

Child-care subsidies in demand ^[1]

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Source: Waterloo Record

Format: Article

Publication Date: 10 Nov 2011

EXCERPTS:

A waiting list of families seeking subsidies to offset child-care expenses will continue to grow if Waterloo Region does not receive an additional \$2 million from the province, regional officials say.

"I find it very disturbing," said Coun. Jane Mitchell of Waterloo.

On Tuesday, Nancy Dickieson, regional director of children's services, told regional councillors that 385 children are currently on the waiting list.

Councillors agreed to ask the province for an extra \$2 million which would cover the cost of subsidies for 400 children.

Last year, the province denied the region's request for an additional \$3.5 million for child-care subsidies and related costs.

Mitchell said it breaks her heart when she hears from families who have had to go on welfare because they couldn't get subsidized daycare from the region to enable them to work or go back to school.

In August 2010, the region established a waiting list for subsidies because the demand exceeded the budgeted 2,700 children a month and resulted in a deficit. The last time the region had a waiting list for subsidized day care was 1995.

Today, the demand for fee subsidies remains at about 3,000 children a month.

And last February, the region decided that family income would be the determining factor in getting this assistance, with families earning less than \$20,000 receiving higher priority than families who earn more than \$60,000. Children with special needs receive top priority.

Dickieson told councillors that so far this year, no families earning more than \$20,000 a year were taken off the list.

The region's budget for subsidized child care is \$14 million, of which regional taxpayers pay \$2 million. The rest is funded by the province.

-reprinted from the Waterloo Record

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