

Quebec wants 25,000 more daycare workers by 2026; recruitment underway ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Quebec is providing millions more to retrain or recruit as many as 25,000 early childhood educators by 2026.

Family Minister Mathieu Lacombe and Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity Minister Jean Boulet hope to recruit 18,000 new educators through various incentives, and to re-qualify 7,000 who may, for example, currently be in the system without having the full qualification required.

With the funds already announced last April for the first cohort of students who have begun training, a total of \$295 million will be spent on various measures.

Around 550 people have already begun this work-study training.

A whole series of measures are being offered: paid work-study training for five days, possible recognition of prior learning, bursaries per study session and bonuses for retirees who return to work.

"Retirees will be offered a bonus of 6.6 per cent, which could represent \$3,000," said Boulet.

Another example: an unemployed person will be able to receive \$475 per week to start their training.

Another measure: a student who follows his or her three-year college training in Childhood Education Techniques will be able to receive a grant of \$1,500 per full-time session that is successfully completed, for a total of \$9,000 for the three years.

"I know that right now it's not easy with COVID-19 in early childhood education," said Lacombe.

"Everyone is overwhelmed. In our daycare centers, we have a lot of work to do. On top of that, we have promised to offer a place for every toddler. We need to send reinforcements to you, the educators, and we also need to prepare the next generation."

Revaluing the profession

The vast offensive to recruit educators in daycare services is part of Quebec's plan to open 37,000 spaces.

But when he announced the plan, the question on everyone's lips was the same: how can so many spaces be opened when there is already a shortage of educators?

"The agreement for the renewal of collective agreements with all the union organizations representing child care workers will certainly contribute to revaluing this profession," said Lacombe.

Quebec has also launched an advertising campaign to attract interested parties.

Unions like the plan

The two main union organizations representing daycare workers welcomed the announced measures, but cautioned against the desire to speed up training for child-care workers at all costs.

"This must not be done by compromising on the quality of the training offered. Indeed, we insist on the importance of offering the most complete training possible, and for us, the reference should be the Diploma of College Studies," said CSQ vice-president Line Camerlain.

The union is also calling for a rapid return to the ratio of two trained daycare workers out of three in a centre. This ratio has been temporarily lowered to one out of three workers because of the staff shortage.

The CSN also said that the improvement of working conditions in the CPEs during the last negotiation of collective agreements is "the best calling card to convince people to come and work in the educational child care network," said Lucie Longchamps, vice-president of the CSN-affiliated Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux.

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