

# 20,000 new daycare spots: \$50 million set aside to build centres [CA-QC] <sup>[1]</sup>

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### EXCERPTS:

More than 20,000 Quebec children could have places opened up for them with the \$50 million set aside in yesterday's budget for the construction of new daycare centres.

Emilien Nadeau, president of the Association des Regions du Quebec, said it is likely the government will announce a project of that magnitude in the coming weeks.

"It's not quite concrete yet, but it will probably be 20,000 or more," said Nadeau, whose group has lobbied for more daycare spaces through its regional development councils. "Is it enough? We don't know. We know there's a lack of spaces."

Finance officials refused yesterday to divulge specifics. Linda Goupil, the minister of child and family welfare, is expected to make an announcement soon.

"It's really up to her," a finance department official said. "I can tell you though that it will be a significant announcement."

A daycare strategy, a centrepiece of the 1997 budget, gave birth to Quebec's \$5-a-day program. The government claims that 60,000 new places and 12,000 jobs have been created.

But more needs to be done to support young families, said Yves Lacasse, president of the Quebec Coalition of Young Business People.

Hard-working young parents still face long waiting lists to find places for their children, he said. And parents need daycares with flexible hours of operation, in order to advance their careers while raising families. "I don't think \$50 million is enough to address those problems," said Lacasse.

But some more spaces are better than none at all, countered the president of one of Quebec's biggest unions.

"It's important that we find a way to solve the problem of not enough spaces, and constructing new centres is one way to do that," said Monique Richard of the Centrale des Syndicats du Quebec.

- reprinted from The Gazette.

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