



### *Windsor's City Council's Child Care Decision*

# Parents Want Quality Child Care

## **The City Has Voted To Shut Down All Its Public Child Care Centres**

On Feb. 1, hundreds of parents and child care supporters went to a City Council meeting to urge Council not to shut down its seven public child care centres plus two satellites. Despite two public opinion polls that voted 2 to 1 for keeping the programs open, and limited information about the impacts of closure, City Council voted 5 to 3 to slam the doors shut on September 1, 2010.

Public child care programs have been the foundation of Windsor's child care services for decades. They have led the way in providing high quality, flexible child care, accommodating special needs children, and contributing to early childhood education training.

## **Parents Want Quality Child Care**

A 2005 report, based on extensive consultations, recommended that the city's public centres should be monitored and retained. There was no such consultation process for the 2010 staff report, which only discusses the costs of running the public centres.

The current staff report says a great deal about the high quality of child care provided by the city's public centres. But there is nothing about the quality of the "alternative choices" that parents will be shifted to. The majority of these alternatives are for-profit centres and many of them are chain operations. The City made no assessment of whether they are equivalent to public centres in quality, access, wages, credentials, and fees.

## **For-Profit Child Care Is Lower Quality Child Care**

Whether child care is beneficial to children or not absolutely depends on its quality. Research shows that for-profit child care is likely to offer the lowest quality care.

Operating child care as a business to make a profit is not the way to deliver the quality that benefits children. A recent (2008) Ontario study by economist Gordon Cleveland using a large Toronto database found that the poorest quality centres were the for-profits; the non-profit programs were better, while the public centres scored best on the quality criteria.

Another quote: this time from a UK child care expert writing in a European Union report, summing up the international research: "Private for-profit ECEC services are very variable but tend to offer the

lowest quality services in all countries where they have been investigated.” Is this what Windsor’s parents want for their children?

This evidence has convinced five Ontario municipalities - Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury, Peel and Kenora - to begin limiting funds to for-profits in the last few years.

**Why Does The Cost Of Child Care Affect The Quality?**

Generally, 80-85% of a child care program’s budget goes to child care worker’s wages and benefits because child care is a labour intensive sector. For-profit child care programs pay lower salaries. The research shows that as a result, for-profit centres are less likely to attract and retain well-qualified staff. Staff turnover rates are higher. Higher wages and better working conditions are predictors of higher quality care.

**Do City Child Care Staff Get Higher Wages?**

All child care workers deserve to be paid a fair wage. City child care programs have historically set the benchmark for wages in Windsor and are established as the pay equity comparator for non-profit and for-profit child care programs. Closing public centres and eliminating properly paid Early Childhood Educator (ECE) positions suggests that child care staff don’t deserve to be fairly paid for the important work that they do. In fact, the problem is that wages at non-profit and for-profit centres are generally too low, not that public staff’s wages are too high.

**What Can Public Child Care Supporters Do?**

Parents can call their MPP and tell them the province needs to release child care stabilization funds immediately. Call Service Ontario at 1-800-267-8097 to find out who is your MPP.

<p><b>MPP Dwight-Duncan</b> Windsor-Tecumseh Riding 2825 Lauzon Parkway, Suite #211, Windsor, ON, N8T 3H5 Phone: (519) 251-5199 Fax: (519) 251-5299</p>	<p><b>MPP Sandra Pupatello</b> Windsor West Riding 1368 Ouellette Avenue, Windsor, ON, N8X 1J9 Phone: (519) 977-7191 Fax: (519) 977-7029</p>
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Email a letter to the editor [letters@thestar.canwest.com](mailto:letters@thestar.canwest.com), or fax it to 519-255-5515, or mail it to: Windsor Star, Letters to the Editor, 167 Ferry Street, Windsor, Ontario, N9A 4M5. One or two paragraph letters are more likely to be published. Be sure to include your name and phone number, so the Star can contact you.

Five councillors voted to close our city child care centres: Councillors Dave Brister, Jo-Anne Gignac, Fulvio Valentini, Drew Dilken and Mayor Eddie Francis. Tell them to reverse their decision. Call 311 to find out who is your city councillor:

To receive Windsor child care campaign updates, send us an email at [info@childcareontario.org](mailto:info@childcareontario.org)