs of shift workers. For example, while shift workers may need different days each week, they often pay for full time care because it is the only way to secure a space. This is a problem not only for affordability, but also because these spaces are ‘taken’ and may not be available for another child. Some workers are also required to be on-call; child care facilities offering drop-in care are very difficult to find. Other shift work schedules that are difficult to find child care for include extended hours, overnight, statutory holidays, and weekends.

The suggestion that a child care facility should be located at the University Hospital of Northern BC arose several times throughout this work. A child care facility located at the hospital would be very convenient for the numerous hospital employees with children. Furthermore, these child care spaces would be co-located with clinical services available at the hospital and the Health Unit, potentially increasing access to services that children and their families need.

---

## CHILDCARE NEEDS AND PREFERENCES

Although many parents indicated that they have preferences for their child care such as the type of programming offered, due to the lack of spaces, parents reported that they were not able to be ‘picky’ about trying to find the kind of child care they prefer. 37.7% of parents mentioned they were unable to find child care that suited their preferences/needs.

Table 14. Child Care Issues Affecting Parents in Prince George	
Issue	% (n=805)
Availability – No spaces available/long waitlists	85.6
Cost too high	67.1
Schedule – Care not available during hours/days needed	52.3
Location – Care not located close to home/work/school	44.0
Could not find child care that suited my preferences/needs	37.7
Reliability – Care closed temporarily or permanently	25.1

When asked about child care preferences and needs that were difficult to access, families mentioned programming/philosophy (21.0%), staff qualifications (19.0%), capacity to care for children who require extra supports (12.7%), and culturally sensitive care (3.1%). Other preferences identified by parents included outdoor time, limits on screen time, cleanliness of the facility, developmentally appropriate care, nutritious meals, and consistent staff.

Table 15. Child Care Preferences and Needs Parents Were Unable to Access	
Item	% (n=805)
Programming and/or philosophy did not meet our needs/preferences	21.0
Staff qualifications inadequate	19.0
Lack of capacity to care for children who need extra supports	12.7
Culturally sensitive care was not available	3.1
Other	18.0

---

## STAFFING

The results of the child care provider survey, the focus group for child care providers, and discussions with stakeholders indicated that while it is very positive that there is government funding available to open new child care spaces, without addressing staffing shortages, new spaces opened will result in the ‘poaching’ of qualified staff from other locations, ultimately affecting the quality of child care in those locations. Providers and stakeholders expressed the sentiment that child care work is generally undervalued, and a societal attitude shift is needed to address this. Existing staffing issues that reflect this undervaluing of child care work include a shortage of qualified providers, difficulty retaining workers, low wages, loss of ECEs from the child care sector to other employers and positions such as the School District, and migration of ECE graduates away from Prince George. This scarcity of qualified staff has had several consequences, including difficulty finding substitutes to cover illness, training days, or vacations. The inability to find substitutes also contributes to burnout, and subsequently, even fewer child care providers.

From our survey of providers, issues related to staffing included finding substitute staff (55.0%), long waitlists (48.3%), low wages (41.7%), and staff retention (11.7%).

**Table 16. Staffing Issues Experienced by Prince George Child Care Providers**

Issue	% (n=64)
Finding substitute staff	55.0
Long waitlists	48.3
Wages are too low	41.7
Finding well-trained staff	28.3
Retaining staff	11.7

Another issue identified was the transferability of courses and early childhood education credentials from outside of BC and Canada. Child care providers indicated that it is difficult to transfer education from other jurisdictions to acquire local ECE certification. Consequently, skilled workers with foreign credentials are underemployed. Similarly, child care providers also experienced difficulty obtaining local recognition for coursework from other institutions. For example, when courses were temporarily unavailable locally, providers sought training at other institutions within BC. Credits from these courses were not always transferable back to the local ECE program.

Staffing is also an issue with respect to children who require extra supports. While there is funding to support opening new spaces, without a concurrent increase in ECEs or support staff, the new spaces will not be inclusive.

---

## UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

Groups typically underserved by child care include children who require extra supports, Indigenous families, low-income families, young parents, families of minority languages and cultures, and immigrants and refugees. This section describes some of the programs and services available in Prince George to assist underserved groups in accessing child care, as well as describes gaps in these services.

---

### CHILDREN WHO REQUIRE EXTRA SUPPORTS

Children who require extra supports include children with developmental or communication delays, exceptional health care needs, and/or behavioural or emotional challenges. From our survey of providers, 39.3% indicated they are able to include children who require extra supports into their child care programs.

