

Ottawa braces for \$2.2M childcare subsidy shortfall ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Ottawa is bracing for a “gathering storm” in childcare services, as the city grapples with a \$2.2 million funding shortfall this year.

Those were the words Coun. Diane Deans, chair of the community and protective services, used to describe the city’s child care services during committee on Thursday.

City staff were expecting a \$1.2-million provincial funding boost for childcare fee subsidy this year. Instead, that pool was cut by \$1 million. The resulting \$2.2 million in pressures means there will be 260 fewer subsidized spaces and an increase in the fee subsidy waitlist to over 1,200 people, according to a city report.

Staff are proposing the city use \$5.7 million from reserve funds to ease that budget shortfall and cover another \$3.5 million in emergency bridge funding as childcare centres transition to a new provincial licensing model.

These provincial changes may have an impact on Beausoleil, a francophone daycare centre in Lowertown.

The facility closed temporarily for repairs last summer. Now parents are hearing that it may not re-open this fall as a municipally run centre. Ottawa Community Housing (OCH), which runs that building, will issue an expression of interest for that site to run a francophone daycare, said Aaron Burry, general manager of community and social services.

“We don’t actually have a lease on the space and, from what we do know from the province, it will be a brand-new license for that particular facility, which will bring some additional costs.”

Rideau-Vanier Coun. Mathieu Fleury said he intends to see a francophone daycare re-open in that space, whether it’s run by the city, or a private or not-for-profit group.

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