

# Full-day kindergarten program disrupts childcare funding <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Ottawa child-care centres have asked the city for \$3.4 million worth of aid to help them adjust to the province's new all-day learning program coming into effect in September.

The problem: The province is giving the city a little less than \$600,000 in funding.

That's why city council's community and protective services committee is recommending that council approve spending as much of the \$1 million set aside in this year's budget as is necessary to deal with the shortfall.

It's the latest development in what has been a chaotic move to all-day learning that starts this September for 15 per cent of Ontario's four- and five-year-olds.

"The whole system is in choppy water," said Councillor Diane Deans, who is chairwoman of the committee, which oversees city-run daycares and child-care subsidies for parents who qualify.

"Change is never easy, especially when there's not a lot of information that is forthcoming in a timely fashion," she said, adding that she generally supports the all-day learning program.

But "there's a lot of grey area for the city in trying to be a partner in implementing this."

The issue for existing centres is two-fold.

First, the city oversees the program but doesn't supply all the money. The province will be moving all its subsidized child-care programs for school-age children out of day cares and into the school system. That means any provincial subsidies leave the existing centres and follow the children to the new school-run system. (It's still unclear whether the portion of child care subsidies the city pays stay with day-care centres or not.)

Second, because the Ontario government will be transferring all of its resources to its own all-day-learning program for children aged 4 to 10 over the next five years, that leaves day cares to cater to children under four.

But caring for infants and toddlers is much more expensive -- they require more care and more equipment, among other things.

"Now all of a sudden, (the province) has taken the cheapest spots, taken the subsidies and they're leaving the child care system without stabilization funding," said Deans.

Now her committee is trying to figure out how to close the gap.

The 2010 budget includes a one-time allocation of \$1 million "to make sure day cares aren't adversely affected" during the implementation of the Ontario government's new education program, said Deans.

In a report to the committee tabled earlier this week, city staff presented a plan for using up to \$550,000 of that fund in 2010. But, the report stated, "need for stabilization funding in the Ottawa child care community far exceeds the available funds allocated by the province."

So committee told staff to spend "what it takes this year to stabilize the system," even if it's the whole \$1 million, said Deans.

Full city council, which is scheduled to meet July 14, will also discuss pressuring the provincial government to shorten its \$53-million funding program from a 10-year timeline to five years.

-reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** funding <sup>[3]</sup>

demand <sup>[4]</sup>

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