

Day-care workers strike tomorrow [CA-QC]^[1]

Author: Hustak, Alan

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EXCERPTS

Instead of going to her St. André St. day care, La Sourithèque, tomorrow, 2-year-old Elisa Medina will be spending the day with her father.

Employees at more than 140 unionized child-care centres in Montreal are expected walk off their jobs tomorrow.

They'll probably be joined by countless more non-unionized day-care workers, invited to take part in the rally on a voluntary basis.

It's the first of four strikes designed to put an end to arbitrary pay scales in the province's 325 day-care centres.

Confederation des syndicats nationaux, the union representing the employees, says the collective agreement it signed in March with the former Parti Québécois government promising pay equity for day-care workers throughout the province has yet to be respected.

The contract calls for a two-per-cent pay increase, improved vacations and a commitment to implement pay equity.

The government has increased wages by two per cent but, says CSN spokesperson Jeff Begley, it hasn't respected the pay equity clause.

"We aren't saying that day care workers should be paid the same as teachers, but we do compare child-care workers to teachers or other educators working with young people," Begley said.

"The government was supposed to have given us a date that it would introduce pay equity before June 15 but it has not done so. It could drag this out for five or six years if it wants to."

Tremblay is one of the lucky ones - she has a day off tomorrow, and will be able to care for her son herself.

Kaled Hamid's 4-year-old son, Sifax, will be out of school tomorrow, but Hamid says parents have had plenty of time to make alternative arrangements for the day.

About 325 day cares, their 6,000 employees and about 32,500 children throughout Quebec will be affected.

Day-care workers earn between \$12.24 and \$18.36 an hour, depending where in the province they are employed.

Begley says traditionally females make up the largest percentage of professional child care givers, but they don't make as much as men do.

"So if 90 per cent of them in one school are all women, if you average it out, their salaries are lower. We're committed to pay equity."

Mabyn Armstrong, director of the Narnia day-care centre in Westmount, said she, like many non-unionized workers, supports the strike.

- reprinted from Montreal Gazette

Region: Quebec^[2]

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