

# Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy

2018 to 2023

Prepared by SPARC BC





# Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy

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## 1.0 Introduction

Quality, accessible and affordable childcare is vital to a healthy community and prosperous economy. All levels of government, community service agencies, families and businesses have a shared interest and play a part in supporting child development and child care services.

While child care licensing and funding is a provincial responsibility, local governments play a role in planning and coordinating for child care and work to support delivery of child care and early learning spaces. Community and provincial service agencies, not-for-profits, school districts, child care providers, community leaders, business owners and others are invaluable partners in both developing and implementing successful strategies to improve child care for children and families in Squamish.

Child care is a critical community amenity that is relevant to the overall affordability situation for Squamish families and affects their ability to participate in the workforce. Ensuring adequate and quality care provides significant social and economic benefits: it reduces developmental vulnerabilities and improves school readiness, reduces social isolation and increases social connections and resilience – especially among single parents or caregivers – and supports business attraction and recruitment, retaining employees and developing a skilled workforce.<sup>1</sup>

The Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy seeks to address key gaps in child care in Squamish through a set of strategies, actions and partnerships that will support Squamish families to access child care for their children ages zero (0) to twelve (12) years old. The Strategy builds on existing initiatives and enabling policies for child care in Squamish. It prioritizes strong partnerships and shared accountability to plan for and deliver accessible, affordable, high quality child care. It amplifies the *Squamish Children's Charter of Rights* and recognizes that children's right to education includes early childhood education.

The Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy is divided into twelve (12) sections, including this one: section 2 gives an overview of the context in which child care is provided in Squamish and highlights the specific opportunities the strategy can capitalize on. Section 3 describes the purpose of the strategy document. Section 4 outlines the methodology employed to collect and analyze the data that informed the strategy. Section 5 shares the key metrics and core child care needs in Squamish, while section 6 shares the future vision for child care in the community. Section 7 describes the guiding principles for how the strategy will be implemented. Section 8 describes the suggested organizational structure that will be used to implement the Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy. Section 9 proposes possible targets for new child care spaces in Squamish over the next five (5) years. Section 10 presents the three (3) strategic directions and associated actions for implementation, with suggested timelines and key partners for each action. In section 11, some of the partners in successfully implementing the child care strategy are introduced in more detail. Finally, section 12 describes the monitoring and evaluation actions that will occur over the next five (5) years, to track the implementation progress and develop an evidence base that will support an updated Child Care Strategy for Squamish beyond 2023.

A technical appendices companion document is also available for those who wish to review the data collection methods more closely.

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<sup>1</sup> *New Westminister Child Care Needs Assessment*. (2016). New Westminister.

## 2.0 The Context and the Opportunities

The Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy was developed in recognition that many families struggle to access child care in Squamish, child care providers are facing challenges as they strive to provide quality care for families and there are new opportunities for the District of Squamish and partners to take an active role in collectively meeting these needs. This section describes the big picture factors that impact child care access and provision in Squamish and highlights the exciting opportunities that make now an ideal time for Squamish to create and implement a Child Care Strategy.

### The Context in Squamish

Squamish is a rapidly expanding community; many service sectors are struggling to meet residents' needs. This growth has impacted the child care sector in the following ways:

- Facilities that historically provided space for child care (e.g., Brennan Park Recreation Centre, many local schools) can no longer do so as it is needed to offer their core programming.
- Child care businesses have largely stayed the same size due to the high licensing requirements and cost of expanding child care facilities, and the challenges finding and retaining qualified staff.
- Demand for child care has risen while supply has stayed constant, leading to longer waitlists.

The increasing cost of living in Squamish is a challenge for all families:

- **The cost of housing has steadily increased, causing families to spend a larger proportion of their earnings on housing costs.** This means families have less to spend on other necessities, including child care.
- **The cost of child care itself is high, even with new and increased provincial subsidies for families.** This puts parents in a difficult position. In two-parent families, one (1) parent may decide to stay home, or both parents might change their work schedules to share child care duties (however, this can result in increased stress and less time spent as a family). Single parent households have even fewer options. Across all family types, parents have reported that the high cost of child care is tied to decisions around participation in the workforce.
- **Child care worker wages are insufficient to afford the cost of living in Squamish, putting a financial strain on early childhood education (ECE) workers and their families.** Child care facility managers report that they struggle to hire and retain qualified staff as a result of these affordability issues (note: the issue of low ECE wages is province-wide, and while new provincial legislation aims to increase ECE wages, only fully qualified ECEs will be eligible<sup>2</sup>).

The unique character of the Squamish community means families have specific child care needs that add complexity to child care provision:

- There is a large proportion of Squamish residents commuting to the Lower Mainland or Whistler for work. These families need child care options with longer or flexible hours, which child care operators struggle to offer due to staffing shortages and operating costs.
- Squamish Nation families would like more access to culturally relevant programming, which currently only exists through the Nation's child care options.

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<sup>2</sup> *ECE Wage Enhancement: Funding Guidelines – Draft.* (2018). Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Despite these very real challenges, Squamish has a core group of committed partners who have collaborated on child care and early childhood initiatives and enabling policies:

- The Putting Children First Initiative (PCFI) has brought together stakeholders from the School District 48, Squamish Nation, District of Squamish, Sea to Sky Community Services, Ministry of Children and Family Development and Vancouver Coastal Health to collaborate on initiatives for children ages zero (0) to six (6) years old since the early 2000s. The Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy is one of many initiatives that have come out of the PCFI collaborations.
- Squamish children created the *Squamish Children’s Charter of Rights* in 2016. The Charter is unique in that it gives Squamish children a voice; the Charter itself is a call to the community and decision-makers to support the well-being and unique needs of children in Squamish. The Charter informed important policy updates to the District of Squamish Official Community Plan.

### **Squamish Children’s Charter of Rights**

1. I have the right to survive. I have the right to a warm home, to food, to clothing and to sleep.
2. I have the right to a clean environment, including fresh air and fresh water.
3. I have the right to peace, to be free and to live in a safe world.
4. I have the right to choice, to my own beliefs and be happy and to love who I want and to be loved.
5. I have the right to play, to exercise and to recreation. I have the right to nature, to be outside, to explore, to imagine and to create.
6. I have the right to be who I want and to be respected for it.
7. I have the right to express myself, to have a voice, to speak out and to be included.
8. I have the right to safety and to feel safe, to trust someone and the right to privacy.
9. I have the right to an education.
10. I have the right to health care.
11. I have the right to have equal rights and to know that I have rights.

### **The Opportunities**

The time is right to invest in child care in Squamish. Provincial and federal governments have committed significant resources toward child care and Squamish has demonstrated its commitment to responding to child care needs across the community.

In spring of 2018, the provincial government announced substantial investments in child care and early childhood education for BC families. The budget includes \$1 billion in new child care funds between now and 2021 and presents a long-term strategy to build a universal child care program for the province.<sup>3</sup> Immediate actions include lower parent fees, more licensed spaces and investments in the early childhood educator workforce. Through the *Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative*, full-time licensed child care program providers can receive new public funding to cover the cost of lowering parent fees by up to \$350 per month per child under the age of six (6). The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) also recently

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<sup>3</sup> See [http://bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2018/childcare/2018\\_Child\\_Care\\_BC.pdf](http://bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2018/childcare/2018_Child_Care_BC.pdf)

announced funding for local governments to engage in child care planning activities to develop a community child care space creation action plan.

Nationally, the federal government has committed to an Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework, supported by the provincial government. The federal government has also committed ten (10) years of transfers to provinces and territories to increase access to quality, affordable child care.

At the local level, in October 2015 the District of Squamish Council affirmed the health, safety and well-being of children as foundational to the community and directed that an early childhood and family-focused lens be incorporated in upcoming Official Community Plan (OCP) policy, bylaws, built environment and strategic planning. Since then, District actions and policy changes have included:

- Adopting the Squamish2040 OCP, which includes the *Squamish Children’s Charter of Rights* and a suite of health and social policies respecting child care and early childhood education;
- Preparing a child care snapshot and reviewing the Community Amenity Contributions (CAC) Targets and Allocations policy to consider earmarking a portion of fees for child care and/or encourage developers to make in-kind space contributions for child care facilities – though affordable housing allocations were ultimately prioritized over child care CAC allocations;
- Expanding the District’s zoning and business licensing regulations to allow more children in residential facilities aligned with provincial licensing; site new child care facilities throughout the community and within all forms of development (i.e., residential, commercial, mixed use); and ease required parking minimums; and,
- Reducing the licensing fee for child care facilities from \$130/year to \$1/year to ease financial barriers for operators.

The local momentum to improve child care in Squamish, combined with these new provincial and federal investments in child care, has created an opportune moment for the Squamish community to strategically organize to access these child care opportunities. Further, with PCFI funding ending in spring 2019, the Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy presents a great occasion for partners to transition from the PCFI structure and leverage its success by collaborating to implement the Child Care Strategy using a shared leadership approach.

### **3.0 Purpose of the Strategy**

The Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy has three (3) main purposes:

1. Give specific guidance to the District Council and staff on local matters regarding child care and early childhood education and how to support and improve child care in Squamish;
2. Set a vision, strategic priorities and new child care targets for the next five (5) years to improve the access rate for affordable, accessible and high-quality child care in line with projected growth; and,
3. Establish the organizational structure through which the Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy will be collectively implemented, monitored and evaluated by partners between 2018 and 2023.

## 4.0 Methodology

The development of the Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy followed a multi-phased approach. The first phase consisted of needs assessment and analysis work, which included gathering information about:

- The child and family populations in the area;
- Existing child care programs;
- Childhood vulnerabilities; and,
- Other socio-economic and demographic information.

Data from Statistics Canada, the Early Development Instrument (EDI) and a survey of parents/guardians and child care providers in Squamish informed the needs assessment and analysis work. 478 parents/guardians and twenty-six (26) child care managers, owners and operators responded to their respective surveys – an exceptional participation rate that speaks to the importance of child care in Squamish.

The second phase of work involved a series of sessions with community members, parents, child care providers and other key stakeholders. The three (3) consultation sessions were held on June 19, 2018 at the Sea to Sky Community Services (SSCS) meeting room. The engagement opportunities sought to:

- Share what the District of Squamish had learned about child care needs to date;
- Discuss participants' perspectives and experiences to further develop the understanding about child care needs in the community; and,
- Solicit information and discussion that informed the development of the Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy.

Eleven (11) parents and community members, thirteen (13) child care managers, owners and operators and seven (7) staff from stakeholder agencies took part in the meetings, for a total of 31 participants in phase 2.

