

CUPE critical of 'big box daycare' coming to Ontario: Canada's largest, publicly-traded daycare company has Ontario foothold after buying local Montessori ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

One of Canada's largest unions is critical of what it calls 'big box daycare' gaining a foothold in Ontario, including the Windsor-Essex region.

CUPE fears quality of care will falter in the wake of Edleun Group's multi-million dollar purchases of seven child care facilities in Ontario.

A trio of Windsor area Montessori schools has been sold to a publicly traded daycare company based in Calgary.

Edleun Group purchased The Children's House Montessori portfolio, which includes three centres, for a total purchase price of \$5.5 million.

The centres provide 485 licensed child care spaces in the greater Windsor area.

Edleun also purchased four schools in the Greater Toronto Area.

Julie Roy was the owner-operator of the Children's House. She is now Edleun Group's manager of Ontario operations.

Roy said Edleun approached her seven months ago about acquiring her schools. The deal closed Dec. 9.

"Obviously we would entertain it," she said of the sale. "It is a business."

That's where CUPE has a problem.

"All the research shows that good quality care is, in fact, public and not-for-profit care. And that commercial, for-profit child care is in fact poorer quality," CUPE spokesperson Stella Yeadon.

On its website, CUPE is highly critical of Edleun, which trades on Toronto Stock Exchange and is the largest private daycare company in Canada.

However, Roy is confident neither children nor parents will see changes in terms of operation here in Windsor-Essex.

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Roy said that despite being a publicly traded daycare company - the first in Canada - Edleun is more concerned about quality of care than profits.

"It's extremely important that the quality and assurance is kept," Roy said.

However, public school trustees in Edmonton aren't sure of Edleun's motives.

Earlier this year, they refused to allow Edleun operate daycares in Edmonton schools.

In May, Edleun made a pitch to rent space in four Edmonton schools to run daycares and early education programs.

At the time, Edmonton trustee Sarah Hoffman said profits can get in the way of providing children proper care and instruction.

Edleun now owns 45 daycare centres in three provinces, providing 4,711 licensed child care spaces.

- reprinted from CBC News

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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