



March 4, 2024

Ref: 294991

Doug McPhee, Chair
Board of Education
School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
Email: Jane.Nixon@sd5.bc.ca

Dear Doug,

Thank you for your email of November 22, 2023, sent on behalf of the Board of Education of School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) regarding specific challenges your school district is facing, particularly in rural areas of the district. We appreciate you sharing your concerns and experience.

Government's goal of making affordable, inclusive, and quality child care a core service that families can rely on represents one of the biggest social policy changes in recent history. We are in year 6 of the 10-year [ChildcareBC Plan](#) and each year we are implementing changes to our programs and policies towards this goal. The Ministry continues to encourage and support boards of education to expand access to licensed child care where they are able and in response to community need.

The Province has committed to leverage opportunities to build child care spaces on public land, including at hospitals, medical centres, government offices, post-secondary institutions, and on school grounds. We thank the Southeast Kootenay School District for opting into 2023/24 District Capacity Funding to improve capacity, including expanding access to child care on school grounds. We acknowledge the significant diversity of both child care needs and district capacity to meet those needs across the province. We encourage you to continue to explore all options available under the *School Act*, including board-operated child care or partnership with a local service provider, dependent on the local context.

Additionally, you highlight in your letter the need for equity in funding to support child care space creation. In an effort to provide equity in funding, the [New Spaces Fund](#) accounts for known cost drivers, including building in rural and remote areas and will support the costs of construction, within reason. If you would like to discuss the specifics of potential projects further, please contact Michelle Kirby, Director, Child Care Development Division by email at Michelle.Kirby@gov.bc.ca.

.../2

Thank you also for sharing your concerns about the workforce shortage in the child care sector in your communities. The successful creation of child care spaces depends on a sufficient, stable, and qualified workforce. A key goal under the ChildCareBC Plan is addressing long-standing issues related to compensation in the sector. Since 2018, when our government released the [Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy](#), provincial and federal investments have enabled a suite of recruitment and retention initiatives to support child care professionals including wage enhancements, bursaries to help with the cost of education, funding and resources for professional development, peer mentoring, and streamlined pathways for international educators.

Enhanced supports may offer opportunities for Education Assistants interested in working in child care to upgrade their qualifications. The Child Care Licensing Regulation [Section 29](#) outlines the employment qualifications required to work as a Responsible Adult. Education Assistants with these qualifications would be able to work with school aged children in Before and After School Child Care programs.

This government also recognizes that compensation continues to be a barrier for many to enter or stay in the child care sector. As such, the Government has committed to develop and implement a wage grid to ensure child care professionals are properly recognized and fairly compensated for their important work. Work to deliver on this commitment is underway, including establishing a timeline for implementation.

The work that the Southeast Kootenay School District and other school districts have undertaken is making progress towards a future where child care is a core service. We thank you for sharing your concerns regarding expanding child care on school grounds. We encourage you to continue to work with Ministry colleagues in identifying and addressing barriers to the delivery of affordable, quality, inclusive child care on school grounds.

Sincerely,



Rachna Singh
Minister of Education and Child Care



Mitzi Dean
Minister of State for Child Care

cc: Viveka Johnson Superintendent, School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
Jennifer McCrea, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Child Care
Patricia Boyle, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Child Care