- ***Prince George Child Development Centre (CDC):*** The Prince George CDC provides services to children in Prince George with special needs and developmental delays. Through a variety of programs, the CDC assists children with a broad range of developmental areas, including social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and communication skills.
  - ***Supported Child Development Program:*** The CDC has a Supported Child Development Program which provides services to support child care programs to offer inclusive child care. Some of the services offered by the Supported Child Development Program include the sharing of resources and information, arranging for specialized child-focused training, delivering training and support to caregivers, providing staff to support children while attending child care programs, lending toys and equipment, and assisting families with accessing services. The CDC's Family Support Worker assists families with applying for funding and offers parenting and sibling support groups.
- ***Infant Development Program (IDP):*** Delivered by AimHi, the IDP provides services for children aged 0–3 who are at risk of or have a developmental delay. Services include home visits, assessments, parent support, and workshops.

- ***Pacific Autism Family Network (PAFN)***: PAFN is a BC wide organization with a Prince George branch. PAFN's core aim is to be a 'Knowledge Centre' providing a collection of resources for families, including supports for basic information, research, assessment and treatment.
- ***Pivot Point***: Pivot Point provides services to children and adults who require extra supports. Services for children include early intervention, school age services, and educational services.
- ***Family Support Institute of BC (FSIBC)***: FSIBC is a province wide society with the mandate of supporting families of people with disabilities. Services include providing information, delivering workshops, and building support through a family-to-family peer support model.
- ***Educational Assistants at School District 57***: School District 57 provides Educational Assistants who provide extra supports for school-aged children when they are at school.
- ***Child Care Resource and Referral***: Offers the 'Ages and Stages' questionnaire, to assist with identifying extra supports a child may require before they enter child care.
- ***Assistance by Child Care Providers***: Several child care providers mentioned that they are able to advocate for families so children can receive the services they need. For example, some child care providers undertake an initial consultation with families to identify any extra supports that are needed, assist families in making connections with the referral process, and create a specialized care plan.

## GAPS – CHILDREN WHO REQUIRE EXTRA SUPPORTS

---

- ***Waitlists for Services***: Although many excellent programs exist for families of children who require extra supports, there are large waitlists to access services from organizations such as the CDC. In order to attend child care, children who require extra supports often need support workers to assist them. Currently, the number of support workers available at the Prince George CDC is not sufficient to meet demands, resulting in long waitlists for services. This is important, because children who cannot access child care are kept home and don't receive the



valuable benefits of social interaction and learning from their peers. Furthermore, when families are unable to access child care, parents may be forced to resign from their jobs in order to care for their children at home. The shortage of ECEs in Prince George was also identified as a barrier to accessing child care for children who require extra supports. If Prince George had more ECE trained workers with special needs training, this could help reduce the pressure on the demand for support workers from the CDC.

When child care providers were asked about what they would need in order to offer inclusive care, responses included the increased availability of support workers, more access to specialized training and/or ECE training, and funding to hire additional staff.

- ***Summer Care for School Age Children:*** Summer care was also identified as a gap for school age children. While school age children receive support from Educational Assistants from the school district during the school year, there are no staff available through the CDC to support the large number of school age children who need extra supports during the summer.
- ***Wrap-Around Services:*** Other needed programs and services include transportation to medical appointments from child care, additional support for families, behaviour support, and training on how to advocate for oneself. Families that are affected by issues such as poverty, substance abuse or mental health issues need extra supports in order to access services.
- ***Accessible Spaces:*** Funding to modify buildings to make them accessible was another identified need that would assist providers in offering inclusive care.
- ***Care for Youth Ages 13-18:*** There is a gap in programs and supports for youth who have aged out of child care. While child care programs serve ages 0-12, many youth aged 13-18 with special needs are not able to stay home alone, yet are also not old enough to qualify for programs that serve adults.

