

Lambton College's Early Childhood Education Centre set to close by July, 2014 ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Some 40 years after it began, Lambton College's on-campus daycare program is closing its doors.

Because of a growing \$186,000 deficit, the college is ceasing operations at its Early Childhood Education Centre as of July, 2014, said spokesperson Cindy Buchanan.

"After careful consideration the college has decided that the continued operation of the centre is not financially sustainable," Buchanan said.

There are 21 jobs - eight full-time - affected, she said, noting college management and representatives with Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) Local 124 will be looking at ways to "minimize the impact," including finding other jobs for staffers at the college where possible.

"The college certainly acknowledges and recognizes the early childhood education centre staff and management who have provided wonderful caring service to Sarnia-Lambton, as well as professional assistance to students," Buchanan said.

The centre, which started in the 1970s, Buchanan said, currently provides daycare services for 40 preschoolers, six infants and 10 toddlers.

The college plans to work with parents and other community daycare providers to find alternatives before the program closes in July, she said.

"It's our understanding that other childcare facilities in our community have vacancies," she said. "So we anticipate the closure will increase demand for their services and the community will not be underserved."

With the advent of full-day kindergarten in Ontario, there's been less daycare demand for four and five-year-olds, she said.

But, she said, there have been more parents enrolling infants and toddlers in the college program. That, she said, requires more staffing and costs more.

One staff member is required for every three infants (up to 18 months old), every five toddlers (18 months to 2.5 years), and every eight preschoolers (2.5 years to 5 years).

Lambton College is the 13th Ontario college to move to shutter its daycare program in recent years, Buchanan said.

The Ontario Early Years Centre, housed in the same building as the daycare program but run separately, will remain open, Buchanan said. The college's early childhood education worker program will also be unaffected by the closure.

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Region: Ontario ^[2]

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