

# Last-minute daycare deal averts strike: 6,200 unionized workers on job today [CA-QC] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Excerpts - see text below

### Excerpts:

Unionized daycare workers canceled a two-day strike expected to start today, after reaching a last-minute agreement with the province late last night.

The 6,200 unionized daycare workers had threatened to walk off the job in an illegal protest of the provincial government's position on aspects of the workers' proposed pension plan.

Representatives from the Treasury Board and daycare workers' unions spent most of Monday and yesterday locked in an intense round of negotiations, in a last-minute attempt to avoid a two-day strike that would shut down 340 unionized daycare centres across the province.

Parties were still hammering out details concerning a pension plan for daycare workers last night, but were close enough for union officials to call off all pressure tactics.

"There is no strike for the next three days, as we had planned," said Centrale des Syndicats du Quebec spokesman Louise Rochefort.

The 70 unionized daycares in Montreal will open today, tomorrow and Friday, and parents of 45,000 children will not have to make alternate arrangements.

"Parents can send their children to daycare," Rochefort said.

The workers, who are affiliated with either the CSQ or the Confederation des Syndicats Nationaux, were scheduled to gather in Montreal today for a massive rally, and were to stage another one-day strike either tomorrow or Friday, depending on their union.

The bargaining process between unionized daycare workers and the government had never broken down, and the unions had not acquired the legal right to strike, Rochefort said yesterday.

Union negotiators were asking for \$38 million to set up a pension plan for daycare workers, who have never had one.

The government had said it was willing to spend \$25 million on a plan, but their proposal was not retroactive, meaning previous years' experience wouldn't count in final pension payment calculations.

A typical daycare employee is a 37-year-old woman earning \$28,000 annually, according to CSN figures. After 30 years earning the average salary, a pensioner would receive \$12,750 under the proposed plan.

Without retroactivity, workers now near retirement would get just a basic government pension.

The request for retroactivity is not unusual in terms of negotiating pension funds, the Canadian Labour Congress' director of social and economic policy said yesterday.

"It's a common proposal - it's one that's often met, and it's one that can be met in whole or in part," Bob Baldwin said. A retroactive plan shouldn't be perceived as a freebie, he added.

"The cost of these things is usually part of the compensation package. The union is willing to give up some part of the package to address the needs of older workers."

Although only about 25 per cent of Quebec daycare workers are unionized, the pension plan under negotiation last night was to apply to all.

**Region:** Quebec <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** staff <sup>[3]</sup>

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