



Smithers Child Care Plan
Implementation Project

FINAL REPORT – January 16, 2024

Submitted by PLAN 54

WHY CARE ABOUT CHILD CARE?



Healthy Children

Promotes healthy child development and increases educational achievement for all children.



Employer Benefits

Reduces stress and absenteeism among employees who are parents and enables female employees to return to work after parental leave.



Supports Working Parents

Allows parents, and in particular mothers, to return to the workforce after having a child, to work closer to full-time hours and to hold better jobs.



Develop Human Capital

Sets us up on a path for a stronger economy in the future, as more children are supported to reach their full potential.



Poverty Reduction

As women are able to earn more income, they gain financial independence, and their families are less likely to live in poverty.



Stronger Communities

Benefits communities as these benefits are large, long-lasting, and broadly shared by everyone in society.

Contents

Overview 4

Achievements 7

Next Steps 9

Appendix A: Action Plan Status..... 11

Appendix B: Draft Incentive Policy 14

Appendix C: Child Care Start-Up Guide 18

Appendix D: Draft Child Care RTE.....22

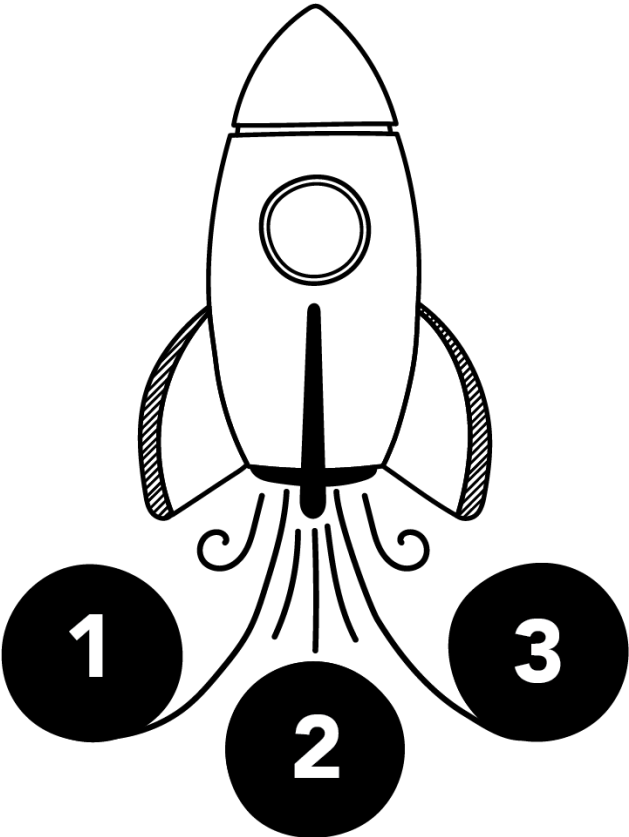
Appendix E: Community Review Results28

Overview

The Town of Smithers recognizes that access to quality child care is an essential service and critical piece of social infrastructure. It benefits families, local economy, contributes to a healthy community and overall resident quality of life. The Smithers Child Care Plan, completed in 2021, is a guiding document for the Town of Smithers to refer to in taking steps to address child care gaps and support new space creation, both directly and as a community partner.

The purpose of the Smithers Child Care Plan Implementation Project is to move forward with the 13 action items identified in the Smithers Child Care Plan. The Plan's actions are organized into three strategic areas, shown below.

