

Executive Summary – Biggar Child Care Needs

Assessment

The Biggar community faces a **significant shortage of accessible, reliable, and flexible child care**, as demonstrated by strong participation and consistent themes across 104 survey responses. Parents, guardians, employers, and community members overwhelmingly agree that expanding child care capacity—including infant, toddler, preschool, and school-age care—is critical for family well-being, workforce participation, and community growth.

1. Overall Demand for Child Care

A large majority of respondents **currently need child care** or will need it within the next 12–24 months. Many are on waitlists, using temporary or inconsistent care, or have no arrangement at all.

- Many families reported being **unable to return to work**, missing shifts, turning down promotions, or changing careers due to unavailable child care.
 - Families commonly experience **waitlists of months to years**, with several noting waitlist times of up to **five years**.
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2. Capacity & Accessibility Issues

Across nearly all demographics, respondents report that Biggar **does not have enough child care spaces**:

- **Infant and toddler spaces** are the most critically lacking.
- School-age families repeatedly emphasized the disappearance of the **Before & After School Program**, which has created major employment challenges.
- Several households depend on **family/friend care**, often described as unsustainable, unreliable, or creating hardship.

Many families need **full-time, year-round care**, while others need **part-time, seasonal, or extended/shift-work-friendly hours**.

3. Desired Features of a New 90-Space Daycare

Most respondents stated they would **likely enroll their children** in a new licensed facility. The most requested features include:

Core Needs

- **More infant and toddler spaces**
- **Full-time care (Mon–Fri, 7am–6pm)**
- **Extended hours** for health-care, shift-work, and emergency services employees
- **Before & After School Program**
- **Drop-in and part-time options**
- **Year-round availability**

Quality Components

- Qualified staff
 - Strong educational programming
 - Outdoor play spaces
 - Support for neurodiverse and special-needs children
 - Better communication/reporting to parents
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4. Financial Considerations

Most families pay or expect to pay **\$10–\$20/day**, consistent with provincial funding expectations.

Some currently pay **\$600–\$1,200 per month** in private or unlicensed care due to lack of alternatives.

Affordability matters, but families repeatedly stated that **availability is the larger barrier**.

5. Community & Economic Impacts

Child care shortages are directly affecting:

- **Workforce participation** – Many respondents cannot work full-time or accept shifts.
 - **Local business staffing** – Employers report turnover, hiring challenges, and absenteeism linked to child care gaps.
 - **Community retention & growth** – Several families stated they might **leave Biggar** or **not move to Biggar** due to child care limitations.
 - Some employers expressed willingness to **partner, sponsor, or reserve child care spaces** to support their staff.
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6. Strong Support for the Daycare Initiative

Across nearly all respondents—parents, employers, and residents—there is **overwhelming agreement** that expanding licensed child care in Biggar is *extremely important* to the community’s health, economic stability, and ability to support young families.

Many individuals volunteered to:

- Assist with fundraising
 - Serve on advisory committees
 - Participate in community events
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Conclusion

The survey results clearly demonstrate that Biggar faces a **critical child care shortage** affecting families, employers, and the community at large. A new licensed 90-space daycare—especially one that includes **infant care, school-age programs, extended hours, and part-time options**—would directly alleviate barriers to employment, improve family stability, and support continued population and economic growth in Biggar.