

Daycare subsidies dry up in Windsor ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Parents in Windsor-Essex who need a subsidy to send kids to daycare may be disappointed.

For the first time in 13 years, there is a waiting list for subsidized daycare spots in the city. The list is 600 spots long for both Windsor and the county.

Conversely, there are open spots, but people simply can't afford them.

Approximately 4,000 children enjoy subsidized daycares spots in Windsor-Essex.

Vicki Noland's twin daughters occupy two of those spots now. She doesn't know what she'll do if she gets cut from subsidies, which is a real possibility given her family's income.

Noland figures she will be cut from subsidy next year because she and her husband have two incomes.

She doesn't think that's an accurate assessment of income.

"It's not enough. My daycare is double the amount of my mortgage payment. So do the math. it doesn't work out.," Noland said.

Noland has been fretting day care for a while.

"It's nerve wracking," Noland said of heading back to work and trying to find daycare. "It was very worrisome when it was time to come back to work. Would I be working for free? I travel in to the city from the county and I had to factor in gas money."

Diane Pettinato from ABC Day Nursery in Windsor says this is a common story amongst parents. They don't know if they'll have subsidies for September.

Enrolment is already down at the nursery this summer. That, in turn, leaves staff of 24 uncertain of their future.

"Staff that have been here two years, they are concerned about whether they'll be working full time, or if they'd be laid off. We just don't know," Pettinato said.

When the city-run daycares closed their doors in 2010, it freed up extra subsidy money. But that well has run dry.

Debbie Cercone, with the City of Windsor, said the waiting list grew because more people are going back to school or to work. People are also eligible for higher subsidies than before because their wages are lower.

"So we have to bridge the gap between the actual cost of care and what they can afford through subsidies. Which puts a tap onto our budget," Cercone said.

Cercone with the city encourages parents to stay on the waiting list because kids transfer over to full-time kindergarten.

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