

Quebec stands firm on controversial parental leave program [CA-QC] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The provincial government is not backing down from implementing its new parental leave program on Jan. 1, despite a plea from the powerful employers' lobby that it reduce benefits paid under the plan.

Employment Minister Michelle Courchesne is standing firm on parental leave, which will require an additional contribution by employers and employees totalling \$298 million.

This month, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business withdrew its representative from the officially autonomous Conseil de gestion de l'assurance parentale, whose role is to administer the program, after Courchesne refused to contribute an extra \$100 million to the \$1.035-billion-a-year program.

The Conseil du patronat business lobby found itself allied with two major labour groups, the Quebec Federation of Labour and the Confederation des syndicats nationaux, in calling on Courchesne to change her mind.

Gilles Taillon, president of the Conseil, wrote Courchesne this week that if she doesn't want to raise Quebec's contribution, she should make the program less generous.

The program will pay 75 per cent of a parent's salary for 40 weeks, or 70 per cent for 25 weeks and 55 per cent for another 25 weeks.

Parental leave will create a new payroll deduction, starting Jan. 1.

The federal government will reduce what it collects in Employment Insurance premiums in Quebec by \$737 million next year. But Quebec will pick up the slack, charging that amount, plus the \$298 million, in a new payroll deduction.

Employees at the top of the scale will pay \$107 a year more than they now do in EI premiums, while their employers will pay an extra \$150 a year.

- reprinted from the Montreal Gazette

Region: Canada ^[2]

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