---

## INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

- ***Prince George Native Friendship Centre:*** The Prince George Native Friendship Centre (PGNFC) offers a variety of programming, including an Aboriginal Supported Child Development (ASCD) Program and Head Start. PGNFC also provide a wide variety of wrap-around social supports, including child and family development programs, literacy training, access to computers and computer training, counselling, a cultural advisor, employment support and training and housing supports.
  - ***Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program:*** The Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program (ASCD) provides services for Indigenous children who require extra supports via a culturally appropriate, strength-based approach. The ASCD program recognizes contributions from circles of people who surround the child, including elders, parents, caregivers, and the community. The program is designed to assist children who require extra support in order to attend child care, including providing support staff for child care settings, referrals, assessments, therapy, and networking.
  - ***Head Start:*** Head Start is a program that addresses the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of Aboriginal children ages 3–5 years old who live in urban communities. The program is based on six components, including culture and language, education and school readiness, health promotion, nutrition, parent and family involvement, and social support. There are two Head Start programs in Prince George.
  - ***Aboriginal Infant Development Program:*** This program provides services such as pregnancy outreach, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder information, home visits, child assessments, referrals, drop in groups, and workshops.
- ***Carrier Sekani Family Services:*** Provides a broad range of holistic, culturally relevant, health and wellness services for Carrier Sekani people. Examples of services offered include parenting training, family supports, nutrition, meal programs, life skills, housing services, and referrals.
- ***Nezul Be Hunuyeh:*** Nezul Be Hunuyeh provides child and family services programs for Tl'azt'en and Nak'azdli families. Programs include assisting

families with children in foster care, building cultural connections, and family support programs assisting with skills such as budgeting, parenting, communication, child development, and healthy lifestyles.

- ***Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Course:*** This course is offered online via the BC Provincial Health Services Authority. Some child care providers require the completion of this course by their staff. Course content includes information about culture, stereotyping, the effects of colonization, and building effective communication and relationships. The course is free for anyone employed by a BC regional Health Authority, Ministry of Health, or Aboriginal organizations; for others, there is a \$250 fee.

## GAPS – INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

---

From discussions with the Education and Health Coordinators for Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, there were several concerns and barriers identified regarding child care:

- ***Trust and Relationship Building.*** Closer relationships between child care providers and the community are highly desired. While having Indigenous child care providers was considered very important, an even higher priority is the establishment of relationships between child care providers and community members. Suggestions for relationship-building strategies included posting staff biographies on child care centre websites and having child care providers come on-reserve to meet families and community members. Related to trust and relationship-building was mention of assistance with advocacy, such as increased access to family support workers. Family advocacy is important for interactions with child care providers and the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
- ***Culture and Language.*** Appropriate, quality cultural programming was identified as a critical aspect of child care for Lheidli T'enneh families. It was noted as important that Lheidli culture should be taught, rather than 'generic Indigenous' culture. Whenever possible, Lheidli language and culture experts should be utilized for teaching, but when not available, experts from other Carrier Nations (e.g., Saik'uz, Nak'azdli Whut'en, Nazko) would be preferred. More opportunities and support for cultural safety training for providers is also needed.

- ***Location and Timing of Child Care.*** There is no child care available on the Lheidli T'enneh reserve, so transportation is needed to access child care available in the city. Other important issues included the needs of shift workers who require flexible or extended hours for child care. Single parents, and in particular, single parent fathers, were mentioned as a group who often require non-standard hours for child care due to shift work.
- ***Co-Location of Services.*** Extra supports available within child care settings were also in demand, including Aboriginal Head Start, Educational Assistants that are available for after school care, mental health clinicians, and behavioural specialists. Follow-through after assessments for special needs was identified as a gap, with families not always receiving communications regarding next steps or how to access services. Wrap-around supports for the whole family was identified as highly desirable, including training for parents, poverty supports, mental health supports, and advocacy for interactions with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

---

## LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

- **Carney Hill Neighbourhood Centre Society:** Carney Hill Neighbourhood Centre (CHNC) is a non-profit social organization that provides services and support to residents of the lower income Veteran's Land Reserve (VLA) neighbourhood. Services are delivered from Nusdeh Yoh Elementary and Hadih House, which are centrally located and within walking distance for many VLA residents. The child care program is licensed to provide care for all age groups, from infancy to school age. CHNC aims to deliver low-barrier child care, including low fees, transportation for children, clothing when needed, and providing a welcoming and non-judgemental environment. Child care is conveniently located within Nusdeh Yoh Elementary, so school age children can access after-school care easily. Other co-located services for children include visits from clinicians in speech therapy, dental hygiene, and nursing. CHNC's nearby Hadih House also provides social 'wrap-around' services, including clothing, meal supports, laundry, computers, wellness programs, Carrier language/culture events, cooking, and sharing circles. CHNC also provides assistance with applying for the child care subsidy.
- ***Universal Child Care:*** The City of Prince George has a Pilot Program Site for BC's Universal Child Care Program at the Highland YMCA location. This program offers child care for \$10/day, or a maximum of \$200/month.
- ***Beyond the Bell:*** Beyond the Bell, a program operated by the YMCA at Glenview Elementary, is offered to vulnerable elementary students. The program includes help with homework, physical activity, and nutritious snacks.
- ***Services and Strategies Offered by Child Care Providers:*** Some providers assist families with low incomes by supplying meals and other needed supplies such as diapers and clothing. In the case of group care run by organizations, they may sponsor a few families in order to provide child care free of charge.
- ***South Fort George Family Resource Centre:*** Offers many programs and services, including play groups, support workers, clothing, training workshops, and access to services such as public health and dental hygiene.