Following these data collection activities, the third phase of work began. All the data and information were analyzed and synthesized into a series of short summary reports (see Technical Appendices document). Key themes and possible actions emerged through this data analysis and synthesis process; these themes guided the drafting of the strategy. Key stakeholders who will be directly involved in the strategy's implementation had a chance to review and revise the strategy draft to ensure the Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy is useful and implementable.



## **5.0 Key Metrics and Needs Assessment**

The following section provides a high-level summary of the key metrics and issues around child and family populations and child care needs in Squamish. There are four (4) infographics that, together with a map, paint the picture of child care needs and demographic trends in the Squamish community.

The map on p. 12 collocates the child population in Squamish by Census Dissemination Area with the current licensed child care facilities in the area. A legend with the names of child cares is on the following page.

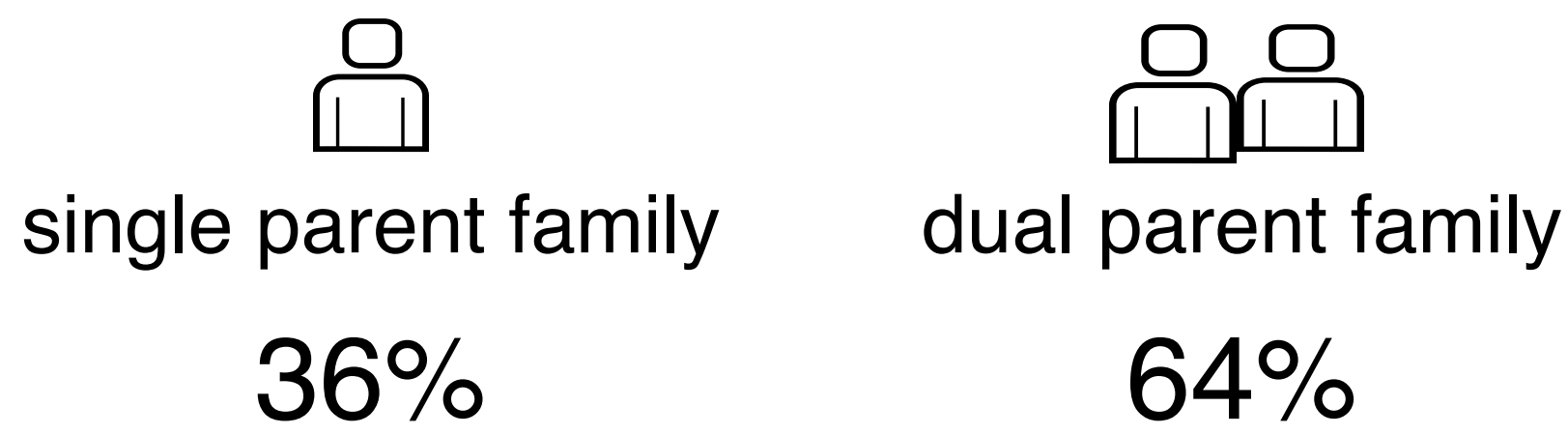
# SQUAMISH CHILDHOOD POPULATION & FAMILY DEMOGRAPHICS

If Squamish District Municipality were a village of 100 people....

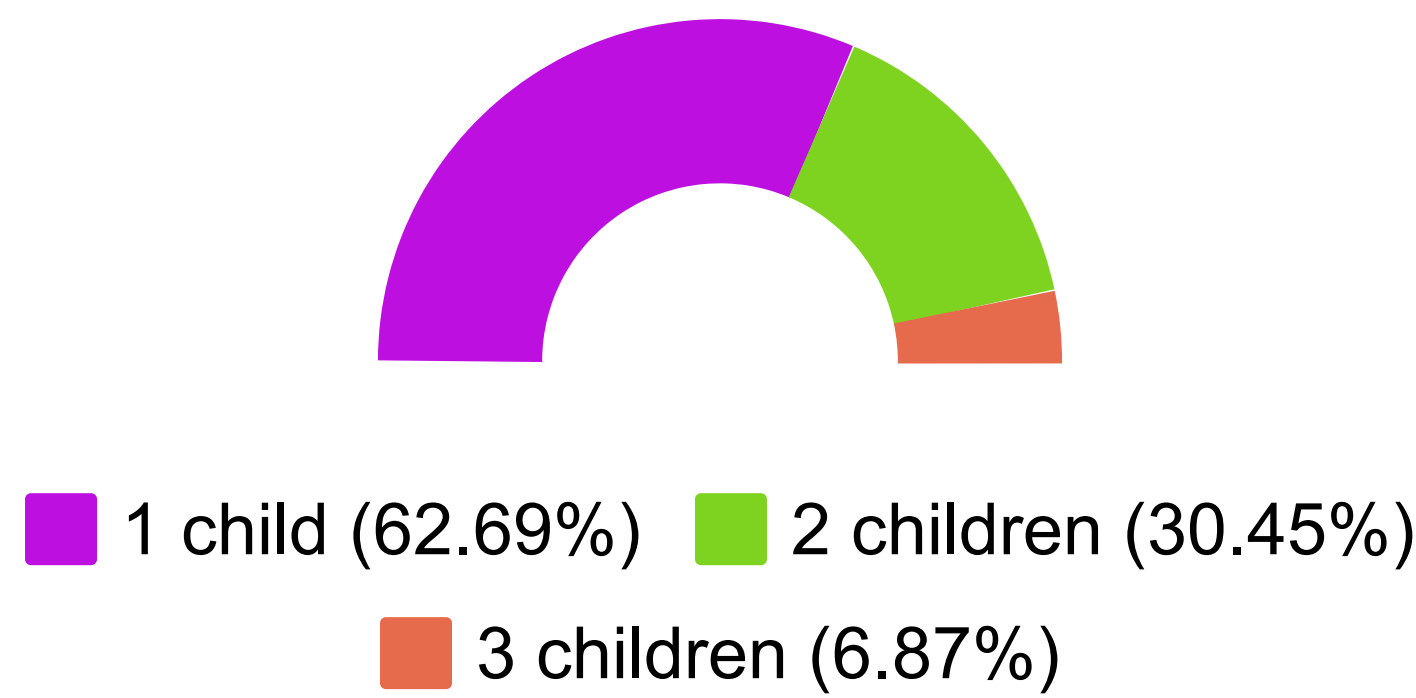


■ ages 0-4 years (7%)    ■ ages 5-9 years (7%)  
■ ages 10-14 years (5%)    ■ 14 years + (81%)