SMITHERS CHILD CARE PLAN STRATEGY AREAS

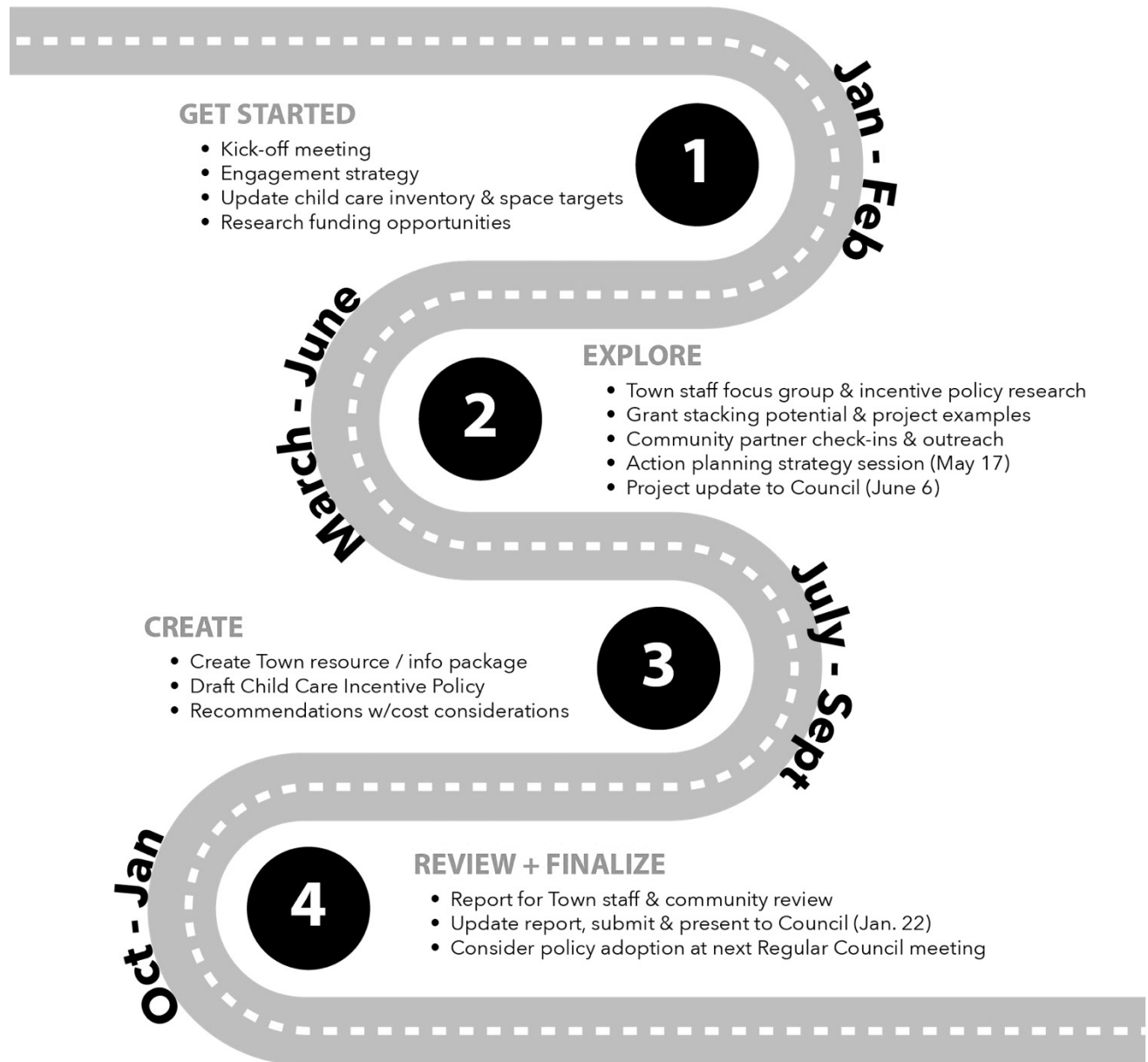


- 1. Create a local framework**
Enable child care space creation by removing land use barriers and creating incentives.
- 2. Actively partner in space creation**
Lead conversations about creating new spaces, including sharing information, exploring available land, and co-location opportunities.
- 3. Advocate & communicate**
Support continued changes at higher levels of government, share child care resources / information, and continue the dialogue in the community.

The Smithers Child Care Implementation Project is 90% funded by Northern Development Initiative Trust's Healthy Northern Development Program (Capacity Building Stream).

PROJECT ROADMAP

The Smithers Child Care Plan Implementation Project followed a four-phase process, as shown below.



ENGAGEMENT

The engagement focus of the Child Care Plan Implementation Project was to action items in the Smithers Child Care Plan. As addressing local child care needs is a shared responsibility, engagement activities centered on exploring opportunities with interested community partners, Town staff, and Smithers Council.

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES			
ACTIVITY	DATE	PARTICIPANTS	OBJECTIVE
PROJECT LAUNCH	March 2023 Virtual	All community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce project & purpose. • Opportunities for involvement & available space creation capital funding.
STAFF FOCUS GROUP	March 22, 2023 Town Hall	7 Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level discussion on potential child care locations on Town land or facilities, for possible future direction from Smithers Council to explore further.
PARTNER CHECK-INS	April – May 2023 In-person, virtual	15 Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-in with community partners (68 email invites sent) on current situation, action areas of interest, & engagement preferences.
STRATEGY SESSION	May 17, 2023 Town Hall & Virtual	14 Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring together community partners interested in taking an active role in addressing child care needs. • Share ideas & identify actions.
COUNCIL MEETING	June 6, 2023 Town Hall & Virtual	Staff & Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share plan findings to-date. • Seek direction on incentive policy.
STAFF REVIEW	Nov. 16, 2023 Town Hall	4 Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hear staff feedback on incentive policy and workshop next step recommendations.
COMMUNITY REVIEW	Jan. 6 & 8, 2024 Old Church & Virtual	120 Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share achievements, incentive policy & recommended next steps. • Hear feedback & ideas.

Achievements

The Smithers Child Care Plan Implementation Project was successful in actioning the 13 items identified in the Smithers Child Care Plan. See Appendix A for a full breakdown of the action plan activities. Highlights of Town achievements include:

1. **ZONING BYLAW REGULATIONS.** Updated Town of Smithers Zoning Bylaw contains simplified child care regulations to streamline approvals. Child care is now permitted in all land use zones as per Zoning Bylaw section 1.5.7.
2. **OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN POLICIES.** Updated Official Community Plan includes new policies that recognize the need for child care and supports new child care spaces in a broader range of land use designations, including co-location.
3. **2023 CHILD CARE INVENTORY & SPACE NEEDS.** Updated statistics confirmed that challenges continue to center around the lack of spaces and staff shortages. There is a current gap of 220+ spaces needed in Smithers to meet the Province of BC's child care coverage rate target of 59%. There are only 11 infant/toddler spaces available for every 100 children under 36 months of age.
4. **FUNDING & INCENTIVES RESEARCH.** Identified the space creation capital funding and ways local governments can support child care. It was identified that existing programs for space creation currently exclude private operators and there is a need for provincial coordination of child care and housing capital funding programs.
5. **LAND OPPORTUNITIES.** Town staff focus group identified opportunity sites for child care on Town land. A new facility at Ranger Park and co-locating child care with a new library facility were top locations identified.
6. **PARTNERSHIP CONNECTIONS.** Conducted community partner engagement (check-ins and group strategy session) that resulted in partnership discussions between landowners and operators, including the Town of Smithers, YMCA & the School District.
7. **INCENTIVE PACKAGE & NEXT STEPS.** Developed draft Town Child Care Incentive Policy, Town guide for starting a child care business, and next step recommendations. Reviewed by Town staff and the community before proceeding to Council for consideration.

The updated inventory and space needs, summary of community engagement, and a list of child care space creation capital funding are available on the Town of Smithers project webpage.

DRAFT INCENTIVE POLICY

The draft Smithers Child Care Incentive Policy (see Appendix B) is a tool to clarify and communicate the Town’s role associated with supporting child care space creation. The policy implements six (6) actions from the Child Care Plan, as well as:

- Responds to community partner feedback for the Town to clarify its role and establish a fair & transparent process for potential future partnerships.
- Establishes space creation investment incentives inclusive to private operators.
- Provides guidance to Town staff and Council on future child care related initiatives.

At the June 6th Committee of the Whole meeting, Council provided direction to move forward with drafting a Town policy that includes five (5) policy components summarized below:

POLICY COMPONENT	WHY THIS?
<p>1) DENSITY BONUS: A Zoning Bylaw incentive to create child care in new housing projects in exchange for greater housing density.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivize space creation. • Consistent with existing density bonus in Town’s Zoning Bylaw for housing.
<p>2) REVITALIZATION TAX EXEMPTION: Municipal property tax incentive to encourage investments in child care. Flexible program that can be tailored to Smithers (program criteria, exemption %, number of years).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few financial incentive tools exempt <i>Community Charter S.25</i>. • Town success with Bylaw No. 1837 – Downtown RTE for residential development.
<p>3) TOWN LEASE: Outline a process for creating child care for lease in a Town facility or on Town-owned land at a reduced lease rate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a fair and transparent process. • Recognize child care as essential service. • Opportunity to cross reference other Town policies already in place.
<p>4) ADVOCACY: Clarify how the Town will support community partners to advance local child care issues to the provincial and federal governments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on existing Town advocacy. • Provide an invitation to community partners to bring advocacy issues forward.
<p>5) INFORMATION SHARING: Create a Town-specific guide / resource to support child care start-ups or operators looking to expand in the Town of Smithers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with existing Town guides. • Help proponents’ navigation Town regulations & provincial requirements.

