



City of Kamloops

Child Care Action Plan



OCTOBER 2026

Canada's Tournament Capital

The City of Kamloops acknowledges that we are located on Tkemlúps te Secwépemc territory, situated within the unceded ancestral lands of the Secwépemc Nation. We honour and respect the people, the territory, and the land that houses our community.



Canada's Tournament Capital

CITY OF KAMLOOPS, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Child Care Action Plan

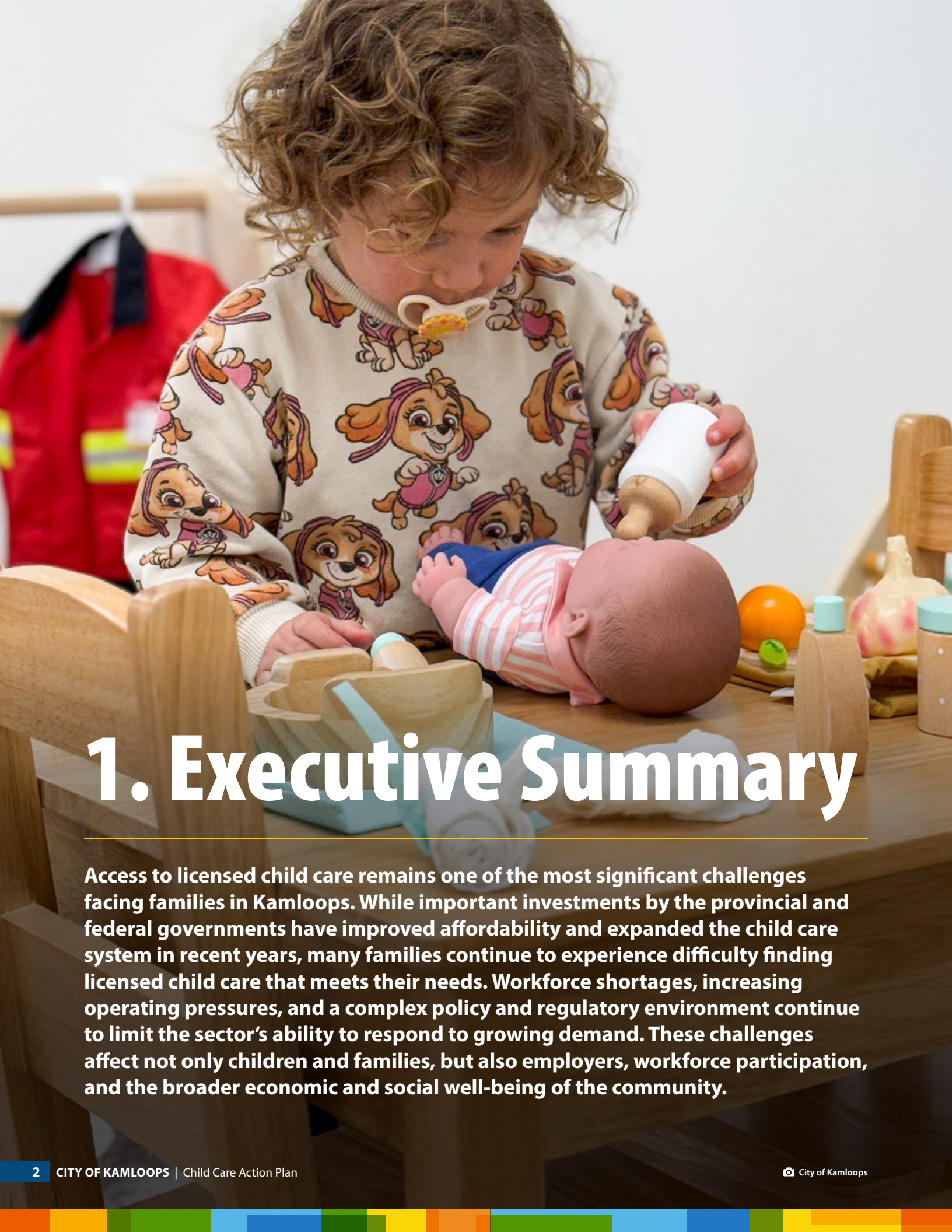
October 2026

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1. Executive Summary

Access to licensed child care remains one of the most significant challenges facing families in Kamloops. While important investments by the provincial and federal governments have improved affordability and expanded the child care system in recent years, many families continue to experience difficulty finding licensed child care that meets their needs. Workforce shortages, increasing operating pressures, and a complex policy and regulatory environment continue to limit the sector's ability to respond to growing demand. These challenges affect not only children and families, but also employers, workforce participation, and the broader economic and social well-being of the community.

Although responsibility for funding, regulating, and operating child care primarily rests with senior levels of government, municipalities play an important role in creating the conditions that support child care development.

Through land use planning, zoning, development processes, partnerships, and advocacy, the City of Kamloops can help reduce local barriers, improve coordination, and support opportunities to increase access to licensed child care.

This action plan builds on the City's 2019 Community Child Care Planning Program and reflects extensive engagement with families, child care providers, educators, licensing representatives, and community partners. While Kamloops has experienced significant growth in licensed child care spaces since 2019, the findings confirm that many of the challenges identified in the previous plan remain. Demand continues to exceed supply in key age groups—particularly infant and toddler care and school-age care—while providers continue to face challenges related to workforce recruitment and retention, funding, inclusion, licensing processes, and navigating municipal planning and development requirements. Engagement also highlighted opportunities to strengthen collaboration, improve access to information, modernize municipal policies, and better integrate child care into community planning.



The action plan establishes a practical, three-year roadmap for the City of Kamloops, focused on areas where the municipality can meaningfully influence child care. The plan is structured around three avenues for action—Municipal Policies and Processes, Community Convening and Collaboration, and Advocacy—and includes initiatives to:

- Recognize child care as essential community infrastructure within municipal planning
- Modernize Official Community Plan and zoning policies to better support child care development
- Improve municipal guidance and navigation for providers
- Strengthen collaboration with community partners and the Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group
- Support evidence-based advocacy with senior levels of government
- Establish ongoing monitoring, reporting, and review to ensure the plan remains responsive to evolving community needs

This action plan views child care as essential community infrastructure that supports healthy child development, family well-being, economic prosperity, and complete communities. By working collaboratively with families, providers, Indigenous partners, School District No. 73, Thompson Rivers University, Interior Health, and senior levels of government, the City of Kamloops can help create a more accessible, inclusive, and sustainable child care system for Kamloops.





2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose

Access to child care remains a significant challenge in Kamloops, affecting families, caregivers, and the broader community. Limited availability of reliable care influences children's development, family well-being, workforce participation, and the local economy. While child care is primarily funded and regulated by the Government of British Columbia, the City of Kamloops has an important role in supporting local solutions within its areas of responsibility and influence.



The purpose of the action plan is to identify clear, actionable steps the City can take to support child care.

THIS INCLUDES:

- pursuing opportunities in areas under the City's jurisdiction in the areas of policy, planning, bylaws, incentives, and municipal processes
- strengthening community coordination through convening key partners for collaborative planning and information sharing
- supporting effective Council advocacy with community-led, evidence-based information aimed at effectively engaging other levels of government responsible for child care funding and regulation



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2.2 Vision

All families in Kamloops have access to affordable, inclusive, quality early learning and care for all children.



2.3 Guiding Principles

The action plan is organized around four guiding principles that form the basis of the vision. Each principle corresponds to a pillar that emerged from community engagement and aligns with provincial child care policy directions. Together, these principles frame both the engagement findings and the action recommendations that follow.



Access:

There are enough spaces that meet the needs of families. Parents have access to programs that fit their schedule and are located close to home, work, or school when they need them.



Affordable:

Early learning and child care is both affordable to parents and operationally viable for providers and institutions.



Inclusive:

Early learning and child care programs are suitable for all demographics and socio-economic backgrounds, provide culturally safe spaces and learning opportunities, and can support the diverse needs of children with exceptionalities.



Quality:

Child care provides children with an enriched and stimulating environment that prepares them for later learning, supported by qualified educators, stable staffing, and evidence-based practice.

These four principles are interdependent. Access cannot be sustained without operational viability. Quality depends on a stable, well-trained workforce, which in turn depends on adequate compensation and professional recognition. Inclusion requires both the will and the resources to serve children with diverse needs. The actions in this plan are designed to address these goals holistically, recognizing that progress in one area reinforces progress in the others.



3. Background

Child care is foundational to the well-being of children, families, and communities. Research consistently demonstrates that access to quality early learning programs supports stronger cognitive, social, and emotional development in children, with benefits that extend well into adulthood (Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain, 2020).



