COVID-19: Quebec to offer free emergency daycare for healthcare workers [1]

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EXCERPTS

Quebec is providing free emergency daycare services for the preschool and elementary-aged children of healthcare providers and other workers in essential services' as the province implements measures to contain COVID-19.

Minister of Families Mathieu Lacombe announced at a press conference on Sunday afternoon that childcare centres (CPE), daycares, and babysitting services in a home environment will be open to welcome the employees' children.

At St. Monica's, a daycare in NDG, workers on Monday sanitized every surface. The centre is one of the few that's open, taking care of the children of essential service workers. The daycare is working on a referral system; parents can only drop off their children if they register their children online. "You would have been contacted by your employer, given a designated website, and then you register," said Mike Cohen, a spokesperson for the EMSB, which is operating eight of the daycares that are still open.

In all, 400 daycares are staying open, and they're free of charge for those using them. The Quebec government will cover the entirety of the costs.

Essential service workers include police, the fire department, ambulance attendants, employees of Urgence Quebec, correctional officers, special constables, and staff who are called upon to provide daycare services.

In referring to the workers, the minister used the words of Premier François Legault, calling them "guardian angels."

"We need you, and it was very important for our government to put in facilitating measures in place so that you can continue your work, which is essential under these circumstances," said Mr. Lacombe.

All concerned parents may present themselves at childcare establishments near their place of work, and their children will be taken care of.

"No exceptions will be granted" for children of parents not affected by the measure, the minister insisted.

Elementary-aged children included

As of Monday, more than 400 school daycare services will be open in as many schools to accommodate children aged 4 to 13, from pre-kindergarten to sixth grade.

The sites were strategically chosen near health establishments, CHSLDs and CLSCs. They can accommodate up to 60,000 children.

The service, which will also be free and intended for the same clientele, will be offered from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday for the next two weeks.

“Take care of children so that parents can take care of the sick,'' said Minister of Education Jean-François Roberge.
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