

Myths and Facts about Child Care in Quebec

Myth: Quebec's child care system does not let parents choose the type of child care they want

In a 2004 Quebec study parents were given a number of alternatives: care provided in their own home, unregulated care in the caregiver's home, licensed family care, care in a CPE, or other type of care. For their infants, the majority of families preferred care provided in their own home. For children ages 1- 4 -- 65 to 80 percent of parents want care in a CPE or in a licensed family home.

Myth: Subsidized child care benefits the rich, not the families who really need it.

A much quoted 2005 study claimed that reduced-fee child care services had been most used by high-income families, not those with low incomes. Other researchers criticized the study because parents who are not working or studying were included in the analysis of child care use.

When parents who were not in the workforce were excluded the pattern of usage was different. Child care use was distributed proportionately among income classes for two-parent families. Single-parent families and those earning below \$20,000 were actually over-represented in fixed-fee child care, while the top income groups were under-represented.

Myth: Quebec child care system has been accused on making children aggressive and mothers depressed

A paper by published by the U.S.-based National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) compared children in Quebec to those in the rest of Canada before and after the introduction of Quebec's child care program. The authors observed increases in aggression, anxiety and hyperactivity; reduced social and motor development; poor children's health based on parent assessments; and, a negative impact on child-parent relationships. Others have questioned the study's conclusions. For example, the sample of children studied was *eligible* for Quebec's child care program but 70% never attended any early childhood program.

Myth: Quebec's child care system is too expensive and not worth the cost

With a budget of \$1.6-billion, charges have been laid Quebec's system is just too expensive. The same is said of other publicly funded programs including health and education; yet public polling indicates an increased appetite for directed spending to these areas. Generally public financing of services is supported by citizens and sustained by governments if service providers are accountable for the funds they use and if those funds produce cost-efficient, good quality services. Successive Quebec budgets have added new allocations for child care. There is a consensus among Quebecers that their government is largely pursuing an appropriate direction.

Myth: Quebec's child care system provides low-quality child care

Studies indicate a substantial quality differences between non-profit and for profit providers, and regulated and unlicensed care. Substantial differences were found between the non-profit CPEs (Centres des petits enfants community based child care) and the commercial operators. Measured on a scale of 1 to 4, preschool classrooms in CPEs averaged a score of 2.93. In for-profit garderies the average was 2.58. Only a small number of commercial preschool classes scored in the good or very good range, compared to a substantial number of CPEs which scored in the good level or above.

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