Next Steps

Meeting child care needs is an on-going process and a shared responsibility. This section outlines recommended next steps the Town of Smithers can take following the completion of the Smithers Child Care Plan Implementation Project.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS	COST CONSIDERATIONS
1. Council resolution to adopt the Town of Smithers Child Care Incentive Policy. Once adopted, share the policy with community partners and broader community.	Staff time
2. Proceed with Zoning Bylaw Amendments (density bonus for child care) as per June 6 th , 2023, motion.	Staff time, advertising costs
3. Proceed with drafting a bylaw (see draft bylaw in Appendix D) to establish a revitalization tax exemption program, in accordance with Section 226 of the <i>Community Charter</i> .	Staff time Advertising Impact on taxation, economy & community
4. Make the “6 Steps to Starting a Child Care Business” guide available on the Town’s website and alongside other Development Services guides. Share with community partners, including CCRR and Smithers Chamber.	Staff time Printing costs
5. Maintain a facility inventory for future lease consideration in under-utilized Town facilities and/or land, whether renovation, expansion, or new development. Involve CCRR and Provincial Licensing in determining suitability for child care.	Staff time
6. Continue to work with the YMCA on a New Spaces Fund application for a new stand-alone child care facility at Ranger Park ¹ . As part of this, host an engagement opportunity for existing tenants/users of Ranger Park and the surrounding neighborhood to learn about the application and provide input into the conceptual design process.	Staff time Engagement-related costs

¹ As directed by July 2023 Council resolution for Town staff to identify possible partnership opportunities with the YMCA.

<p>7. Bring forward North Central Local Government Association resolutions regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Improved Provincial coordination and incentives that encourage mixed housing and child care projects in small community contexts.b. Child care capital funding eligibility to include land purchase cost, planning / design costs, and increased funds available to private operators.	<p>Staff / Council time</p>
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Appendix A: Action Plan Status

STRATEGY AREA 1: Create a Local Framework	
ACTION	STATUS
1.1 Include child care policies in the Official Community Plan (OCP) that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the need for child care spaces in Smithers. • Support new spaces in a broader range of land use designations, including residential, commercial, and public use. • Encourage co-location of child care with family service organizations, schools, housing & recreation / civic facilities. 	COMPLETE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCP updated in 2022.
1.2 Amend the Town of Smithers Zoning Bylaw by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify bylaw definitions of child care. • Permit "in-home child care" as aux. use in all residential zones. • Permit "child care centre" as a principal use in all downtown commercial zones, public use zones, and residential zones. • Add a density bonus provision when new multi-family residential developments are associated with the creation of child care space. 	PENDING: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning bylaw updated in 2022. • June 6th Council direction to proceed with including density bonus in Child Care Incentive Policy and for Town staff to proceed with Zoning bylaw amendments. • Density bonus included in policy with bylaw forthcoming.
1.3 Create a Revitalization Tax Exemption (RTE) Bylaw that grants municipal tax exemptions for buildings that are renovated and/or built new that include space for new child care centres.	PENDING: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 6th Council direction to proceed with RTE in policy. • RTE program (bylaw) drafted.
1.4 Monitor & adjust child care space needs and targets using 2021 census child population (0-12 yrs.) & child care coverage rates (spaces per population).	COMPLETE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update using 2021 census and provincial licensing data.

STRATEGY AREA 2: Actively Partner in Space Creation

ACTION		STATUS
2.1	Make the Smithers Child Care Plan publicly available to support local space creation applications	<p>COMPLETE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan available on Town’s website. • Direct email sent to 68 community partners.
2.2	Encourage public & independent schools to explore creating before / after school spaces.	<p>COMPLETE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct email to schools introducing project, sharing 2021 Plan, inviting participation & sharing website link. • From the strategy session, YMCA committed to reach out directly to Town and SD54 to explore partnership opportunities.
2.3	Support creation of new child care spaces in a wide range of facilities, including schools, Friendship Centre Hall, college, recreation / civic facilities and within proposed BC Housing funded projects.	<p>COMPLETE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New land use policy & regulations (see 1.1 & 1.2) • Direct email sharing funding with eligible organizations. • May 17 strategy session identified interested partners. • Sept. meetings with funders and operators identified provincial funding complexities combining child care & housing funding.
2.4	Support reduced lease rates for local child care providers operating in public facilities with priority given to infant / toddler programs and flexible / extended hours programs.	<p>COMPLETE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 6th Council direction to include in incentive policy. • Draft policy includes reduce lease.
2.5	Explore the development of child care space for lease on existing Town-owned land, in an existing facility or as part of new projects. Collaborate directly with CCRR, Health Authority and local child care providers on this.	<p>COMPLETE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Staff Focus Group identified Ranger Park as top location. • Partner check-ins identified interested operators / land owners. • June 6 Council direction to outline process in policy. • Town staff + YMCA exploring Ranger Park location.

STRATEGY AREA 3: Advocate & Communicate

ACTION		STATUS
3.1	Support child care providers and local organizations to advocate to the Provincial Government on child care.	COMPLETE: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner check-ins & Strategy Session confirmed advocacy areas (ECE shortage, lack of spaces, funding gaps).• Future Council advocacy at UBCM.• Included in Incentive Policy.
3.2	Feature child care info and related resources in civic marketing initiatives to attract new families to Smithers.	COMPLETE: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town child care start up guide created, to be available online and in print. Resources listed on Town website.• Once finalized, share guide with Chamber and CCRR.
3.3	Actively participate in community meetings regarding child care needs and space creation. Consider hosting a Committee of the Whole meeting with local organizations and child care providers to debrief the plan and outline next steps.	COMPLETE: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town hosted May 17 Strategy Session with community partners.• June 6 Committee of the Whole meeting.• January 2024 engagement (survey, in-person & online discussion).
3.4	Support SD54 & Coast Mountain College in working together to find creative solutions to train local ECEs.	COMPLETE: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May 17 Strategy Session resulted SD54 and College committing to continued exploration of creative approaches.

