

Special-needs kids' child care at risk [CA] ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

Children with special needs are the forgotten casualties in the uncertainty created by the Conservative government's pledge to cancel the child-care agreement between Queen's Park and the former Liberal government, say child welfare advocates.

"It's a sad situation that is looking very dark," says Linda Nagle, executive director of Children First, which provides services to children, from birth to six years old, with special needs in Windsor and Essex County.

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About \$1 million a year until 2010 had been earmarked for Children First, which was dedicating a large chunk of that money to easing a waiting list of 330 children needing services such as speech pathology, physical and occupational therapy, psychology and social work.

In anticipation of the funding, the agency, which has a staff of 80, was in the process of expanding staff as well as its office space. It was also expecting to provide services to 20 per cent of the children occupying the 660 spaces. But it's unlikely much of that plan will proceed in light of the Stephen Harper government's refusal to continue funding the federal-provincial deal.

"This is very disheartening. We really believed the government was finally recognizing all children need support," says Nagle. "If funding is not going to be there, we have to review all our options."

...

- reprinted from the Windsor Star

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