For families, reliable and affordable child care enables full participation in the workforce, supports household financial stability, and reduces the stress of coordinating informal child care arrangements.

For communities, a well-functioning child care system supports economic productivity, helps attract and retain young families, and contributes to gender equity. When child care is unavailable or unaffordable, it is disproportionately women who reduce their work hours, delay career advancement, or leave the workforce entirely (Statistics Canada, 2018).

While the benefits of child care are widely recognized, the child care sector operates within a complex and evolving policy, funding, and regulatory environment that influences the availability, affordability, and accessibility of care across communities.

Understanding these broader influences is essential to identifying meaningful opportunities for local action. This section explores why child care matters, provides an overview of the provincial child care system and the factors shaping the sector, examines the role municipalities can play in supporting child care, and summarizes the current state of child care in Kamloops to inform the actions identified in this plan.

3.1 Why Child Care Matters

Early Childhood Development and Lifelong Outcomes

The years from birth to age five are a critical period for cognitive, social, and emotional development, shaping school readiness and long-term well-being. Research consistently shows that high-quality early childhood programs generate strong returns through improved educational attainment, health outcomes, and lifetime earnings—particularly for children facing disadvantage. In British Columbia, approximately one in three children enter kindergarten vulnerable in at least one developmental domain, underscoring the importance of access to quality early learning environments (Stefanowicz, 2026).

Child care also functions as a key social determinant of health. Regulated settings provide consistent nutrition, early identification of developmental concerns, and stable, supportive environments. These benefits are especially significant for children experiencing poverty, social isolation, or additional support needs, making access to inclusive, high-quality care a critical lever for improving long-term outcomes.



In British Columbia, approximately one in three children enter kindergarten vulnerable in at least one developmental domain, underscoring the importance of access to quality early learning environments (Stefanowicz, 2026).



80.8%

OF MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN UNDER SIX PARTICIPATED IN THE LABOUR FORCE IN 2023

a record high, compared with 74.4% prior to Canada-wide child care affordability agreements.



Family Well-Being, Equity, and Workforce Participation

Child care plays a central role in supporting family stability, enabling parents—particularly women—to participate in the workforce, pursue education, and balance caregiving responsibilities. Without access to affordable care, many parents reduce working hours or leave employment altogether. National and international evidence reinforces this link: following the introduction of Canada-wide affordability measures, labour force participation among mothers with children under six rose to a record 80.8% in 2023, up from 74.4% prior to the agreements (Statistics Canada, 2024).

Child care is also a critical gender equity issue. Women continue to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid caregiving, and barriers to child care access reinforce income inequality and limit career progression (Fortin,

Godbout, & St. Cerny, 2012). Affordability challenges remain, with families—particularly single-parent households, most of which are led by women—continuing to struggle with costs. Even with fee reductions, child care expenses can represent a substantial share of household income (Statistics Canada, 2018).

Equity considerations extend beyond affordability. Families of children with developmental, behavioural, or medical needs often face additional barriers in accessing inclusive care. Without adequate supports and system capacity, these families remain underserved, limiting both child development opportunities and parental workforce participation.

Economic and Community Impacts

Child care is essential social and economic infrastructure that underpins labour force participation, business productivity, and community growth. Accessible and affordable care enables a stable workforce, supports employee retention, and allows local economies to function effectively. Evidence from Quebec's long-standing low-fee system demonstrates the scale of impact, bringing an estimated 70,000 additional mothers into the workforce and generating \$1.49 in economic returns for every dollar invested (Homer, 2021).

Nationally, child care shortages are increasingly recognized as a constraint on economic growth. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has identified lack of access to child care as a top barrier to workforce expansion, with direct implications for employers' ability to recruit and retain staff (Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 2023). This is reflected locally, where long waiting lists and unmet demand limit labour participation and reduce economic competitiveness.

At the community level, insufficient child care supply can slow population growth, strain local businesses, and reduce overall economic resilience. Conversely, a well-functioning child care system supports inclusive growth, attracts and retains families, and contributes to vibrant, sustainable communities.



Child care is essential social and economic infrastructure that underpins labour force participation, business productivity, and community growth. Accessible and affordable care enables a stable workforce, supports employee retention, and allows local economies to function effectively.

In 2021, the Government of Canada signalled a fundamental shift in how child care is understood at the national level, recognizing it not simply as a private family responsibility, but as essential public infrastructure that underpins healthy child development, workforce participation, gender equity, and economic growth.

Public Responsibility and the Case for Investment

In 2021, the Government of Canada signalled a fundamental shift in how child care is understood at the national level, recognizing it not simply as a private family responsibility, but as essential public infrastructure that underpins healthy child development, workforce participation, gender equity, and economic growth. This shift reflects a growing recognition that child care is a public good, with benefits that extend well beyond individual families to communities and society as a whole. As a result, responsibility for building and sustaining a strong child care system extends beyond parents to all orders of government and community partners (Government of Canada, 2021).

This renewed approach has been accompanied by significant public investment in affordability and system expansion. However, improving access to child care requires more than reducing parent fees alone. Long-term success depends on aligning affordability measures with sustainable operational funding, workforce development, facility planning, and coordinated system planning. Without this alignment, gains in affordability may be undermined by limited access to licensed spaces, workforce shortages, and pressures on service quality. Continued, coordinated investment across all aspects of the child care system is essential to realizing the full social and economic benefits of early learning and child care.



3.2 Understanding the Child Care Sector

Child care in British Columbia operates within a policy and funding environment that is complex and continually evolving. Understanding this broader context is essential for interpreting local challenges and recognizing both the opportunities and limits of municipal action.

Federal and Provincial Policy Context

The 2021 Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, committed to by both the federal and provincial governments, has driven significant investment and system change, with the aim of achieving an average parent fee of \$10 per day. In British Columbia, this has accelerated investment and expansion of programs such as the \$10-a-Day ChildCareBC initiative, the Child Care Fee Reduction, the Child Care Operating Fund, Early Child Care Educator Wage Enhancement, and the Affordable Child Care Benefit.

These programs have substantially improved affordability for families. Affordable child care has positive impacts on workforce participation—especially among women—strengthening overall family financial stability, reducing financial stress, and improving the ability to afford quality licensed care versus informal arrangements. At the same time, while these programs have the potential to deliver significant positive impacts, increased affordability has

also driven higher demand without a corresponding investment in workforce capacity, placing significant strain on providers and leaving many families still unable to access care (Macdonald & Friendly, 2023).

These programs have also introduced significant administrative burden, requiring providers to navigate complex application, reporting, and compliance processes. As most funding streams remain pilot programs, their long-term stability is uncertain, further complicating business planning. Questions remain around the pace of implementation, long-term sustainability, and ongoing cost-sharing arrangements, creating uncertainty for providers planning new spaces or investments.



The 2021 Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, committed to by both the federal and provincial governments, has driven significant investment and system change.



City of Kamloops



CHILD CARE IS A MIXED SYSTEM—BUT NOT ALWAYS A COORDINATED ONE

Diverse providers are essential to meeting community needs, while fragmented funding, regulation, and government responsibilities can make planning and service delivery more complex.

Mixed-Market System and Diverse Business Models

The child care sector in British Columbia operates within a mixed-market model that includes non-profit organizations, commercial operators, sole proprietors, and home-based providers—many of whom are female-led small businesses—as well as a growing role for the public education system. Each operates under different funding structures, regulatory requirements, and business models.

While this diversity contributes to the resilience of the child care sector, it also creates challenges for coordination and long-term system planning. Tensions and perceived inequities can arise where funding structures or expansion initiatives are viewed as favouring particular provider types. At the same time, meeting the demand for child care needs continues to depend on a diverse range of providers, reinforcing the need for a clear and coordinated provincial vision that recognizes the distinct roles, contributions, and needs of different provider types.

Fragmented Governance and Overlapping Mandates

Governance of the child care sector is distributed across multiple provincial ministries, contributing to a fragmented and complex system. The Ministry of Education and Child Care leads overall policy and affordability programs. The Ministry of Children and Family Development funds supports for children with exceptionalities. Health authorities, under the Ministry of Health, are responsible for licensing and oversight. The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction links child care to workforce participation programs. Immigration pathways, overseen at the federal level, have also become an important source of workforce recruitment for the sector, but their growing role highlights broader questions around long-term workforce planning, training, and retention.

No single entity holds end-to-end responsibility, requiring providers to engage with multiple systems simultaneously. This fragmentation complicates service delivery, slows decision making, and creates barriers to coordinated system planning.

