

# Funding cuts will force Laval perinatal centre to close, director says



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Laval mayor Marc Demers has written a letter to Premier Philippe Couillard asking for funding to be reinstated to Mieux-Naître. *MATTHEW SHERWOOD / MATTHEW SHERWOOD*



After only two years in operation, perinatal resource centre Mieux-Naître à Laval might have to close its doors because of a lack of provincial funding despite a quickly growing clientele, director Lysane Grégoire says.



Mieux-Naître learned they would not be receiving any more funding from Quebec in a letter sent to Laval's Integrated Health and Social Services Centre (CISSS) on June 29.



Laval has complete and adequate perinatal services, wrote Health and Social Services spokesperson Marie-Claude Lacasse in an email to the Gazette. She says the CLSC de Ste-Rose offers select perinatal services at 280 Roi-du-Nord Blvd. She also says the funding Mieux-Naître received was non-recurring, of which the centre was aware.



In an open letter sent to Gaétan Barrette, Quebec's minister of Health and Social Services, on Monday, Mieux-Naître pleads for financial help to "prevent the closing of (...) the region's only perinatal resource centre."

In 2015-2016, Grégoire said they saw 509 parents. The following year, that number increased to 1,527. She said about 4,300 babies are born in Laval every year.

"Even though we haven't been able to pay rent for the month of July, (our landlord) is allowing us to finish offering the services that people have registered for throughout the end of July, beginning of August," Grégoire said, adding if things don't change before then, the centre will have no choice but to shut down.

If the centre does close, some of its services will still be offered by a postnatal home-care worker who is paid by the CISSS du Laval, Grégoire said. That employee is currently working for Mieux-Naître, which employs four people and hires other contractual workers.

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Mieux-Naître was given \$40,000 in discretionary funding, which Grégoire said was meant to help get the centre off the ground while the ministry worked on developing the budget that would group them with other perinatal centres around the province, which she said never happened.

“They’ve told us the name of the game is money, and they don’t have enough to finance us,” Grégoire said.

Their open letter to Barrette argues that the government recognizes the value of perinatal centres, as 10 others located throughout the province receive funding in line with the Politique de périnatalité, established in 2008 while Premier Philippe Couillard was minister of Health and Social Services.

Grégoire said Centre de santé et de service sociaux de Laval included the creation of a “community and intercultural environment for parents in the perinatal period” as one of their priorities in their 2011-2016 Projet clinique.

She said Laval mayor Marc Demers has written a letter to Couillard asking for funding to be reinstated to Mieux-Naître. He is one of the members of the Pour nos bébés coalition, formed in December 2016 in hopes of saving the centre.

In a letter of support for Mieux-Naître, a mother who used its services wrote they helped her find balance after suffering from postpartum depression.

In light of Mieux-Naître's imminent closure, Sara Tremblay said, "I am worried for all the women who will give birth and, like me, will find themselves without help."

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