- ***BC Government Initiatives to Reduce the Cost of Child Care:*** There are several BC Government initiatives designed to reduce the cost of child care and reduce barriers for low income families:
  - ***Affordable Child Care Benefit:*** The Affordable Child Care Benefit is available to all families in BC. The amount of money received by families depends on income, family size and type of care. For example, families who earn less than \$45,000/year could be reimbursed for the entire cost of their child care. Partial funding is available to families earning between \$45,000–\$111,000/year. Prince George falls into the North Central Service Delivery Area, where there was average of 835 children who received subsidies each month in 2017/18<sup>13</sup>. This number was down 4.8% from 2016/17 when there were an average of 877 children receiving subsidies per month. In comparison, the number of children receiving the Affordable Child Care Benefit declined 1.8% across British Columbia from the same time period.
  - ***BC Child Care Fee Reduction:*** This fee reduction provides funding to child care operations in order to reduce fees for parents. There are currently 104 child care operations in Prince George that have ‘opted-in’ to receive this funding<sup>7</sup>.
  - ***Child Care BC Start Up Program:*** The Child Care BC Start Up Program provides grants to assist people in opening new licensed child care spaces. The program includes funding to support training and the purchase of equipment needed for child care. As of January 2019, Prince George had 58 new spaces at eight facilities as a result of this funding<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2018. Early Years Case Data and Trends. Available from: <https://mcfcd.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/early-years/case-data-and-trends>

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2019. Startup Grants Give BC Families More Child Care Options. Available from: [https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news\\_releases\\_2017-2021/2019CFD0005-000107.htm](https://archive.news.gov.bc.ca/releases/news_releases_2017-2021/2019CFD0005-000107.htm)

- ***Child Care Operating Funding Program (CCOF)***: CCOF is an optional program that child care providers can choose to participate in. CCOF assists child care providers with the costs of running child care, which helps keep parent fees down. In the North Central Service Delivery Area, there were an average of 3,622 CCOF Contracted Child Care Spaces for the Fiscal year of 2017/18, or CCOF spaces for 17.6% of the child population<sup>15</sup>. This compares to 18.4% for British Columbia as a whole.
- In general, Median Parent Fees for CCOF Funded Facilities in the North Central Service Delivery Area are lower than the BC average:

Table 17. Median Parent Fees for CCOF Funded Facilities in Prince George and BC <sup>16</sup>			
Child Care Type		North Central Service Delivery Area	BC
Infant 0-18 months	Group	\$840	\$1,088
	Family	\$800	\$850
Toddler 19-35 months	Group	\$800	\$1,000
	Family	\$750	\$840
30 months to 5 years	Group	\$700	\$800
Licensed Preschool 3 days/week	Group	\$165	\$195
Licensed Preschool 5 days/week	Group	\$295	\$345
School Age Care (Kindergarten - Full Day K)	Group	\$348	\$412
	Family	\$433	\$445
School Age Care (Grades 1+ (Before and After School))	Group	\$300	\$330
	Family	\$400	\$400

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2018. Early Years Case Data and Trends. Available from: <https://mcfcd.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/early-years/case-data-and-trends>

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2018. Early Years Case Data and Trends. Available from: <https://mcfcd.gov.bc.ca/reporting/services/early-years/case-data-and-trends>

## GAPS – LOW INCOME FAMILIES

---

- ***Support with Applying for the Affordable Child Care Benefit.*** There are some existing supports to assist families with applying for the Affordable Child Care Benefit such as staff at the CCRR and CHNC, however, more access to assistance with this process would be desirable. Other related services needed to support the process includes access to a computer and electronic literacy training.
- ***Social Workers Available Within Child Care Settings.*** A social worker available in-house to support families could be helpful to vulnerable families.
- ***Transportation.*** Low income families have difficulty accessing child care as they may not have their own transportation. Strategies to reduce this barrier include building child care on public transportation routes, and/or the provision of transportation by child care facilities.

