

Daycare budget cuts have parents asking 'Where's the beef?' ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Budget cuts at a Laval daycare have forced a change in the daily menu: it's gone almost all vegetarian.

The Journal de Montréal reports Les P'tits Soleils daycare in the Ste-Dorothée borough has been forced to cut \$80,000 over the last two years, and the daycare expects more cuts next year.

Public daycares will take a \$74 million hit in 2015-2016, according to the association for Quebec's public daycares (AQCPE).

The director of the daycare, Sylvette Mousset told the Journal that a management position was cut and fundraisers were organized to pay operating costs.

Mousset said it still wasn't enough.

The director said that food took up between \$70,000 to \$80,000 of their annual budget, and replacing meat with alternatives such as chickpeas and tofu has allowed the daycare to save money.

Parents were against the elimination of meat from the lunch menus, which has led the daycare to serve it no more than once per week.

Nutritionist Stéphanie Côté told the Journal that a child can grow up healthy eating vegetarian because eating meat isn't essential.

She said the daycare's menu is well balanced with lentils, chickpeas, beans and tofu acting as good substitutes.

Côté added that a vegetarian diet can help anyone on a tight budget because of the high cost of meat.

She said that because consuming less meat also helps the environment, it's beneficial for everyone.

In recent years, meat in general has been edging toward luxury status. The cost of ground beef has risen 56 per cent over the last four years, and restaurants have also been feeling the pinch. Over the last two years, the price of a smoked meat sandwich at Schwartz's has almost doubled.

-reprinted from CJAD 800 AM

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