

Daycare spaces in Edmonton a concern ^[1]

Author: Lazzarino, Dave

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EXCERPTS

It may be no surprise to parents working in Edmonton's downtown that daycares are hard to come by. The city's executive committee discussed options Tuesday that could change that.

A report to committee showed a lack of spaces city-wide but a particular need in the downtown.

Coun. Scott McKeen said he's heard from residents in his ward about experiences moving to the city's downtown for its walkability and then having to drive "to kingdom come" to bring their kids to daycare.

"So you move downtown and you want a more walkable lifestyle ... and there's just not enough spaces," said McKeen.

The committee approved a motion that would work with stakeholders to change the city's policy around numbers of employees in the area of a daycare as well as a preference for not-for-profit providers, affordable care and quality that meets the aims of early childhood education.

The motion also said to include daycare in the ongoing Big City Charter conversation and draft some zoning bylaw amendments to improve day care availability.

"The need for it in terms of vulnerable populations is way higher in the heart of Edmonton," said Mayor Don Iveson in support of making daycare a charter element.

McKeen believes even more needs to be done.

"I'm not actually all that happy with the motion," he said, adding more creativity has to be applied to the issue when speaking with large downtown businesses and developers to convince them that daycare would be good for the bottom line as well.

"What do building owners need? Some of them might just not even realize the demand and might see it as a way to sell space in the buildings. There might be an economic advantage or a market advantage to residential developers if they put day care in their buildings," he said.

The issue will come back before council in September.

-reprinted from Edmonton Sun

Region: Alberta ^[3]

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