

Riverview Boys and Girls club wants answers

OLIVIA ZOLLINO
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

The Boys and Girls Club of Riverview is asking the province why its funding needs are being ignored after money was announced for the Moncton club last week.

On Friday, the province announced a two-year grant of \$250,000 for the Boys and Girls Club of Moncton for its Raising the Grade program.

Lynda Carey, executive director of the Riverview club, said their program is also in jeopardy and is just as valuable to the students who use it.

"Our program is extremely vital to our organization and to the community here," she said.

Thirty clubs across Canada have the program, with three in New Brunswick: Moncton, Riverview and Fredericton. Each club was sponsored for five years by telecom giant Rogers.

At the end of the sponsorship, the clubs had hoped the province would take over funding the program.

Fredericton launched their program a year later than the other clubs and have another year left of sponsorship funding.

Carey said the program costs \$55,000 a year in Riverview - \$100,000 less than the Moncton club.

The clubs run their programs differently and the price difference stems from the fact that Riverview does not employ full-time teachers.

In Riverview, Carey said the program takes a three-pillar approach: academic support such as tutoring and mentorship, career discovery and hobby exploration.

The funding goes towards staff wages and costs associated with running the program.

Carey admits the program is smaller in size, serving 25 to 30 students last year versus 300 at the Moncton club. She said with some changes coming in September, they have 50 students expected to enroll.

Without the funding, the program would no longer be able to continue by the end of this year and two full-time employees would lose their jobs.

"We've been talking to the provincial government as well, and unfortunately, we're not getting a lot of attention," Carey said.

She said she's trying to give the situation the "benefit of the doubt."

In June, Carey said she received a letter from Brian Kenny, the provincial minister of Education and Early Childhood



Lynda Carey, executive director of the Riverview club, said if the club does not secure funding then their Raising the Grade program will be cut by the end of the year. PHOTO: OLIVIA ZOLLINO/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Development, stating the program coincided with the government's 10-year education plan.

In the letter, Carey said Kenny wrote that he wanted to see the club and program in person, but had yet to make any plans to do so.

In an emailed statement, Kenny said the government provided funding to Moncton's club with the intent that they will find a full-time sponsor again in the future.

"We agreed to provide temporary funding for a portion of the program on the condition that they fundraise the balance for the next two years with a goal of moving back to full private sector

sponsorship thereafter," he said. "The Riverview Boys and Girls Club has approached us with a similar request and we are certainly open to considering it. We have reached out to the club to get further details on what their needs are."

Thursday afternoon, Carey said she was sent a document by the Education Department to fill out and detail the Raising the Grade program's benefits.

Riverview MLA Bruce Fitch called the program a "winner."

"I saw the results first-hand during the annual general meeting when some of the youth involved got up and said what a different it made in their life," Fitch said. "Hopefully the government will see

fit to fund this as they did the Moncton club."

Fitch said he's offered advice to the club and is waiting for a decision by the government.

"It comes down to choices and \$55,000 is not a big number when you look at some of the amounts of money they've given in other projects."

While Carey said she's happy for the Moncton club, she added that she does not understand why the province does not see the same value in their program.

"I'm trying to get them to realize this is just as important for the kids in Riverview as it is for the kids in Moncton," Carey said.