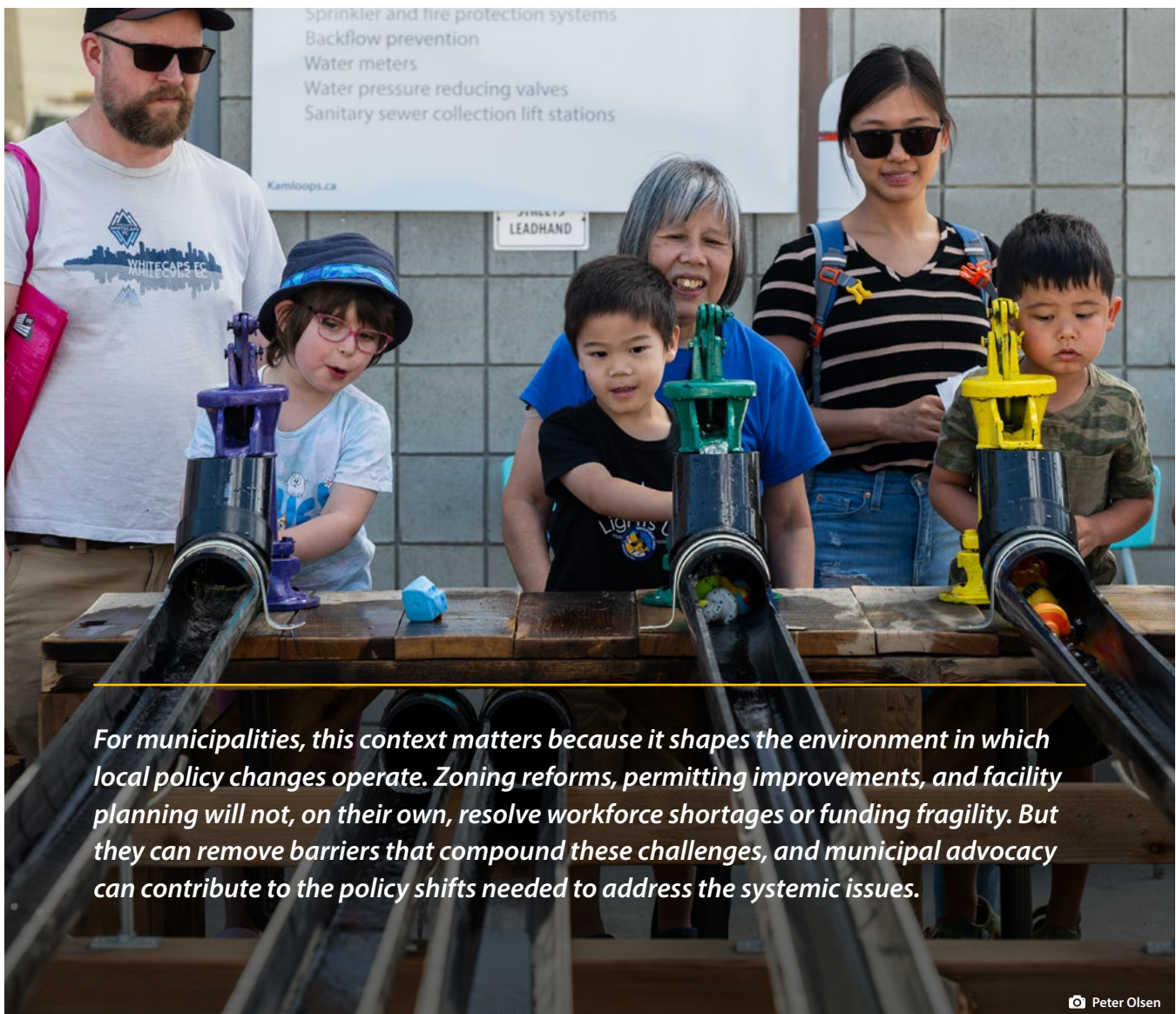
Workforce and Professionalization Challenges

Workforce shortages represent a significant structural risk across the sector. Early childhood education lacks a standardized provincial training model, centralized professional body, or regulated entry to practice comparable to other professions. Training programs are delivered by multiple institutions, resulting in variability in preparation and limited alignment on professional standards.

Recent efforts to address shortages have included streamlined certification pathways, leading to an increase in early childhood educator assistant roles. However, providers have raised concerns that this approach prioritizes quantity over quality, with some graduates lacking sufficient practical experience.

Additional pressures stem from the linkage between child care employment and immigration pathways, which can contribute to a transient workforce. More broadly, the profession continues to face challenges related to low wages, limited career progression, and persistent perceptions that undervalue early childhood education.

Together, these factors make it difficult to recruit, retain, and professionalize the workforce, and complicate efforts to define and maintain consistent standards of quality across the sector.





The Role of Local Government

In British Columbia, child care is funded and regulated provincially. Municipalities do not deliver child care services, set fees, license providers, or fund operating costs. However, local government can help shape the conditions under which child care can be built, operated, and expanded. Zoning bylaws determine where facilities are permitted. Official Community Plans can signal whether a community treats child care as essential infrastructure or as a discretionary land use. Development permit processes and business licensing help set the pace at which new spaces can come online.

Beyond regulation, municipalities play a convening role. They can bring together providers, school districts, health authorities, Indigenous communities, employers, and families to coordinate planning and align investments. They can advocate to provincial and federal governments with locally grounded data. They can integrate child care into broader municipal planning, including housing, transportation, and neighbourhood design, so that child care is planned alongside community growth rather than addressed after development has occurred.



In British Columbia, child care is funded and regulated provincially. Municipalities do not deliver child care services, set fees, license providers, or fund operating costs. However, local government can help shape the conditions under which child care can be built, operated, and expanded.

Municipal Scan

A scan of other British Columbia municipalities shows a range of approaches to supporting child care through land use, regulation, and planning policy. Several jurisdictions have moved to treat child care as a community service rather than a commercial use, embedded it in residential and mixed-use zones, and tailored development requirements to the realities of operating a licensed facility.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS SCAN INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- **Nanaimo** allows licensed child care to operate in residential neighbourhoods throughout the city, making it easier for providers to locate child care closer to where families live (City of Nanaimo, 2025).
- **Prince George** updated its zoning to allow smaller child care facilities in single-family residential neighbourhoods and expanded the age range that these facilities can serve (City of Prince George, 2026).
- **Kelowna and Vernon** have adopted parking requirements designed specifically for child care facilities, rather than applying commercial parking standards, helping reduce unnecessary development costs and barriers for new providers (City of Kelowna, 2026) (City of Vernon, 2026).
- **Victoria** has simplified its approval process and permits child care in most areas of the city, reducing the time and complexity involved in opening new facilities. These changes contributed to the creation of 762 new licensed spaces over two years, without the City directly delivering the spaces (City of Victoria, 2025; 2026)
- **Vancouver** encourages the creation of child care spaces through its development process, using planning incentives and developer contributions to support new facilities. This approach has contributed to the creation of hundreds of new child care spaces through development (City of Vancouver, 2022; 2023).
- **Several municipalities, including Richmond, Surrey, Victoria, and Saanich**, have developed dedicated online child care resources that bring together information on municipal requirements, provincial licensing, funding opportunities, and key contacts. These centralized resources make it easier for current and prospective providers to navigate the process of establishing or expanding a child care facility.

The experiences of other British Columbia municipalities demonstrate that local governments have a range of tools available to support child care development. While the approaches vary based on local context, they provide valuable examples of how planning policy, zoning, and development processes can be used to reduce barriers and increase opportunities for child care. These examples provide potential opportunities for Kamloops and have informed the actions identified in this plan.



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DID YOU KNOW?

In 2025, the City of Kamloops helped bring 36 new licensed child care spaces to the community through the Station Plaza Child Care Centre operated by YMCA-BC. This investment supports local families, strengthens workforce participation, and helps make high-quality child care more accessible in Kamloops.



3.3 Child Care in Kamloops

Community Child Care Planning Program

In 2019, the City of Kamloops completed its first comprehensive report on child care—The Community Child Care Planning Program—to better understand local child care needs and identify opportunities to increase access to licensed child care.

The report found a significant shortage of licensed spaces across the community, particularly for infants, toddlers, and before- and after-school care, and identified barriers for low-income, Indigenous, newcomer, and refugee families, as well as a lack of flexible care options and wrap-around supports (City of Kamloops, 2019).

