

Private daycare might close in September: \$7-a-day limit could force it to shut or cut hours, programs [CA-QC] ^[1]

Author: Lunau, Kate

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

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Bill 124 requires private and public daycares receiving government funding to charge no more than \$7 per child per day, even if parents are willing to pay more for extracurricular programs. Daycares may still charge extra for field trips.

The regulation, which comes into effect Aug. 31, will affect about 1,500 private and public daycares across the province. Roughly 30 private daycares in Quebec receive no government funding and will be unaffected, said Sylvain Levesque, president of the Association of Private Daycares.

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Public daycares receive an average of \$33.65 per child per day in funding from the Quebec government, while subsidized private daycares receive an average of \$30.65, said Caroline Joubert, spokesperson for Family Minister Carole Theberge.

Sonia Maloney is the assistant director of the Centre de la Petite Enfance Narnia in Westmount, a public daycare facing cutbacks as a result of Bill 124. Her daycare charges \$15 a day, but Maloney points out the \$8 added fee is optional and no children are excluded from any activities.

When the regulation comes into effect, one of CPE Narnia's nine trained educators will be let go. Another two are to be let go in September 2007. The daycare's 57 spots will eventually be reduced as a result.

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The new regulation is meant to combat abuses, said Daniel Desharmais, Minister Carole Theberge's press aide. Some daycare services charged fees of \$1 a day for stroller storage, or to provide a child with a locker, he noted.

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The Association of Private Daycares has planned a general assembly of its members on Aug. 23 to form a plan to deal with the new regulation. A strike is not an option, Levesque said.

The Quebec Association of Public Daycares could not be reached for comment.

- reprinted from the Montreal Gazette

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