

Daycare workers announce new strike dates in October ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The union representing home-based daycare workers in Quebec has announced a new series of rotating strike days in October, a move that will affect thousands of children and their families across the province.

The one-day work stoppages are set to begin on Oct. 10 and will continue through Oct. 17, with groups of daycare workers in different regions striking in each for a 24-hour period. A province-wide strike will then be held on Oct. 20. Similar strikes were held during the summer.

This is the latest pressure tactic deployed by the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ) as the union and the provincial government attempt to hammer out a new collective agreement. The 13,600 home daycare workers affiliated with FIPEQ-CSQ have been without a collective agreement since October 2013.

The biggest sticking point has been pay. Home daycare workers are paid for 35 hours of work per week, but the union said they actually put in closer to 50 hours, on average. Their pay is also the same across the board, regardless of education or level of experience.

"It's really unfortunate that we need to go on strike to be heard," FIPEQ-CSQ president Kathleen Courville said in a release issued Thursday morning. "It was a last resort to choose this option, which we know will not be without consequence for parents and the 92,000 children that we care for each day."

In Quebec City, provincial Family Minister Francine Charbonneau said it's "unacceptable" for the workers to walk off the job while negotiations are still in progress.

"I don't understand why people are talking about strikes. They should be at the table talking to each other," she said, adding that the government is still at the table, negotiating in good faith.

"We already succeeded in 2010 to put something extraordinary in place - a first collective agreement for autonomous workers ... now we are negotiating for a second time," the minister said. "Since 2010, (home daycare workers) have obtained a salary increase of 32 per cent. That's not nothing. If we can agree once, we can agree a second time. But it's not in the street that it should happen, it's at the negotiating table."

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