

Quebec daycares threaten closures over cuts to provincial funding ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Quebec daycares could soon close their doors as a pressure tactic to counter looming budget cuts of at least \$120 million.

The Association Québécoise des Centres de la Petite Enfance (AQCPÉ), the association representing non-profit, publicly funded daycares, plans to launch a campaign to counter the provincial government's austerity measures.

Louis Senécal, the AQCPÉ's president and director general, told Radio-Canada that it would start with small disruptions organized across the province in different regions.

"And, ultimately, a national closure," said Senécal.

Impact on services

Daycare operators say budget cuts affect education and services provided to young children in Quebec's public system.

Dgyno Daigle, the director general of CPE L'Éveil Enfantin in Quebec City, told Radio-Canada that his centre had to merge with another in order to save money.

That's led to turning away young children who need extra care or supervision.

"It was with sadness that we had to refuse a child who is severely handicapped, because we don't have the means to hire someone full-time," said Daigle.

The government's decision to cut in daycares has led André Rémillard to question Quebec's priorities. The director of CPE du Carrefour in Montreal says that Quebec should invest in young children instead of pumping money into Bombardier.

"We've already cut personnel," said Rémillard. "We're already cut down to the bone."

Open to negotiations

The AQCPÉ says that while strike action is underway for the new year, it is still willing to talk with the government.

"The truth is that we wish we were at the negotiating table more than we want to be in streets," said Senécal.

Quebec still plans on moving forward with cuts but the ministry of families has said that it is open to discussions.

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