

City could fund retraining of laid off childcare workers ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

City and school board officials are in discussions about the city paying to help train laid off municipal child care workers hired to work in schools.

Nine city daycare centres close in September at the same time the province begins phasing in its full-day kindergarten program, creating jobs for ECE workers.

Sixty-two full-time ECE workers received layoff notices from the city in May.

"We have talked in generalities about requirement for some retraining dollars for our staff should they get hired," said Ronna Warsh, city community development and health commissioner.

She said the discussions are preliminary and it's unknown how much funding the city would be able to offer.

"All the applicants to the school boards are going to be treated equally," Warsh said.

All ECE workers hired to work with teachers in kindergarten classrooms will need training because they'll be part of a new program, said Colleen Norris, manager of human resources and policy development at the Catholic school board.

She said the board is hiring 16 full-time ECE workers out of more than 250 applicants.

"We're looking at the best applicants and there are some good City of Windsor people out there," Norris said.

The full-day kindergarten program will be phased in this fall at 18 local schools. In September 2011, another nine local schools will pick up the program, which is to be fully phased in by 2015-16.

While the Catholic board will hire new workers for the kindergarten expansion, the public board has its own pool of ECE workers to draw upon.

Their positions were eliminated years ago but because of recall rights most of the new full-time jobs were taken by those employees, said Kristie Cronin, co-ordinator of human resources with the public board.

But there are still support staff supply jobs that need to be filled and City of Windsor employees were automatically given an interview after applying, Cronin said.

"Anyone we received from the city we are granting an interview," she said.

Cronin said there were 10 to 15 applications from city employees. The school board is looking to fill about 50 supply positions.

Jean Fox, president of CUPE Local 543, said the possibility is "great news."

"Certainly if they hire some of them that would eliminate a few people having to bump into other positions," said Fox, who represents the city's daycare workers.

"They love what they do - that's what they're trained to do and that's what they want to do."

Warsh said the city has been meeting with school officials since the decision was made to close the daycare centres.

"For staff that wanted to work for the school board, or consider applying for the school board, we have met with their HR directors and ensured that their resumes got over," Warsh said.

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-reprinted from the Windsor Star

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