The report concluded that addressing these challenges would require coordinated action from all levels of government and community partners. Recommendations focused on five key areas—coordination, funding, space, staffing, and tools—with an emphasis on long-term system planning, including increased provincial investment, expansion of licensed spaces, workforce development, integration of child care into school planning, and improved local coordination (City of Kamloops, 2019).

Since the report was completed, the government of British Columbia has made significant investments through initiatives such as ChildCareBC, the Canada-BC Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, the \$10-a-Day ChildCareBC program, expanded operating and capital funding, and enhanced supports for early childhood educators.

Despite these advancements, many of the challenges identified in 2019 continue to exist within Kamloops. Demand for licensed child care continues to outpace supply, workforce shortages remain a significant constraint on expanding services, and communities continue to face challenges navigating the planning, development, and operation of new child care facilities. While some progress has been made, there remains an ongoing need for local action to support implementation, identify community-specific priorities, and ensure that future investments respond to the evolving needs of Kamloops families.

Child Care Supply

Based on data provided by Interior Health in March 2026, Kamloops currently has 140 licensed child care facilities offering 4,190 licensed spaces across full-day group care, school-age care, and licensed family or home-based child care. An additional 408 preschool spaces and 47 child minding/occasional care spaces bring the total number of licensed spaces in Kamloops to 4,645 (Interior Health, 2026). The local child care system is supported by a diverse mix of providers, with corporations and sole proprietors accounting for the majority of facilities (115), alongside 20 non-profit organizations and two School District No. 73-operated facilities.

For the purpose of this report, references to licensed child care spaces exclude preschool and child minding/occasional care spaces unless otherwise noted. While these programs play an important role in supporting children's early learning and providing short-term care options for families, they are licensed under different requirements and are generally limited to a maximum of four hours of care per child per day. As a result, they do not provide the same level of full-day child care capacity as other licensed program types and have been separated to provide a more meaningful assessment of child care availability and future space requirements.

The composition of Kamloops' child care sector highlights the important role that all operator types play in meeting community need. While provincial policy has increasingly emphasized investment in the non-profit sector, the

majority of licensed child care facilities in Kamloops are operated by private providers. As a result, future strategies to increase the supply of child care spaces will need to recognize the significant contribution of both private and non-profit operators and consider approaches that support the continued sustainability and expansion of the full range of providers operating within the community.

Licensed child care capacity has also continued to grow since the City's 2019 Community Child Care Planning Program. Although direct comparisons should be interpreted with caution due to differences in available data sources and inventory methodologies, the current inventory demonstrates a substantial increase in the number of licensed spaces over the past six years. However, the number of licensed spaces should not be interpreted in isolation.

Engagement with local child care providers indicates that occupancy and availability vary across program types, with some operators reporting vacant spaces while others continue to experience significant demand. Providers also noted that staffing shortages can limit their ability to operate all licensed spaces, meaning that not all licensed capacity is available to families at any given time. As a result, both the distribution of licensed spaces and workforce capacity should be considered when assessing current and future child care needs



KAMLOOPS' CURRENT CHILD CARE SUPPLY:



140

LICENSED
CHILD CARE FACILITIES

4,190

FULL DAY LICENSED
CHILD CARE SPACES

408

PRESCHOOL
SPACES

47

CHILD MINDING/
OCCASIONAL
CARE SPACES

4,645

TOTAL NUMBER OF
LICENSED SPACES

PROGRAM TYPE

SPACES

Infant and Toddler	788
Group Care (30 months–school age)	1,619
School Age (5–12)	1,341
Multi-Age Home and Family Care	442
Subtotal	4,190
Preschool	408
Child Minding/Occasional Care	47
Total Licensed Spaces	4,645

ORGANIZATION TYPE

NUMBER OF FACILITIES

Sole Proprietorship	61
Corporation	54
Society/Non-Profit	20
Partnership	3
School District No. 73	2
Total	140

The local child care system is supported by a diverse mix of providers, with corporations and sole proprietors accounting for the majority of facilities (115), alongside 20 non-profit organizations and two School District No. 73-operated facilities.

Community Need

As of 2025, Kamloops was home to approximately **12,626 children between the ages of 0 and 12**, with school-aged children accounting for the largest share of the child population (City of Kamloops, 2023). Understanding both the size and distribution of this population is an important first step in assessing current and future child care needs.

Kamloops currently has 4,645 licensed child care spaces, including preschool and child minding/occasional care programs. Excluding these part-day and occasional program types, there are 4,190 licensed spaces capable of providing full-day child care services.

Because multi-age home and family child care spaces (442) cannot be reliably assigned to a specific age group, they have been excluded from the age-specific analysis below.

AGE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
0–36 months	2,373
3 years–5 years*	2,417
5*–12 years	7,836
Total	12,626

*Based on school entry dates and estimated age of children entering kindergarten, 70% of children age 5 were considered as part of the 3–5 year old category; 30% are included in the 5–12 age.

KAMLOOPS IS HOME TO APPROXIMATELY:

12,626

CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 0–12



LICENSED SPACES BY AGE GROUP

PROGRAM TYPE	CHILDREN	LICENSED SPACES	SPACES PER 100 CHILDREN	ASSESSMENT
Infant and Toddler	2,373	788	33	Lower Availability
Group Care (30 months–school age)	2,417	1,619	67	Higher Availability
School Age	7,836	1,341	17	Limited Availability
Overall	12,626	3,748	30	Lower Availability

HIGHER AVAILABILITY
(59+ spaces per 100 children)
There is a comparatively strong supply of licensed child care spaces relative to the child population.

MODERATE AVAILABILITY
(44–58 spaces per 100 children)
There is a reasonable supply of licensed child care spaces, but additional capacity may be needed as the community grows.

LOWER AVAILABILITY
(30–43 spaces per 100 children)
There is some meaningful supply of licensed child care spaces, though the number remains below the level that would ideally be available.

LIMITED AVAILABILITY
(Less than 30 spaces per 100 children)
There is very little local supply of licensed child care spaces, indicating a more significant opportunity or need for future expansion.



Overall, Kamloops has approximately 30 licensed full-day child care spaces for every 100 children, compared with the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care target of 59 spaces per 100 children.

While intended as a planning benchmark rather than a prescribed target, this comparison provides useful context for understanding overall system capacity.

Looking beyond the overall ratio highlights important differences by age group. Capacity for children aged 30 months to school entry has increased substantially and now exceeds the federal planning benchmark. In contrast, infant and toddler care and school-age care continue to have proportionally fewer licensed spaces relative to the child population. This suggests that while overall child care capacity has grown, future space creation efforts may be most effective when focused on expanding infant and toddler and school-age programs, where demand continues to exceed available capacity.

CHILD CARE DISTRIBUTION BY NEIGHBOURHOODS

While city-wide statistics provide a useful understanding of overall system capacity, they do not reflect how child care is distributed throughout Kamloops. Families typically seek child care close to where they live, work, or attend school, making geographic availability an important consideration. Examining the distribution of licensed child care spaces by neighbourhood provides additional insight into where capacity is more limited and helps identify areas that may benefit from future investment or expansion.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DISTRIBUTION OF LICENSED CHILD CARE SPACES

NEIGHBOURHOOD	NUMBER OF CHILDREN 0-12	NUMBER OF LICENSED SPACES	SPACES PER 100 CHILDREN	ASSESSMENT
Aberdeen	1,835	465	25.34	● Limited Availability
Barnhartvale	595	28	4.71	● Limited Availability
Batchelor Heights	630	7	1.11	● Limited Availability
Brocklehurst	1,918	432	22.52	● Limited Availability
Campbell Creek	130	40	30.77	● Lower Availability
Dallas	562	42	7.47	● Limited Availability
Downtown and West End	657	568	86.45	● Higher Availability
Dufferin	300	0	-	● Limited Availability
Heffley Creek	76	0	-	● Limited Availability
Juniper Ridge	367	111	30.25	● Lower Availability
Lower Sahali	291	117	40.21	● Lower Availability
North Kamloops	1,355	617	45.54	● Moderate Availability
Pineview	188	80	42.55	● Lower Availability
Rayleigh	315	49	15.56	● Limited Availability
Sagebrush	293	250	85.32	● Higher Availability
Southgate	39	114	292.31	● Higher Availability
Upper Sahali	1,292	310	23.99	● Limited Availability
Valleyview and Rose Hill	1,140	475	41.67	● Lower Availability
Westsyde	1,499	382	25.48	● Limited Availability

*Total spaces include multi-age/family child care programs; it does not include preschool, casual care or child minding.