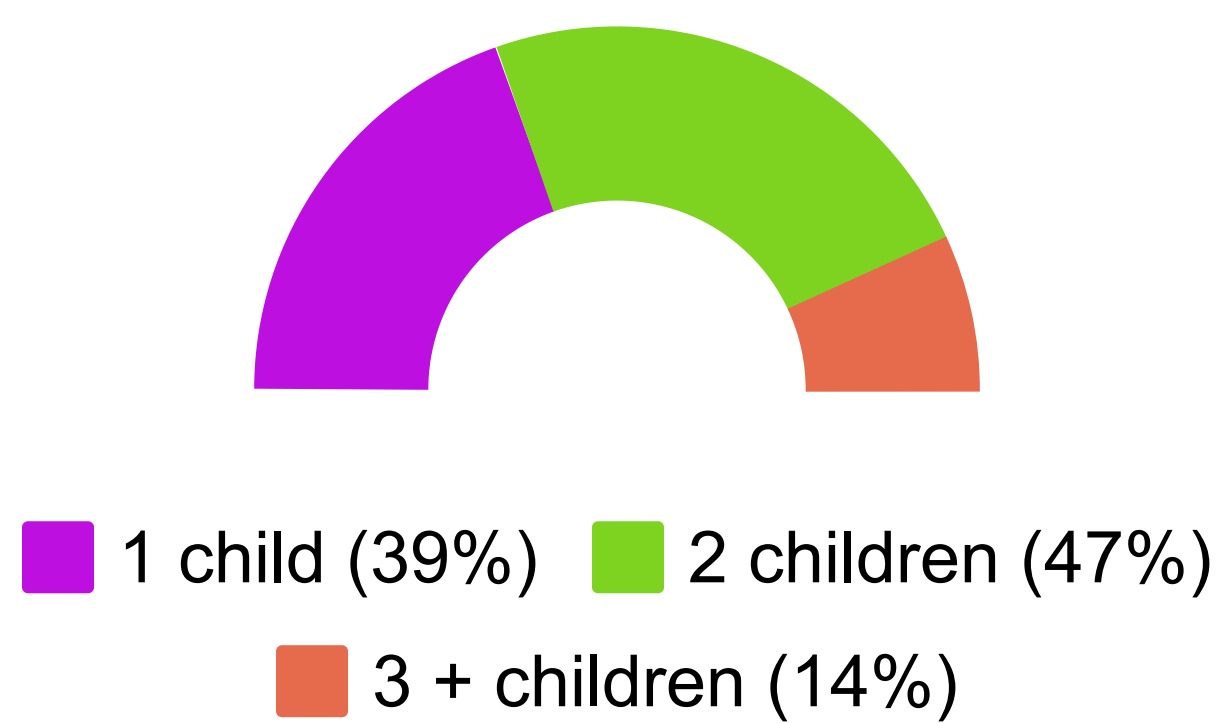
## Family Structures in Squamish



### # of Children in Single Parent Households

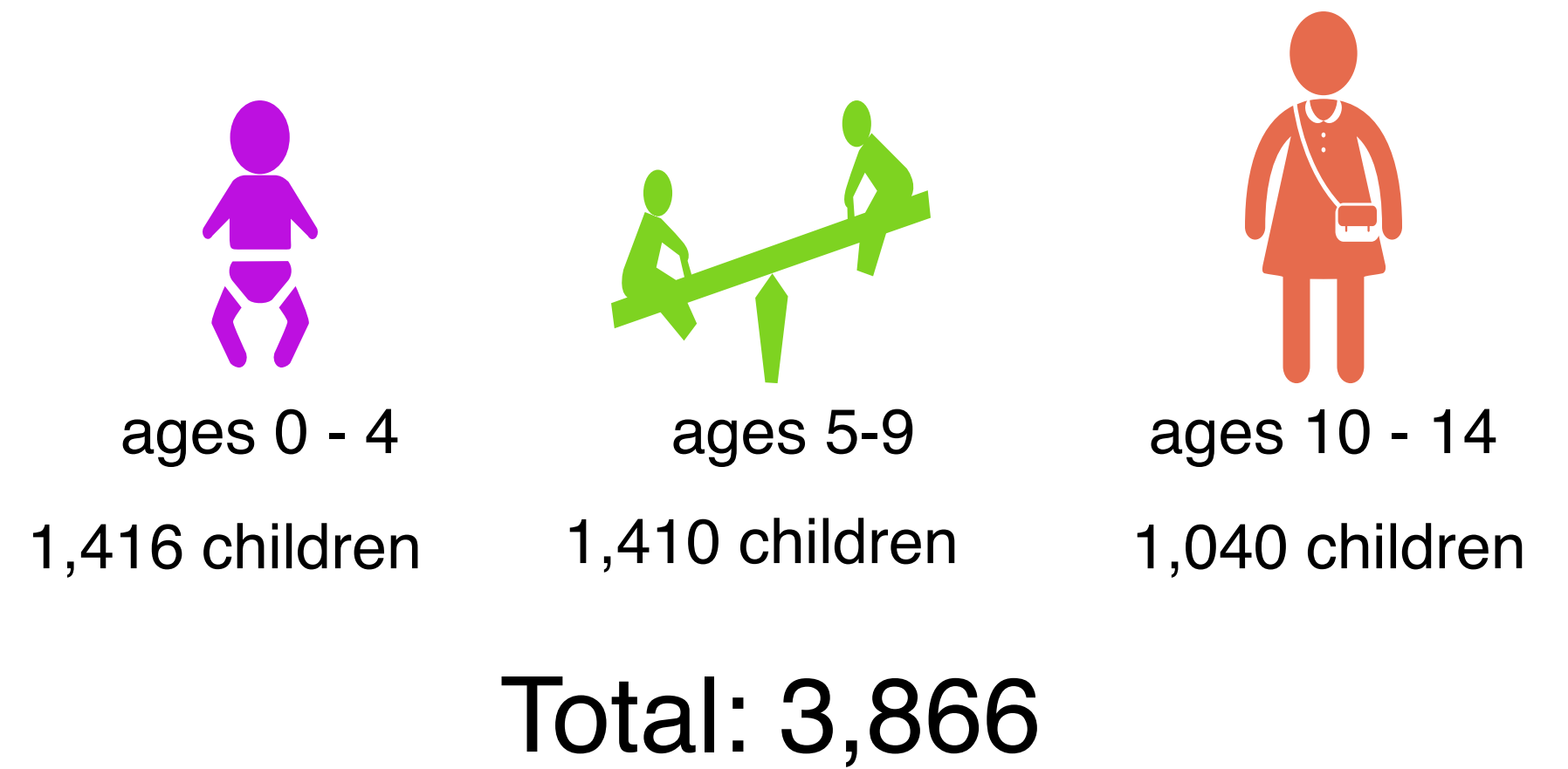


### # of Children in Dual Parent Households



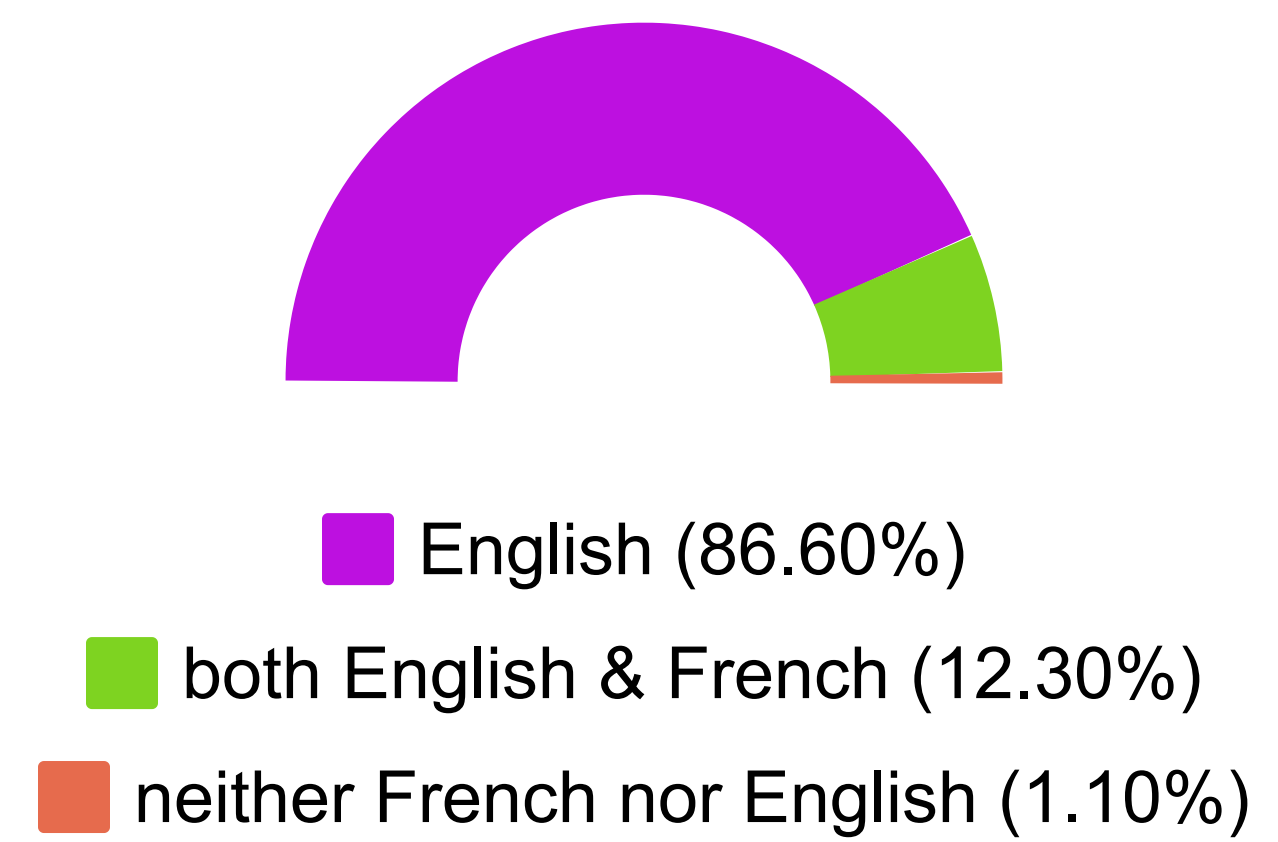
**72.4%**  
of single parent families in Squamish are headed by women

