

# Grey facing \$1M child care funding cut <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Langlois, Denis

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## EXCERPTS:

Grey County is bracing for a nearly \$1 million cut to its budget for child care programs.

Committee reports warn that a significant loss in provincial funding will impact programs and service delivery, but officials say \$2 million in mitigation funding from Queen's Park will allow the county to postpone changes for a few years and prepare a plan to deal with the reductions.

"Although the financial piece is a big hit to us and our child-care community, we are working collaboratively with members of that community to determine how best to manage this challenge that we're facing," Barb Fedy, the county's director of social services, said Thursday.

Grey spends about \$7 million a year on a variety of child care programs, including providing daycare fee subsidies for children in low-income households and with disabilities as well as direct operating grants and capital support for child care facilities.

The province announced in late 2012 that it would change the formula for disseminating money to municipalities for child care programs.

A new calculation is based on actual, up-to-date data for municipalities, such as child population, child poverty levels, welfare caseloads and cost of living.

As a result, the province's child care funding to the county has been slashed by about \$700,000 - from \$5.7 million in 2012 to \$5 million in 2013. A cost-sharing calculation between Grey and the province reduces the county's allocation by \$215,000, which will reduce the overall child care budget to about \$6 million.

About \$920,000 in mitigation funding was used to offset the funding loss this year, with another \$470,000 budgeted to be used in 2014.

About \$600,000 in those bridging funds will be left after next year.

Fedy said demographics are changing in Grey County. There are less elementary school-aged children in the area, due to fewer births over the years and the decision of some families to leave the area to find employment.

The final year of the province's full-day kindergarten rollout is slated to take place in 2014, meaning all four- and five-year-old children will be in school during the day, she said.

"The demand for child care is not as high as it once was," she said.

Grey County staff has been meeting with community partners, including private and home daycare providers, to prepare a work plan for transitioning to the new funding formula.

"We're hoping the impact won't be as bad with the (demographic) changes we're seeing," Wepler said.

The plan will be presented to the county's social services committee.

Warden Duncan McKinlay said council made a "conscious decision to not make hasty, reactionary changes" to child care programs and to use the mitigation funding to maintain services in the short-term.

Wepler said he expects the county will begin to implement changes in 2015.

Georgian Bluffs Deputy-mayor Dwight Burley, chairman of the Grey's social services committee, said county council will do "everything we possibly can" to reduce the impact on families.

"We're trying to deal with it as best we can," he said.

-reprinted from the Sun Times

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** funding <sup>[3]</sup>

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/13/12/grey-facing-1m-child-care-funding-cut> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding>