

Crofton Early Learning Centre

“The Eagles Nest”

Chemainus Crofton Community Schools Association in partnership with the Municipality of North Cowichan

November 2024



Current Childcare and Development impacting Crofton

150- 200

200

0

Average waitlist size

After meeting with local childcare facilities, we were told the average number of children on waitlists in the Cowichan Valley ranges between 150-200 and is considerably higher for Infant Toddler spaces.

Predicted growth in Crofton

The potential construction of 200 new homes in Crofton signifies substantial growth and necessitates further development in the area.

Licensed childcare centres in Crofton

Zero



TRAFFIC CONCERNS

Appropriate *signage*

To address the issue, we will work with North Cowichan to implement safety controls. These include speed limit signage, an electronic speed measuring sign, speed bumps, and traffic calming island. If visitors fail to adhere to posted signage to not block driveways towing service can be engaged as a corrective measure.

Staggered *start times*

Pickup and drop-off is limited to a 2 hr window in the morning and a 2 hr window in the afternoon, with exceptions made for special situations. Data from childcare centres shows the extreme improbability of all 44 children arriving in vehicles at the same time, as compared to a school situation.

hours of operation

The new center's operating hours will be from 7:30 am -5:30
Closed weekends and statutory holidays.

Special *events*

Staff will inform residents of any upcoming special events with adequate notice, This can be done through a community newsletter, fostering good communication and reducing any potential disruptions.

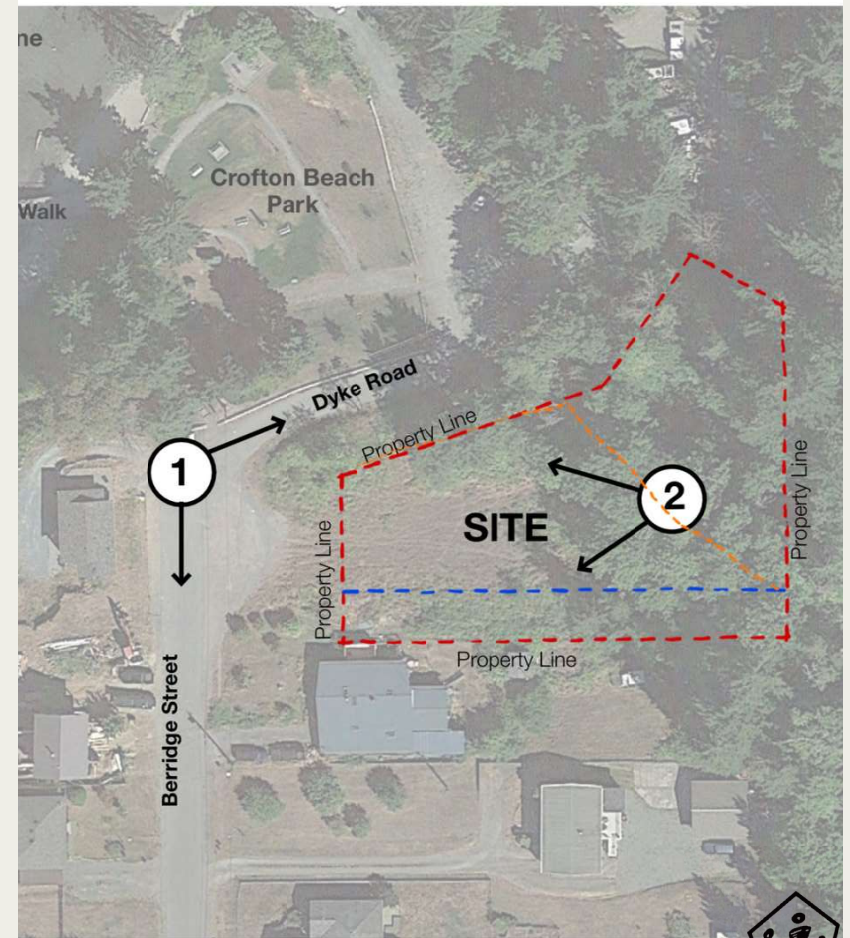
Additionally, the invitations sent to families will include specific parking instructions to address the parking situation.