---

## YOUNG PARENTS

- ***Elizabeth Fry Society Teen Mothers' Alternate Program:*** The Teen Mothers' Alternate Program is designed to support 'at risk' pregnant or parenting teens. This program is a partnership between School District 57 and the Elizabeth Fry Society, and provides academic, life, and career skills programs for adolescent mothers and pregnant teens.
- ***Child Care at Post Secondary Institutions:*** Spaces at the child care centres at the University of Northern BC and the College of New Caledonia are prioritized to students attending post-secondary education.
- ***Extra Assistance from Providers:*** Child care providers noted that younger parents may have less confidence in their parenting abilities and/or have less knowledge about the services their children may require. For example, child care providers described providing additional support to young parents, including informing them about available services such as dental and speech therapy.



---

## MINORITY CULTURES AND LANGUAGE GROUPS, IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

- *Le Cercle des Canadiens Français de Prince George*: Offers French language preschool. Also offers a variety of services for Francophones, including cultural events, a French language library, access to computers, computer support, language lessons, and translation services.
- *École Franco Nord*: Francophone school that offers after school care.
- *Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society of Prince George*: The Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society (IMSS) offers services to immigrants and refugees new to Canada. Services offered include English language classes, assistance with gaining employment, computer training, transportation, and referrals. IMSS also offers child minding for parents who are utilizing IMSS services.
- *Services/Programs Offered by Child Care Providers*: From our survey and focus group for providers of child care, child care providers mentioned a variety of strategies for providing culturally sensitive care, including reading books about the languages and traditions from families' cultural origin, celebrating holidays from other cultures with dance, potlucks, and traditional clothing, and displaying decorations reflecting other cultures and locations, such as flags and maps. There are some child care programs with staff that speak other languages, including Mandarin and Punjabi. Another strategy to support children learning English was learning a few key words from the child's first language (e.g., 'bathroom' and 'hungry').

---

## HUB MODEL OF CHILD CARE

The ‘hub model’ was mentioned by several stakeholders as a desirable solution that could assist underserved groups in accessing child care. Child care ‘hubs’ are child care facilities that include child care for several age categories (e.g., infant/toddler, 3–5 years, preschool, and school age care), while also providing a range of other services in the same building. In Prince George, the Carney Hill Neighbourhood Centre and Prince George Native Friendship Centre could be considered child care hubs.

Typically, hubs have a family support worker who performs several functions, including helping families in applying for child care subsidies and navigating the system, delivering information about resources, connecting families with referrals, and helping families with parenting skills, both informally and/or through workshops. Other services that could be available within hubs include access to computers, electronic literacy training, wellness services, and adult literacy supports.

Several benefits of hubs were identified. Firstly, they offer convenient access to both child care and needed wrap-around services, which can reduce barriers for underserved groups. Another benefit of hubs that offer child care for several age groups is that children are able to stay in the same facility as they age, resulting in fewer transitions and less stress for children; siblings can also remain together in the same facility. Furthermore, co-locating many different ages of child care together can help to facilitate the development of relationships amongst families. These relationships may create community and a sense of extended family, thus building valuable supports for families.

Criticisms of the hub model were also discussed. Disadvantages included high operation costs, the potential for low uptake of the available services, and difficulty recruiting the necessary skilled staff from an already scarce pool of workers. To avoid these issues, a new child care hub in Prince George would ideally be developed in a location where services already exist; services could then be expanded as needed to meet any increased demand. Efficiency in delivering services could also be maximized as the greater community could continue to utilize the services, and not just the relatively small group using the child care services.

## PLAN, BYLAW, AND POLICY REVIEW

A review of municipal bylaws and policies was conducted to identify barriers to child care space creation in the City of Prince George. The City of Prince George and the Northern Health are the regulating agencies for child care within the City of Prince George; applicants proposing to open a new child care facility must submit zoning and business license applications to the City of Prince George, and community care license applications to Northern Health. The City of Prince George and Northern Health work together in order to facilitate the approval process for potential new child care facilities. The two groups have an annual meeting to discuss strategies to address concerns and issues that surface in relation to the two application streams.

City of Prince George zoning bylaws include two categories of child care operations, including 1) ‘minor operations’, which involve up to 12 children, and where the operator lives within the building, and 2) ‘major operations’, involving 13 or more children, where the operator does not live in the building. Minor child care operations are permitted in all residential zones. Restrictions for minor child care operations include the prohibition of operating bed and breakfasts, secondary suites, and secondary dwellings on the property. For major operations, there are restrictions on placement due to concerns such as traffic, noise, and parking. However, in the appropriate situation, there is also a history of properties being rezoned in order to accommodate larger child care operations.

The City of Prince George Official Community Plan language demonstrates an overarching support for child care in Policy 7.2.4 (below). Restrictions on proximity to hazardous conditions such as manufacturing or disposal sites are in place to maintain safety.

