

PQ, QS square off on overhaul of Quebec's public daycare system ^[1]

The PQ wants to abolish private daycares network, while QS promises new model for remote regions

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EXCERPTS

Seven days into the Quebec election campaign, party leaders unveiled child care promises on Saturday.

Parti Québécois (PQ) Leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon says the party is committed to making daycare accessible for all.

If elected, he says, he would transform the province's nearly 119,000 private daycare spots into public ones over the next five years.

"We know there's about 50,000 children waiting for a spot," St-Pierre Plamondon said Saturday while at a Quebec City daycare.

"We can also assume that there's also tens of thousands of parents at the moment who aren't able to participate in the labour market because of the shortage of spots in daycares."

The Coalition Avenir Québec has already promised an additional 37,000 spots for children in the network, but St-Pierre Plamondon said his party would add 15,000 on top of that. That would bring the total number publicly funded spots promised to 135,000, at an estimated cost of \$225 million.

The cost for both promises combined comes to \$768 million per year, the leader said. The party would turn to income taxes to pay for the network.

Micro daycares

QS also took to big daycare promises over the weekend, calling for the creation of what co-spokesperson Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois called "micro public daycares."

Nadeau-Dubois says the model is aimed at regions where there aren't enough children to justify the creation of full sized publicly funded daycare centres.

He said parents in remote regions are struggling the most to find affordable care for their children.

"A new model [is needed]," he said while at a stop in Rimouski on Saturday. "A new way to create multiple micro public daycares all across the territory of Quebec, to be able to answer the needs of those small communities."

He put the cost at an estimated \$610 million per year.

The party is also promising to convert as many private daycare spots into public ones as soon as possible, with the goal of at least 37,000 new public spots within a first mandate.

St-Pierre Plamondon said QS's plan doesn't go far enough in addressing labour shortages in the province compounded by a lack of public daycares. He pointed to the party's promise to provide a benefit of \$870 per month for families who can't yet find a place for their young ones in daycare.

"The urgency is in creating spaces and finding a solution for everyone," he said while in Quebec City. "I do not see the logic of taking public funds to aggravate the labour shortage."

Liberal Leader Dominique Anglade promised access to subsidized daycare for all Quebec children. Anglade told reporters at a local daycare on Friday that no fewer than 52,000 kids are still waiting for a spot.

She said her party would create 67,000 extra spots at a cost of \$1.1 billion per year, with funds coming from a recently signed daycare agreement with the federal government.

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