

Quebec premier mulls gradual opening of schools, daycares before end of June ^[1]

Legault says one possibility is sending children in certain regions back to school before others

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EXCERPTS

The Quebec government is working on a plan to reopen schools and daycares over the coming weeks and months, Premier François Legault said at his daily news conference Tuesday.

"Of course, we still need some time to be sure that the pandemic is under control before reopening the economy and the schools," Legault said.

He said it would be a bad idea to send all children back to school at once in September, at the start of a new school year, because that could trigger a second wave of COVID-19.

Epidemiologists believe children are much less susceptible to developing complications from COVID-19. However, the concern is that children could pass it on to their teachers or parents and grandparents, restarting the whole cycle of infection.

On March 22, the government extended its closure of schools until May 4. Legault has said any reopening would come with two weeks' notice.

He said Tuesday it is still possible the province will restart schools, in some form, before the end of the current school year — though not in July or August.

The key word is "gradually," the premier said.

One option is to send children in certain regions back to school before those in other regions, Legault said.

Daycare workers urge caution

The province is also looking at allowing more parents to send their children back to daycare soon.

Under the current setup, daycares have only been taking in the children of essential workers.

Marie-Claude Lemieux, a spokesperson for the Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance, said out of thousands of children at daycare, only about six have tested positive.

That's partially because they are nowhere near capacity, she said. A space that normally has 80 children now tends to have five to 15.

Lemieux said welcoming more children while keeping the spaces virus-free would be difficult — and stressful for staff.

"They don't want to spread this virus among their family," she said.

She acknowledged, however, that daycares will eventually need to take in more children. She wants the province to be careful and to listen to her group if it feels something needs to change.

Parents have also decried opening schools before September.

A petition launched last week garnered more than 150,000 signatures overnight, many of them from parents afraid this would mean exposing their children to undue risk and encouraging the spread of the virus.

Region: Quebec ^[3]

Tags: closure ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 30 Apr 2020): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/04/quebec-premier-mulls-gradual-opening-schools-daycares-end-june>

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