Relevant policies from the Official Community Plan:

- **Policy 7.2.4:** Support measures to ensure all children from birth to age five have access to comprehensive early childhood development and care.
- **Policy 8.3.100:** The City supports new or expanded light industrial businesses with low air emissions located in lands with the appropriate zoning, provided air dispersion modeling does not indicate significant local impacts to sensitive receptors such as residential areas, daycares, schools or hospitals.

- **Policy 6.4.45:** Vulnerable development (including child care) should be prohibited from hazardous condition areas, unless the applicable hazard can be practically alleviated, and until adequate risk reduction measures are in place.
- **Policy 6.4.70:** When deciding where to locate vulnerable development land, owners should consider a minimum of 150 m from Dangerous Goods Routes as identified on Schedule B-2: Hazardous Conditions and a minimum of 300 m from hazardous material manufacturing, processing, and disposal sites. A hazard assessment may recommend greater or lesser setbacks.

## ACTION PLAN TARGETS AND GOALS

### THE ROLE OF THE MUNICIPALITY

The Community Charter provides the statutory framework for all municipalities in BC, except the City of Vancouver. It sets out municipalities' core areas of authority. To align with the Community Charter, the City of Prince George typically plays five roles in relation to fostering the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community. The five roles are described in more detail below:

ACT	FACILITATE	ADVOCATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Planner</b> - the City is responsible for defining the short-, medium, and long-term direction for a variety of services.</li><li>• <b>Protector/Regulator</b> - under the Community Charter there are certain enforcement responsibilities the City has to ensure safety and quality of life.</li><li>• <b>Provider</b> - the City delivers and maintains services, infrastructure and utilities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The City plays an important role as facilitator, convenor and partner to align community action on shared goals.</li><li>• The City may work with non-municipal entities ( i.e. the private sector, not-for-profits, services providers, etc.) to align community action on shared goals.</li><li>• Support can include contributing knowledge, staff time, grants, hosting forums, establishing Select Committees, etc.</li><li>• The City's facilitation of collective work is focused on guiding vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurements, building public will, advancing policy and mobilizing funding.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The City routinely advocates for policy, funding, and/or support from other levels of government.</li></ul>

Specific to these guiding roles described above, examples of the types of roles that a municipal government can play in child care in British Columbia include<sup>17</sup>:

- Arranging child care planning meetings with stakeholders;
- Advocating with other levels of government (provincial and federal) with respect to local child care concerns;

<sup>17</sup> City of Richmond 2017–2022 Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy, 2017. Available from: [https://www.richmond.ca/\\_shared/assets/2017-2022\\_Richmond\\_Child\\_Care\\_Needs\\_Assessment\\_and\\_Strategy48036.pdf](https://www.richmond.ca/_shared/assets/2017-2022_Richmond_Child_Care_Needs_Assessment_and_Strategy48036.pdf) p. 15

- Conducting local child care needs assessments;
- Collaborating with child care providers to obtain grants;
- Modifying municipal bylaws to reduce barriers to opening child care facilities;
- Providing municipally owned space and/or lands at low or no cost;
- Applying for directed funding to create child care spaces;
- Providing incentives to developers in order to facilitate the creation of child care spaces in new developments (e.g., by approvals for increased density alongside plans to develop child care spaces);
- Supporting and/or developing websites with child care information for parents and/or child care operators;
- Supporting child care operators by providing resources to facilitate the operation of existing child care centres as well as information about opening new child care centres; and
- Creating policies for municipal employees, like flexible hours or compressed work weeks in order to support families with children.

As deemed appropriate, the City of Prince George would engage in one or more of the above activities and/or roles to address child care needs in the community.

---

## SPACE CREATION TARGETS

To set space creation targets, we considered the estimated demand for child care as well as the local feasibility of creating spaces. To assess demand, we considered population projections, parent employment rates, child care waitlist information, and assessments of child care utilization from the Ministry of Children and Family Development. To assess feasibility, we examined child care space ratios amongst other regions and considered local capacity, including the availability of land and personnel.

Although we did not have the capacity to implement a survey with the methodological capability to precisely estimate local demand, we utilized secondary data sources to make this assessment. In Canada, the labour force participation of mothers has increased dramatically over the last few decades, with the proportion of families with two working parents increasing from 35.9%

in 1976 to 69.1% in 2014<sup>18</sup>. Not all families with dual earners require child care, because in some of these families, children are cared for by another family member such as grandparents or other relatives, or other arrangements are made (e.g., parents arrange for opposite work schedules). Prince George's current ratio of 18.7 child care spaces per 100 children is slightly higher than the ratio reported for British Columbia overall in 2016 (18.4), but below the national average of 27.2<sup>19</sup>. Although our child care space ratio is close to the provincial average, based on the MCFD assessments of access to care as well as feedback from parents, we know the current ratio in Prince George is far from adequate.