Child care availability varies considerably across Kamloops and generally reflects broader land use patterns throughout the city. Higher concentrations of licensed child care spaces are found in areas such as Downtown, North Kamloops, and the Lower Sahali/Southgate corridor, where commercial uses, employment centres, educational institutions, and community services create opportunities to support families from across the city. In contrast, many primarily residential neighbourhoods—including Aberdeen, Brocklehurst, Westsyde, Upper Sahali, Barnhartvale, Dallas, Rayleigh, Batchelor Heights, Dufferin, and Heffley Creek—have comparatively fewer licensed child care spaces relative to the number of children living in those communities. This pattern is influenced, in part, by the availability of commercially zoned land and locations suitable for larger child care facilities. See **Appendix C** for further data breakdown of age categories per neighbourhood.



While many families access child care near their workplace, along commuting routes, or close to schools, access to neighbourhood-based child care remains equally important. Locating child care within residential communities can improve convenience for families, reduce transportation barriers, and better support before- and after-school care by allowing children to remain closer to their home school. As Kamloops continues to grow, planning for child care will require a balanced approach that supports both centrally located facilities that serve families across the city and opportunities to integrate child care into neighbourhoods where families live.





4. The Action Plan

4.1 Community Engagement Summary

Methodology

The action plan was informed by a mixed-methods engagement process involving child care providers, families, educators, and sector partners in Kamloops.



Online surveys conducted between September and October 2025 gathered input from 38 licensed child care providers representing group centres, multi-age programs, family child care, and preschools, including both commercial/sole proprietor (61%) and non-profit (39%) operators across a range of facility types. A separate survey received 291 responses from parents and caregivers of children aged 0–12 from across Kamloops neighbourhoods.

Two provider focus groups were held in November 2025 with for non-profit and commercial/sole proprietor operators to discuss zoning, licensing, facilities, staffing, funding, inclusion, and quality. Additional written feedback was collected as part of these sessions.

Staff also held meetings and discussions with key sector partners, including early childhood education professionals, School District No. 73 representatives, and Interior Health licensing, to gather input on the challenges facing the child care sector, ensuring their perspectives will be reflected in the plan. Detailed information regarding the community engagement process is available in **Appendix B**.

Parents and Caregivers Survey - Key Themes

LIMITED ACCESS TO CHILD CARE

Approximately one in three families could not secure care for all children who need it, with the greatest shortages in infant and school-age spaces. Most parents described the search for care as difficult or very difficult due to limited availability, scheduling challenges, transportation barriers, and concerns about suitability.

AFFORDABILITY PRESSURES

Families still reported struggling with child care costs, even with the introduction of programs aimed at supporting affordability. This has led some to reduce work hours, rely on informal care arrangements, or go without care altogether.

BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Families of children with developmental, behavioural, or medical needs identified additional challenges in accessing and maintaining care, including limited provider capacity and insufficient external supports.

QUALITY AND STABILITY CONCERNS

While many families with existing care were generally satisfied, concerns were raised about staff turnover, limited flexibility, communication, and the ability of programs to support diverse needs.



Child Care Operators Survey - Key Themes

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

Staffing was identified as a significant challenge across the sector, with providers reporting difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified early childhood educators, particularly those with experience supporting children with diverse needs. Contributing factors included workforce availability, burnout, turnover, and compensation pressures, with providers highlighting opportunities to strengthen training, mentorship, partnerships, and specialized staffing supports.

LICENSING PROCESSES AND CONSISTENCY

Providers noted concerns regarding consistency and clarity in the health authority licensing interpretations and processes, particularly during planning and construction stages. Many emphasized the value of earlier collaboration and clearer communication between operators and licensing staff.

ZONING, PERMITTING, AND BYLAW CHALLENGES

Providers identified challenges related to unclear processes, mixed interpretations, and certain requirements that can make opening or expanding child care spaces difficult. Providers also noted difficulties finding suitable locations that meet both municipal land use requirements and the child care licensing standards, limiting opportunities to establish or expand licensed child care spaces.

FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRESSURES

Providers described challenges navigating multiple funding programs, rising operating costs, and uncertainty related to long-term funding models. Many called for simplified administration, greater transparency, and funding approaches that better reflect operational realities and varying child support needs.

INCLUSION, QUALITY, AND SECTOR COLLABORATION

Providers emphasized the need for additional supports related to inclusion, staff training, peer mentorship, and access to specialized resources. Improved public communication and stronger partnerships across the sector were also identified as important priorities.

Overall Key Themes

Engagement findings underscore that pressures across the system are mutually reinforcing. Workforce shortages limit service expansion and impact quality; financial constraints restrict providers' ability to raise wages or grow; and families face limited availability, inflexible hours, and rising costs. While some supply imbalances are emerging (e.g. underutilized 3–5 year old spaces), gaps remain acute for specific age groups.

Based on feedback gathered through the engagement process and research on the child care sector, the following themes emerged as opportunities for the City of Kamloops to further strengthen its role in supporting the child care sector:

- **Recognize child care as early childhood education** that is essential to child development, and as essential community infrastructure similar to parks, schools, and community centres, within relevant City plans and bylaws.
- **Integrate child care spaces into neighbourhood planning** through zoning updates that promoting safe outdoor environments that support play, healthy child development, and well-being.
- **Improve access to information** and coordinated support for child care providers through enhanced guidance, centralized resources, data sharing, and collaborative approaches that help navigate planning, development, and operational considerations.
- **Strengthen community coordination and sector collaboration** by enhancing opportunities for ongoing engagement, information sharing, workforce discussions, and collective approaches to addressing child care priorities and advocacy efforts.
- **Support effective advocacy** through strengthened partnerships, improved data and information gathering, public awareness efforts, and coordinated approaches to advancing child care priorities within the community.



4.2 Action Plan Framework

This action plan translates what we learned from families, providers, and sector partners into a structured set of actions for the City of Kamloops. It is organized around three categories:



Direct Internal Action

Pursuing opportunities in areas such as policy development, planning, bylaw updates, communications, and processes

Convening Community

Strengthening community coordination through convening key partners for collaborative planning and enhancing information sharing

Advocacy

Supporting effective Council advocacy with community-led, evidence-based information aimed at effectively engaging other levels of government responsible for child care funding and regulation

This action plan is designed with a three-year horizon, with priority actions identified for implementation within the first year (0–12 months). Actions are not listed in order of priority. Many are interdependent and will advance concurrently. Each action is informed by one or more of the four guiding principles (access, affordable, inclusive, quality) and by the specific barriers and opportunities identified through the engagement process and municipal scan.

4.3 Key Actions

DIRECT INTERNAL ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Official Community Plan Updates	Update the Official Community Plan, where appropriate, to recognize licensed child care as essential community infrastructure, similar to parks, schools, and community centres.	Lead: Planning and Development Support: Social, Housing, and Community Development	Years 2–3
	Update the Official Community Plan, where appropriate, to integrate early learning and child care into neighbourhood planning and support the establishment and expansion of child care facilities in residential neighbourhoods, mixed-use centres, and future growth areas, supporting complete, walkable, and family-friendly communities.	Lead: Planning and Development Support: Social, Housing, and Community Development	Ongoing
	Encourage the co-location of licensed child care facilities with schools, parks, civic facilities, neighbourhood centres, and other community amenities to improve accessibility and support complete communities.	Lead: Planning and Development Support: Social, Housing, and Community Development	Ongoing
Zoning Bylaw	Consider adding child care as a permitted use in more zones within the Zoning Bylaw.	Lead: Planning and Development Support: Social, Housing, and Community Development	Years 1–2
	Consider refining child care definitions in the Zoning Bylaw (e.g., child care - home based; child care - neighbourhood; child care - mixed-use centre).	Lead: Planning and Development Support: Social, Housing, and Community Development	Years 1–2
	Partner expanded zoning with specific use regulations that address potential areas of concern within neighbourhoods.	Lead: Planning and Development Support: Social, Housing, and Community Development	Years 1–2
	Explore flexible parking regulations, for example: • tiered parking approach - based on number of licensed spaces • shared parking provision - allow for shared parking agreements within a certain radius • discretionary reductions - reductions based on proximity to transit • pick-up/drop-off zones - review the ratio between pick-up/drop-off and long-term parking spaces, and explore opportunities to use adjacent street parking for pick-up/drop-off needs.	Lead: Planning and Development Support: Social, Housing, and Community Development	Years 1–2