Appendix B: Draft Incentive Policy



DRAFT POLICY: CHILD CARE INCENTIVE

PURPOSE:

The Town of Smithers acknowledges that access to licensed child care is an essential service and critical piece of social infrastructure. The Child Care Incentive Policy provides clarity on steps to be taken by the Town to encourage child care space creation in the community.

POLICY:

1. Density Bonus

A density bonus is a voluntary regulatory tool to incentivize child care space creation in Smithers. It is the policy of the Town to:

- a) Amend the existing density bonusing regulations in the Town of Smithers Zoning Bylaw by permitting additional density in multi-family residential developments, with a minimum 5 or more residential dwellings, that include a purpose-built licensed child care centre (excludes in-home child care).
- b) Support a residential density bonus of one (1) additional dwelling for every five (5) licensed child care spaces provided to a maximum of 15 additional dwelling units per hectare.

2. Revitalization Tax Exemption

A Revitalization Tax Exemption is a voluntary tax incentive tool to support new child care development in Smithers. It is the policy of the Town to:

- a) Establish a Child Care Revitalization Tax Exemption (RTE) for the purpose of encouraging the development of new or expanded licensed child care facilities within Town boundaries.

- b) Eligibility to include development of new or expanded licensed child care facilities including new stand-alone centres, child care centres co-located with other projects, and home-based child care when operated from a single-family home.
- c) The extent of tax exemption available under the Child Care RTE program is the municipal portion of the tax increase directly attributable to the increase in assessed value of improvements.
- d) A tax exemption term of up to ten (10) years for 100% of the increase in assessed value of all improvements (i.e., applies to the whole development), is supported.
- e) Include a 5-year sunset clause in the Child Care RTE program, tracking new spaces created, with potential program extension, as directed by Smithers Council.

3. Town Leasing Practices

A transparent process for creating child care spaces for lease in a Town facility or on Town-owned land provides clarity on the steps involved for both the Town and community partners. It is the policy of the Town to:

- a) In its leasing practices, treat licensed child care as a community service, rather than as a commercial enterprise.
- b) Maintain a facility inventory for future consideration of a lease in under-utilized Town facilities and/or land, whether renovation, expansion, or new development.
- c) Community partner-led projects on Town facilities and/or land must follow the process outlined in [Policy ADM-024 Community Partnership](#).
- d) Town initiated projects to create licensed child care space for lease will include a fair and transparent process to select a child care operator by first issuing a Request of Expressions of Interest to all local and regional operators early in the process.
- e) Use of municipal land and/or facilities to non-profit licensed child care operators will be at a reduced rate of \$1 per year.
- f) Town land sale discussions will follow [Policy ADM-018 Town Land Sales](#) with preference given to child care that is co-located with housing or other community project.

4. Advocacy

The Town plays an important role in advancing child care issues by advocating to provincial and federal governments on the importance of child care in supporting healthy communities. It is the policy of the Town to:

- a) Encourage community partners to bring forward child care advocacy issues to Smithers Council to advocate at regional and provincial advocacy platforms, such as UBCM and the NCLGA.
- b) Advocate for continued funding to support child care space creation for all child care providers, including both private and non-profit operators, and address trained staff shortages.

5. Information Sharing

While the Town is not responsible for operating child care programs, it can provide information to support new child care start-ups in the community. It is the policy of the Town to:

- a) Provide prospective child care providers with an information guide that summarizes the Town's requirements for establishing child care, including steps to navigate municipal and Provincial licensing requirements.
- b) Share information on available grant funding and incentives to support child care space creation through the Town's social media and webpage.

Appendix C: Child Care Start-Up Guide

6 Steps to Starting a CHILD CARE BUSINESS



The Town of Smithers recognizes that quality child care is an essential building block in our community's social infrastructure, with positive impacts to the local economy and well-being of the entire community. This guide is intended to provide step-by-step assistance for starting, expanding, or relocating a child care business in the Town of Smithers.

1 Preliminary Research & Planning.

Before you sign a lease or purchase a building, the first step in the process is to be familiar with the requirements for a child care business. Providers caring for three or more children (who are not a sibling group and not related to the provider) must hold both municipal and provincial licenses:

1. **Community Care Facility License** issued by Northern Health
2. **Business License** issued by the Town of Smithers

2 Understand the Regulations.

All child care facilities in Smithers are regulated by the Provincial *Community Care & Assisted Living Act* and the *Child Care Licensing Regulation*. Provincial licensing includes health and safety requirements, training, staff-to-child ratios, space, equipment, and more. Municipal requirements relate to development, building, business licensing, signage, and parking. We recommend connecting with the provincial Licensing Officer and Town's Business License Inspector to confirm what'll be required.

3 Review Funding & Incentive Programs.

There are a variety of programs available to support the creation of new child care spaces in Smithers. For a current list, flip to the contact list on the last page of this guide or visit www.smithers.ca.

4 Submit Applications.

Once you've gathered all the necessary information, you are now ready to apply for a provincial Child Care Facility License. After discussions with the provincial Licensing Officer and the Town's Business License Inspector, you may want to proceed with submitting a Town of Smithers Business License Application and a Building Permit Application (if required) at the same time.

5 Get Approvals.

Officials at the provincial and municipal level will review your applications for compliance with applicable regulations and contact you if other requirements are needed or to arrange inspections. If a Building Permit is required, additional inspections will occur during the Building Permit process. A provincial license will not be issued until "Final Occupancy" approval of a Building Permit is given, if required.

6 Open for Business.

Once you have your Provincial license, Town of Smithers Business License, and any other required approvals in place, it's time to open for business. Be sure to display your business license in a visible location at your place of business!

Child Care Business Checklist

In addition to the information outlined in the “6 Steps to Starting a Child Care Business” guide, the following are specific requirements for prospective child care providers in the Town of Smithers.

