

Region run daycare centres should close, consultant recommends ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The five daycare centres operated by the Region of Waterloo should close, consulting firm KPMG says.

KPMG was hired by the region to examine its entire operations and suggest areas the upper-tier government could get better value for its money.

According to Regional Chair Ken Seiling, they didn't find a whole lot to suggest cutting.

"They found a very well-run organization - very well-managed," he said in an interview.

One notable exception is the region-run daycare centres.

By closing them, the KPMG report says, the region could save \$2.5 million - and put that money toward subsidizing more spaces in private sector daycares.

Parents who have children at the public daycares don't like the sounds of that.

"We really value our centre, and we really value the care we have here," said John Peters, whose son attends the Edith MacIntosh Children's Centre in Kitchener.

Stephen Furmaniuk, who has a son at the same facility, says he's worried about any talk of closing Edith MacIntosh due to a lack of space elsewhere in the local daycare system.

"It's very difficult to access daycare," he said.

"I don't know if my wife and I are both going to be able to work."

Peters says KPMG has made the same recommendation when reviewing the services in other Ontario municipalities - only for the municipalities to find that the private sector isn't creating new spaces to fill the void.

"The closure of spaces has left hundreds of families without childcare spaces," he said.

Also not wanting to see region-run daycares closed is Jan Richards.

As president of CUPE Local 1883, which represents employees of the daycares, she estimates that 65 positions could be lost if the daycares were to close.

Those positions could theoretically be made up for elsewhere in the system, she says - but she doesn't see any reason to tinker with the current setup.

"It's not just dollars and cents. It's what you're giving back to the community as well," she said.

Seiling says the region wants to hear from the public before making a decision on the future of its daycare centres or any other recommendations in the KPMG report.

Decisions on those issues are expected in October.

Aside from Edith MacIntosh, daycares potentially affected include the Kinsmen Children's Centre, Cambridge Children's Centre, Elmira Children's Centre and Christopher Children's Centre.

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