

Daycare for every child by 2016, Marois promises ^[1]

Author: Bagnall, Janet

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EXCERPTS:

MONTREAL - Premier Pauline Marois says that by 2016, there will be a \$7-a-day daycare space for every child in the province who needs one.

In an east-end Montreal daycare centre, the Centre de la petite enfance Coeurs de l'île, Marois said 28,000 new, additional spaces will be created, adding \$261 million a year to the more than \$2-billion annual cost of the current network. The new spaces will bring the total to 250,000 subsidized spaces across Quebec.

Marois promised the daily fee of \$7 for subsidized spaces would remain the same until 2016, at which point the government might look at indexing it to the rate of inflation, she said. Marois said she was proud to say that the additional 28,000 spaces will finally complete the daycare network that the Parti Québécois launched 15 years ago. Nearly half the new spaces, 13,000, have already been recommended by regional consultative committees set up in 2011. About 2,000 will be created immediately, most in non-profit daycare centres.

Marois insisted that despite the fact that it might look as though successive governments keep promising but never create the same spaces, out of the 18,000 spaces promised by the Charest government in 2008, only 1,900 remain to be created. The others are in operation.

Parents of children currently in unsubsidized private daycare will not be happy to learn that they still will not have access to the new \$7 spaces. Getting a child into subsidized daycare is largely a matter of luck, with some families frozen out despite having signed onto subsidized care waiting lists almost from the moment their child was conceived.

Last month, owners of private, unsubsidized daycare centres demonstrated in front of Marois's Montreal office demanding the provincial government extend subsidies to existing daycare centres as a matter of fairness and warning that they faced bankruptcy unless they were allocated some of the new spaces. Marois said Monday about 32 per cent of the existing daycare capacity is in private centres, which charge between \$35 and \$40 a day. The government's position is that fairness is not an issue: Private daycare, once tax relief is factored in, works out to about the same cost as a subsidized centre, it says.

Marois said the government's preference is for state-run early childhood centres. She cited a higher rate of dissatisfaction with the quality of private daycare centres as well as last month's recommendation from the Conseil de l'éducation supérieure that within five years, 90 per cent of 4-year-olds in Quebec receive educational services in a state-regulated setting.

-reprinted from the Montreal Gazette

Region: Quebec ^[2]

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