

Quebec public daycares face \$40M perpetual shortfall ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

A promise made by the Parti Québécois to add 15,000 new spots in \$7-a-day daycares by 2016 may be a pipe dream if a long-term solution to a perpetual shortfall of \$40-million isn't found.

Radio-Canada obtained a copy of a memo, which indicates that Quebec's CPE system could be facing deeper cuts than previously anticipated.

A working group on CPE daycares is looking into the relationship between what parents pay, what Quebec taxpayers pay and what can be done to make up for perpetual losses in the CPE daycare program. The group's final meeting is scheduled for Dec. 12.

"We are just as surprised as you are, and frustrated to say the least," CPE association spokeswoman Gina Gasparini told Daybreak Montreal host Mike Finnerty.

On Wednesday, Quebec's Minister of Families Nicole Léger vigorously denied further cuts. She said there would be no more cuts to the province's CPE program this year.

However, when she was confronted by a Radio-Canada reporter yesterday armed with the internal memo in question, Léger wasn't so emphatic.

CPEs say subsidies don't reflect cost of living

Last spring, the government negotiated a \$31-million cut within the subsidized daycare program and a global cut of \$56-million to the province's entire daycare budget - cuts that the head of the CPE association called unjustified at the time.

Gasparini said today that the CPE network could not support another major cut. She said that while the cost of living has increased, the subsidies CPEs receive from the Quebec government have not, resulting in millions less for the network every year even without cuts.

"It's been eight years that our subsidies have not matches the cost of living of our expenses, over which we have very little control. Salaries are set, food is food and rent is rent," Gasparini said.

Parents may end up being the ones who absorb any further cuts to the CPE program.

Léger said she would not rule out increasing the cost of public daycare, which has been frozen at \$7 a day for 10 years.

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