Community *growth*

As more people move into an area, the demand for roads, public transport, and infrastructure naturally rises. Living in a space where traffic does not impede you is a privilege, not a right.



The current site plans incorporate adequate parking facilities and a well-designed driveway as shown below, in compliance with municipal by-laws.



NORTH COWICHAN'S OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

Childhood vulnerability is captured on a regular basis in B.C. through the [Human Early Learning Partnership's Early Development Instrument \(HELP EDI\)](#). This instrument measures five core domains of early child development and identifies children who are vulnerable in these areas. Thirty-three percent of children in North Cowichan are vulnerable which is the same as the provincial average. HELP considers a rate of 10% to be a "reasonable" benchmark for child vulnerability. The current vulnerability rate of 33% in North Cowichan is over three times higher than what is considered reasonable.

Social supports such as affordable housing, access to nutritious food and childcare can help decrease childhood vulnerability.

The [2020 Cowichan Region Childcare Plan](#) identifies that only 20% of all children 0-12 years old have access to a childcare space. According to the Childcare Plan, the coverage for children aged 0-2 years (infant/toddler group) is lower (15%), qualifying it as a childcare desert for that age group. Increasing evidence demonstrates that childcare is not only important to child well-being and development, but essential to communities and plays a crucial role in the function of the economy. The graphic to the right describes the multiple benefits of early childhood education.

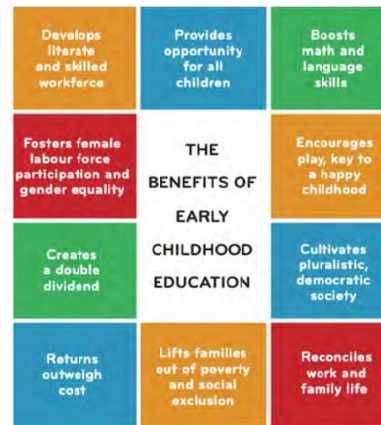


Figure 4.3: Benefits of Early Childhood Education⁵

The official community plan's revelation that only 15% of children aged 0-2 have access to child care highlights a critical issue impacting early childhood development and family stability. This limited access can significantly contribute to the vulnerability rate as outlined in the British Columbia Early Development Instrument (HELP EDI), which measures various factors affecting children's readiness for school and overall well-being. Addressing this gap is crucial for fostering a supportive environment where children can thrive and parents can participate fully in the workforce.

In response to this, many municipalities are beginning to develop and incorporate policies geared toward helping families acquire and maintain accessible, affordable and quality childcare. In particular, the need for affordable infant/toddler care is key to helping caregivers, particularly mothers, transition back to the workforce which helps the economy and promotes gender equity. The Cowichan Childcare Plan identified space creation targets for 2030:

- 301 new spaces over ten years.
- 133 for infant-toddler.
- 83 for preschool ages.
- 85 for school-aged children.

However, without a universal childcare system in place, childcare fees are costly, especially for infant/toddler care. Though fees are coming down due to federal and provincial funding the average cost that parents pay in BC for infant/toddler care is \$875/ month.⁶

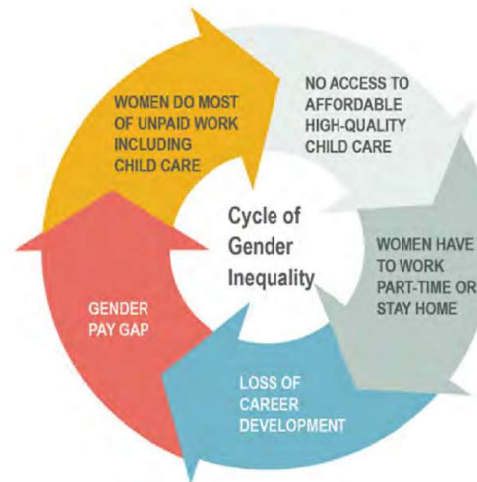


Figure 4.4: Alberta Federation of Labour Childcare Diagram⁸

4.1.5 Defining Success | Objectives

Objective: Support the development of affordable, quality early learning and care programs and spaces.