DIRECT INTERNAL ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Streamline Support for New and Existing Child Care Providers	Establish a child care provider landing page on the City of Kamloops website	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Planning and Development, Building Inspection, Kamloops Fire Rescue, Communications and Strategic Partnerships	Year 1
	Develop a child care provider how-to guide that supports clear guidelines for suitable locations, licensing and permits	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Planning and Development, Building Inspection, Kamloops Fire Rescue, Communications and Strategic Partnerships	Year 1
	Promote awareness of the revitalization tax exemption for commercial child care facilities to support the development and expansion of child care spaces in Kamloops	Lead: Planning and Development Support: Social, Housing, and Community Development; Communications and Strategic Partnerships	Year 1
	Establish an internal liaison role to support prospective child care providers through municipal processes, track requests and inquiries, and identify and resolve barriers to and challenges in opening a child care facility in Kamloops	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Planning and Development, Building Inspection, Kamloops Fire Rescue, Communications and Strategic Partnerships	Years 2–3



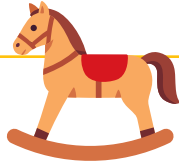


DIRECT INTERNAL ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Streamline Support for New and Existing Child Care Providers Continued...	Develop and regularly update neighbourhood-level data on licensed child care spaces by age group to better understand the distribution of spaces, identify gaps, and support planning for new or expanded child care services.	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Planning and Development, GIS, Communications and Strategic Partnerships.	Years 2–3
	Continue to meet regularly with the City of Kamloops internal Child Care Working Group to explore challenges impacting operators and opportunities for support	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Planning and Development, Building Inspection, Kamloops Fire Rescue, Communications and Strategic Partnerships, Real Estate, Civic Operations - Public Works.	Ongoing

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY COORDINATION		RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Sector Working Group	Update the terms of reference for the Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group: - define the group's purpose as well as the scope and process for collecting, reviewing, and translating feedback into actions and advocacy - define the topics of discussion and collective community initiatives (e.g. workforce development, local information sharing, or shared advocacy efforts)	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group	Year 1
SUPPORT EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY		RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE
Develop Advocacy Framework	Identify community priorities and suggested tactics to support Council advocacy to senior government	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Communications and Strategic Partnerships, Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group	Years 2–3
Data Collection and Storytelling	Strengthen data collection and storytelling to support evidence-based advocacy by tracking local child care trends, highlighting community impacts, and using local experiences to inform decision making and engagement with senior levels of government	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Communications and Strategic Partnerships, Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group	Years 2–3
Public Awareness Campaigns	Support opportunities to bolster the child care sector as a community asset and a valued career path	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Communications and Strategic Partnerships, Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group	Years 2–3
Align Efforts with Key Partners	Establish and align advocacy opportunities with School District No. 73 and Thompson Rivers University	Lead: Social, Housing, and Community Development Support: Communications and Strategic Partnerships	Years 2–3

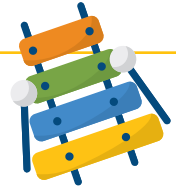
4.4 Reporting and Review

Effective implementation of this action plan will require continued collaboration, regular reporting, and ongoing review to ensure that actions remain relevant and responsive to changing community needs and the evolving child care sector.



Internal Child Care Working Group

The City's Internal Child Care Working Group will lead implementation of the action plan. With staff from relevant departments across the organization, the working group will coordinate implementation activities, monitor progress, identify emerging issues, support cross-departmental collaboration, and undertake ongoing reviews of the action plan to ensure actions remain aligned with municipal priorities and community needs.



Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group

The Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group will support implementation of the action plan in an advisory and collaborative capacity by providing ongoing input, sharing sector perspectives, and identifying emerging opportunities and challenges. The group's terms of reference will be updated as necessary to reflect its role in supporting implementation of the action plan, including its purpose, membership, roles and responsibilities, and reporting relationships.



Annual Report to Council

City staff will provide an annual report to Council outlining progress on the action plan, including the status of implementation actions, key performance indicators (such as changes in licensed child care spaces, facility counts, and other available measures), a summary of engagement activities, and any recommended adjustments to the action plan.



Review Action Plan Every Three Years

A comprehensive review of the action plan will be completed after three years to evaluate implementation, assess outcomes, and determine whether updates are required based on new data, engagement findings, and changes to the provincial or federal policy environment.



5. Conclusion



The child care sector in Kamloops has grown since the City of Kamloops' first needs assessment in 2019, yet core challenges persist. Families still struggle to find care, providers still struggle to find staff, and the sector's financial model remains fragile. This action plan commits the City to using the tools within its authority, including planning, regulation, convening, and advocacy, to create better conditions for child care in our community.





6. References

Survey data, focus group findings, and stakeholder input cited in this report are drawn from the engagement activities described in Appendix B and are not separately referenced below. The following references support data, research, and policy claims drawn from external sources.

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Appendix A

The child care sector uses a wide range of technical terms, acronyms, and program names. The following definitions are provided to support readers from across Council, staff, the sector, and the broader community in engaging with this report.

Defining Terms

Care Types and Settings

Licensed Child Care:

Child care spaces regulated and overseen by the provincial government through Community Care Facilities licensing. Licensed facilities must meet provincial standards for staffing, ratios, health and safety, and program delivery.

Early Learning and Child Care:

An umbrella term referring to licensed and registered child care that follows early childhood development practices and the BC Early Learning Framework. Distinct from informal child minding arrangements.

Group Child Care:

Centre-based licensed care typically operating in commercial, institutional, or purpose-built spaces. Provincial licensing categories include group child care under 36 months, group child care 30 months to school age, and group child care school age.

Multi-Age Child Care:

Licensed care for up to eight children of mixed ages in a single program. Can operate in a home or a centre.

In-Home Multi-Age Child Care:

Licensed care for up to eight children of mixed ages operating in the provider's own home.

Preschool:

Licensed program providing part-day care and early learning, typically for children aged 30 months to school age.

School Age Care on School Grounds:

Licensed care for school-age children delivered on school district property, typically before and after school.

Workforce and Qualifications

ECE (Early Childhood Educator):

A person who has completed an approved early childhood educator certificate or diploma program and is certified by the BC Early Childhood Educator Registry. Early childhood educator certification is required to work in a licensed group child care facility.

ECE IT (Infant/Toddler):

A specialized post-basic certification required to work with children aged three years and under in a licensed group child care facility.

ECE SNE (Special Needs Educator):

A specialized post-basic certification supporting work with children with extra support needs in licensed group child care.

ECEA (Early Childhood Educator Assistant):

A person who has completed a basic early childhood educator assistant course. Early childhood educator assistants work under the supervision of a certified early childhood educator.

ECE Wage Enhancement:

A provincial program that provides eligible certified early childhood educators with a wage top-up of \$6 per hour, intended to support recruitment and retention in the sector.

Funding Programs and Subsidies

Affordable Child Care Benefit (ACCB):

A provincial subsidy paid to eligible families to help offset the cost of child care. Income-tested and paid directly to the provider.

Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI):

A provincial funding program that supports licensed providers to reduce the fees they charge to parents. Participating providers must agree to limits on annual fee increases.

Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF):

A provincial operating subsidy paid to licensed providers to support the costs of operating a child care facility.

\$10-a-Day ChildCareBC Program:

A provincial program that provides operating funding to selected licensed providers in exchange for capping parent fees at approximately \$10 per day. Sometimes referred to as the operating funding model.

Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Agreement:

A federal-provincial agreement signed by British Columbia in 2021 committing both orders of government to working toward an average parent fee of \$10 per day for regulated child care.

New Spaces Fund:

A provincial capital funding program to support the creation of new licensed child care spaces.

Inclusion and Support Services

Supported Child Development (SCD):

A provincially funded program that provides consultation and support to families and child care providers to enable children with extra support needs to participate in licensed child care.

BC Early Learning Framework (ELF):

The provincial framework that guides early learning practice in British Columbia. Organized around four areas of learning and development: well-being and belonging, exploration and creativity, languages and literacies, and social responsibility and diversity.

Local and Sector Bodies

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR):

The local program that supports families in finding child care, supports providers (including registered home-based providers), and administers some provincial programs at the community level. The Kamloops Child Care Resource and Referral is operated by the YMCA BC.

Children's Therapy and Family Resource Centre (CTFRC):

A local non-profit agency that provides therapy and support services to children and families in the Thompson region, including support for children with extra needs in child care settings.

Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Engagement Group:

The City of Kamloops' Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group is a forum for the City to engage with sector partners, providers, and stakeholders on local child care issues.

School District No. 73 (SD73):

The Kamloops-Thompson School District, which delivers public education and operates a small number of licensed child care facilities on school grounds.

Interior Health:

The regional health authority responsible for licensing and inspecting child care facilities in Kamloops under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act.

