

City seeks labour study into shortage of educators ^[1]

Author: O'Brien, Jennifer

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EXCERPTS:

Despite Ontario's focus on early childhood education - being rolled out to every public school in the province - London's childcare sector is suffering an acute labour shortage, city staff say.

To find out why there's a shortage of early childhood educators (ECEs), especially in a city running Canada's highest metro jobless rate, politicians on London's community and protective services committee will be asked to approve a labour market survey Monday.

The answer is a no-brainer, said Coun. Joni Baechler.

First off, the province will pick up the cost of the \$73,000 study, said Baechler. And besides, she argues it's essential to tackle the problem.

"The money is available and we've got a problem. Not just a little problem, an acute problem and one that has a domino effect," she said. "If you can't retain early childhood education, you've got some parents that can't keep their employment, which has an impact . . ."

The shortage isn't new. The lack of enough qualified early childhood educators in Ontario has only grown since schools began adopting full-day kindergarten programs in recent years.

On its website, the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare says the industry's low wages have made it undesirable for qualified workers.

"Many early childhood educators are underpaid and undervalued. . . Fair pay and benefits (like pensions) will ensure that ECEs are able to make enough money to support their own families . . ." the coalition says, citing statistics that 41% of trained ECEs are working in other fields.

While full-day kindergarten has opened up more jobs for ECEs, it often means split shifts that are difficult to juggle.

In London, the shortage is especially bad for the Francophone and aboriginal communities, said Lynne Livingstone, the city's director of neighbourhood, children and fire services.

But it is also bad across the board, she said.

"We have regular meetings with the childcare sector a couple of times a year, and one of the things we are hearing is it is getting harder and harder to recruit," she said.

"The study will give us a real sense of the demand we are seeing in our community, what the issues are and what strategies we can put in place."

The proposed study

Ontario government-approved and funded for \$73,000

City expected to contribute staff time

Goal is to understand:

Demand for early childhood educators (ECEs) in London over next five years

Expected supply of ECEs

Why people choose to work - or not - in the field

Long-term solutions to solve the shortage

- reprinted from the London Free Press

Region: Ontario ^[2]

Tags: staff ^[3]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/04/city-seeks-labour-study-shortage-educators> [2]
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/staff>