

Waterloo regional council votes to close five child-care centres ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Waterloo regional council has decided to close five regionally run child-care centres, despite passionate pleas from local parents who disagree with the move.

Last month, council received a report from KPMG that recommended closing the centres to help free up funding for other centres.

Thirty delegates spoke to council during the virtual meeting Wednesday night, with many imploring council to vote against the recommendation.

"When I heard these centres were shutting down I was shocked. Why in the world would they want to shut down the best that we have? These centres are an example of how a centre should be run," said delegate Sandra Camara.

The KPMG report said the closures would save the region \$6.8 million annually.

"Anyone who dares to try to hide behind that report will find themselves fully exposed. The fact that this vote is before you as far from an election cycle is not a coincidence," said delegate Michael O'Connor.

The vote was 12-3 in favour of closing the centres. Councillors Berry Vrbancovic, Tom Galloway, and Sandy Shantz voted against the move.

Council says while the closures will hurt some, it will create a better child care system overall.

"I realize the closures, the measure recommended by KPMG were as a cost cutting measure, but saving money isn't the recommendation, and it certainly isn't my motivation, my motivation is fairness," said councillor Elizabeth Clarke.

The region operates five centres, but oversees 14,000 child care spaces provided by 67 operators. The report said closing the regionally operated centres could help reinvest money into the private daycare system.

Closing the centres will eliminate 207 spaces, but officials said they could create 350 to 750 spaces with the savings.

Edith MacIntosh, Christopher Children Centre, Cambridge Centre and Kinsmen Centre will all close by mid-2021. The Elmira Children Centre will close in a year.

Region: Canada ^[3]

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