

# Council decides to shutter Sudbury daycare centre <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

The city-run daycare will close.

Council was undeterred by the presence of two dozen daycare workers and supporters - most sporting bright pink T-shirts - who filled the public gallery at Tuesday's meeting.

Along with a large group of volunteer and professional firefighters, it was standing-room-only in the council chambers for much of the four-hour meeting.

Lengthy discussions and emotional arguments did little to sway council. In the end, they voted 11-2 to defeat a motion Ward 6 Coun. Rene Lapierre introduced, which would have kept the junior citizens daycare open at least through mid-May.

Ward 2 Coun. Michael Vagnini was the only other member of council to side with Lapierre.

Ward 5 Coun. Robert Kirwan initially appeared to favour maintaining the city-run facility, noting that subsidized daycare means better accessibility, especially for lower-income families.

While securing a spot is not a concern, Ron Henderson, director of citizen services, admitted some families would need to travel - sometimes by public transit - to centres throughout the city and potentially far from home, in order to find a replacement spot.

Kirwan noted, somewhat in jest, that could end up costing families as much as the subsidized daycare. But in the end, he voted to shutter the city-run daycare.

Because the city subsidizes the service \$45 per day per child, it results in a two-tiered system, Kirwan contended.

Lapierre introduced the motion in the hopes of maintaining French-language daycare services and accommodating shift workers, especially in light of council's December decision to deregulate store hours.

He was also concerned that closing the facility would mean longer wait lists.

The city proposed shuttering the daycare as a cost-saving measure in August 2014 after losing \$4.6 million in provincial funding.

Henderson was confident that all children who currently attend the city-run daycare would find spaces at other downtown facilities. He also noted there is a French-language replacement lined up to receive the young ones.

Ward 10 Coun. Fern Cormier advised against "kicking the can down the road" and giving false hope to employees, who would eventually be laid off or transferred to another department.

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

**Tags:** accessibility <sup>[4]</sup>

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