## Childhood Population

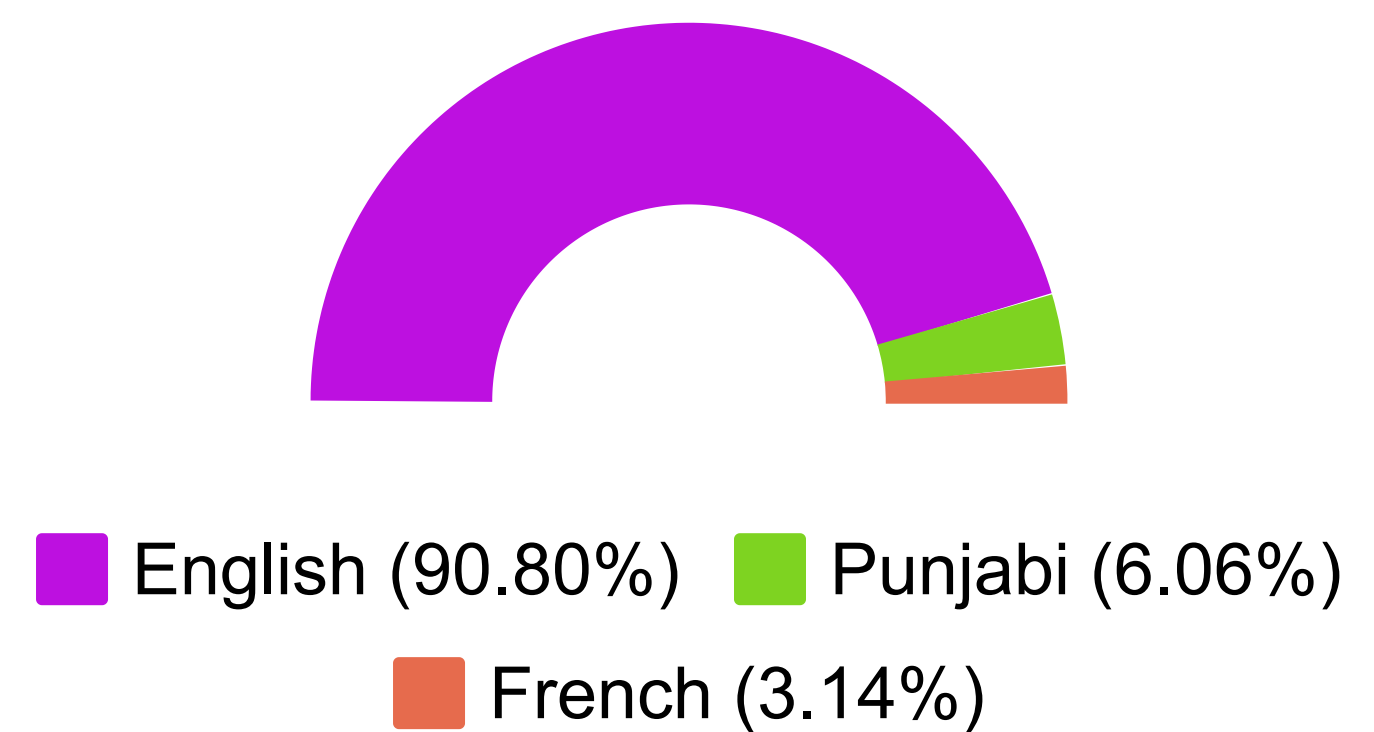


## Language and Diversity

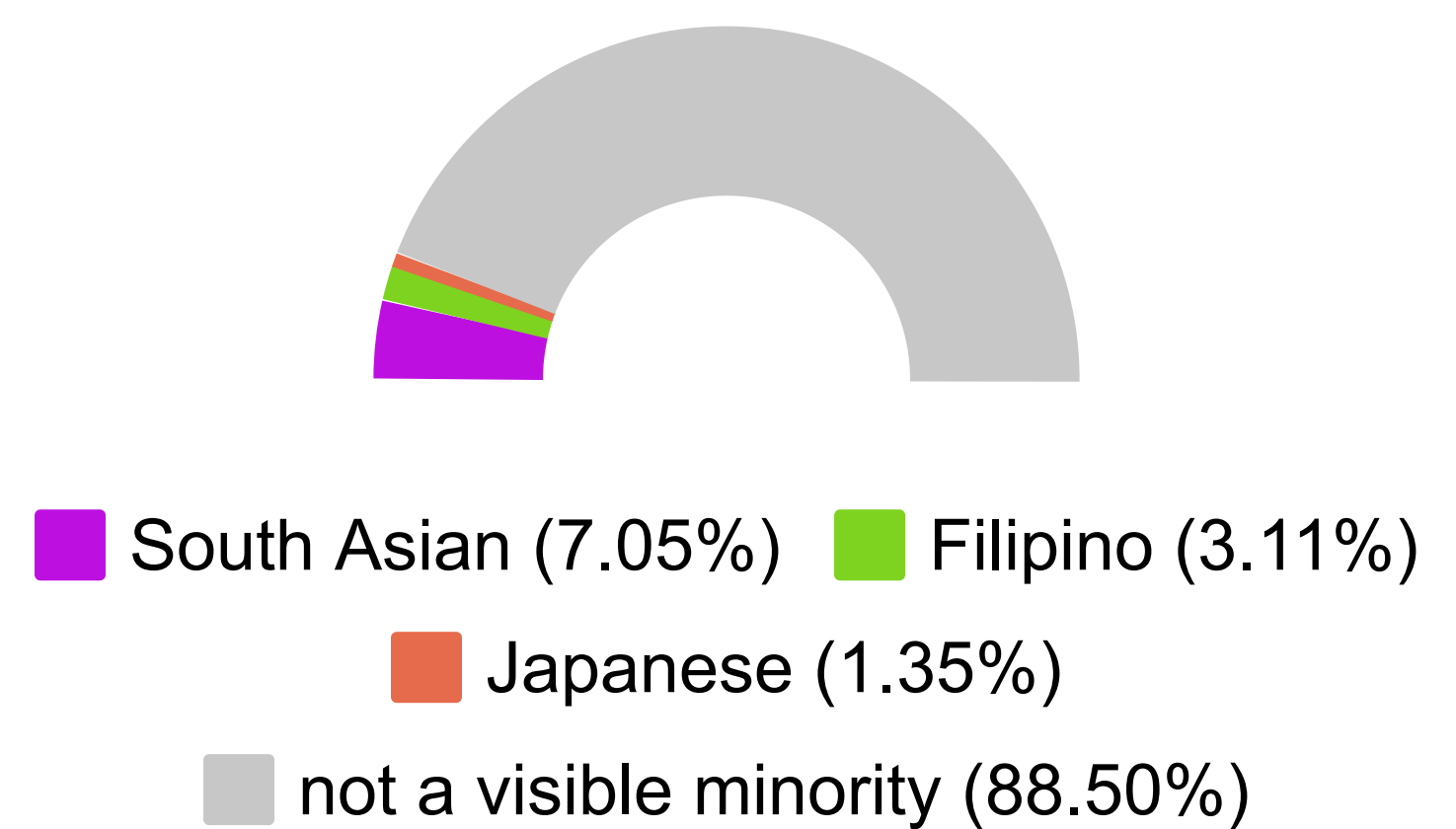
Languages Spoken in Squamish



### Mother Tongues in Squamish



### Self-Identified Visible Minority Groups



**5%**  
of residents in Squamish identify as Aboriginal

**18.5%**  
of residents were newcomers between 2011 and 2016

# CHILDHOOD VULNERABILITIES

## Between Wave 2 (2004-2007) and Wave 6 (2013-2016) of measuring vulnerability of children ages 0-5 years in Squamish...

Vulnerability rates in Squamish North **got worse** in the areas of social competence, emotional maturity and language & cognitive development and stayed constant in the area of physical health & wellbeing.

Vulnerability rates in Squamish South **got better** in the areas of social competence and language & cognitive development and stayed constant in the areas of physical health & wellbeing and emotional maturity.

Rates of children ages 0-5 years with one or more vulnerability in their developmental health as of 2016

**32%**

Squamish North

**38%**

Squamish South

Despite progress in some areas and setbacks in others, these vulnerability rates are too high. No child should be vulnerable.

The BC provincial average for vulnerability on one or more scales is

**32%**



Data source: Squamish Early Development Index (EDI) Wave 6 (2016).

## COST OF LIVING & AFFORDABILITY



**9.9%**

of children ages 0-5 years in Squamish live in low-income families

**29.3%**

of children ages 0-17 years live in low-income status families (based on the LIM-AT)

**47%**

of parents surveyed say current child care fees are sustainable for their family



**21.8%**

of owners spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs

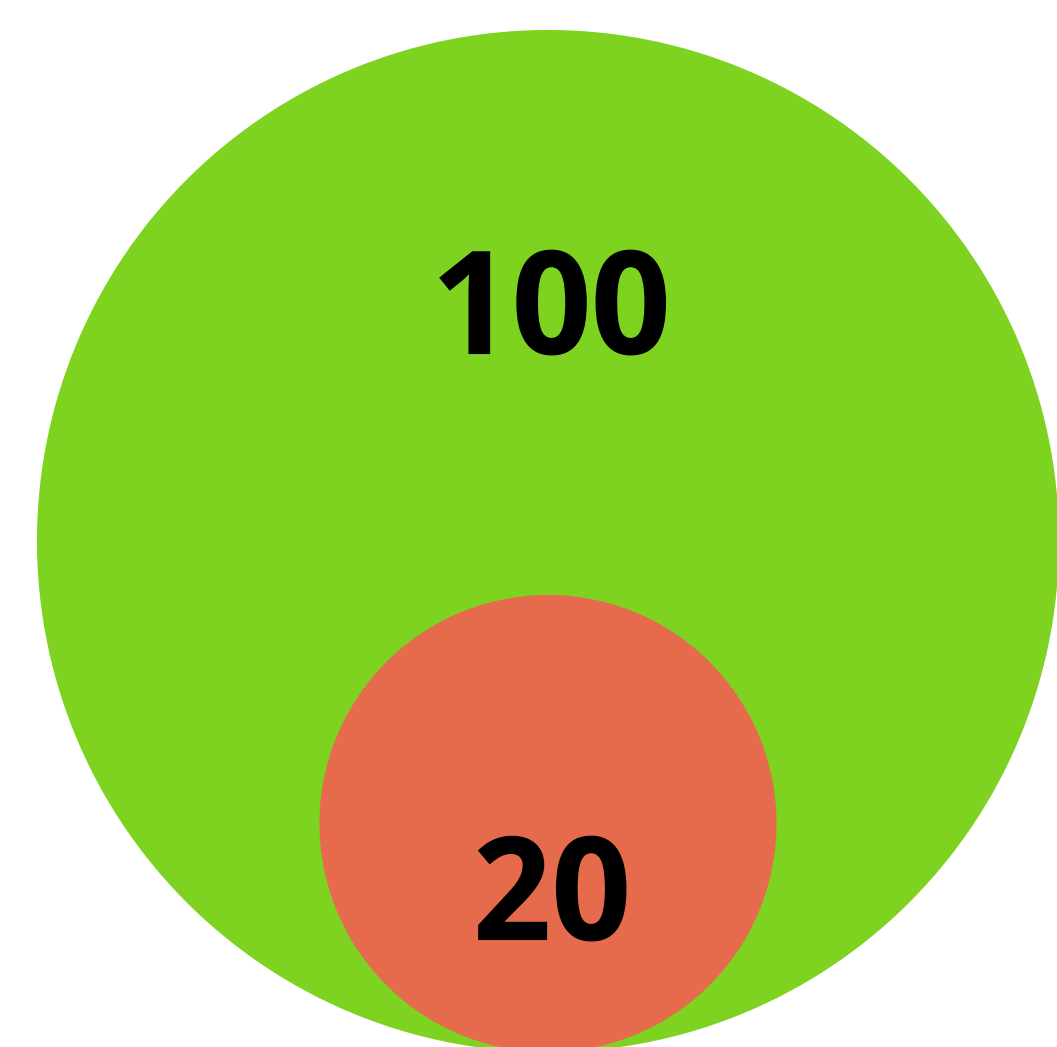
**36.4%**

of renters spend 30% or more of their income on shelter costs



# CHILD CARE IN SQUAMISH: SPACES, SCHEDULING & WAITLISTS

## Current Access Rate for Child Care in Squamish

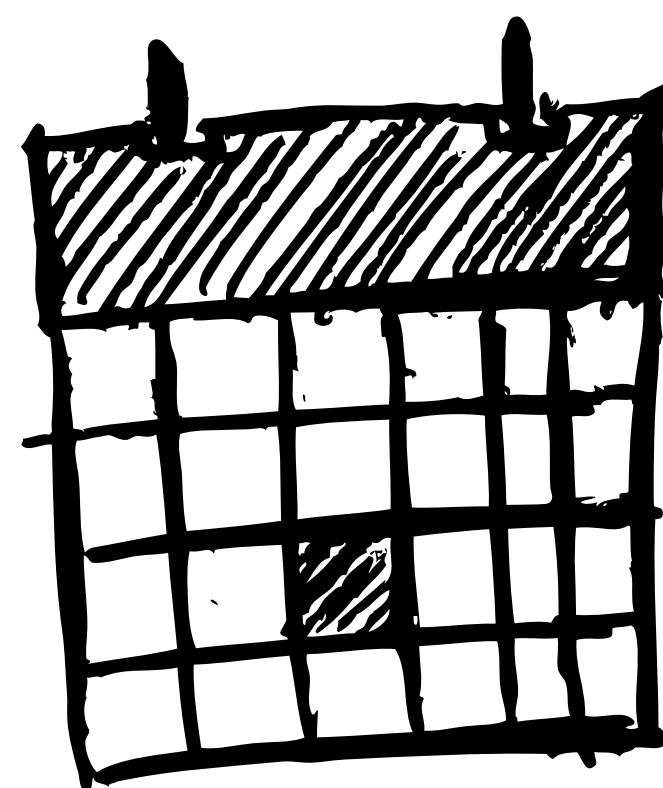


■ Children ■ Spaces available

Number of Children: 3,866

Spaces available: 779

## Scheduling



Of 26 child care provider survey respondents, just one program offers Saturday care and **NO** programs offer Sunday care

**49.3%**

of parent survey respondents need full-day child care

**41.1%**

of parent survey respondents need after school care

## Licensed Child Cares in Squamish

**32**

Residential

**11**

Commercial



There is a severe lack of before and after school care options. The 7-12 year old age group is particularly underserved

**Over 2 in 3** parents surveyed, or

**69.7%**

feel that there is not an adequate supply of child care spaces in Squamish

## Waitlists

**25.3%**

of parent survey respondents currently have a child on a waitlist for child care



## Children with Additional Support Needs

**28**

children with additional support needs in Squamish currently have no access to services and are on a waitlist

**\$60,000**

in additional funding is needed for non-profit agencies to meet current waitlist demands

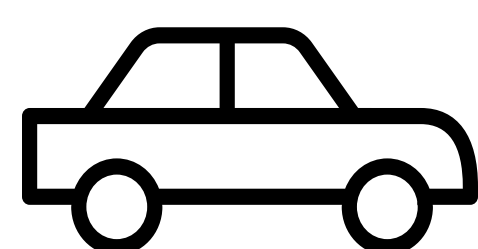
Data sources: Squamish Child Care Resource and Referral, Census of Canada 2016, Squamish Child Care Provider Survey (2018), Squamish Parent Child Care Survey (2018), Supported Child Development Program

