

Day-care solutions all over the map [CA-QC] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Give parents \$5,000, tax free, for each pre-schooler and let them decide whether to spend it on day care.

The proposal, tabled yesterday by the Conseil du Patronat du Québec at public hearings into day care, calls for a return to the family allowance, which was diverted in 1997 to help finance Quebec's \$5-a-day day care.

Families, not the government, should decide what is in the best interests of their children, Gilles Taillon, chairperson of Quebec's largest employers' lobby group, said in his brief.

The Conseil's recommendation contrasted with the majority of briefs, which demanded heavily subsidized child care, preferably in nonprofit community-based day-care centres.

The Liberal government this summer raised the possibility of hiking day-care fees to as much as \$10 a day to finance the growing network of subsidized child care in the province.

Not only do many parents, workers and community groups oppose the move, some say the government should never have put a price on day care in the first place.

"Day care is like health care and education - it's a public service," said Sylvie Lévesque, director of the Fédération des associations de familles monoparentales et recomposées du Québec. "It should have been free right from the beginning. Then we wouldn't be having this discussion."

Louise Chabot, of the Centrale des Syndicats du Québec, said the Liberals should honour the \$5-a-day commitment--in regular day-care centres as well as in school settings--pending a full review in the National Assembly.

The three-day hearings end today in Montreal.

- Reprint from the Montreal Gazette.

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