

# Largest layoff in history of County of Lambton <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley is calling for an audit of Lambton County's entire social services division in the wake of county council's decision to shutter Coronation Park Day Nursery.

"I think from this process, there are some significant issues (in the division)," Bradley said, pointing to "supervision, reporting and accountability" concerns following Wednesday's heated debate over the future of the Sarnia day care.

County council narrowly voted 20-17 in favour of closing the 42-year-old Oak Avenue day care effective Nov. 28.

Fifty infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers will be displaced by the closure.

However, local school boards have already committed to finding another provider for before-and-after-school programming for 73 Holy Trinity and Queen Elizabeth II students.

A total of 40 full and part-time workers will also be impacted by the closure.

Bradley warned fellow county councillors the closure of the day care - now prompting the largest layoff in the county's history - will have ramifications for years to come in the community.

Unionized Coronation Park workers will now start bumping other county workers through their collective agreement, he noted. The closure will also colour discussions around other county-run services, such as its three long-term care homes.

"If I was in the [county-run] old age homes, I'd be fearful," Bradley said. "We only need one (under provincial guidelines)."

Fellow city representative Coun. Anne Marie Gillis joined Bradley Wednesday in calling out senior county staff for the lack of public consultation and lack of effort to find other solutions to address the projected \$1.1-million deficit facing the day care this year.

Bradley tried unsuccessfully to have a decision on the day care tabled to allow for a community committee to be formed and review other options besides closure.

But Deputy Lambton Shores Mayor Elizabeth Davis-Dagg said the workers' union - the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) -- has made it "clear" that it isn't willing to be at the table to discuss wages, the largest expense of the day-care centre.

"It's pretty obvious this will be a futile exercise," she said of the idea of a committee.

But CUPE national representative Brian Humphrey disputed this account, suggesting union officials were only consulted for a short period of time by senior county staff.

"We made them fully aware that pay equity was an issue for us," he said. "It's a statute that we can't get around and yet they called us out on the floor [of county council chambers]."

CUPE Local 2926 could have found "creative ways" to help the county to deal with costs during its collective bargaining slated for later this year, Humphrey noted.

However, Deputy Warden Bev MacDougall said any more delays in a decision over the day care would just "prolong the suffering."

Ontario Education Minister Liz Sandals has made it "very clear" the county will not receive any additional child-care funding, MacDougall noted. In the meantime, 64 other local day-care centres could benefit from the \$5-million pot of transitional funding.

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Read online at The Observer <sup>[2]</sup>

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

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## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/09/largest-layoff-history-county-lambton> [2]

<https://www.theobserver.ca/2014/09/03/largest-layoff-in-history-of-county-of-lambton> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [4]

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