

Private daycares take battle to court [CA-QC] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

An association of private daycares in Quebec says the government's clampdown on extra fees for \$7-a-day daycare spaces is illegal.

The Association des garderies privées du Québec has filed a motion in Quebec Superior Court to challenge the new rules, that come into effect Aug. 31.

Under the new rules, daycare operators that offer subsidized spaces can charge no more than \$7 a day for a maximum of 10 hours of professional care, including the provision of a meal and snacks.

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About 482 private daycares in Quebec offer subsidized spaces.

Some private daycare operators are looking at creative ways to get around the new regulations.

La Gard'Et Rie in St. Hubert has informed parents it will offer two options, starting Sept. 1.

Children will receive basic daycare services, from 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., for \$7 a day.

For another \$6, parents can sign up their children for an enriched program from 4:30p.m. to 6 p.m.

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Government officials are investigating La Gard'Et Rie's plans for September, said Daniel Desharnais, spokesperson for Family Minister Carole Théberge.

"At first glance, it does not appear to conform to the government rules," he said.

Parents can buy into specialized programs at a daycare, provided they deal directly with the subcontractor offering the services, he noted.

Private daycare operators who charge parents \$7 a day for subsidized daycare also receive a daily stipend of \$33 per child from Quebec, Desharnais said.

The combined \$40 is more than adequate to provide quality educational daycare for children under five, he said.

Rouleau disagrees.

Private daycare operators receive less government funding than public childcare centres, Rouleau said. At the same time, private operators have to pay business and property taxes, of which the public sector is exempt, she added.

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- reprinted from the Montreal Gazette

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