

Federal cash won't go straight to daycare [CA-QC] ^[1]

Author: Dougherty, Kevin

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EXCERPTS

The \$1.1 billion Quebec will get as its share of a federal daycare funding promise will not go into daycare.

Helene Potvin, president of the Association quebecoise des centres de petites enfance, said yesterday the money will go into the provincial government's bank account, known as the consolidated revenue fund.

"They cut \$50 million from our budget," Potvin told reporters, saying after the signing two weeks ago of an agreement on daycare funding between Premier Jean Charest and Prime Minister Paul Martin, the government could have returned money to the system.

Louise Bedard, spokesperson for Family Minister Carole Theberge, confirmed that the \$1.1 billion will go into the government's bank account.

In future, she added, it could go to families, but she could not provide precise details. "There are people who stay home," Bedard said. "There are people who choose not to send their children to the daycare service."

Potvin told reporters that Bill 124, presented by Theberge last month to tighten up Quebec's daycare system, was prompted by the \$50-million cut.

Bill 124 has angered the parents who now run the system, she added.

There are about 1,000 CPEs, or centres de la petite enfance, in Quebec. They were created by the previous Parti Quebecois government as private not-for-profit corporations, run by parents.

The association Potvin heads, which groups about 850 CPEs, has been the centre of resistance to the Charest government's efforts to re-engineer daycare, starting in its first year in power with a 40-per-cent increase in the daily fee parents pay.

Potvin said angry parents have suggested protest tactics, included closing highways, to protest against Bill 124.

She noted that Theberge will begin by invitation-only hearings on Bill 124 next week, giving those invited little time to prepare and excluding others from the consultation. "Madame Theberge is stirring up a storm," Potvin said. "She will pay the price."

Theberge told reporters yesterday Potvin's association is mounting a "fear campaign" and misrepresenting Bill 124.

"No daycare places will close, whether it is in the CPEs, in family daycare or in private daycare," the minister said. "The services are here to stay."

- reprinted from the Montreal Gazette

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