TOWN OF SMITHERS BUSINESS LICENSE

- Meet with Development Services staff to discuss your proposal and confirm if any of the following are required, in addition to a Town of Smithers Business License:
 - Building Permit (required for a change of use, renovation, or new construction project).
 - Off-street parking (1 space per 30 m. sq. of gross floor area of the business, in addition to other parking required for the property).
 - Development Permit (substantial exterior changes or new construction in a commercial area within the Form and Character Development Permit Area).
 - Sign Permit (for exterior business signs, unless exempt).
 - Development Variance Permit (to vary parking or sign requirements).
- After applying for a Community Care Facility License to Northern Health, complete and submit a Town of Smithers Business License Application.
- Town staff will review your application and contact you if additional information is required.
- Town staff will schedule and conduct required license inspections, and will advise of any deficiencies that need to be corrected. Re-inspections may be required.
- Once you have all required approvals in place (i.e., Community Care Facility License, Final Occupancy Permit, etc.) you will be issued a Town of Smithers Business License.
- Pay \$160 annual Business License Fee (there is no fee for non-profit providers)
- Display your business license in a visible location at your place of business.

NOTE ON BC BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS

All child care facilities are classified as an assembly occupancy under Part 3 of the BC Building Code. Child care facilities with 8 or less children in a single-family home are exempt from this requirement and will remain classified as a single-family building under Part 9 of the BC Building Code.



DID YOU KNOW...

The Town of Smithers Zoning Bylaw permits child care businesses to be in any zone within the Town of Smithers? Check out Section 1.5.7 of the Zoning Bylaw...

Child Care Contacts

Provincial licensing assistance:	→	Northern Health Licensing Officer 1-844-845-4200 licensingconnect@northernhealth.ca
Business Licenses, Building Permits & Inspection assistance:	→	Town of Smithers License / Building Inspector 250-847-1600 devserv@smithers.ca
Development permits, sign permits, parking requirements & local incentive program assistance:	→	Town of Smithers Planner 250-847-1600 devserv@smithers.ca
Services for child care providers, including start-up business support:	→	Smithers & Area Child Care Resource & Referral reception@nwcddc.ca 250-847-8824
Provincial grants and funding, including new spaces fund, start-up grants & maintenance fund assistance:	→	Ministry of Education & Child Care (ChildCareBC) cccf@gov.bc.ca 1-888-338-6622
Aboriginal Head Start funding, including new spaces fund assistance:		Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC admin@ahsabc.com 250-709-7592
Early childhood educators' network & peer mentoring program:	→	ECEBC Bulkley Valley https://www.ecebc.ca/about/branches or contact CCRR
Local business community:	→	Smithers & District Chamber of Commerce info@smitherschamber.com 250-847-5072
Local ECE Training Programs:	→	Coast Mountain College 1-877-277-2288

Visit www.smithers.ca for links to additional child care resources and current incentive programs.



Appendix D: Draft Child Care RTE



BYLAW NO. [REDACTED] – CHILD CARE REVITALIZATION

A bylaw to establish a revitalization tax exemption program in Smithers

WHEREAS Council may, by bylaw, establish a revitalization tax exemption program;

AND WHEREAS Council wishes to establish a revitalization tax exemption program in the Town of Smithers with the objective to stimulate child care space investment necessary to address the urgent community need for new child care spaces and to implement the principles, objectives and policies of the Town of Smithers Official Community Plan related to strengthening the local economy and supporting social well-being.

AND WHEREAS Council has considered this bylaw in conjunction with the objectives and policies set out for the use of permissive tax exemptions under Bylaw No. [REDACTED] – Five Year Financial Plan and has determined that this bylaw is compatible with those objectives and policies;

AND WHEREAS pursuant to the *Community Charter*, Council has given notice of the consideration of this bylaw;

NOW THEREFORE, in an open meeting assembled, the Council of the Town of Smithers hereby enacts as follows:

Citation

1. This bylaw may be cited as “Bylaw No. [REDACTED] – Child Care Revitalization Tax Exemption”.

Definitions

2. For the purposes of this bylaw:
 - a. "Assessment" means taxable land and improvement assessed value, as provided by BC Assessment;

- b. "Child Care Facility" means the physical building and area of land that is used for the purpose of operating a licensed child care program in accordance with the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*.
 - c. "Eligible Construction Project" means the construction of a new, separate building where at least one (1) licensed child care facility is included in the building;
 - d. "Eligible Renovation Project" means a capital improvement to an existing building, including interior upgrades, restoration, refurbishment, and/or expansion, where at least one (1) licensed child care facility is provided;
 - e. "Exemption Agreement" means a revitalization tax exemption agreement executed by the Town of Smithers and the owner under this bylaw and the *Community Charter*.
 - f. "Exemption Certificate" means a revitalization tax exemption certificate issued by the Town of Smithers under this bylaw and the *Community Charter*.
 - g. "Project" means an Eligible Construction Project and/or an Eligible Renovation Project;
 - h. "Parcel" means a legal parcel, as defined in the *Community Charter*, situated within the Revitalization Area, upon which a Project is undertaken;
 - i. "Revitalization Area" means any location within the Town of Smithers where child care is a permitted use.
 - j. "Tax Exemption" means a revitalization tax exemption obtained pursuant to this bylaw.
3. Words defined in the *Community Charter* have the same meaning when used in this bylaw unless otherwise defined.

Establishment of Program

- 4. A revitalization tax exemption program is established for the granting of Tax Exemptions and the issuance of Tax Exemption Certificates in accordance with the terms and conditions prescribed in this bylaw.
- 5. The revitalization program is established for all areas within the Town of Smithers where child care is a permitted use in the Town of Smithers Zoning Bylaw.

Eligibility

6. To be eligible for a Tax Exemption, a Project must:
 - a. Be a licensed child care facility;
 - b. Be issued a building permit after April 30, 2024 and have been issued an occupancy permit no later than April 30, 2029.
 - c. Have a minimum Building Permit construction value of over \$50,000; and
 - d. Comply with all enactments, laws, statues, regulations, and orders of any authority having jurisdiction, including bylaws of the Town.

Ineligible Projects

7. Notwithstanding Section 6, a project is ineligible for a Tax Exemption if:
 - a. The Parcel of which it is part is already subject to another tax exemption from the Town.
 - b. The property taxes for the Parcel of which it is a part are in arrears; and/or
 - c. Any construction commenced prior to an approved application for a Tax Exemption will not be eligible for consideration;

Amount & Term

8. The term of each Tax Exemption shall be 10 years.
9. The amount of the assessed value on which the Tax Exemption is based shall be 100% of the increase in Assessed Value of improvements applicable to the municipal portion of the property taxes.
10. An owner may only apply for a Tax Exemption once per parcel.

Change of Ownership

11. The Director of Finance may transfer an Exemption Certificate to a new owner subject to the terms of the applicable Exemption Agreement.