# SQUAMISH RESIDENT COMMUTING TRENDS

Note: these figures are for all working residents, not just parents who may need to access child care

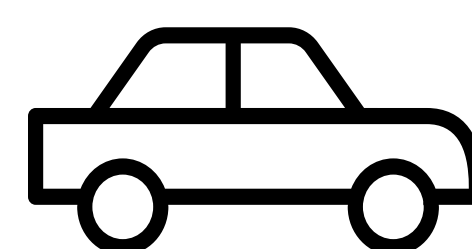
**45%**

of Squamish residents commute to work **outside** of the Squamish Census Agglomeration (i.e., to Whistler, Pemberton, Vancouver)



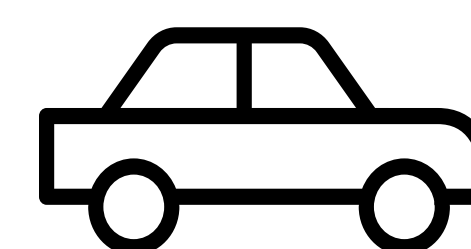
**20.2%**

of commuters leave home between 6 and 6:59 am



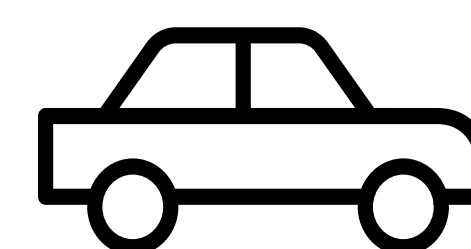
**26.3%**

of commuters leave home between 7 and 7:59 am



**22.4%**

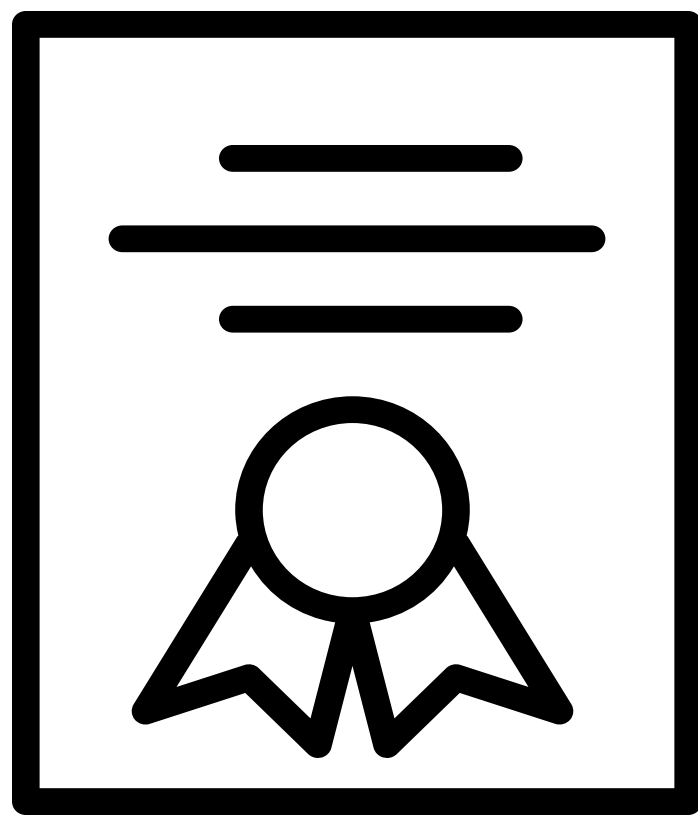
of commuters leave home between 8 and 8:59 am



Data sources: Census of Canada 2016, Parent Child Care Survey (2018).

# CHILD CARE IN SQUAMISH: CHALLENGES FOR PROVIDERS

## Staffing, Hiring and Retention



- Difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff
- Wages are not commensurate with the educational requirements needed for ECE qualifications
- Parents also recognize that ECE staff are underpaid and undervalued

## ECE Wages in Squamish

**\$14/hr**

for casual work in ECE field

**\$16/hr**

for ECE assistants

**\$18-22/hr**

for fully qualified ECEs

## Spaces and Location

High rents and limited amounts of commercial space are barriers to child care providers

**39.1%**  
of operators stated they are more likely to expand their current facility than to...

renovate their space

**31.8%**

or

relocate to a new space

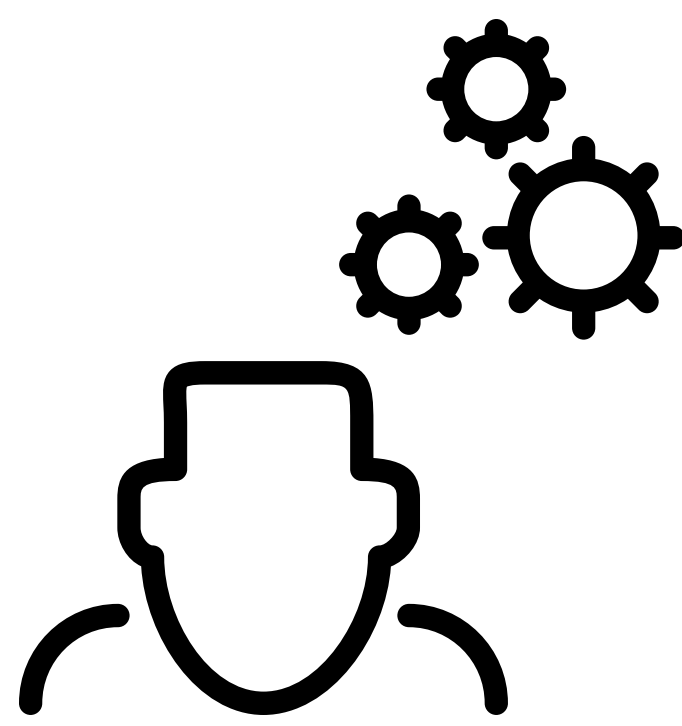
**26.1%**



**73.1%**

of child care operators face space challenges (e.g., unable to expand program space to increase licensed spaces, issues with design of program space)

## Access to Information



Providers worry that parents do not have enough information to make informed decisions about what safe and high quality child care should look like

## Policy

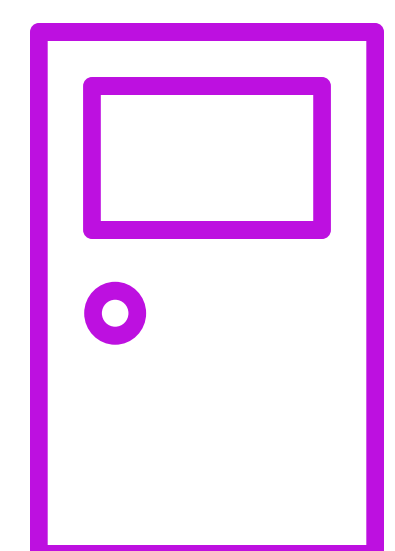
VCH supports child care providers to expand their facilities from 8 to 16 spaces, but District of Squamish building code (provincial policy) then requires the home to be converted into a business, resulting in extensive renovations that may include:



ramps



exit signs



no sliding doors in the home

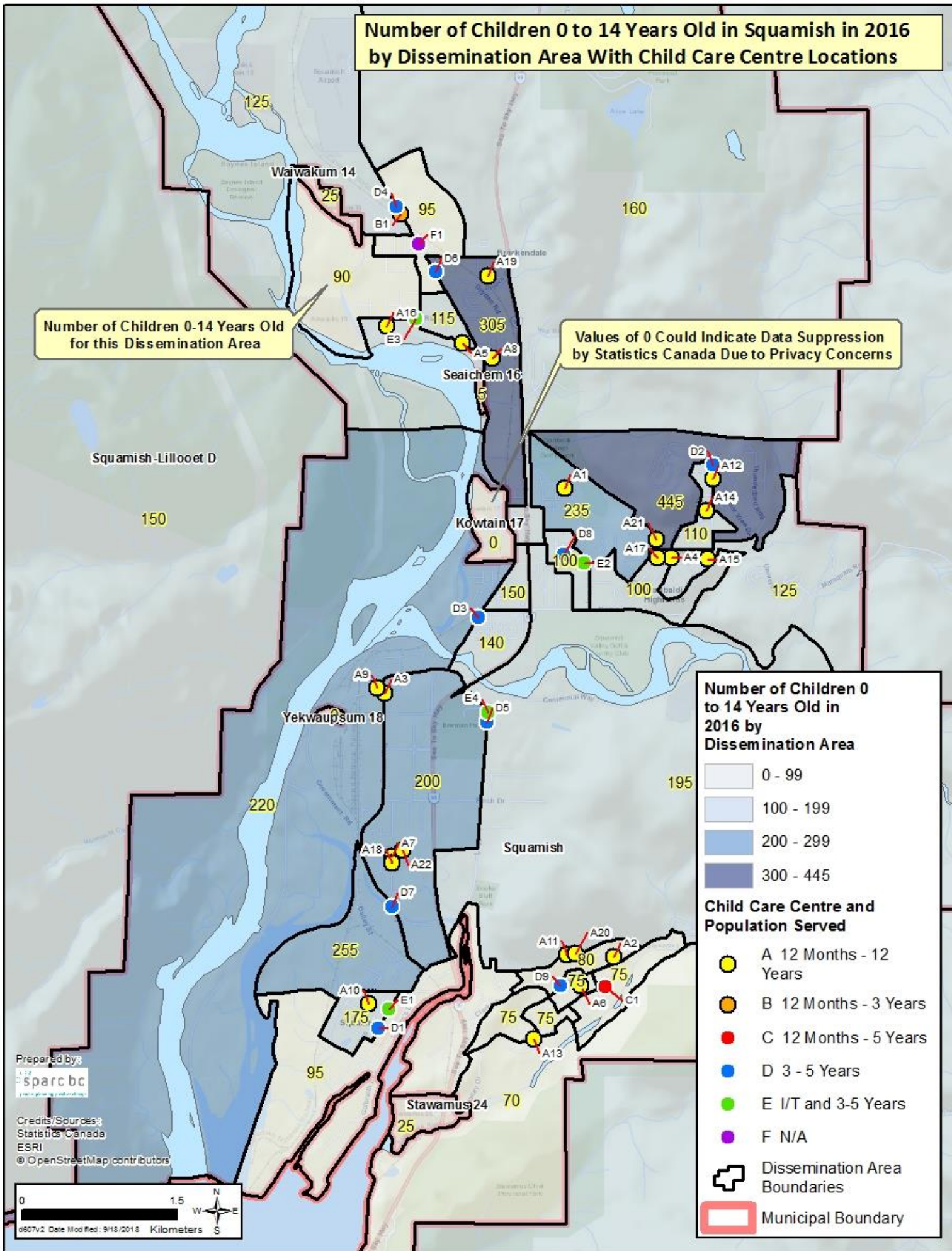
## Quality of Care

- Lack of child care spaces means parents are desperate to place their children in child care, sometimes sacrificing quality or safety of care for their children
- Staffing challenges contribute to lower quality care, as ECE educators take other jobs and unqualified adults work in child care

