

Huron County uses leftover funds to cover child-care costs for a month ^[1]

It's the best way to help as many people as possible, says Children's Services manager

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EXCERPTS

Huron County is covering a quarter of a million dollars in licensed child-care fees for the month of October, giving parents some much-needed room to breathe during the community's pandemic recovery.

Cheryl Patience, manager of Children's Services and Ontario Works for Huron County, said the additional funding comes from Ontario's Ministry of Education, as well as the federal government. After putting dollars towards expansion and accessibility projects, she said sending the remainder to parents is the best way to help as many people as possible.

"We are hearing from families, some have gone through layoffs and some, you know, whose work was impacted when school was closed. With some of the childcare closures, they had to leave work or come up with alternate ways to find care," Patience told Chris dela Torre on CBC's Afternoon Drive.

"Certainly there's additional costs for parents, come fall with school costs and sports and all those things that are starting up again. So I just figured it's a good time in the fall to do that."

Any parent whose child is currently enrolled in licensed care within Huron County will receive the funding without having to apply. Instead, their fees will be invoiced to Huron County Children's Services, which will pay their childcare centre directly.

The costs of child-care vary from part-time to full-time, and between centres. Patience said typically, full-time care per child is approximately \$1,000 a month.

A positive response from 'every player involved'

Bonnie Hastings, director of the Goderich Municipal Child-care Centre, said in general, the county offers a good subsidy program for low-income families.

However, the extra help is more than welcome as parents grapple with ongoing COVID-related uncertainties.

"We've had a great response from the centre itself, and from parents after having obviously a very tough year and childcare still operating through most of COVID. We have had a very positive response from every player that's been involved," Hastings said.

"There was lots of talk of supporting child-care in the past, but actually seeing some action I think was really appreciated from parents."

Hastings added that in light of the support for parents, child-care centres are still struggling to find enough staff to meet the needs of working families.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

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