



Supporting the needs of the community

RDCK facilitates partnership for new child care centre in Castlegar

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By Dan Elliott, RDCK Communications Coordinator

Understanding and responding to the needs of the community is one of the most important functions of the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK). A well-defined and pressing need for families throughout the RDCK is access to child care services. While child care is not typically within the mandate for a local government like the RDCK, this was recognized as a significant issue for residents. Beginning in 2018, the RDCK stepped in to facilitate and collaborate with community partners, the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) and the province to help develop new child care spaces in our region.

In January of 2021, the RDCK, Castlegar and District Recreation Commission, and Kootenay Family Place (KFP), with funding support from CBT, successfully applied to the Province's Childcare BC New Spaces Fund to support a brand new, licensed space in Castlegar. The result is the Castlegar and District Kids' Club, a new facility located at the Castlegar and District Community Complex and run by KFP, which officially opened its doors, January 4, 2022.



“Having access to licensed quality care is essential to improving outcomes for the residents of Castlegar and surrounding communities,” said Sally Bojecho, Co-Executive Director, Kootenay Family Place. “As child care waitlist numbers have increased over the past several years, families have struggled to find care options that will support them in being able to fulfill both their professional and personal goals. Kootenay Family Place and the Castlegar and District Recreation Commission have established a collaborative relationship with the common goal of increasing accessibility to quality early learning programs for families’ diverse needs in our community.”

The B.C. government has made child care a priority and their goal is to deliver affordable, accessible and quality child care to families across the province. Since 2018, the government has invested \$299 million for the Childcare BC New Spaces Fund, which helps improve access to child care throughout the province by supporting the creation of new licensed spaces.

The RDCK's involvement in the development of local child care began in early 2018, with the RDCK Board directing staff to evaluate the feasibility of locating child care facilities within underutilized community hall spaces in Electoral Area I. The feasibility study, funded by the RDCK and CBT and completed by Selkirk College's Rural Development Institute indicated a high demand for child care spaces in the Nelson-Castlegar corridor and significant barriers for families in accessing affordable and convenient child care spaces.

Late in 2018, elected officials in the Castlegar area were approached by KFP to partner on a potential new child care facility at the Castlegar and District Community Complex. Having familiarity with KFP, previously working on the 'Summer at the Skatepark' program for 11 years, the Castlegar and District Recreation Commission decided to expand the partnership to fill a much needed void in the community. This was followed by a successful application to the Childcare BC New Spaces Fund.

"This is a great fit for the Castlegar and District Community Complex because this is a community hub and facility designed for all ages," said Jim Crockett, Manager of Recreation, Castlegar and District Community Complex. "We have a seniors centre and provide programs and services for all ages, so it is a nice fit to add a child care centre right on site."



“Collaborating with a partner who understood the unique needs of our community was essential to the successful development of Castlegar and District Kids’ Club,” said Bojecho. “The uniqueness of the development of the co-located child care facility will not only address the need for additional child care options, it will also foster a gathering place for families to connect and become more involved in various recreational experiences.”

Having received \$2 million in funding from the Childcare BC New Spaces Fund, the construction of the new 2,000 sq. ft. facility at the Castlegar and District Community Complex is now complete and the facility has opened part-time, with the goal of eventually providing preschool care in the morning and afterschool care in the afternoon.

“Castlegar and District Kid’s Club will house a morning preschool program for children ages 2.5-5 years, in addition to providing after school care, for children ages 5-12 years, in the afternoons,” said Bojecho. “These programs will be offered annually through Kootenay Family Place from September through June, with the Castlegar and District Community Complex also having access to the facility for programming and school break camps.”

“One of the biggest reasons why we were successful with our funding application was the ability for the child care centre to utilize all our services, including the rink, pool and soccer fields,” said Audrey Maxwell Polovnikoff, Recreation Coordinator, Castlegar and District Community Complex. “Emphasizing the important of connecting with children at a young age to the importance of health and wellness made sense to the B.C. government and to the Castlegar and District Recreation Commission.”

[Click here](#) for more information on the Castlegar and District Community Complex Child Care Centre.

To learn more about the Childcare BC New Spaces Fund, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/childcare/newspacesfund

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