Based on these data sources related to demand for child care as well as local feasibility for space creation, we set our space creation targets to 35 spaces per 100 children for 0–5 year olds, and 20 spaces per 100 children aged 6–12. For ages 0–5, we selected the target of 35 spaces per 100 children as it would modestly exceed the national average of 27.2. We set lower targets for school age care compared to spaces for 0–5 years because demand is expected to be lower due to parents being able to work at least part time during school hours. While these targets are likely below the actual demand for child care, after considering the availability of land, trained personnel in the community, and municipal capacity, we determined that these targets would be ambitious and progressive, yet feasible. These attainable targets represent significant forward movement towards meeting the demand for child care in Prince George.

<sup>18</sup> Uppal, S. Statistics Canada, 2015. Employment Patterns of Families with Children. Available from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14202-eng.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2016. Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, p. 146. Available from: <https://www.childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-in-Canada-2016.pdf>

While the overall population of Prince George is expected to increase modestly over the next decade, the population of children aged 0–12 is projected to decline. The number of new spaces required to meet our target ratios for the projected population in 2029 are presented in Table 18. To meet the target ratios, space creation will need to be predominantly focused on children ages 0–36 months and 6–12 years.

<b>Age</b>	<b>Current spaces</b>	<b>Current Population</b>	<b>Current ratio per 100 children</b>	<b>Future Population 2029<sup>20</sup></b>	<b>Target ratio</b>	<b>Target number of spaces for 2029</b>	<b>Number of new spaces needed</b>
<b>0-36 months</b>	560	2846	19.7	2427	35	849	289
<b>3-5 years</b>	775	3055	25.4	2591	35	907	132
<b>6-12 years</b>	927	7881	11.8	6685	20	1337	410

In an effort to respond to the identified number of new spaces needed (above), the City of Prince George is working in cooperation with community partners (including preparing funding proposals), to support the development of the following proposed number of new short-term (one to two years) new spaces. This is a concentrated effort in the short-term to contribute to licensed space creation targets and improve access to child care services within the community.

<b>Age</b>	<b>Current spaces</b>	<b>Number of new spaces needed</b>	<b>Proposed new spaces for creation (1-2 years)</b>
<b>0-36 months</b>	560	289	30
<b>3-5 years</b>	775	132	41
<b>6-12 years</b>	927	410	50

**Note:** Achievement of the proposed space creation targets is dependent on external funding sources such as the Childcare BC New Spaces Fund that provide significant capital development dollars.

<sup>20</sup> BC Stats, 2019. Population Projections – 2019–2029, Prince George Census Agglomeration – Custom Tabulation.



## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY ACTIONS FOR IMPROVING ACCESS TO CHILD CARE SERVICES IN PRINCE GEORGE

Based on surveys and engagement activities, the following additional suggestions related to child care space creation in Prince George are provided and categorised according to municipal action:

Theme	Recommendation/Action	Nature of Action		
		Act	Advocate	Facilitate
STAFFING	New child care operations supported by the City could be required to provide a plan for the recruitment and retention of staff to avoid ‘poaching’ qualified staff from existing child care operations.	X		X
	Consider working with the College of New Caledonia to identify possibilities for maximizing enrolment and graduation rates for early childhood training, and increasing access to the Infant/Toddler and Special Needs certifications.	X		X
	Similar to programs that allow students in grades 11 and 12 to access trades training from the College of New Caledonia, a program allowing high school students to complete ECE training could help address the shortage of trained workers. This model is currently utilized at other post-secondary institutions in BC.		X	
	To more efficiently utilize the pool of qualified staff available in Prince George, the City could support and/or facilitate the development of an external casual pool database. The database could reduce the need for duplication of paperwork (e.g., criminal record checks).		X	
	Examine the possibility of facilitating the local transferability of the credentials of people with early childhood education training from outside of BC and Canada.		X	