4.1.7 The Municipality will ask developers and landowners to:

- a. Consider including childcare centres in housing or commercial developments.
- b. If requesting additional density on a property, contribute to community amenities.

The municipality's commitment to supporting the development of affordable quality early learning spaces, as outlined in their objectives in section 4.1.5, is a significant step towards enhancing community education infrastructure. This objective not only supports individual growth but also contributes to the long-term socioeconomic development of the community by laying a solid educational foundation for future generations.

4.1.5 Defining Success | Objectives

Objective: Support the development of affordable, quality early learning and care programs and spaces.

Progress will be measured by:

- Number of childcare spaces per child.
- Reduction in vulnerability rate of children.

4.1.6 The Municipality will strive to:

- a. Consider leasing Municipal-owned facilities at a nominal rate to non-profit childcare providers.
- b. Allow for childcare (home or group) in a variety of zones.
- c. Cooperate and support community organizations that provide services for children and youth, including vulnerable populations.
- d. Promote childcare centres within or adjacent to seniors facilities and promote interaction between age groups.⁷
- e. Review Municipal zoning and business licence regulations to ensure there are no unnecessary barriers to quality childcare facilities at a range of scales and types.

⁶ Read more about infant/toddler care in BC: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/TheAlarm>

⁷ Read more about Toddler and Seniors together - the Benefits of Intergenerational Care: <https://ifstudies.org/blog/toddlers-and-seniors-together-the-benefits-of-intergenerational-care>

4.1.7 The Municipality will ask developers and landowners to:

- a. Consider including childcare centres in housing or commercial developments.
- b. If requesting additional density on a property, contribute to community amenities which could include childcare space.

4.1.8 The Municipality will work with others to:

- a. Advocate for a universal \$10/day childcare plan to the provincial and federal government.
- b. Advocate to the school district to provide space for childcare programs.
- c. Consider partnerships with non-profit organizations to develop sites or facilities.

Section 4.1.6 underscores the municipality's dedication to supporting non-profit organizations by prioritizing the leasing of municipally owned facilities to these entities. The proposed Crofton Early Learning Centre aligns with this criteria.



PROJECTS TIMELINE

April 2022

Municipality receives funding for Early Learning Centre in Crofton.

April 27 2022, the municipality of North Cowichan puts out a press release announcing 1.76 million dollars in funding from the Government of British Columbia to build 44 new childcare spaces in Crofton

August 2022

Open House

North Cowichan held an open house on August 11th 2022. 25 letters were sent out to the residents of Berridge and Dyke street. Municipal staff sat at the proposed child care site, staff had information boards regarding the project. 12 people attended in which 11 were in support of the project with 1 opposing.

Municipal staff told the CCSA in an email the residents who attended were in full support citing the location was good for a children to attend childcare in a housing-centered community

July 2023

Public Hearing

On July 19th, a public meeting was held to rezone the land. At this time, the public was given an opportunity to come forward with concerns during the "Comments from the Public." portion of the evening.

October 2024

Petition brought forward

The municipality received a petition to do a traffic study from Berridge street residents.



Crofton Child Care Facility

Community need is high – Based on “Cowichan region child care plan”



Facility will be owned by North Cowichan and operated by Chemainus Crofton Community Schools Association (CCSA)

Grant amount
\$1,750,000

Grant funding from Ministry of Children and Family Development

44 child care spaces

12 spaces under 36 months

32 spaces 30 months to school age

Only **33%** of child care needs are met in the Cowichan region

Building Details



5000 square feet

New modular / wood construction single level building. Detailed design coming soon.