# Number of Children 0 to 14 Years Old in Squamish in 2016 by Dissemination Area With Child Care Centre Locations

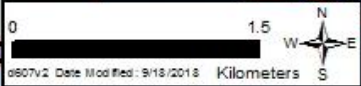
Number of Children 0-14 Years Old for this Dissemination Area

Values of 0 Could Indicate Data Suppression by Statistics Canada Due to Privacy Concerns



Prepared by:  
City of Squamish  
SPARC BC

Credits/Sources:  
Statistics Canada  
ESRI  
© OpenStreetMap contributors



## Squamish Child Care Locations on Child Care Map

Name	Map Data Point
Aida's Daycare	A1
Bumble Bee Family Childcare	A2
Busy Bees Family Daycare	A3
Circle Of Friends Childcare	A4
Eagle View Child Development Centre	A5
Everyday Magic Children's Center	A6
Forest Friends Daycare	A7
In The Meadow Child Care	A8
Kid's Corner Licenced Family Daycare	A9
Les Petits Coquins Daycare	A10
Little Miracles Montessori	A11
Little Rose Daycare	A12
Mi Casita Learning Centre	A13
Paisley Children's House	A14
Puddle Jumpers Childcare	A15
Rainbow Child Care	A16
Rainbow's End	A17
Snug Bugs Daycare	A18
Stepping Stones Family Childcare	A19
The Soaring Eagles Nesting Place	A20
Tsan Chester Childcare	A21
Wee Ones Family Daycare	A22
Squamish Montessori Ltd	B1
Kinderbarn	C1
Balsam Montessori Academy	D1
Early Discoveries Inc.	D2
Mishmash Play & Learn	D3
Pebble Lane Preschool	D4
Project Play Family Centre	D5
Red Barn Montessori	D6
Squamish Montessori School Ltd	D7
Squamish Waldorf School Assoc - Rainbow Preschool	D8
Squamish Waldorf School Association	D9
Bee Haven Consulting Inc.	E1
Discovery Kids Childcare	E2
Fresh Ayre Daycare Ltd.	E3
Squamish Montessori School	E4
Camp Summit (Explore Canada & Education Ltd.)	F1

## 6.0 Vision for Child Care in Squamish

The vision for child care in Squamish builds on the vision from the Squamish2040 OCP:

Squamish families have access to a range of affordable, accessible, high quality child care options that meet the demand throughout the community and support children's healthy development.

Definitions of the vision's components include:

**Affordable:** Affordable child care refers to a system in which all families, regardless of income, can access child care equitably. Affordability is facilitated through stable and reliable public investments from municipal, provincial and federal sources, with senior levels of government holding the major funding responsibility.

**Accessible:** Accessible child care refers to both the physical accessibility of child care facilities, as well as the availability of culturally and developmentally appropriate programs for children 0-12 years old throughout the community, including for children with additional support needs.

**High Quality:** High quality child care supports children's development socially, linguistically, emotionally, physically and intellectually. It complements the family's role in raising healthy children. Research and experience show that predictors of quality may include: well-educated and fairly compensated child care workers who engage in ongoing training in child development and early childhood education; informed parental choice in selecting care; parental involvement in the care option; effectively administrated programs; compliance with licensing standards; and adequate program resources and operating funds to support programming that is appropriate for the child's individual level and developmental stage.

## 7.0 Guiding Principles for Implementing the Child Care Strategy

These principles have guided the development of the strategy and will continue to guide all partners as they implement the Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy:

**Promote Shared Leadership and Collaboration:** The strategy's implementation will be dependent on political support of elected officials and District staff, and community partners sharing the responsibility for its roll-out. Taking a collaborative approach will help all partners develop a sense of joint ownership over the strategy and its implementation.

**Focus on Equity:** Applying an equity lens to the strategy is essential to ensure that improvements to child care consider the range of demographic characteristics and systemic barriers that families may face when accessing child care in Squamish.

**Engage the Community Meaningfully:** Effective and meaningful community engagement includes not only informing community members of the strategy's progress, but also inviting citizens to share perspectives and ideas throughout the implementation process and adjusting the strategy's focus as circumstances and needs shift in the community.



## 8.0 Organizational Structure for Implementing the Child Care Strategy

The Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy is designed such that many of the strategy's actions are starting points for collaboration with identified partners. In order to implement the Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy, the following organizational structure is proposed.

To ensure that partners are fully engaged in the strategy's implementation process, it is recommended that the PCFI table initially lead the process **to strike a cross-sectoral implementation committee**, specific to the Squamish Child Care Strategy. Members of the Child Care Strategy implementation committee would give their time in kind, and might include representatives from:

- Home-based child care provider(s)
- Commercial child care provider(s)
- Not-for-profit child care provider(s)
- Private child care provider(s)
- District of Squamish
- School District 48
- Sea to Sky Community Services
- Squamish Nation
- Vancouver Coastal Health (specifically, Community Care Facilities Licensing)
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Supported Child Development Program
- Squamish recreation services
- Parents/caregivers
- The development community
- The local business community and/or Chamber of Commerce
- Individual practitioners working with young children (e.g., therapists, behaviour consultants)

The implementation committee makeup should be demographically diverse, with a range of age groups, genders, family statuses, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic statuses and language groups represented.

Immediate actions for the committee to consider and implement include:

- Developing a Terms of Reference (TOR) document to guide their work together;
- Determining the leadership structure for the committee (e.g., one chair, co-chairs from different sectors, rotating chairs with term appointments, etc.); and,
- Establishing a longer-term, sustainable funding structure to support the implementation committee's activities.

Additionally, the District of Squamish is recommended to hold a central leadership role in ensuring the strategy is being implemented and monitoring and reporting back on progress. The District might consider designating a staff member as the liaison on child care. This staff member would also take the lead on any District-specific actions in the strategy and share progress with the community and Council through an Annual Monitoring Report (see Section 12, pp. 27-28).

## 9.0 New Space Targets for the Next Five Years

As of 2011, the access rate for licensed child care spaces in Squamish was 8 spaces per 100 children ages 0-14 years old (280 spaces for 3,320 children); in 2016 the access rate had increased to 20 spaces per 100 children ages 0-14 years (779 spaces for 3,860 children).<sup>4</sup> Although we do not have the full data to understand how many families need access to child care in Squamish, the access rate certainly reflects the reports of the deep need for additional child care spaces across the spectrum of ages and developmental stages in Squamish.

From available Census of Canada data, we know that between the 2006 and 2011 Census periods, the population of children aged 0-14 years in Squamish grew by 8.7% (compared to -0.3% for BC). Between 2011 and 2016, the population of children grew by 16.3% (compared to 2.1% for BC). Over the decade between 2006 and 2016, the total increase in population of children ages 0-14 years in Squamish grew by 26.4%. Squamish continues to experience rapid population growth overall; Squamish grew almost 14% between 2011 and 2016 and is one of the top 25 fastest growing communities in Canada with a population of over 5,000 people.<sup>5</sup>

Using an annual growth rate of 2.4%<sup>6</sup> as a “lower growth scenario” and an annual growth rate of 3.0%<sup>7</sup> as a “higher growth scenario,” the table on the next page shows:

- The minimum number of new spaces needed to maintain the current access rate of 20 as a baseline, which the Child Care Strategy aims to meet and exceed by 2023; and,
- The number of new spaces needed to achieve a “reach” target of 30 spaces per 100 children ages 0-14 years in 2023.

The “reach” target has been selected to align with and slightly exceed the provincial access rate of 27 licensed spaces per 100 children ages 0-6 years in 2015,<sup>8</sup> and significantly exceed the provincial access rate of 18 licensed spaces per 100 children ages 0-12 years in 2016 (compare this rate to Quebec’s; 55 licensed spaces per 100 children ages 0-12 years in 2016).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Squamish access rate is lower than 2015 access rates for the City of North Vancouver (24), the District of North Vancouver (27.1) and West Vancouver (25.6). The average access rate in Metro Vancouver was 18.5 spaces per 100 children ages 0 to 12 years in 2015. Source: *A Municipal Survey of Child Care Spaces and Policies In Metro Vancouver*. December 2015. Metro Vancouver Social Issues Subcommittee.

<sup>5</sup> Census of Canada 2016 data.

<sup>6</sup> The District of Squamish Community Housing Needs Assessment (July 2018) uses a 2.4% annual population growth rate and is thus used here as a lower growth scenario to maintain consistency across municipal population projections and targets.

<sup>7</sup> The District of Squamish OCP considers a 3% annual growth rate as a higher growth scenario and is thus used here to maintain consistency across municipal population projections and targets.

<sup>8</sup> *Solving BC’s Affordability Crisis in Child Care*. (2015). Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

<sup>9</sup> *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada, 2016*. (2016). Child Care Resource and Research Unit.

Licensed Child Care Targets	Lower Growth Scenario		Higher Growth Scenario	
% population increase	2.4% per year	12.6% overall	3.0% per year	15.9% overall
# Children ages 0-14 years in 2023	4,346		4,475	
Total spaces needed to maintain access rate of 20 spaces per 100 children	869		895	
Increase of spaces needed to maintain access rate of 20 spaces per 100 children	Total: 90	18/year over 5 years	Total: 116	23/year over 5 years
Total spaces needed to increase access rate to 30 spaces per 100 children	1,304		1,342	
Increase of spaces needed to increase access rate to 30 spaces per 100 children	Total: 525	105/year over 5 years	Total: 563	112.5/year over 5 years

Notations:

1. The population projections are not precise calculations; rather, they are based on projected population increases that cannot predict the future natural births and population fluctuations due to migration to/from Squamish between now and the next Census period.
2. Further, to achieve an access rate of 30 spaces per 100 children by 2023 would require increasing the current number of child care spaces by 67% over a five (5) year period in the lower growth scenario and 72% in the higher growth scenario. This is an ambitious target that reflects the extensive need for child care investments in the Squamish community.
3. Finally, note that although the Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy focuses on children ages 0-12 years old, Statistics Canada organizes demographic data such that data for children ages 0-14 years old must be used. Child care for 12-to-14-year-olds tends to focus on community and youth programming, as opposed to paid before- and after-school and summer child care services, as children aged 12-14 years old are generally transitioning out of formal care options.

