

Council asks consultant to find ways to mandate child-care spots in new developments ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

With the recently announced \$10-a-day daycare being celebrated by parents across Ontario, politicians at the local level are now tasked with figuring out how to make the concept a reality.

During Tuesday's (April 19) regular meeting of Collingwood council, Coun. Yvonne Hamlin put forward a motion directing the town's official-plan consultants to examine how the town could require residential and commercial developments coming to Collingwood to provide space for early learning and child-care programs moving forward.

On March 28, the province and federal governments announced the Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement to deliver \$10-a-day child care for Ontario families, and create 86,000 new licensed early learning and child care spaces in the province.

Hamlin said she put forward the motion as a way to determine how that initiative could be integrated at the local level. Part of the motion noted that local day-care spots are currently "exceedingly limited."

"It will be our job, as the municipality, to make sure there are spots for this daycare to happen. I don't know exactly how we can make that happen, but I know there are community benefits. We can require such things as daycare be included in community developments," she said.

"My motion is to ask our staff to have a look at the context of our official plan to make child care spaces available in our town," she said.

Coun. Steve Berman said he thought it would be a great avenue to consider, and inquired about the timing to chief executive officer Sonya Skinner.

"Is this something you can do if it's open-ended?" he asked.

Skinner said there wasn't much time or money left in the 2022 budget to be adding more to the official plan review at this point.

The official plan is the overall policy framework for how land is used in Collingwood and sets out the vision for the community over the next 20 years. The plan is the guide for managing where, when and how the town should grow.

The town retained Planning Partnership Inc. and Urban Metrics to do the work of the official plan review starting in 2019 and the first draft is expected to come before council within the next six weeks.

On Tuesday, Deputy Mayor Keith Hull pointed to his own personal experiences with child care.

"As someone who had child care, we were fortunate at the time to get a space and pay a reasonable rate. That certainly has changed," said Hull. "I'm glad you brought this forward and I'm interested to see what our experts say."

Hull noted that child care is a licensed process, and questioned how the municipality could marry that process to legislate someone building a commercial development to create space if they're not able to secure the licensing.

"I'm interested in finding local solutions to this very serious problem," he said.

Mayor Brian Saunderson noted that child care is typically handled through the County of Simcoe, which recently received \$48 million for implementing child care and early-years learning.

"It seems to me there is a fair bit of bandwidth and expertise at the county. It would be helpful for our staff/consultants to have access to that expertise when looking at ways we can create incentives for child care in our community," said Saunderson.

"It's an important issue," he said.

Hamlin agreed to add consultation with the County of Simcoe to council's instructions for the consultant.

On Tuesday (April 19) night, council voted 7-1 in favour of passing the motion, with Coun. Mariane McLeod opposed. Coun. Bob Madigan was absent from the meeting.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: child care expansion ^[4]

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