

Demand for Coronation Park services remains high, according to county data ^[1]

Author: Simpson, Barbara

Source: Sarnia Observer ^[2]

Format: Article

Publication Date: 18 Aug 2014

EXCERPTS

A much-anticipated pitch to the province for additional funding to help save Coronation Park Day Nursery has come up empty, says Lambton County Warden Todd Case.

A delegation of county officials met with Education Minister Liz Sandals Monday morning to discuss the \$1.1-million funding shortfall facing the Sarnia day-care centre this year.

While the Ontario government has provided a \$5-million transitional fund to help communities adjust to its new day-care funding formula, Case said the county delegation wanted to check with Sandals about any potential new increases.

She said "there was no new funding or anything else new being considered at this time," Case said Monday afternoon. "But at the end of the day, I thought it was important, as warden of the county, that I ask that question, being that we are where we are with the Coronation day-care situation."

County council is expected to discuss the future of the Oak Avenue centre at its Sept. 3 meeting. In early June, councillors decided to hold off on any decision-making until after the Ontario election.

Case wouldn't speculate on whether council would vote in favour of shuttering the centre.

"I, for one, am going to also listen and probably take part in the debate on the floor," he said. "I usually don't when I chair a meeting, but I definitely will have my say on this one as well ... I don't think there's anyone that sits around that shoehorn at county council that likes the idea of closing a day care, that's for sure."

But Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley said the finger shouldn't be pointed at the provincial government, which provided transitional funding.

Senior county staff delivered a single-option plan proposing closure of the centre with no period for public engagement, he noted.

"We could take two years on a tree bylaw that went no place and tried to engage the public," he said. "We can certainly take this time with a service that relates to children..."

When asked why senior county staff haven't provided an option besides closure, Case said a "very thorough" discussion has happened about the day-care centre.

"Mayor Bradley is welcome to his opinion," he said. "Every county councillor has one and I'm not going to get into that today. I think county staff has brought back different reports to council - council has asked for different things - and I'll leave that for county council to question in September at our meeting."

Bradley also met with Sandals in London on the future of Coronation Park during her visit to the Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO) conference Monday.

He said her message was clear: the future of the day care has to be resolved locally with the assistance of the transitional funding.

He suggested Lambton County should be following Sault Ste. Marie's lead, engaging the community and taking the time to make sure taxpayers aren't overburdened.

Bradley also met with senior Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) officials to discuss the state of publicly funded child care in Ontario.

In Sault Ste. Marie, a review committee has been struck to review its three municipal day-care centres following the change to the province's funding formula.

Members of that committee include a pair of council members, the city's manager of child-care services, two workers and a CUPE executive member.

"Some communities like Sault Ste. Marie and Kingston are trying to keep (municipal day-care centres) in place and find solutions, whereas others are shutting it down," Bradley said. "But the others who shut it down did it with a lot of public discussion and true public

engagement, not just saying, 'You can come to a public council meeting.'"

Use of Coronation Park Day Nursery remained high this spring, according to a senior county staff report released Friday.

The day care's infant room saw a 100% occupancy rate thanks to the county's five-day registration policy. The main day-care site saw an overall occupancy rate of 82% from April to June, with the after-school programs seeing an overall occupancy rate of 66% at Queen Elizabeth and 75% at Holy Trinity.

- Read online at Sarnia Observer ^[2]

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: funding ^[4]

public management ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/08/demand-coronation-park-services-remains-high-according-county-data>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/08/demand-coronation-park-services-remains-high-according-county-data> ^[2]

<https://www.theobserver.ca/2014/08/18/demand-for-coronation-park-services-remains-high-according-to-county-data> ^[3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> ^[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> ^[5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8166>