Built to BC Step Code 2 and Rick Hansen Accessibility Gold Standard

- OTHER INFO**
- Archaeological Impact Assessment required
 - Environmental Management Plan in progress
 - Works and services (sewer/water/road/parking) included in design



BOARDS SHOWN TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND BERRIGE AND DYKE STREET RESIDENTS IN 2022 AT OPEN HOUSE

Schedule



Future key dates



ECONOMICAL IMPACTS

From an economic perspective, this land is owned by North Cowichan, with financial support from the BC government allocated for construction. Staff will be pursuing grants to supplement these funds. There are no alternative land options available, and the "not-in-my-backyard" sentiment raises the question: whose backyard is acceptable? Financial options are constrained; utilizing existing assets (the land) will result in lower taxes compared to if the municipality opted to purchase property elsewhere for the project.

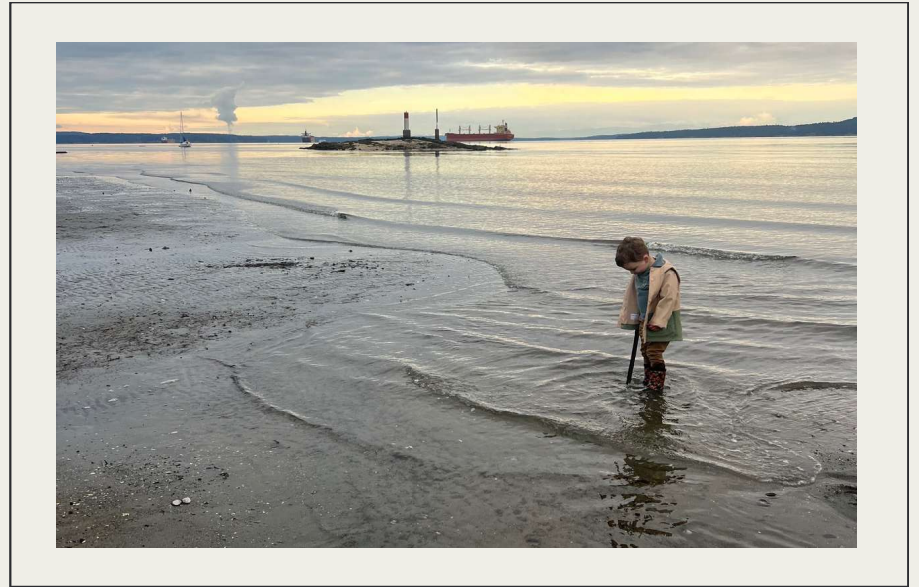


Change can be difficult, but it's also an opportunity for growth. The benefits this childcare centre offers to the community—both now and in the future—far outweigh the short-term concerns. Change often comes at a personal cost, but when we weigh the long-term benefits for our children and families, it's clear that this is a necessary and positive development.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Concerns regarding potential environmental damage are unfounded. The center has been meticulously designed to ensure that children remain safely distanced from the creek, and construction activities will not adversely affect the environment. In fact, one of the center's educational objectives is to instill in children an understanding of the significance of protecting local waterways and preserving wildlife.

The center plans to accommodate up to 44 children, divided into smaller groups according to age. At any given time, a maximum of 16 children will be present on the beach, and it is likely that the number will be even lower. Consequently, the center's presence will not overwhelm the local beach or boardwalk.



BRITISH COLUMBIAS EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK

British Columbia's Early Learning Framework emphasizes the significance of providing children in early years settings with access to nature-based programs, such as the one proposed. It highlights the positive impact these programs can have on reconciliation efforts.

"Children develop a sense of place when they connect with their local communities and outdoor environment. Early learning is "of a place" when children and educators engage with local histories with respectful curiosity and a desire to contribute and share" (British Columbia Early Learning Framework pg., 21)"

"Where early care and learning programs and schools are situated within or near Indigenous communities, educators can contribute to the social well-being and cultural vitality of the community by exploring ways of honouring and learning from community Elders. With appropriate recognition, this can be a joyful education across deep historical divides." (British Columbia Early Learning Framework pg., 19)



SUPPORTING THE GREATER GOOD

Dismissing the needs of the majority to accommodate a select few is an elitist perspective. The requirements of local families, especially the increasing population of children in the area, should be prioritized. The Early Learning Centre will benefit not only current residents but future generations, ensuring that children receive the necessary support and education to make meaningful contributions to the community.



Thank you for your time

