

City can cut 2,000 child care spots, merge fire and EMS to save money: report ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Toronto could save money by eliminating 2,000 city-funded child-care spaces, ceasing to operate nine long-term care homes and 57 daycares, and merging its fire service with its paramedic service, says the third report on city services from the consulting firm KPMG.

The first two reports mostly suggested smaller cost-cutting changes, but even those were greeted cautiously by allies of Mayor Rob Ford. Any proposal to cut child care or restructure the city's emergency response system is sure to be politically controversial; the report says both ideas are high-risk and that both face major barriers to implementation.

According to KPMG, 87 per cent of the activities overseen by council's community development and recreation committee are "mandatory or essential." The other 13 per cent, the report says, can be eliminated or phased out.

The city subsidizes 24,000 child-care spaces. The province contributes money for 22,000. The report says the other 2,000 could be phased out. But such a move, the report says, would make "work and/or school less accessible to some parents" and could force more people to seek welfare. Its authors note that there is already a 19,000-person waiting list for subsidized spaces.

More than 90 per cent of the city's daycare centres are run by companies or non-profits, though most receive government funding. The 57 daycares directly operated by the city operate at a significantly higher cost than the others, the report says, because they have more staff. These daycares could be contracted out, the report says.

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