

City commits to spending an extra \$300K to keep daycare fees stable ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

City councillors say they're willing to pay \$300,000 more starting next year to keep daycare fees stable at eight local daycare centres and keep local daycare expansion plans on track.

Without a commitment from both Peterborough city and county to help pay, fees could increase at eight daycares and a plan to expand Hucklebug Child Care Centre in Norwood by 39 spots could be cancelled.

To avert that, city councillors gave preliminary approval at a meeting on Tuesday to pay more: the city would pay \$300,000 more annually under the new plan and the county would pay \$135,000.

The proposal passed with no debate on Tuesday.

According to the staff report, the daycares that would have to hike their fees without added municipal funding include:

- Hucklebug Child Care (at their Havelock location)
- Centre Educatif Les Petits Curieux
- Compass Early Learning and Care
- Peterborough daycare centre
- Pearson Child Care Centre

Strath-MacLean Childcare

- Trent Child Care
- YMCA Child Care

It's all because Ontario's Progressive Conservative government has announced plans to decrease its funding for daycares.

The previous Liberal provincial government had planned in 2017 to create 100,000 new daycare spaces over five years at no cost to municipalities.

Between 2017 and 2020, a total of 424 new, full-time daycare spaces across Peterborough city and county were planned under the program.

Some of those spaces haven't been added yet: 262 spaces have already been created at the eight daycares mentioned above.

They were expecting ongoing operating money from the provincial government — and now they're facing cutbacks.

The provincial government says starting in 2020 it will fund 80 per cent of the cost to run those new spaces rather than 100 per cent.

Yet city council can't wait until the 2020 budget talks in January to make a commitment: the provincial government needs to know by Oct. 30 whether the city and county are committed to paying 20 per cent of the cost to run the new Hucklebug spots in Norwood, or they won't be given permission to begin construction on that daycare centre.

Meanwhile city council still hasn't decided on a separate staff recommendation from early September to close its two municipally run daycare centres at the end of June as a cost-saving measure.

The city could close both Pearson and Peterborough daycares, as well as the after-school programs at Edmison Heights and Westmount Public Schools.

The closures would save the city about \$570,000 annually, and staff recommends spending that money on the expanded daycare spots.

City council isn't expected to decide on those prospective closures until after Peterborough-Kawartha MPP Dave Smith comes to speak to council about provincial funding decreases at a meeting Oct. 28.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

spaces ^[5]

fees ^[6]

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