Other Terms

Mixed-Market Model:

The structure of British Columbia's child care sector, which combines for-profit operators (including corporations, sole proprietors, and home-based providers) with non-profit organizations and a small but growing public sector role.

Co-location:

The practice of locating child care facilities within or alongside other community uses such as schools, recreation centres, or community centres.

Child Care Age:

Children aged 0 to 12 years. This range aligns with provincial child care licensing categories and elementary school age.





Appendix B

Understanding the experiences of families and providers is essential to developing actions that address real needs. This section describes how community input contributed to the creation of this plan.

Community Engagement Overview

Methodology and Data Sources

The development of this action plan was informed by a mixed-methods engagement process designed to capture the experiences and priorities of both child care providers and families in Kamloops.



Provider Survey:

An online survey distributed to licensed child care operators between September and October 2025 received 38 responses from active providers. Respondents represented a cross-section of licensed group centres, multi-age programs, family child care, and preschool operators. Twenty-three (61%) operated as for-profit entities (sole proprietors) and 15 (39%) as non-profit. Facilities included purpose-built centres (12), private homes (14), school buildings (3), faith-based or community buildings (3), and commercial spaces (4).

Parent and Caregiver Survey:

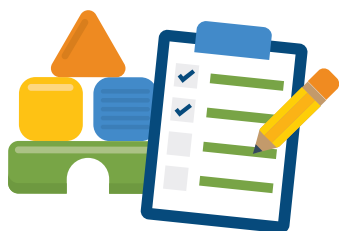
An online survey received 291 responses from parents and caregivers of children between 0 and 12 years of age. Respondents were distributed across Kamloops neighbourhoods, with the largest concentrations in Upper Sahali, Aberdeen, Brocklehurst, Westsyde, and North Kamloops. Household incomes ranged broadly, with the majority falling between \$100,000 and \$199,000. Thirty-three respondents (11%) identified themselves or their children as Indigenous.

Provider Focus Groups:

Two facilitated sessions were held in November 2025 to explore survey findings in greater depth. The first session (November 20) engaged for-profit and sole proprietor operators; the second (November 24) engaged non-profit operators. Discussions covered City of Kamloops zoning, licensing, and bylaws; Interior Health licensing; construction, facilities, and location; staffing; funding; and inclusion and quality. Participants also provided written feedback through sticky notes and follow-up correspondence.

Early Childhood Education Faculty Focus Group:

A small focus group was also held with Thompson Rivers University's Early Childhood Education faculty in February 2026 to gather an educational perspective on workforce preparation, qualification pathways, and the gap between training and the practical demands of working in licensed child care. Faculty input has been integrated into the workforce, training, and quality findings throughout this report.



All engagement instruments and discussions were organized around the four goals of this plan—Access, Affordability, Inclusion, and Quality—so that findings could be mapped directly to policy recommendations.

What We Learned

The engagement process revealed a child care system under significant strain. Providers demonstrated deep commitment to the children and families they serve, but described compounding challenges across workforce shortages, financial pressures, regulatory complexity, and gaps in inclusion supports. Families reported widespread difficulty finding care, affordability stress, and variable quality experiences. Focus group discussions with operators added operational detail, particularly around municipal regulatory processes, while input from Thompson Rivers University's Early Childhood Education faculty added a complementary perspective on workforce preparation and qualification pathways.

Access

Overall, demand for child care in Kamloops outpaces supply; however, this supply gap is not universal across all age groups. Among providers, 31 of 38 (82%) maintain a waitlist, with several large operators reporting waitlists of 100 to 400 or more families. Among parents, 87 of 291 respondents (30%) reported not having child care for all children who need it. Both provider and parent feedback indicates that supply gaps are most acute for infants aged 0 to 18 months (33 families without spaces) and school-age children aged 5 to 12 (48 families). While parent feedback indicated further gaps for the 3-to-5 age group (16 families), providers indicated that there is now an abundance of 3-to-5 age group spaces, and they are experiencing challenges filling these programs.

Finding care is difficult even for those who secure it. When asked to rate the difficulty of their child care search on a scale of 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult), parents responded with an average of 4.2, with 82% rating it a 4 or 5. The most common barriers were lack of availability in their area (81%), high cost (42%), concerns about quality (41%), and limited hours matching their schedules (34%).

Half of providers had considered expansion in the past five years, but only 10 of 19 succeeded in adding spaces. The dominant barriers were staffing shortages, lack of suitable facilities (particularly those meeting outdoor play space requirements), high construction and lease costs, and zoning or permitting challenges.

Focus group participants provided detailed accounts of such regulatory barriers. For-profit operators described waiting up to three months for building permits while paying rent, inconsistent direction from inspectors, and requirements that varied across locations. Both groups reported that Interior Health licensing officers become involved too late in the process, typically only after

construction is complete, resulting in expensive modifications. Providers asked that licensing participate from the start of projects.



Non-profit operators highlighted that parking requirements often exceed actual need, with some facilities maintaining parking that sits unused during program hours and could be converted to outdoor play areas. Both groups recommended that the City of Kamloops require new developments to include child care-appropriate space built to licensing specifications.

Hours of operation further constrain access. Most providers operate between approximately 7:00–7:30 am and 5:00–5:30 pm on weekdays. Only four of 38 had implemented extended hours, opening as early as 6:00 am. No providers reported evening, overnight, or weekend hours. Among parents, 132 of 204 families with care (65%) reported being impacted by planned closures and holidays, such as professional development days (both for child care staff and school professional development closures), provider vacations (home-based providers), and statutory holidays.

Focus group participants also challenged the prevailing narrative around supply shortages. For-profit operators reported that demand has shifted since the COVID-19 pandemic, with some centres now operating with empty spaces, particularly for children aged 30 months to school age. They attributed continued long waiting lists in part to families registering on multiple lists, inflating apparent demand. Participants asked that the City of Kamloops help direct parents to available spaces and avoid approving new centres before existing capacity is filled.

Affordability

Affordability is a pressure point for both families and providers. Among parents, cost was the second most common barrier to finding care (42%) and was identified by 43 of 87 families without care as a reason they could not secure a space. Overall, 27% of families reported struggling to afford fees often or always.

Providers described a sector caught between reducing costs for families and maintaining viable operations. The factors with the greatest impact on financial feasibility were fee limits (66%), wages and benefits (61%), and lease or mortgage costs (45%). Providers participating in the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative are limited to annual fee increases of 2–3%, but reported operating costs rising well beyond that threshold.

Provincial funding programs have broad uptake (76% of providers subscribe to the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative and 87% accept subsidy), but significant frustrations persist. Only 34% had applied for the \$10-a-Day program, with non-applicants citing ineligibility or insufficient information about the process. Kamloops currently has three centres that are part of the \$10-a-Day program, providing a total of 398 child care spaces across all age groups, which represents just 8.3% of all child care spaces currently licensed in the city. This contrasts significantly from the City of Vancouver, which has approximately 20% of its child care spaces operating as part of the \$10-a-Day program.¹⁹

Focus group discussions added depth to these concerns. For-profit operators reported spending up to 30 hours per month on administration across multiple funding streams. Both groups noted that fees and fee increases are greatly restricted under the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative in their operating agreements, while costs have risen substantially. Non-profit operators expressed concern that the \$10-a-Day model was rolled out too quickly and is now being scaled back, and that the upcoming wage grid may force centres to reduce staff wages or opt out. Both groups called for streamlined funding that is simpler and more predictable.



Inclusion

Providers expressed strong commitment to inclusive care but described significant barriers to delivering on that commitment. Two-thirds (66%) had a formal inclusion policy and 50% provided inclusivity training. However, 74% reported that barriers to serving children with higher needs had impacted their ability to provide care. The most frequently cited barriers were insufficient staffing overall (23 providers), lack of funding (22), insufficient staff with specialized certifications (21), and lack of support from external agencies (20).

Among parents, 43 respondents (15%) reported that their child had experienced needs that affected their participation in care. Of those with identified needs, 19 (44%) reported that these needs were not appropriately accommodated. Parents described being turned away, having children's hours reduced, or having care terminated when needs escalated.

Both surveys and focus groups pointed to the Supported Child Development program as overstretched. Providers cited agency staff shortages, inconsistent coverage, and a six-month rotation policy. Focus group participants reported that support resources are concentrated on children under five, leaving school-age children with little or no external support. For-profit operators raised an emerging insurance barrier, with at least two providers reporting that their insurance no longer covers external support workers on their premises.

Both focus groups emphasized the need for funding that follows the child rather than the provider, with individualized support levels tied to the complexity of each child's needs.



