

MEDIA RELEASE

City of Williams Lake



For Immediate Release

March 9, 2021

450 Mart Street
Williams Lake, BC
V2G 1N3

City Resolution on Early Childhood Education Endorsed by UBCM

A resolution submitted by Council regarding Early Childhood Education has been endorsed by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) and will be forwarded to the appropriate government departments for follow-up.

The resolution, *Early Childhood Education Labour Force Shortage*, was submitted to UBCM after being endorsed by the North Central Local Government Association last spring.

The resolution was drafted following community consultation for the Williams Lake Child Care Needs and Action Plan, led by the Williams Lake and Area Social Planning Council in partnership with the City in 2020. When working on that plan, the working group heard very clearly that while Williams Lake would benefit from more childcare spaces, there were several spaces in the community vacant due to lack of qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECE's). In November 2020, a delegation of childcare providers made a presentation to Council about the critical lack of spaces in Williams Lake, and the resulting negative impact on the local labour market.

"We continue to hear about the lack of qualified labour in our community that is affecting many businesses. Access to quality childcare is essential for a vibrant workforce - this is a labour market problem that needs to be corrected," said Beth Veenkamp, Economic Development Officer.

The resolution calls for a fair wage for qualified ECE's that is more reflective of the cost of living, as well as the financial and time investments required to take the training. The resolution also calls on the government to address the gender barriers in the profession, particularly when compared to a trades education that requires less school time, provides more incentives, and ultimately provides significantly better wages as well as inter-provincial mobility.

Council has been pressing for the Ministry of Advanced Education and Training to provide more training opportunities for rural communities. With only online options currently available, the working group found that programming did not meet the needs of our local students, who fare better with in-class sessions.

"We are pleased that we were able to bring the concerns we heard from our local providers to the attention of UBCM, which will now go directly to the Province. This is not a Williams Lake-specific problem, but Council has taken the approach that we can not afford to wait for the government to figure this out and understand the issues facing rural communities," said Mayor Walt Cobb. "We support local training and fair wages, and we continue to work toward providing opportunities in our community."

-30-

Media Contact:

Beth Veenkamp, Economic Development Officer

bveenkamp@williamslake.ca

Direct: 250-392-8480 / City Hall: 250-392-2311