

OCDSB scrambles to shore up \$200K daycare funding gap left by city ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board wants the city to reverse a decision to cut funding for board-run daycares while it continues to subsidize child care centres run by the Catholic board.

According to an OCDSB staff report, the city decided in January to change funding rules to make school boards ineligible for general operating funding, known as "GO funding." The funding helped daycare operators cover direct operating costs, pay equity and wage enhancement grants.

But according to the report, the Catholic board has continued to get that funding because a private entity runs its daycares, while the OCDSB runs its own

The decision represents a loss of \$200,000 in annual GO funding, according to board staff.

"We believe that in the interest of equity, we should have been eligible for it," said Mike Carson, the OCDSB's chief financial officer.

Approximately 130 children aged three months to four years attend the four licensed child-care centres operated by the OCDSB:

- 50 children at Rideau Child Care Centre operated out of Rideau High School.
- 50 children at Variety Child Care Centre operated out of Woodroffe High School.
- 16 children at Adult High School Child Care Centre operated out of Adult High School.
- 16 children at Banting Child Care Program at Frederick Banting High School.

The board says it's been in talks with the city to restore the funding, but if that doesn't happen the stakes could be high for the families who now depend on those daycares.

Board to review staffing, fees to address shortfall

According to a note to board members to be discussed at tonight's board meeting, "[OCDSB] staff is assessing how best to address the deficit which would include a review of fees charged and staffing levels, but they continue to liaise with City of Ottawa and Ministry of Education representatives in an effort to restore the funding."

The board doesn't want to have to shut the daycares as a result of the cut, Carson told CBC.

"We would hope that we could find another solution. Ultimately, we need to be in a position where we aren't subsidizing them with education dollars."

The board could also seek another entity to operate the daycares, as the Catholic board has done, Carson said.

"They provide an important service to the community, a service that is obviously required. We all know the availability of affordable licensed child care in this city continues to be a major concern, and we think it should be a normal part of our business."

The board is already facing tough choices as it struggles to implement a one per cent budget cut ordered by the province. Staff have suggested cuts to staffing and programs, and could recommend closing schools.

-reprinted from CBC News

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