

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
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Dear Councillor,

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care to urge Sault Ste. Marie City Councillors to vote to continue support for Sault Ste. Marie's municipal child care centres.

I had the opportunity to visit Sault Ste. Marie in October and toured several local child care programs. I was impressed with the dedicated early childhood educators and Sault College ECE students that I met throughout the community. Our first tour was of Jessie Irving Children's Centre and I was immediately struck by the high level of care, innovation and professionalism of the staff. These are programs and employees that Sault Ste. Marie ought to be celebrating.

I'm sure you have heard from local parents and early childhood educators about the importance of these centres to Sault Ste. Marie families. I had the chance to host a Sault Ste. Marie child care community meet-up at Café Natura when I was in town, attended by folks from both public and non-profit programs. It was inspiring to see so many dedicated women, full of civic pride, talking about the importance of these municipal centres. It was wonderful to see the "unity in the community" that these vital programs inspired.

In reviewing and debating this decision you may have heard that, in recent years, some other municipalities have voted to close their child care centres. However, there is evidence that the tide is turning away from this direction. In a recent decision, the Region of Waterloo voted 14-1 to continue support for regional children's centres. And the rationale was very clear to Waterloo councillors: providing high quality child care programs makes your region a supportive place for families, an area that attracts families to move to your region, and a site of innovation.

It is also important to consider likely future development in early childhood education and care. With a new federal government that has committed to pursuing a national child care framework, now would be the wrong time to "get out of the game" of child care provision. If the federal and provincial governments begin to roll out new investments in child care, the municipality will want to be able to be at the table, to maintain a role in public planning of child care, and these centres allow you to do just that.

Child care services are a key part of our municipal infrastructure in Ontario – providing much needed support to working parents, and nurturing care and education to our children. Every municipality ought do its utmost to be a careful steward of these vital programs.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is comprised of hundreds of child care centres, parents, grandparents, ECEs, trade unionists and concerned citizens – most importantly we are people who care about child care. We urge the City of Sault Ste. Marie to work ensure that the City's wonderful, high quality child care programs can continue to provide much needed benefits to the next generation of local families. I trust you will make the right decision.

Warm regards,

Carolyn Ferns

Public Policy and Government Relations Coordinator

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care