Application Process

12. If an owner of a Parcel wishes to enter into an Agreement for a Tax Exemption under this bylaw, the owner must submit to the Town the following:
 - a. Submit an Intent to Request a Revitalization Tax Exemption form, in a form acceptable to the Director of Development Services, or designate, in conjunction with a building permit application.
 - b. Upon Project completion, submit:
 - i. An application to Request a Child Care Revitalization Tax Exemption Certificate, in a form acceptable to the Director of Development Services, or their designate;
 - ii. Copy of the occupancy permit issued for the Project;
 - iii. Copy of the current year's property tax notice for the Parcel;
 - iv. Proof that all property taxes, including penalties, interest, and applicable fees, on a Parcel have been fully paid; and
 - v. Original signed Exemption Agreement, duly executed by the owner.
13. An owner must submit all required documentation to the Town by October 15th of the year in which the Project is finished for the Town to submit a completed Tax Exemption Certificate to BC Assessment by their October 31st deadline, to receive a Tax Exemption the following year.

Cancellation & Recapture

14. The Tax Exemption Certificate may be cancelled by Council, in its discretion, in one or more of the following circumstances:
 - a. On request of the owner;
 - b. If any of the conditions in the Tax Exemption Certificate or in the Agreement are not met; or
 - c. If the owner has allowed the property taxes to go into arrears or to become delinquent.
15. If the Tax Exemption Certificate is cancelled by Council, the owner of the Parcel for which the Tax Exemption Certificate was issued must remit to the Town an amount equal to the value of any Tax Exemption received after the date of cancellation, no later than thirty (30) days after the effective date of cancellation.

16. If the amount specified in Section 15 is not paid within thirty (30) days, the amount shall be added to the assessment roll for the property.

Administration of Tax Exemption Program

17. The Director of Development Services, or any other official appointed by Council from time to time, is the designated municipal officer for the purpose of receiving and processing Tax Exemption Certificates.

18. The Director of Finance is the designated municipal officer for the purpose of:

- a. Issuing Exemption Certificates, which include the following:
 - i. Legal Description & assessment roll number of the Parcel;
 - ii. Term of Tax Exemption;
 - iii. Extent of Tax Exemption;
 - iv. Annual amount of the Tax Exemption;
 - v. Conditions on which the Tax Exemption is provided; and
 - vi. That a recapture amount is payable if the Exemption Certificate is cancelled and how that amount is determined.
- b. Providing copies of Exemption Certificates to BC Assessment after one is issued;
- c. Transferring Exemption Certificates; and
- d. Notifying BC Assessment after an Exemption Certificate is cancelled.

Delegation

19. The Chief Administrative Officer, or their designate, is hereby delegated the authority to cancel an Exemption Certificate under section 14 of this bylaw.

Appendix E: Community Review Results

COMMUNITY REVIEW SUMMARY

120 people participated in the review of the draft report, which involved the child care incentive policy and next step recommendations. Engagement activities included an online survey (95 participants), in-person drop-in session (15 participants) and Zoom discussion (10 participants).

Promotion of engagement options included newspaper ads, radio ads, community posters and emails to community partners. In addition, Town staff hand delivered 300 posters to local child care providers to let them know about the engagement opportunities and to put posters into kid's lunch boxes for parents & caregivers.

LET'S TALK CHILD CARE

We're looking for community feedback on steps we're taking to improve child care in Smithers.

Feedback Survey

- Closes 4:30 pm Monday, Jan. 8



Community Drop-in

- Saturday, Jan. 6
- 10 am - 3 pm
- Old Church
- Family friendly!

Virtual Gathering

- Monday, Jan. 8
- 7 pm - 8 pm
- Via Zoom
- RSVP: general@smithers.ca

Visit www.smithers.ca or call 250-847-1600 for more info!

Town of Smithers

POLICY FEEDBACK			
POLICY AREA	SURVEY	DROP-IN	ZOOM
DENSITY BONUS	73% Support	4 Stars	
REVITALIZATION TAX EXEMPTION	81% Support	8 Stars <i>"Include commercial spaces", "employer programs run child care"</i>	
TOWN LEASE	93% Support	7 Stars <i>"Things like this will make people feel like Smithers is a town that cares about families and is actively supporting them!"</i>	
ADVOCACY	75% Support <i>"Advocate for change in policies that are barriers for childcare spaces – i.e., at little horizons there are two empty spaces because there are not enough toilets as per group care guidelines."</i> <i>"Advocate for better ECE pay, consider supports for existing childcare options – retention matters just as much."</i>	4 Stars <i>"Work with CCRR & Chamber"</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff shortages are key challenge impacting local providers.

<p>INFORMATION SHARING</p>	<p>82% Support</p> <p><i>"CCRR does the 'how to start a child care program' and navigate licensing. CCRR does the info sharing you are suggesting – it already exists."</i></p>	<p>7 Stars</p> <p><i>"CCRR very helpful in providing licensing requirements. Greater issue is making child care education readily available & affordable for all providers."</i></p> <p><i>"Great idea!"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCRR provides licensing information & resources. • Licensing Officer can review child care requirements.
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Other Policy Ideas:

- Look at ways we can support our local college to deliver programs.
- Good to reduce barriers for the potential childcare providers or help encourage people getting into that.
- Prioritize low-income housing developments with first offer to those who work in childcare.
- Flexibility when rezoning is sought for childcare programs.
- Lack of spaces is extremely stressful for working parents.
- While child care is an important item to be discussed, it should not receive forms of municipal subsidies or exemptions.
- Support property owners operating private facilities but would like to expand and are ineligible for new spaces funding (town can apply).
- Prioritize low-income housing developments with first offer to those who work in childcare.

