

Remarks by Cara Steiner, Prairie Lily Daycare

City Council Budget Meeting - December 10, 2018

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement ahead of the Budget meeting on December 10, 2018. My name is Cara Steiner, and I have been working in Regina as an Early Childhood Educator for the past 15 years. I have been fortunate to work in this City with countless families in different childcare environments including Centre and School settings.

Early Childhood Education is a deep passion of mine, and in the past several years, I have moved to managing three Childcare locations here in Regina as well as participating in advocacy work throughout our City and province. I am a part of the Saskatchewan Leader's caucus, which is a group of Childcare Directors and related professionals including Social Workers and Early Childhood Education professors from across the province working alongside the Canadian Child Care Federation. I also have recently joined the board of the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association and look forward to working with them in 2019 to represent our City and its needs.

I have remarkable growth in Early Childhood Education since I first began working as an Educator. More and more research has been done, both economic and education based, that continues to support the importance of what we do as Early Years Educators. The men and women who work in this field are constantly striving to see our sector held to a higher standard and to be recognized as professionals.

Licensed, non-profit Childcare Centres in Saskatchewan have begun to use the Play and Exploration Early Learning Program Guide as a curriculum guide. This guide is an important part of Saskatchewan's Early Childhood development initiatives and speaks to the importance of high quality experiences for all Saskatchewan children during their most formative years. It is based on knowledge gained from Early Childhood Education research, examples from successful practice of early childhood educators and understandings passed on through community culture, values and beliefs.

The Centres asking for this tax exemption operate high quality programs, where Educators understand the importance of preparing a high-quality environment where they can foster all areas of a child's learning. Early Childhood Educators are responsible for maintaining facilities and meeting not only the basic needs of children, but when they provide a high-quality program they are also responsible for:

- Promoting positive social and emotional development
- Encouraging optimum physical development through indoor and outdoor play
- Creating an aesthetically beautiful environment that nourishes children's spiritual development
- Fostering language and literacy
- Stimulating intellectual and cognitive development
- Engaging families and building a community mindset where family input is welcomed and encouraged
- Allowing children to develop healthy relationships with adults and peers
- Planning activities and outings based on observations of the children's interests
- Personal professional development

Early Childhood Educators deserve recognition for what they do and a champion to come alongside them and support what they do. If the City of Regina was to approve this exemption, we would be able to take the money and pour it back into our programs and Educators, continuing to increase the quality of the programs that this City's children are attending. It will allow for more supplies, more experiences to be given, and outings to be planned.

This exemption will not be allowing unlimited Centres to be coming in and applying for tax relief. Currently, for a Childcare Centre to open in our province, they must first apply and be approved for spaces with the provincial government. There is a process in place to ensure that the spaces that are being developed are operated by qualified professionals. By having this exemption specifically apply to licensed, not for profit Centres, you are preventing this being applied for by other like-minded groups, as they do not provide the same services with the same focus that we do.

We recognize that the proposed tax exemption will not address the issues of availability of spaces nor the issue of affordability to parents in our City. We look at this as a provincial issue to address. Through some of the advocacy work that I am doing together with several other groups, we are continuing to build relationships with the provincial government, specifically the ministries of Education and Social Services, to address these issues. We hope to see the Bi-Lateral funding continue into the next federal political cycle and will be raising the issue of affordability when it comes time to plan for future funding. This type of work takes years to accomplish, and we hope that this tax measure being implemented will give these organizations some relief while we work to achieve these goals.

When looking to the successes of other provinces across Canada, we have observed that for real, lasting, and systemic change to happen, we need to start at a municipal level. We need all levels of government to be recognizing the importance of Early Childhood Education so that we can build a strong base of both public education/awareness and a plan for the future. We hope to see Saskatchewan develop a more comprehensive universal Child Care system so that our families can save thousands of dollars a month that can be returned to our economies and used to create more financially stable women and families. We long to see all future citizens of our province, and more specifically Regina, grow into successful adults who are contributing to a thriving City and economy while becoming leaders along the way.

We look forward to taking this starting step to working toward this provincial ideal by beginning at home. The City of Regina is in a place where they can begin to lead our province by being our champion for Childcare. Thank you for your continued consideration in this matter.

Cara Steiner