## 10.0 Strategic Directions and Recommended Actions

Based on the research and engagement on child care to date, existing District policies and the many opportunities available through provincial and federal commitments to child care, three (3) strategic directions are proposed to guide all child care in Squamish over the next five (5) years: 1) prioritizing a “whole community” approach to child care, 2) increasing child care accessibility and affordability, and 3) improving child care quality.

In the following section, each strategic direction is introduced with a short context statement, followed by a table that includes recommended actions, an implementation time frame (short term = 1-2 years, medium term = 3-5 years, and ongoing) and the key partners needed to animate each action. A total of forty-four (44) actions are proposed. Please refer to Section 11 on partnerships and collaboration (p. 21) for descriptions of each partner and acronym as needed.

### Strategic Direction 1: Prioritizing a “Whole Community” Approach to Child Care

The challenges around child care provision do not happen in a vacuum; parents, child care providers and key stakeholders have all acknowledged the interrelationships between affordable and high-quality child care and housing, transportation, employment and other factors that affect family and community life. There is a lot of room for improvement when it comes to reducing silos, increasing communication and collaboration and applying a child care lens across a range of decision-making bodies in Squamish, not just those working directly on child care.

Taking a “whole community” approach to addressing gaps in child care starts with a common understanding that child care *is* early childhood education, and education is a child’s right. Child care systems in New Zealand and Australia approach child care through such framing. And, as one Squamish parent stated, “The key is when we start looking at child care as an early education space and not a place where children can be drop[ped] off to allow parents to go to work.”

Framing all decisions about child care in these terms while engaging different sectors of the Squamish community (parents and residents, child care providers, community agencies, political leaders, the business community) in partnerships, policy development and other initiatives has the potential to transform the way child care decisions are made while building a shared understanding of the needs, capacities and possibilities for child care in Squamish.<sup>10</sup> The eighteen (18) actions proposed below advance these goals.

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<sup>10</sup> The “whole community” concept as defined here is borrowed from an emergency management framework. It is defined as “a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests.” Source: Whole Community Approach. (2018). Retrieved from <https://delvalle.bphc.org/mod/wiki/view.php?pageid=140>

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Key Partners
<b>Policy and Planning</b>		
1.1 Develop and adopt a community-wide declaration centred on child care as a child’s right and secure commitments from a range of partners to collaborate on and implement the Child Care Strategy actions	Short term, ongoing	All possible partners; led by the Child Care Strategy implementation committee
1.2 Designate a District child care staff liaison to support integration of housing, transportation and child care in District planning, policies and decisions and monitor progress (e.g., align affordable housing and child care policies and targets)	Short term, ongoing	DOS Council, DOS staff
1.3 Set targets for child care spaces in neighbourhoods/ nodes and work with developers in the design and build of in-kind child care spaces. Develop a policy framework for ensuring spaces are dedicated for child care and rented to not-for-profit child care providers in perpetuity, and explore partnerships to operationalize these policies	Short term	DOS, development community, SSCS, child care providers
1.4 Reduce and/or remove barriers to starting/expanding a child care facility through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing current District policies and zoning, communicating building code requirements and addressing barriers wherever possible (e.g., allow residential child care in carriage houses);</li> <li>• Streamlining paperwork requirements for child care providers; and,</li> <li>• Encouraging strata councils to permit residential child care facilities in their bylaws.</li> </ul>	Short term, ongoing	DOS, VCH, child care providers, community agencies
<b>Advocacy</b>		
1.5 Advocate to the provincial government to align child care licensing requirements and Building Code legislation, reducing barriers to starting/expanding child care facilities	Medium term	Child Care Strategy implementation committee
<b>Direct Support</b>		
1.6 Dedicate District funding toward the Squamish Child Care Strategy implementation committee to replace Putting Children First Initiative (PCFI)	Ongoing	DOS
1.7 Create and manage a community classroom for online learners that (among other things) hosts a regular group session for online ECE students to study together; receive mentorship, support and potential placements from local ECE professionals; and host visiting lecturers to enhance online learning	Short term, ongoing	Child care providers, post-secondary ECE programs (e.g., Capilano University)
1.8 Improve care providers’ comfort level and ability to support children with additional needs via community trainings	Ongoing	SCDP, post-secondary ECE programs (e.g., Capilano University)
1.9 Build fences around existing playgrounds to enable child care providers to use these as outdoor play spaces	Ongoing	DOS, SD48

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Key Partners
1.10 Reinstate regular child care manager meetings as a mechanism for child care providers to share resources, collaborate, communicate concerns and participate in joint initiatives (e.g., policy development, explore sharing staff to increase capacity, standardize wage grids and employment conditions, mentorship)	Ongoing	DOS, SSCS, CCRR, community agencies, child care providers
<b>Partnerships and Collaboration</b>		
1.11 Prepare an application for the UBCM grant for eligible child care action planning by January 18, 2019 to secure funds to support the implementation of the Child Care Strategy and identified space targets	Short term	DOS, PCFI/Early Years Table, Child Care Strategy implementation committee (if it has been struck)
1.12 Initiate discussions to develop a child care partnership with School District 48 that may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collocating child care spaces at/with schools through creative approaches and joint management;</li> <li>• Developing a catchment area system for child care that helps ease young children’s transition into kindergarten;</li> <li>• Standardizing wages across School District and ECE to reduce ECE staff loss; and,</li> <li>• Designating a child care champion at each school to implement the partnership at the school level.</li> </ul>	Short term, ongoing	DOS, SD48, SSCS, community agencies, child care providers
1.13 Broker relationships between organizations with underused spaces and before- and after-school child care providers (e.g., churches, Chief Centre, senior’s centres)	Ongoing	DOS, SSCS, CCRR, community agencies, child care providers
1.14 Explore a collaboration with the BC government to launch a Prototype Centre for infant-toddler care that offers reduced-cost child care regardless of income, informing the development of a BC-wide universal child care program	Short term	DOS, child care provider(s), BC government, possibly SN
1.15 Explore opportunities for high school and/or university students to complete job shadowing or job placements in ECE facilities to encourage them to enter the field	Medium term	Child care providers, SD48, VCH, Quest and/or Capilano University
<b>Information Sharing</b>		
1.16 Develop centralized resources for would-be and current child care providers to reduce barriers to starting and/or expanding child care facilities (e.g., how-to guide, website, a designated staff resource/process navigator)	Short term, ongoing	DOS, VCH, child care providers
1.17 Communicate opportunities for permissive tax exemptions (PTEs) to not-for-profit child care providers	Medium term	DOS
1.18 Encourage and share information about community-based solutions to child care shortages (e.g., connecting parents and youth in babysitting course; speed dating for parents and child care providers; pairing high school and elementary school students for after-school care)	Ongoing	All possible partners; perhaps through the Child Care Strategy implementation committee

## Strategic Direction 2: Increasing Child Care Accessibility and Affordability

Based on the surveys and engagement sessions with parents, caregivers, child care providers and agency partners, it is clear that child care in Squamish is inaccessible and unaffordable for many families. Waitlists; inflexible existing child care options (despite some programs having spaces, suggesting other barriers to access including transportation and hours of operation/scheduling); and a severe lack of options for children with additional support needs are major challenges. Ideally, all families in need of child care should be able to access safe, equitable, affordable care for their children in a timely fashion.

In addition to these issues, ECE staff also face affordability issues, as the cost of living in Squamish and ECE wages do not match. This puts pressure on child care providers trying to meet families' needs and is likely contributing to the child care shortage in Squamish.

The following twenty (20) recommended actions address affordability and accessibility issues for both families and ECE workers.

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Key Partners
<b>Policy and Planning</b>		
2.1 Increase child care spaces across all age groups and child care types (i.e., infant-toddler, children with extra support needs, before- and after-school, summer options)	Ongoing	DOS, VCH, developer community, child care providers
2.2 Prioritize new child care facilities in neighbourhoods with high child populations, as well as around existing and future planned family service hubs, schools, senior's centres, parks and Brennan Park Recreation Centre to create and strengthen child care hubs across Squamish	Ongoing	DOS
2.3 Consider neighbourhood traffic impacts and locations of existing residential child cares when approving new residential facilities to mitigate clusters of service and congestion	Ongoing	DOS
2.4 Advance the community amenity contribution (CAC) framework wherein developers build ECE worker affordable housing units held for the purpose in perpetuity	Ongoing	DOS, development community
2.5 Consider a "Housing Authority" for ECE workers to access affordable local housing	Short term	DOS, housing agencies, development community
2.6 Research best practices for flexible, short-term/drop-in and evening/extended hour child care options	Medium term	DOS, Child Care Strategy implementation committee
2.7 Monitor the impact of new provincial child care subsidies on child care waitlists in Squamish through an annual child care survey and share information with partners	Ongoing	DOS, SSCS, CCRR, community agencies, child care providers
<b>Advocacy</b>		
2.8 Advocate to the provincial and federal governments on child care and affordability issues, including:	Short term, ongoing	DOS, SSCS, community agencies, child care providers, Child Care

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Key Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased funding and resources for children with extra support needs to access child care equitably;</li> <li>Expanded ECE student bursaries; and,</li> <li>Aligning ECE education policies, licensing requirements for child care facilities and ECE wages to reduce staffing challenges.</li> </ul>		Strategy implementation committee
2.9 Support existing child care and affordability advocacy initiatives, including ECEBC \$25aDay wage initiative, \$10aDay initiative and universal basic income advocates	Ongoing	DOS, SSCS, community agencies, child care providers
2.10 Advocate for post-secondary institutions to move away from 4-year ECE degrees to keep certifications accessible and graduate people into the ECE workforce	Short term, ongoing	DOS, SSCS, community agencies, child care providers
2.11 Animate the Squamish Living Wage project by encouraging child care providers to sign onto providing a living wage for staff	Medium term	DOS, child care providers
<b>Direct Support</b>		
2.12 Align child care service hours with work schedules	Ongoing	Child care providers, SSCS, community agencies, businesses
2.13 Consider alternatives to first-come first-serve registration, particularly for before- and after-school and summer child care options	Short term	Child care providers, SSCS, community agencies, Recreation services
2.14 Explore opportunities for flexible/drop-in summer child care options	Short term	Child Care Strategy implementation committee
2.15 Reduce financial barriers to participate in current summer care options (e.g., gear requirements, outings)	Short term	Recreation services
2.16 Monitor and stop “pay-to-play” practices (i.e., providers accept higher fees from families who can afford it, require deposits to put children on waitlists) to ensure child care access is not income-based	Ongoing	DOS, VCH, Child Care Strategy implementation committee
2.17 Improve programming for children ages 7-12-years-old and explore opportunities for “middle-years” programs and services as well as a younger youth centre or spaces	Short term, ongoing	Child care providers, Recreation services, DOS, SD48
<b>Partnerships and Collaboration</b>		
2.18 Explore opportunities for businesses and child care providers to partner on purpose-built child care ventures	Ongoing	DOS, child care providers, SSCS, community agencies, businesses, SCC
2.19 Explore opportunities for therapists and child care facilities to collaborate to better support children with additional support needs	Medium term	SSCS, Community agencies, child care providers, VCH, individual practitioners
2.20 Reduce transportation barriers for before- and after-school care by offering programs at schools through a joint-use agreement with SD48 (see action 1.11)	Short term, ongoing	SD48, child care providers, SSCS, community agencies



### Strategic Direction 3: Improving Child Care Quality

Stakeholders worry that parents and caregivers do not have access to the information they need to make informed child care choices for their children. This may lead to parents choosing less than optimal child care services, particularly as licensed child care spaces are limited to begin with and the Squamish population continues to grow. Inconsistent education requirements for ECE qualifications also contribute to quality concerns. The six (6) recommended actions below tackle these quality issues.