Quality

Among families with care, overall satisfaction with the quality of care their children receive was moderate to high: on a scale of 1 (not satisfied at all) to 5 (very satisfied), the average rating was 3.9. However, the most common aspects falling below expectations were consistency of staffing and turnover (98 respondents), program hours and flexibility (87), cost relative to quality (71), communication with families (67), child-to-educator ratios (56), and continuity of care (51).

Providers confirmed that workforce is the primary quality risk. When asked to rate recruitment difficulty on a scale of 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult), the average was 4.2, with 55% assigning the maximum score. The dominant reasons staff leave the sector were burnout, low wages, lack of professional recognition, and stress from high-needs children without adequate support.

Provider focus groups deepened the picture of workforce challenges. Both groups described the Early Childhood Educator Assistant qualification as inadequate, producing graduates who lack practical experience. Non-profit operators described a cycle in which fully qualified early childhood educators bear a disproportionate workload compensating for underprepared early childhood educator assistants, accelerating burnout. For-profit operators noted that no substitute pool exists, meaning any staff absence creates immediate pressure on ratios and care quality.

Thompson Rivers University's Early Childhood Education faculty offered a complementary perspective from inside the training system. Faculty highlighted current early child care educator curricula and qualification requirements as outdated and insufficiently standardized, resulting in uneven preparation and inconsistent expectations across

training pathways. They noted that the knowledge and practical experience gained through current training programs often does not match the complexity of children's needs or align with evolving quality markers, including inclusion and supports for diverse learning and developmental needs. Finally, educators raised concern that existing qualification standards can allow individuals to enter the field with minimal training, provide care, and still not be required to progress to full qualification, which they felt undermines both program quality and the credibility of the profession over time.

Both provider groups called for broader training opportunities, including evening and weekend course options, expanded practicum placements, and training focused on supporting children with challenging behaviours. Non-profit operators proposed a centralized substitute staffing service and a peer mentoring program. Both groups noted that existing training opportunities through the Child Care Resource and Referral program are underutilized because providers are not aware of them.

Adherence to the British Columbia Early Learning Framework was high (87%), but barriers to full implementation included insufficient planning time, lack of educator knowledge of the framework, and competing demands from managing complex behavioural needs.



What This Means for Kamloops

The engagement findings paint a picture of a child care system where supply, affordability, inclusion, and quality pressures are mutually reinforcing. Providers cannot expand without staff, cannot retain staff without better wages, and cannot raise wages within existing fee structures. Families cannot find enough spaces, particularly for infants and school-age children, and those who do secure care face affordability pressures and variable quality.

Our focus groups added a critical layer of operational detail, particularly around municipal regulatory processes. Providers identified specific, actionable friction points in permitting, zoning, and bylaw enforcement that are within the City of Kamloops's direct authority to address. They also identified opportunities for the City to play a stronger convening and coordination role by supporting training partnerships, improving information for parents about available spaces, and requiring child care-appropriate space in new developments.

While many systemic challenges fall primarily within provincial jurisdiction, the municipality has meaningful levers. The action plan that follows is organized around these levers, supplemented by advocacy to other orders of government on issues outside the City of Kamloops's direct authority.





Appendix C

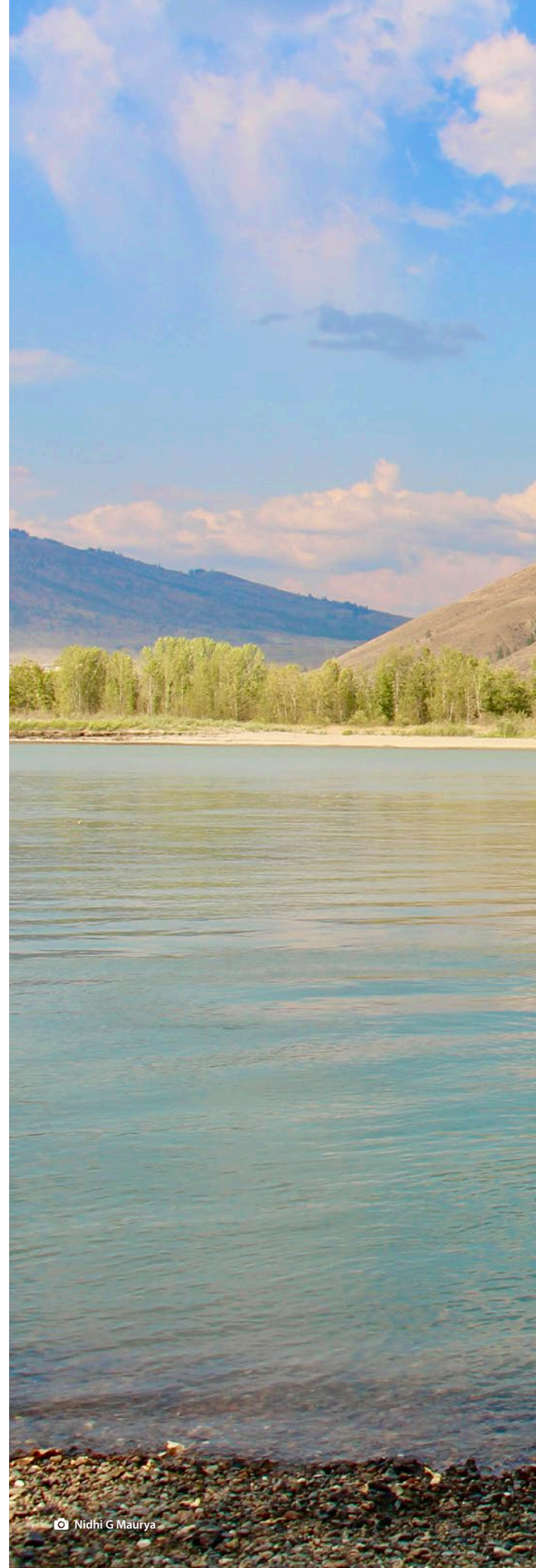
2025 Spaces by Neighbourhood and Age Category

NEIGHBOURHOOD	NUMBER OF KIDS 0-36 MONTHS	CHILD CARE SPACES	RATIO
Aberdeen	285	68	24%
Barnhartvale	102	0	0%
Batchelor Heights	112	0	0%
Brocklehurst	345	88	26%
Campbell Creek	21	0	0%
Dallas	91	0	0%
Downtown and West End	143	174	121%
Dufferin	48	0	0%
Heffley Creek	14	0	0%
Juniper Ridge and Rose Hill	60	8	13%
Lower Sahali	59	36	61%
North Kamloops	267	102	38%
Pineview	38	24	63%
Rayleigh	49	0	0%
Sagebrush	55	48	87%
Southgate	12	36	291%
Upper Sahali	225	72	32%
Valleyview	180	92	51%
Westsyde	238	40	17%

NEIGHBOURHOOD	NUMBER OF KIDS 3-5 YEARS	CHILD CARE SPACES	RATIO
Aberdeen	300	216	72%
Barnhartvale	105	0	0%
Batchelor Heights	122	0	0%
Brocklehurst	343	124	36%
Campbell Creek	28	24	85%
Dallas	99	24	24%
Downtown and West End	107	268	251%
Dufferin	59	0	0%
Heffley Creek	14	0	0%
Juniper Ridge and Rose Hill	66	45	68%
Lower Sahali	49	45	92%
North Kamloops	227	161	71%
Pineview	34	49	145%
Rayleigh	62	0	0%
Sagebrush	60	99	165%
Southgate	2	78	3900%
Upper Sahali	239	106	44%
Valleyview	200	255	127%
Westsyde	268	128	48%

NEIGHBOURHOOD	NUMBER OF KIDS 5-12 YEARS	CHILD CARE SPACES	RATIO
Aberdeen	974	144	15%
Barnhartvale	352	28	8%
Batchelor Heights	362	0	0%
Brocklehurst	1,105	160	14%
Campbell Creek	76	0	0%
Dallas	339	10	3%
Downtown and West End	347	94	27%
Dufferin	181	0	0%
Heffley Creek	43	0	0%
Juniper Ridge and Rose Hill	221	35	16%
Lower Sahali	158	20	13%
North Kamloops	750	301	40%
Pineview	101	0	0%
Rayleigh	189	20	11%
Sagebrush	161	95	59%
Southgate	15	0	0%
Upper Sahali	753	94	12%
Valleyview	697	106	15%
Westsyde	905	152	17%

*Total spaces include multi-age/family child care programs; it does not include preschool, casual care, or child minding







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