

Daycare walkout looming: Three April strike days could affect 45,000 kids [CA-QC] ^[1]

Author: Gyulai, Linda

Source: The Montreal Gazette

Format: Article

Publication Date: 25 Mar 2002

AVAILABILITY

Text below

EXCERPTS:

Parents of as many as 45,000 children enrolled in 300 Quebec daycare centres affiliated with the Confederation des Syndicats Nationaux might have to make alternative child-care arrangements for three days next month following a strike vote by employees.

Only some movement by the provincial government on two lagging issues - building a pay-equity package for the mostly female work force in the daycares and offering them a pension plan - can stop a walkout now, CSN vice-president Claudette Carboneau said yesterday.

The CSN's 5,500 daycare-centre workers voted 97.2 per cent in favour of striking for three days in the middle of April if the provincial government doesn't kick-start talks, she said at a press conference to announce the voting results. The three days could be consecutive or sporadic, she added.

"The Quebec government has been procrastinating for months and months," Carboneau said. "The 97.2-per-cent strike vote is testimony to workers' exasperation and their desire to see things stop dragging."

She added she'll present the results - culled from votes taken by 26 CSN union locals - today to Linda Goupil, the provincial secretary of state for social solidarity, family and children.

"It would be totally irresponsible on (Goupil's) part to not even call the sides to talk and unnecessarily provoke a work stoppage in a sector as sensitive as daycare centres," she said.

The daycare centres in question are run by non-profit organizations whose board members include parents and receive provincial funding to offer \$5-a-day daycare to children.

There are 70 daycare centres that could be affected by a walkout in the city of Montreal, Carboneau said.

The Quebec government agreed in May 1999 to set up a pension fund for daycare workers, she said.

It was the same year the province agreed to increase daycare workers' salaries from an average of \$10 an hour to \$15, she said.

The struggle for pay redress and the creation of a uniform pay scale in the daycare sector took 20 years, she said.

About 95 per cent of daycare workers are women, she pointed out.

"It's an old story of systemic discrimination," Carboneau said.

Even today, the salary level doesn't reflect the training and the minimum CEGEP education required to work in a daycare centre or the responsibility on daycare workers' shoulders, she said.

And daycare workers face a precarious situation in retirement, she said.

With low salaries, "you can imagine these people didn't have the means to save enough money to plan their retirement," Carboneau said.

Little Progress

The province and the union were supposed to plan the creation of a pension plan for daycare workers through a joint committee, but there have been only a few meetings, she said.

The level of pension benefits has not yet been studied, she said.

At last word, the provincial Treasury Board was going to examine the matter, Carboneau said.

The issue of pay equity is also supposed to be sorted out by a joint committee, but Carboneau said the province has left discussions to CSN representatives and parents' representatives while it sorts out a pay-equity deal with its public-sector employees.

A decision on the price tag of a pay-equity deal might be a long way off because the sides haven't yet agreed on what male-dominated jobs

to compare with daycare workers' salaries, she said.

Blames Ottawa

In Sorel-Tracy yesterday, Premier Bernard Landry told reporters that the federal government has to take blame for not giving Quebec its fair share in equalization payments, LCN television network reported. If the province would get \$50 million more a week from Ottawa, it would be easier for the government to increase its pay for nurses and daycare workers, Landry said.

In the past, the province has argued that daycare is still a developing network and daycare centres are run by non-profit organizations.

"It's profoundly unjust to ask a group of women to pay the costs of developing the network, especially if you want a quality network and if you want to maintain a quality work force," Carboneau said.

reprinted from The Montreal Gazette.

Region: Quebec [2]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/02/08/daycare-walkout-looming-three-april-strike-days-could-affect-45000>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/02/08/daycare-walkout-looming-three-april-strike-days-could-affect-45000> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7855>