

Saint John, N.B. looking for ways to open childcare spaces to 'hundreds'

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Excerpts

The City of Saint John is set to look for ways to tackle an ongoing daycare shortage in the city.

Presented at Saint John Common Council, Coun. Barry Ogden and Joanna Killen are hoping to find ways the city can work with developers and other city stakeholders to find ways to open new spaces in the city.

Councillors believe it will help boost immigration to the city by having spaces for families to place their children.

In an interview with Global News on Monday, Killen said she's been hearing from daycare operators in the city, and she said the list is believed to be "hundreds."

"If we want our city to grow, we need to give that to as many people as possible."

"As the pandemic has proven, people have had babies, and people are starting to get back in the workforce; things have changed, so we have to make sure there's enough spots for everyone there."

Killen believes that the city doesn't have an adequate number of childcare spaces to accommodate the growing population. She stated during Tuesday's Common Council Meeting that finding initiatives and programs could entice residents to open more spaces in the Port City.

"Maybe someone wants to expand their daycare and they didn't realize the market is like this," said Ogden.

"We do have a lot of old buildings, old churches, old schools that are possibilities. People can even expand their daycare."

He noted that availing other properties owned by the province could open that door to new development. He's hoping the city can use some of its vacant or soon-to-be vacant buildings for potential daycare locations.

The move by council came on the heels of an emotional public hearing two weeks prior that saw multiple residents come to council trying to approve a daycare being rezoned from a building that was up for development.

Ogden told Global News that this is a part of residents bringing the need forward, and the city is "jumping on it."

The passed motion will go to the growth committee, which will report back to the council at a later date.

Region: [New Brunswick](#) [3]

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[space creation](#) [5]

[child care expansion](#) [6]

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