

ANMORE DAY CARE

Dear Residents of Anmore

September 09, 2010

At the Regular Council meeting on Tuesday, September 14, 2010 at 7:00 pm, Council is expected to vote on if it “wishes to move forward or whether the project (Major Capital Funding for the Creation of New Child Care Spaces Agreement No. CO781001) will be cancelled and all funding (\$499,500) returned” to the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The Child Care Working Group established by Council is split and was unable to formulate a consensus recommendation to Council.

Based on all of the evidence that follows, I plan to vote to cancel the project and return the grant money to MCFD. Mayor Anderson, a Director of the Anmore Youth and Community Services Non-Profit Society which the Business Plan shows will operate the Child Care Centre, continues to be very involved and a strong advocate for keeping the grant. Since Mayor Anderson has yet to recuse herself on this issue, and both Councillors Palmer-Isaak and McEwen are on record in strong support of building the Child Care Centre, I think, without strong public disapproval, Council will vote to continue with the Child Care project.

From my perspective, this would be a big mistake for the following reasons.

1. The Village of Anmore is financially responsible if the facility fails: According to the MCFD, “If the child care facility ceases to be operational before meeting the 10 year operating commitment the Village of Anmore would be obligated to pay back the pro-rated amount calculated on the number of months remaining in the ten year commitment.”
2. Existing child care facilities operating within a five km radius of the Village Hall have space available and declining enrolments:
The MCFD website shows 68 of the 70 Group and Family Child Care Centres within a 5 km radius of the Village Hall with child care space available. As well, the YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral Child Care Program Evaluation survey for the Tricity area conducted in September 2009 shows:
 - My enrolment increased over the past year **NO 53.4%**
 - I am considering expanding my child care facility **NO 64.9%**
 - Currently I have vacancies in my childcare **YES 64.9%**
 - My enrolment has decreased this year **YES 42.7%**
3. A Child Care Centre in Anmore would duplicate a service already provided:
Both Anmore and Belcarra Councils financially endorsed the creation of the Green Apple Day Care in the heritage IOCO church on the Sunnyside border of Anmore. This facility is currently operating at 50% capacity and the co-owner says that a Child Care Centre in Anmore will likely put them out of business at the IOCO site.

4. The needs assessment survey conducted by a Sub-Committee of the Anmore Daycare Working Group is at best inconclusive about the amount and type of child care needed:

While there appears to be a need for before and after school programs, the need for other types of childcare is not shown. British Columbia is moving to full-day five year-old kindergarten by 2011 and eliminating most of the need for half day child care spaces, and in June 2010 the Minister of Children and Family Development announced increased spending for 'Before and After School Programs' in the schools.

5. Without tapping other sources of money, there is insufficient money to build the Child Care Centre in Anmore

The Village has approximately \$523,000 available to build a Child Care Centre. There were two building tenders submitted to Council and both were substantially above this amount. The low bidder pared back on a number of items, such as landscaping, but still had a quote substantially larger than the available money (in the order of \$75-100,000). While she is currently seeking new money from another fund from the developer to support the building shortfall, Mayor Anderson seems to have forgotten her election commitment to move forward only if the Child Care Centre can be built within the existing funds available.

6. Sustainability:

Generally, employee salaries consume 80% of child care centre operating budgets. As well, the infant care included in the Anmore plan is considerably more expensive than toddler care. The evidence shows me that there is limited need for a Child Care facility in Anmore, there is substantial competition within a five km radius, and the pared back facility will require that basic amenities be added after it is built if it is to quietly blend into the Ravenswood neighbourhood. Since the plan is to make the fees low, pay the employees well, and for the not-for-profit Society to borrow approximately \$25,000, I believe that there will not be sufficient income and the business case for building a Child Care Centre in Anmore is very weak. From my perspective, if given the go ahead by Council, not only will we have \$1,250,000 (land and building) tied up in a single purpose stand alone facility but there is a high probability that the Village of Anmore will need to financially support the on-going operation.

Given the 2 to 1 rejection of the referendum request to finance a community centre/day care in Anmore, I suspect that many of you have concerns about this initiative similar to mine. The September 14th Council Meeting at 7:00 in the Village Hall will probably be your last opportunity to voice them.

Councillor Mario Piamonte

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