

Jeffrey Hooites Meursing & Tessa Brauer  
1101-4189 Halifax St. Burnaby, BC V5C 0H9

Mayor Derek Corrigan & Council:

I am writing you today to bring awareness and hopefully change to the wage disparity concerning your early childcare professionals. They are working hard on a daily basis ensuring our infants, toddlers, and pre-kindergartners are getting the support they need to get the best start possible in life and our lovely community.

My wife and I are the proud parents of a 2 year old daughter who attends the Madison Children's Center located in Brentwood. This center is currently run by the Purpose non-profit society. Our first foray into raising a child and subsequently having her attend a daycare has been a very rewarding but also an extremely challenging experience due to the costs and availability of daycare. I know the current elected provincial government has made big promises to "fix" our current daycare system and we are patiently waiting to see what they will actually commit to.

Last week, we received a letter from the purpose society (attached to this email) indicating that fees will be going up by a whopping \$200/month starting April 1<sup>st</sup> citing challenging conditions around proper recruitment and retention of daycare staff professionals at their centers. My wife and I were shocked by this sudden large increase in fees. We now have to make necessary budget adjustments to adjust but will be fine in the end. As the reality of the fee increase sank in, our feelings turned more to sadness and disbelief with the wages being paid to these extremely important professionals in our community.

The society is citing the wages paid to their professionals are still below a living wage for the Lower Mainland and thus they have been losing their best talent to neighboring Cities who pay better wages. We have witnessed this first hand with a few of the very best workers leaving due to financial constraints. In their place, more unqualified and less impactful workers are left to educate our children. The example given in the letter was the City of Vancouver topping up wages for their early childhood professionals to at least the living wage. The City of Vancouver and the City of Burnaby both have extremely high if not equal cost of living challenges today.

What my wife and I are proposing is as follows: We would like to see the City of Burnaby draft and pass a motion to provide a subsidy or "wage top-up" to all daycare professionals in the City of Burnaby. Surely the City has the funds to provide a competitive landscape for this professional base? I commend you on your current fiscal responsibility...that is no easy feat. Let's take advantage of our good fortune and start to focus on the working base that is often in the shadows but provide an extremely important role in our community and for our children.

Let's get proactive ahead of our provincial government to show our commitment to the children and our community.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Hooites Meursing and Tessa Brauer (Proud parents of Harlow Hooites Meursing)

Copied to:

City Manager

Referred to:

Sustainable City Advisory Committee (2018.04.10)



February 5, 2018

Dear Parents,

### **Re: Child Care Fees Increase**

Everyone has now received notice of the upcoming fee increase effective April 1, 2018. The management staff of the Purpose Society discussed implementing this increase at great length and the ramifications of doing so. It was not done lightly. Some parents have provided feedback regarding this increase and some had questions. Consequently, I want to provide you with the reasons for such a significant increase.

As one parent mentioned, the Purpose Child Care Centres are facing a staffing crisis. The staffing shortage is being felt in both the child care sector generally and the Purpose Centres. Over the last several years, it has become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified child care staff. This crisis is affecting all child care centres, but it is affecting our Centres more significantly because our wages are comparatively low when compared with other daycares in Burnaby and New Westminster. Over the past few years, we have been working to slowly increase wages, but the current staffing situation has forced us to take more drastic action. We are not paying a living wage for some of the positions and our wages are currently uncompetitive with other Centres.

The current fee increase will allow a significant increase in our starting salaries. In addition, we are increasing the combined annual cost of living and merit increase from 2% to 3% annually. This is nowhere near the 2016 to 2018 rate of inflation of 6% cited by one parent. However, while this will narrow the wage gap between the Purpose Centres and other Centres, we will still be low. The revenue needed to put us in a truly competitive position would have required a 25% increase in fees. As an added piece of information, we will always be at a disadvantage to centres operating in the City of Vancouver, as Vancouver City provides a wage top-up to child care centres.

The range of fees in the Burnaby/New Westminster area for infant/toddler programs is \$1100 to \$1700 per month (the highest rate being in New Westminster). At \$1250, we were at the low end of this range, and with the increase, we are now in the middle.





Here is some additional information regarding day care fees and income. Day care fees and any other income collected from each Centre are kept separately from any other Centre and are used to pay the wages and other operating expenses of that Centre. Day care fees are never used to fund other Purpose programs. There are many recurring expenses involved in running a day care centre – wages/benefits, rent, utilities, insurance, accounting, garbage, water, cleaning supplies, food, maintenance and repair, toys and furniture replacement among other things. As well, periodically we have more significant replacement or maintenance costs, such as playground tiles, play equipment, appliances and vehicles.

It is realistic to expect that the Purpose Society could give parents 6 months' notice of a fee increase in future and we pledge to do that unless something completely unexpected occurs. In this instance, we need to be able to implement wage increases April 1, 2018. Finally, please be assured that the management team has already looked at ways to save money and eliminate unnecessary costs. Frankly, there are none. For example, we source the cheapest janitorial supplies without compromising the comfort of small bums. The biggest budget line is salaries and benefits.

I appreciate that this fee increase is challenging for families to cope with; however, if we are not able to more effectively hire and retain qualified child care staff, we will not be able to continue to offer quality child care for your family.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to email me at [dawn.embree@purposesociety.org](mailto:dawn.embree@purposesociety.org).

Thank you,

Dawn Embree  
Executive Director  
Lower Mainland Purpose Society