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Key Partners
<b>Policy and Planning</b>		
3.1 Develop community programming quality standards for child care in Squamish that build on and exceed VCH and DOH standards, and mandate that child care providers abide by these as part of the business licensing process (e.g., these might include a commitment to providing high scope programming, ongoing cultural humility and safety training to better serve Squamish Nation families, etc.)	Short term, ongoing	All possible partners; led by Child Care Strategy implementation committee
<b>Advocacy</b>		
3.2 Advocate to the provincial and government for ECE education/qualification policy changes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandating that Responsible Adults (RAs) must complete a set of trainings/courses beyond the ECE-A level to improve their skills and quality of care;</li> <li>• Requiring ECE Assistants (ECE-As) to continue their education toward full ECE qualifications;</li> <li>• Directing unlicensed child care facilities to take continuing education and training to maintain any provincial grants, and get licensed over time; and,</li> <li>• Lobbying for ECE qualifications criteria to include a broader range of education backgrounds (e.g., nursing, teaching degrees).</li> </ul>	Short term, ongoing	DOS, Child Care Strategy implementation committee, CCRR, child care providers
<b>Direct Support</b>		
3.3 Improve quality monitoring for existing child care facilities in Squamish by designing and implementing Squamish-specific quality monitoring measures (e.g., setting criteria/standardized rating system; develop formal way for parents to rate child cares via annual survey)	Short term, ongoing	CCRR, supported by the Child Care Strategy implementation committee
<b>Partnerships and Collaboration</b>		
3.4 Develop an ongoing relationship with Squamish Nation that is culturally appropriate, Nation-led and initially focused on improving cultural safety and humility and increasing indigenous content in all ECE facilities	Short term, ongoing	DOS, SN, VCH, SSCS, community agencies, child care providers

Recommended Action	Time Frame	Key Partners
<b>Information Sharing</b>		
3.5 Provide information to child care providers on the benefits of and process for licensing child care, and support unlicensed child care facilities to get licensed	Short term, ongoing	VCH, CCRR, DOS,
3.6 Improve parent education around child care options and licensing through an education campaign and improvements to existing CCRR resources for parents (which describes different child care types (e.g., licensed, unlicensed) and includes questions to ask possible providers when searching for child care)	Short term, ongoing	CCRR, supported by the Child Care Strategy implementation committee

## 11.0 Partnerships and Collaboration

The proposed implementation structure for the Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy relies on partnerships and collaboration to bring the strategy to life. The following partners have been identified in the previous section, and can play the following roles:

- **District of Squamish (DOS):** See the information box on the next page.
- **School District #48 (SD48):** Share information, pursue joint planning and service delivery opportunities including space sharing and/or siting child care facilities on school property;
- **Community agencies and services (e.g., Sea to Sky Community Services – SSCS, Child Care Resource and Referral – CCRR, Supported Child Development Program – SCDP, Brennan Park Recreation Centre, senior’s centres, library, etc.):** Share information, co-develop child care friendly policies and strategies, submit joint proposals for child care funding opportunities, explore space sharing opportunities for child care;
- **Squamish Nation (SN):** Share information, explore cross-cultural opportunities and/or co-develop guidelines for providing culturally safe and relevant child care in the municipality, explore opportunities for partnerships around child care;
- **Home-based, private and not-for-profit child care provider(s):** Share information, co-develop child care friendly policies and strategies that support child care providers;
- **Individual practitioners (e.g., behaviour consultants, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, etc.):** share information, explore opportunities for collaboration on child care services;
- **Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH):** Share information, align licensing requirements, inform District child care policy development;
- **Provincial Advisory Group for Supported Child Development:** Share information, advocate for additional funding and staffing supports for children with additional support needs, inform District child care policy development;
- **Parents/caregivers:** Share information, inform District child care policy development;
- **The development community:** Explore opportunities for collaboration on child care provision in Squamish beyond the CAC process;
- **The local business community and Squamish Chamber of Commerce (SCC):** Share information, explore opportunities for collaboration on child care provision in Squamish beyond event-based sponsorship, encourage new employers to establish child care facilities for their employees and create child-friendly spaces within their business;
- **Local MLAs and MPs:** Share information, advocate on behalf of local child care needs at the government level; and,

- **Senior governments:** Develop and enact child care policies, reduce child care fees for families and/or remove fees for families with low incomes, subsidize people pursuing ECE education, provide stable and reliable funding for a comprehensive child care system in Squamish (i.e., through enhancing wages for ECE workforce, capital grants for child care facilities).

### **Summary of the District of Squamish’s Role in the Provision of Child Care**

Although child care provision is primarily a provincial and federal responsibility, local governments play a unique and important role in supporting child care operations in their communities.

The District of Squamish’s role in child care is primarily defined through the Local Government Act of BC. This legislation delegates the authority and responsibility for land use and development planning and business licensing to municipalities. The District of Squamish can play a role in child care in the following ways:

- Uphold the *Squamish Children’s Charter of Rights* and apply a child and family lens in community planning, policies, bylaws, programming and service delivery (see the Context and Opportunity section of the strategy for examples);
- Advocate to higher orders of government for increased funding for quality, affordable child care and higher wages for early childhood workers;
- Approve new child care facilities located equitably across the community, improving child care accessibility for families throughout the District (i.e., as far as Britannia Beach, Brackendale);
- Address financial barriers to providing child care through adjusted business fees and charges;
- Provide support to child care providers to navigate provincial and municipal licensing requirements for setting up or expanding a child care facility;
- Support aligned land use regulation and child care licensing regimes;
- Address financial barriers to providing child care through fees and charges;
- Foster partnerships with early years community partners to promote early childhood development initiatives and support local families and caregivers by enhancing accessibility to programs and services across the community; and,
- Play a role in quality assurance of existing child care facilities to ensure safe, high quality spaces (e.g., through building and fire inspections).

The District of Squamish is not responsible for directly providing child care services or funding child care services. However, the District can play a critical and strategic role to convene partners and amplify existing efforts to improve child care in the Squamish community.

## 12.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation process described below is intended as a guiding framework, and not as a prescriptive set of actions.

### Monitoring Process

As the strategy is implemented, the implementation committee will be responsible for monitoring progress as follows. On an annual basis, the committee will:

**Track completed actions and measure indicators of success:** Progress on actions and any associated and defined indicators of success should be measured and recorded by the implementation committee (e.g., meeting a target for new spaces, change in access rate, number of new developments with in-kind child care amenities, etc.).

### Engage in a strategy progress review:

- Committee members could share an update on the strategy's progress, including indicators mentioned above, and gather insights on the implementation process from their colleagues' perspectives as appropriate;
- Committee could co-host a community/parent session to gather insights including: perceived degree of impact of the implemented actions to date; anecdotal/qualitative information from clients/parents; recommendations for action areas to focus on in the upcoming year; and others; and,
- Following this process, the implementation committee can compile the insights meetings with the measured action indicators and discuss action plans for the next year.

### Report to District Council and the broader community:

- The District staff liaison for child care could present a short progress report on behalf of the implementation committee to the District of Squamish Council on an annual basis. This may be tied with the District's annual community monitoring program. The report could include an update on the actions completed/in progress to date; indicators measured to date; and focus areas for the next year of implementation, including new actions to add to the Child Care Strategy (presented as amendments to the strategy document with a rationale for their inclusion);
- The annual progress report could also jointly be made available to the public in a variety of formats and locations (e.g., online on the District and other stakeholder websites; print copies at the library, recreation centre and other public places); and,
- The implementation committee might also consider different approaches for sharing the report in accessible ways for a range of literacy levels (e.g., infographic, short video, poster) in addition to making the report available in full.

## Evaluation Process

In 2023, it is recommended the implementation committee undertake a more fulsome evaluation process of the five (5) years of implementing the strategy. The evaluation would consist of:

**Review of annual implementation & monitoring reports for 2019-2022:** The review is intended to highlight the trends in child care provision over the implementation period (i.e., successes, drawbacks, new factors that affected the implementation) and identify any actions that were not completed. These should be reviewed to determine why they were not completed and whether they should be included in the next iteration of a child care strategy.

**Reassess current child care needs in Squamish:** Taking stock of the child care needs in 2023 will assist in developing an update to the strategy for the following five (5) years. The child care needs assessment will benefit from the data gathered over the monitoring period. The assessment data collection process may take a similar shape as the activities done for this strategy and/or incorporate new measures and approaches, as appropriate.

**Engage in a 5-year review of the strategy:** Similar to the annual review process, the implementation committee members could gather insights and feedback from their colleagues, as applicable. These insights would be summarized and included in the final evaluation report for the strategy.

### **Report to District Council and share with the broader community:**

- The District staff liaison for child care could present a short evaluation report on behalf of the implementation committee to the District of Squamish Council. The report might include a summary of the overall actions completed/not completed during implementation; indicators measured and overall trends; and focus areas for the next iteration of a Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy with a rationale for their inclusion;
- The final evaluation report should be made available to the Squamish community in a variety of formats and locations (e.g., online on the District and other stakeholder websites; print copies at the library, recreation centre and other public places); and,
- The implementation committee might also consider different approaches for sharing the report in accessible ways for a range of literacy levels (e.g., infographic, short video, poster) in addition to making the report available in full.

Following the completion of these evaluation steps, the Child Care Strategy implementation committee will be in a good position to either create an updated child care strategy themselves or collaborate with a consultant to do so for 2023-2028 and beyond.