

City of North Vancouver minds its home child care regulations

Restrictions on larger home-based operations remain

[Jeremy Shepherd](#) / North Shore News

July 21, 2016 03:07 PM



file photo Cindy Goodman, North Shore News

It came down to a matter of principal Monday night.

Despite unanimous support for daycares in general, City of North Vancouver council kiboshed a motion that would have loosened restrictions for entrepreneurial childminders seeking to turn homes into principal-use child care facilities.

The vote was a disappointment for Coun. Linda Buchanan.

“We are not supporting families in our community,” she said.

By pushing child care from residential zones to commercial districts, working parents end up patronizing facilities that profit by “warehousing children” while providing child care rather than early childhood development, according to Buchanan.

The city doesn’t allow homeowners to turn their houses into storefronts, noted Coun. Pam Bookham.

“I don’t understand why we would allow daycare, which is a commercial operation ... to have that right,” she said.

Bookham also expressed concern that speculators might buy up residential properties and “use daycare as a way of generating income.”

That scenario makes little sense financially, countered Mayor Darrell Mussatto.

“Daycares are tough to put in anywhere, in the sense that they don’t make any money,” he said.

With miniscule vacancy rates and high land values, Mussatto said a failure to offer daycare will result in parents taking longer commutes or leaving the city entirely.

“Any chance we get to put daycare in communities, I think we need to take full advantage.”

A strictly commercial enterprise is likely less sensitive to a neighbour’s concerns, according to Coun. Don Bell.

“At least when there’s an owner/operator they share the neighbourhood with their neighbours,” said Bell. They live there, they’re accessible.”

Principal-use child care centres such as Discovery Castle, Kidsland, and Golden Star have generated “very few complaints,” according to a city staff report.

With a split vote looming, Coun. Holly Back cast the decisive vote against allowing principal-use daycares.

“I wouldn’t want one next to me,” she said.

Allowing principal-use child care facilities could open the door for other businesses hoping to operate out of a residential neighbourhood, Back cautioned.

Coun. Rod Clark concurred, arguing there are always concerns around whether anyone is living in the house after business hours, he said.

“I think we should be limiting daycare in residential zones to a maximum number of eight children.”

Clark’s comments conflicted with the unqualified support he expressed when discussing new child care space at Ridgeway elementary in January. Coun. Craig Keating was quick to point out the discrepancy.

“I agreed with Coun. Clark on Jan. 18,” he said.

While allowing principal-use daycares would be an experiment, Keating suggested residential neighbourhoods were likely a better fit than main thoroughfares.

“I’m prepared to experiment with the idea of principal use, and we’ll see what the results are.”

Council voted to allow staff to approve child care facilities with 12 spots or fewer while leaving larger operations under council’s purview.

Council would also exercise oversight on any child care facility proposed for the same block of another daycare, on lots smaller than 5,900 square feet, and in instances when parking on arterial roads is an issue.