Theme	Recommendation/Action	Nature of Action		
		Act	Advocate	Facilitate
SPACE CREATION	Focus space creation on infant/toddler and school age care. While there are shortages of spaces for all ages, care for ages 0–36 months and school age care have the largest shortages.	X	X	X
	Wherever possible, consider the possibility of creating new spaces for school age care on school property.		X	
	Prioritize the creation of spaces in locations such as the Hart and downtown, where child care is in high demand and difficult to access. Early Development Instrument (EDI) scores also demonstrate that children in these locations are vulnerable in one or more of the five scales (physical health & well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development or communication skills and general knowledge) <sup>21</sup> .	X	X	X
	Create spaces by partnering with providers with a proven track record in child care delivery. As an example, consider arranging meetings with stakeholders such as Northern Health during the planning phases.	X	X	
	Consider other successful models of childcare as possible models. Examples mentioned by stakeholders and providers include the Reggio Emilia Approach, as well as successful child care models in Surrey, Revelstoke, and Sweden.	X		X

<sup>21</sup> Human Early Learning Partnership, 2019. Early Development Instrument Wave 7 Community Profile – Prince George School District. Available from: [http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/media/edi\\_w7\\_communityprofiles/edi\\_w7\\_communityprofile\\_sd\\_57.pdf](http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/media/edi_w7_communityprofiles/edi_w7_communityprofile_sd_57.pdf)

Theme	Recommendation/Action	Nature of Action		
		Act	Advocate	Facilitate
CO-LOCATION OF DESIRED SERVICES	To increase seamless and convenient access to services families use and need, municipal planning should consider possibilities for co-location of services when developing new child care spaces. Examples could include recreation facilities, libraries, and social service organizations.	X	X	X
	Consider a 'hub' model for child care with co-located services, which could also benefit underserved populations by reducing barriers to accessing child care.		X	
	Child care located within or near the University Hospital of Northern BC could be beneficial as it would not only serve the large number of health care workers who have children, but could also potentially provide convenient access to services available within the hospital and the Health Unit.		X	
FLEXIBLE CHILDCARE	Support the development of child care offering flexible schedules and hours. There are very few spaces in Prince George to accommodate the needs of people who do shift work and/or work part time. Examples of non-mainstream schedules and times that are particularly in demand include part-time care, extended hours, statutory holidays, weekends, overnight, and drop-in/occasional care.		X	X
REDUCE BARRIERS FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS	Advocate to other levels of government on the Universal Child Care Model. Currently, the Universal Child Care program is in a pilot phase. Advocating for the continuity of this program would ensure this program continues to benefit all families, and low income families in particular.		X	
	Provide supports to facilitate access to specialized training for child care providers in areas such as cultural safety and special needs.		X	
	Partner with organizations involved in working with underserved populations to develop child care spaces, such as minority language and cultural groups, Indigenous organizations, and organizations serving low income families.		X	

The City of Prince George is committed to working collaboratively with community partners to improve access to child care services within the community. Similar to supported housing initiatives, being able to respond, particularly to the space creation targets identified in this assessment, is multi-jurisdictional in approach. Therefore, the City of Prince George will continue to pursue partnerships and build relationships with senior levels of government and other interested parties in order to work towards the space creation targets identified for Prince George.

Within the roles of local government, the City of Prince George will, on an on-going basis and as opportunity presents, continue to investigate how it can improve and increase access to child care. This includes strategies such as defining land use, setting policy direction, creating/providing incentives, leveraging land, and providing low cost leases. Additionally, the City of Prince George will ensure all of its relevant plans, policies, and regulations, where applicable, facilitate the establishment of child care facilities. The City of Prince George will also facilitate the sharing of community need information with private and non-profit child care operators to assist with child care planning efforts, liaise and maintain connections with local child and family service organizations to strengthen networks and facilitate joint planning opportunities, and ensure that the local child care needs assessment data is monitored and updated as required to ensure decision related to child care needs are being made based on the most current community data. These strategies contribute to meeting licenced space creation targets in the community.

## CONCLUSION

This child care planning project examined access to child care spaces as well as issues and concerns related to child care for Prince George families. Shortages for child care spaces were identified for children of all ages; however, the most substantial shortages were for infant and toddler care (0–36 months) and school age care (ages 6–12). Families also experienced difficulty accessing care that meets their specific needs and preferences, including location, timing/schedules, staff qualifications, and programming. The inability to access suitable child care had multiple consequences, including parents leaving their employment, working reduced hours, or changing positions, or accepting spaces in unsatisfactory child care arrangements. An existing shortage of ECE trained staff was identified as a critical issue underlying shortages of quality child care spaces. In particular, shortages of ECE trained staff affects access to child care for underserved populations, such as children who require extra supports. To address these issues, we have set child care space creation targets for the next decade, as well as developed a series of recommendations, strategies and actions for how, as a community, we can effectively, efficiently, and creatively work towards meeting the child care needs of families in Prince George.