

Group aims to help find French daycare spots for some of 250 families on waiting list ^[1]

In-home caregivers would become employees of the Francophone Early Childhood Education Centres

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EXCERPTS

A new pilot project aims to help find French daycare spots for some of the 250 P.E.I. families on a waiting list looking for a space. The Association of Francophone Early Childhood Education Centres in P.E.I. hopes to employ in-home daycares to offer those spaces.

"What we're looking at doing is creating a family home daycare agency model," said Kathleen Couture, executive director of the association, who said her group would recruit and license the educators.

Those operating daycares in their homes would be employed by the association, and have access to health benefits, paid sick days, and professional development. Families would pay their daycare fees directly to the association, who would pay the operators.

"We would actually be sort of their supervisor, to ensure high-quality programming, and we would actually partner with them in many ways," Couture said.

"We'd be able to offer them shared spaces, a partnership with an early childhood education centre, so they could go there for activities and an exchange of toys and resources and things like that."

'We don't want children to struggle'

Many of the families on the waiting list for a child-care space are rights-holders — they have French heritage and are entitled to have their children educated in French.

"The earlier that children begin in French, the better results you'll have later," said Couture. "We don't want children to struggle in primary or Grade 1 or Grade 2. We want them to have a good base of French."

Couture said this type of model is already in use across Canada, but this would be the first initiative of its kind in P.E.I. Right now, the association said it's 80 per cent ready to implement the pilot, and is looking to hear from anyone who is providing French child care in their home, or might be interested in doing so.

"We want to find out how many people are out there, that are currently doing child care in their home, and want to have more support, want to have help," said Couture.

"Because that's what we want to do, is we want to be there for them. We want to make sure that we support the in-home child care that are happening right now and help them get licensed and help them become a high-quality educational program."

Pilot requires change in legislation

In order for the pilot to get started, a change in legislation is required — one that would enable the association to acquire the licence, and the in-home provider to take on the care of the children. Right now, licences can only be associated with the person or organization directly responsible for that care.

The association is working with education officials to develop the pilot.

In a statement sent to the CBC, officials with the Department of Education said it's still early days, but confirmed that the province is looking at potential changes to the Early Learning and Child Care Act, and that it is committed to working with individuals or organizations interested in licensing in-home child-care centres.

Couture hopes the pilot will start next spring. She'd like to see at least six in-home centres take part initially, and said once a working program is established for Francophone centres, the model could be rolled out in English in-home child-care centres as well.

In the meantime, she said, plans are underway to expand and increase spaces at two of the association's daycare centres: Île enchantée in Charlottetown, and Jardin des étoiles in Summerside.

Region: Prince Edward Island ^[3]

Tags: spaces ^[4]

waitlist ^[5]

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