

Quebec turns to daycare workers to fill shortage of kindergarten teachers ^[1]

But childcare centers worry that will only aggravate their own labour shortage

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EXCERPTS

The Quebec government wants to address a province-wide shortage of kindergarten teachers by recruiting from the ranks of daycare workers, but some worry that will only create another shortage elsewhere in the system.

Under regulatory changes proposed last month, childcare and daycare workers who have a CEGEP diploma in early-childhood education will be able to teach kindergarten.

But these workers will have to meet a number of other conditions as well in order to qualify for kindergarten positions.

These conditions include: having more than two years of teaching experience; have completed nine units of university courses; and be enrolled in a preschool education program at university.

If they meet these conditions, childcare and daycare workers will be eligible for a probationary certificate allowing them to teach kindergarten.

The proposed rule changes were published in June in the *Gazette officielle du Québec*. They will have to be ratified by the National Assembly before they take effect, likely sometime in September.

Robbing Peter to pay Paul?

The changes received a cautious welcome from the Conseil supérieur de l'enseignement, a government advisory body for education issues.

"We believe these measures should be transient, not permanent," said the body's president, Maryse Lassonde.

Before making such a measure permanent, she added, the government should "wait at least three years to see the effects on the system as a whole."

But an association representing Quebec's network of subsidized childcare centres is opposed to the change, noting they too are confronting a shortage of workers.

"It feels like the government is establishing a competition between two networks that are experiencing a shortage of personnel, instead of working in co-operation," said Marie-Claude Lemieux, a spokesperson for the Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance, or CPEs.

Lemieux is concerned childcare workers will be lured away from the CPE network by the higher pay of teaching kindergarten, worsening the existing shortage in the childcare sector.

She wants the Education Ministry to consult with the Family Ministry before moving ahead. "[These measures] are sending a signal that the education minister is working alone on this plan," Lemieux said.

Positive for immigrants, says advisory body

The effects of the new measures are "hard to foresee," according to Lasson. She estimates around half of students with a CEGEP diploma in early-childhood education end up pursuing preschool education at university.

She welcomed another amendment being proposed by the government to deal with the shortage of kindergarten teachers, one that will make it easier for immigrants to have their teaching experience recognized by the Ministry of Education.

"For immigrants that have been teaching in their own country, there is a greater recognition of experiential learning," said Lassonde.

"That's positive. Extremely positive."

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Region: Ontario ^[3]

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