

Quebec daycare workers not satisfied with minister after debate

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EXCERPTS

The union which represents workers in 140 CPEs, publicly-funded daycares in Quebec, said the heart of the province's labour shortage crisis comes down to recognition and salary. Educators are underpaid, they said, and as a result, they're leaving for jobs in other fields.

The Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) government has an ambitious goal to create enough spaces in the publicly-funded daycare network for every child who needs one to have a spot at \$8.50 a day.

However, employees have walked off the job as part of a six-day strike mandate. On Friday, striking daycare workers paid close attention to what the minister had to say during a two-hour debate at the Quebec National Assembly. Some of them even rented movie theatres to watch together.

"You can build as many CPEs as you want, promise everything you want, if there's no workers in the CPEs, you're not going to be able to open them," said Anne Dionne, a vice-president with the Centrale du Syndicat du Quebec (CSQ).

The government has already committed to raises, but Dionne said negotiations are hung up over two things: wage increases for support and kitchen staff and lump sum incentives for educators who work 40 hours a week or more. She said that money should be incorporated into their base salaries.

The government has admitted its biggest challenge to creating new spaces in public daycares is recruiting and maintaining staff, so Dionne asked why a better offer isn't on the table.

"He's more busy being all proud that he is the first one for the last 20 years trying to do something for the network — and we salute that. There are good decisions in there and there are good intentions, but there's nothing on the table," she said.

Minister Lacombe said the government is eager to reach an agreement with educators and he's confident there will be one soon.

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