

City wants policy for aboriginal child care subsidies ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

City managers and departments are being asked to help an aboriginal childcare program in Scarborough survive.

The Native Child and Family Life Centre on Galloway Road was built with a care centre for 56 children from infancy to age six, and its staff can speak to them in Cree and Ojibway.

But in an interview in October, Kenn Richard, executive director of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto warned the program was in "extreme jeopardy."

The non-profit agency doesn't get money to pay for cultural instruction in the childcare, and aboriginal mothers have to qualify for subsidized spaces by joining a long general queue, said Richard, who wanted the city to have a separate aboriginal stream for subsidized spaces.

Richard, who also wanted a separate funding envelope for aboriginal culture in child care, said two other childcares run by the agency had closed and the remaining program on Galloway was "subsidizing the province and city to the tune of \$15,000 a month."

Members of Toronto council's executive committee were told this week that city officials were "putting solutions in place to stabilize" the program in Scarborough.

At the urging of Trinity-Spadina Councillor Mike Layton, co-chairperson of the city's aboriginal affairs committee, members of the executive asked the general manager of children's services to work on a plan "which could include the creation of an aboriginal criteria policy for childcare subsidies."

They also agreed other city officials should work with the provincial and federal governments "in developing a deficit reduction plan for the agency," and to report back when this was done.

Paul Ainslie, local councillor for the Galloway Road area, said he supports the recommendations and believes city staff are doing their best to help.

He suggested, however, the agency would have to change its program, perhaps opening spaces for the non-aboriginal community. T

he Galloway childcare was structured in large part to care for kindergarten-age children, and opened before a public school down the street introduced all-day kindergarten, drawing many of those children away, Ainslie said.

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Region: Ontario ^[2]

Tags: aboriginal ^[3]

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