NEXT STEP FEEDBACK

RECOMMENDATION	SURVEY	DROP-IN	ZOOM
YMCA NEW SPACES PARTNERSHIP	86% support	<p>5 stars <i>"Sounds like a great project, many parents I know (including me) are very hopeful that it will get realized."</i> <i>"Great idea but may not be immediately fruitful if we don't have staff to run it. Existing Smithers child care facilities are already short staffed."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for partnership & Ranger Park location – new spaces are needed. • Multiple new programs are needed to meet local needs. Encourage others to apply for funding. • Staffing concerns.
ADOPT CHILD CARE INCENTIVE POLICY	82% support	<p>2 stars <i>"Yes, proceed"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything that can be done to support child care positive.
PROVINCIAL ADVOCACY	80% support	<p>5 stars <i>"Help guide policy to facilitate private child care access to funding."</i> <i>"Make ECE schooling free for educators already in the industry."</i> <i>"More ECEs is the most pressing issue in child care."</i> <i>"Preschool or Junior Kindergarten program run by Province under the Ministry of Education."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more ECE and local training options. • Good examples of what's worked to learn from.
FACILITY / LAND INVENTORY	79% support	<p>6 stars - <i>"Consider housing policy as well as may need to recruit new ECEs to town to fulfill daycare requirements", "Churches"</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCRR and Provincial licensing can help clarify criteria on suitability, including non-town owned options.

FUNDING APPLICATION FOR LAND ACQUISITION	75% support	5 stars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing is tied to challenge of recruitment of ECEs.
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Other Next Step Ideas:

- Instead of supporting a business model from outside Smithers work with current providers that have been active and vocal in the need for space to create childcare spaces. Why are we bringing in outsiders when there are multiple people willing to do it here.
- Incentives for training local early childhood educators who will live and work in Smithers - i.e. pay for training in exchange for 1 year of service within the town, or similar incentive policies like exist for trades.
- No use of Smithers tax dollars please.
- Coordinate with local indigenous groups too.
- Maintain a facility inventory for future consideration of a child care lease in under-utilized Town facilities and / or land. I'd like to see the Town consider this item to other facilities we well (for example, housing, youth centre), not just child care.
- Get the college to offer on-line ECE training as well needed to train ECEs to work in any of the above.
- Partner with BC Housing to create combined senior housing with childcare spaces.
- Create opportunities for rentals for child care staff.
- Studies have shown that parents who care for their own children create a safer and healthier environment in which children respond more positively. If subsidies and incentives are to be given, they should be directed in a manner aimed at encouraging parents to care for their own children.

Support for the Town continuing to take an active role in addressing local child care needs:

- 91% survey participants support; 5% do not; 4% not sure.
- Yes please, this is very important for supporting families.
- Yes, contributes substantially to our economy and the quality of child care and our local families' needs being met directly affects our wonderful community for generations.
- Yes!
- Yes, for sure - economic investment to community.
- 100% please do – work with partners to improve situation.

Other ideas for how the Town can support child care in Smithers:

- Child care in/above businesses, particularly for large employers.
- Cold weather play space, Old Church?
- Local schooling.
- Heavily subsidized ECE schooling.
- Create incentives for home-based child care programs.
- Utilize industry money.
- Utilize church space to run programs.
- Get Coast Mountain College to offer full ECE training to people while they work in the field. Other programs have done this & it is very successful (2 people liked/agreed).
- Work to create more affordable housing. ECEs/anyone cannot find housing.
- Lower taxes so people can afford life including childcare.
- The town should support local business owners and community members that already live work and play in the area and operate successful childcare facilities. Working with an outside agency (YMCA) when other organizations have been asking for help for multiple years is a slap in the face to business owners and tax payers that live here.
- Do you have any ECEs actively apart of this conversation?
- I support the towns role if they are considering both private, and government supported projects.
- The town should remain playing an active role in not only supporting child care but also taking a leadership role. The town of Smithers is responsible for advocating for their people-- many of these people need quality childcare. With the cost of living, it is becoming unrealistic to live in a single income family, however, the lack of quality childcare within community makes it very difficult for families to re-enter the workforce.
- Spaces is not the problem the problem is qualified staffing.
- We need to also address bigger picture items. I have two children who are in childcare in our community and I feel extremely fortunate that I have not had to struggle significantly in securing care for my second child. The only reason I didn't struggle was because I had an older child in care which gave me an in. I know that almost all my friends with kids in the same birth cohort as my second son struggled significantly to find care and many didn't return to work right away because of it. I feel like there is a significant issue in terms of the ability to

staff childcare facilities. It's excellent to strive to create more spaces (especially for the infant/toddler age) however there is a severe challenge in recruiting and retaining staff. The cost of living in town continues to rise, rentals are few and far between and significantly harder to newcomers to town to acquire, and quite frankly provincially I think we do a very poor job of paying ECEs and other childcare providers what they are worth. We need to continue to strengthen our communities plans to support key determinants of health so we have people who are paid a living wage to care for our children and can live comfortably in our community.

- Sponsor or supply grants to students wanting to become an educator for young children. One of the big issues seems to be lack of staffing. Or if some tax dollars could go towards raising wages for those workers to get more people doing it.
- The Town should create its own daycare. Profits go towards community care projects; parents have more options for work. Also, sidenote, there needs to be an option for care before 8am and after 5pm.
- We need more part time and full-time child-care spaces. Moms are unable to go back to work in their trade due to the lack of availability. And if they must, mother's end up using other means necessary that may not necessarily be safe for the child.
- A 4-year waitlist is outrageous to wait for a spot for a child under 3 years of age.
- Incentive for people with their ECE to come here and work at a current daycare or start their own up.
- Spots specific for nurses to go back to work. We need more infant spots. Nurses are having to leave their lines because we need to go back at 12-18 months and most spots are 30 months+.
- More transparency with wait lists. I have been on some for 2 years and am still not at the top.
- The YCMA plan sounds great on paper as the spaces are needed (my unborn baby is currently in a wait list that is over 70 families long for mid 2025) but the concern is always staffing. It looks good on paper, but the existing child care providers are already struggling to find staff, and if they find staff from out of town, there is nowhere for these newly acquired staff members to live.
- Consider better utilizing new and old school facilities for child care (e.g., new French school). Additionally, consider the possibility of using government building to house childcare for those working in them (e.g., town office, Nora Building, front counter BC, court house) to relieve pressure on the broader childcare needs in the town. Consider housing issues associated with brining in outside care providers.
- Childcare spaces are great. But there needs to be more consideration of the staffing it takes to run these childcare businesses. ECEs and infant and toddler educators are hard to find. Without proper qualified people, there is no point in opening new spaces. I don't see enough of this talked about by the town or our government.
- This is such a complex issue. As we all know, housing, particularly "affordable" housing, is a challenge for many people in our community. In my experience, our childcare providers have struggled to continue to live in our community with lack of housing that they can afford, therefore putting further strain on the childcare situation. Then when people are not able to

find childcare, they may not be able to work, which means they too may need a more affordable housing situation. I can't think of anything new to add, except I want to say thank you for considering this, it is such a critical need in the community. Without childcare, many of the people in healthcare, service industry, etc. are not able to return to work and the health of the entire community is affected.

- Thank you for seeking the feedback of community members; as a working professional and a mother of two utilizing a daycare service, I welcome the opportunity to voice my concerns and provide feedback. To start, the Town could look into the feasibility of offering a \$1 lease of a town-owned property to a registered daycare. I am not sure if there is already this agreement at Ranger Park, if so, is there room for more? Potentially the building by the Town office? This affordable rent option would support the establishment and operation of daycare centers, making quality child care more accessible to families in the community. Additionally, investing in professional development and training opportunities for child care providers can greatly enhance the quality of care and education offered to children. By offering workshops, seminars, and certifications, providers can stay updated on best practices and improve their skills, ultimately benefiting the children in their care. Community engagement is also crucial in improving child care in Smithers. Encouraging community involvement through volunteer programs, parent advisory committees, and community events that promote the importance of early childhood education can foster a sense of ownership and support for child care initiatives. I think an advisory committee made up of parents, providers, and Town Staff that regularly met, would be beneficial. If this already exists, better communication to the community is key. Ensuring that child care remains an actionable priority is of utmost importance for the town of Smithers. I am aware that many women are forced to make difficult choices, either giving up their careers or reducing their working hours. This not only affects individuals and families, but also has a broader impact on the community. We are losing valuable nursing staff, educators, and other essential members of our workforce, which is crucial for maintaining the necessary community services and amenities that we all rely on and enjoy. By prioritizing and investing in child care, we can support working parents, retain skilled professionals, and ensure the overall well-being and prosperity of our community.
- There needs to be care available for teens who have neurodiversity who also may or may not be able to stay at home all day alone. Or care for kids during school holidays (that are equal to the same hours or a little longer than school hours so parents can work) and not have to take time off unpaid. The pool has a good program but cuts off at age 12 the hours are great for working parent. There are other day camps, but they are half day for young kids and older kids' parents can't leave work for hours to move kids from camps. Also, must be affordable.
- New ECEs brought into town will also struggle to find a place to live.
- Indigenous partnerships of those who are rights holders to the land the "town land" is on.
- Family licensed childcare provider should be able to hire staff of their choosing if they have the right qualifications to work in a childcare setting. That should not be dictated if they must be directly related to the licensee. If an individual was fully certified to work with children and all policies and procedures are in place with the northern health licensing authorities. Licenses

should be able to hire additional casual or part-time staff. There are many family daycares in Smithers, more than group centres. The centres must shut down if they are sick or do not have staff to cover if they are away with their own children or for any sort of purpose, that means up to seven families will be missing work. One should be able to provide staff as well to cover maternity, and not to shut down, if a licensee were to have a child, they pay out-of-pocket to the staff to keep their centre open and parents working. And to have maybe a few months at home with their baby. Most family daycare centres raise their children doing this and these little things make it quite difficult. Most people only receive eight weeks from when they have their baby because of the staffing problem, which is a bylaw from the town to my knowledge. Many family daycares shut down in a fast turnaround time from opening due to the fact they are not able to hire the same staff as a group centre, although they follow the same policies and procedures. The logic around this just does not make sense. Family daycare tend to take care of children under 36 months, old. they're the ones that do 90% of the care in Smithers group centres rarely have infants or kids under two. Family daycare providers work with young children in the most fragile portion of their lives. Many families choose fam centres because of the number ratio is lower and it's a more intimate and one on one space and care. The centre should be supported as any group centre again considering the policies and guidelines and procedures are mutual.

- Housing for childcare staff should be prioritized - no point creating spaces if no one can afford to run those spaces long term. We need low-income housing prioritized to bring in staff to run these facilities. Municipality also needs to create long term partnerships with both the Wetsuweten nation and the hereditary chiefs to pave the way for land development if the town isn't willing to purchase private properties. Create a rezoning plan with the regional district to allow for denser property builds outside municipal boundaries that would allow for development to serve the municipality in the future. The land between town and Lake Kathlyn was taken out of the ALR to allow for that development to happen.
- It's a very complicated issue, indeed. However, I support strengthening families, so that public childcare is not necessary.
- The comments at your Dec. meeting of the 2 councillors who were opposed to town involvement in child care made it clear that they do not have an accurate understanding of the scope of the problem, or of the wider-reaching community and societal impacts of a lack of access to child care. This issue affects ALL residents, even those without young children. I strongly encourage the mayor and her staff to ensure all Councillors are fully educated on the issue, and that the two Councillors in question be reminded that their job is to meet the current and future needs of the entire community, not to act according to their own personal beliefs. (Especially when those beliefs are based on false perceptions!!)
- Federal government and BC government also needs to support this area. Three governments need to work together.
- Advocate for better working hours and wage increases for ECEs.
- I really hope that the town is actively coordinating with the CCRR and existing childcare centres when making plans!!!

- Contact the Treehouse Housing Association (The Ark) in Telkwa. They are a Non-Profit with all the infrastructure to operate child care programs. They could open another program in Smithers but need more ECE staff. The first step in all of this is to get more people trained in ECE. We need to get our college (or another one) to offer an on-line option for people to work at the same time as doing their ECE's. This needs to be low or no cost.
- Coordinate with church space during week for childcare centre, partner with CMTN early childhood education program (incentive for remote workers), partner with high school (transition youth into childhood education training), partner with educational institutions and implement preschool programs in facility
- Child care is the responsibility of the Provincial Government, and the Town of Smithers should only have an advocacy role when it comes to child care. We need to quit letting the provincial government download their issues onto the municipalities.
- Daycare should be incorporated into school buildings.
- I strongly believe town of Smithers and Telkwa should be active in this and consider childcare as a service to community which pays off. Partner with Telkwa for some of the idea above, as those both communities and using and lacking the existing space and places in the child care facilities. Almost all current daycares are missing the staff, could Smithers and Telkwa create opportunities for housing/ rentals for possible new child care staff?
- Address other issues of limited affordable housing options, more childcare spaces for under 2, recruiting and retaining ECEs in the community, options for part time or drop-in child care as well as full time, extended childcare hours to accommodate a 9-5 work schedule.
- Identify any potential industry that might help offset some of the start-up costs of buying toys and small pieces not yet paid by the province.