

More than 3,000 new Toronto child care spaces at risk due to provincial cuts ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Thousands of new child care spaces approved by the previous provincial government — including 3,049 in Toronto — may never get built due to the latest Ford government cuts.

A total of 51 new child care centres in schools across Toronto, slated to open between this fall and the fall of 2022, are no longer eligible for provincial operating funding, according to a staff report to be debated at city council this week.

The province will honour capital commitments to build the daycares only if cities and school boards promise to come up with the operating funds by Aug. 30, according to an April 26 education ministry memo to municipalities.

But cash-strapped cities and school boards can ill-afford to save the centres, said Toronto Councillor Mike Layton.

“The provincial government has been trying to hide the magnitude of the cuts to child care, to education and to our public health funding. This one is the latest and it’s just a sign of what’s to come,” Layton said Monday.

“In the middle of the year, we’re expected to come up with the money to demonstrate that these spaces will be funded. The reality is we don’t build child care that way,” added Layton, who represents Ward 11 University-Rosedale, where two new centres with space for 98 infants, toddlers and preschoolers may never get built.

Under the previous Liberal government’s plan to double the number of child care spaces for kids under age 4 by 2022, the province had promised to pay 100 percent of operating costs.

“Now 100 percent is being downloaded to municipalities,” Layton said.

City staff say it would cost about \$35 million a year to cover child care subsidies and other operating grants if the 51 centres proceed without provincial support.

“At a time when our budgets are, at best, uncertain in this Conservative climate, it is going to be difficult,” Layton predicted.

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