

**June 25, 2021**

**RE: Puddle Jumpers Childcare @ proposed site of Burnaby North Baptist Church (3977 Albert Street)**

Dear Mayor and Council,

I live in North Burnaby with my partner and 9 year-old child who attends Gilmore Elementary School. Both of us parents work full-time and require before and after school childcare in order to meet the needs of our employment commitments. Without regular and reliable childcare, we would be unable to afford to live in such a wonderful community we have called home for many years.

There is a childcare shortage in North Burnaby and our neighbourhood of Burnaby Heights (serving Gilmore Elementary School) is particularly challenged when it comes to out of school care. Up until a few years ago, there were 4 out of school care centres serving Gilmore (ArtSpace, PuddleJumpers, YMCA out of Rosser, and Treasure Island). ArtSpace closed a few years ago due to rent increases and now Puddle Jumpers, the program my son has attended for the past 7 years, is faring the same fate and set to close in August leaving dozens of families without care for September. The remaining centres – YMCA at Rosser School and Treasure Island are at full capacity. We are devastated to be without out of school care for September – our ability to continue working relies on this care.

Shawna Harrison, the owner and operator of Puddle Jumpers has been pursuing the move of her program to Burnaby North Baptist Church (3977 Albert Street) and has run into some challenges. We, and the other families affected, are very hopeful that these can be resolved.

We understand there are a variety of factors that make approving the use of the proposed Burnaby North Baptist Church (3977 Albert Street) a challenge. However, we believe there may be creative and collaborative ways in which to overcome these challenges. The City of Burnaby's *Burnaby Childcare Policy* outlines its commitment including, but not limited to, assisting with the creation of a comprehensive and inclusive child care system in Burnaby which offers a range of child care options and responds to diverse groups within the community and to work with various boards, ministries as well as childcare providers to assist in pursuing childcare objectives. Although last revised in 2000, we expect the City to continue working towards achieving this in our community.

Shawna, the owner and operator of Puddle Jumpers, is an integral member of our community, running multiple childcare centres in North Burnaby, serving dozens of families at each location. Shawna always has the children's best interests at heart, and she truly cares about the families she provides care to. She has been in operation for 20+ years and has contributed to our community in many great ways; Burnaby is fortunate to have her in our community.

The permanent closure of Puddle Jumpers will be devastating to our family. We are requesting Mayor, Council and city staff work together with Shawna Harrison and Puddle Jumpers to find ways to continue to support our out of school childcare needs in our community with finding ways to overcome obstacles that may be preventing approval of Puddle Jumpers at the proposed site noted above.

Thank you for your consideration,

Róisín O'Neill

