

The Alarming Impact of COVID-19 on Young Children
Pandemic underscores the urgent need to join forces and
Put early childhood development front and centre of our societal priorities

Montreal, November 12, 2020 — Momentum is building in support of **Early Childhood Week** (November 15–21) to give a voice to the 530,000 children 5 and under in Quebec, or close to 600,000 counting all those who will be born in the coming months. This province-wide movement has one clear goal: to make early childhood development a true priority for our society. The issue is even more compelling in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has only made conditions worse for children who were already vulnerable.

Collateral damage of COVID-19 on the well-being of young children

The repercussions of the pandemic are undeniable. We need only think of the effect of masks on interaction in learning environments, the strains on household finances and mental health, the weakened social safety net, the effect of telework on work-family balance, unprecedented stress during pregnancy, mothers who have given birth without their partner, grandparents cut off from their families, delays in healthcare services, increases in domestic abuse, and greater housing needs and food insecurity. The critical transition to kindergarten has also been jeopardized by COVID-19-related restrictions and the cancellation of many of the activities that favour interaction between schools, families and the community as a whole.

"It's been proven, in both the short and the long term, that collective efforts to support early childhood development help reduce overall healthcare, social and educational spending and decrease school dropout rates. We all have a role to play in the lives of children 5 and under by providing them with the social safety net they need to grow and thrive. Leading the way in this are parents, naturally, but it goes beyond that: the essential contributions of educators, neighbours, employers, community services, policy-makers and an engaged citizenry cannot be overlooked. They have the power to do something concrete and make a real difference. Today's toddlers are tomorrow's adults. We need to give each of them an equal chance at achieving their full potential so they become well-rounded, productive members of society. And the only way we can make that happen is by working together!"

Elise Bonneville, Director, Collectif petite enfance

Activities across the province

A wide range of activities aimed at decision-makers and the general public will take place throughout the province during Early Childhood Week. Participating organizations will host a number of virtual events through such venues as public libraries, family centres, childcare facilities, Indigenous communities and more. There will also be a few events that are province-wide in scope, namely:

- November 17: Release of the survey findings on the challenges faced by parents and their children in this time of pandemic, commissioned by the Early Childhood Observatory
- November 18: Early childhood development summit in Montreal, hosted by Horizon 0-5
- November 19: Virtual Event – Supporting the Well-being of Young Children in English-speaking Communities!, organized by Community Health and Social Services Network
- November 20: Announcement concerning new developments and Child Friendly Municipality nomination procedures, hosted by Espace MUNI

For the full ECW program, go to www.grandesemaine.com/en/

Ambassadors for early childhood

Close to 20 people from many different walks of life have agreed to speak up for the youngest members of society, namely:

- Doreen Assaad, Mayor, City of Brossard
- Caroline Biron, Managing Partner, Woods LLP
- Kim Boutin, Olympic medalist, short track speed skating
- Caroline Calvé, Snowboarding Olympian, Head of Services for Athletes and Training Groups, ESIM
- Louise Deschatelets, Actress and columnist
- Martine Desjardins, General Manager, Mouvement national des Québécoises et Québécois
- Gabrielle Fontaine, Actress
- Michel Leblanc, President and Chief Executive Officer, Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal
- Annie Lemieux, President, LS4 / LSR GesDev
- Jean-François Parenteau, Borough Mayor, Verdun
- Jamie Orchard, Journalist and Founder, The Second Act Project
- Ghislain Picard, Chief, Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador
- Kim St-Pierre, Olympic hockey player, Business Development Manager, BOKS Canada
- Stéphanie Trudeau, Executive Vice President, Québec, Énergir
- Guillaume Vermette, humanitarian clown
- Fabrice Vil, Co-founder and President, Pour 3 Points, certified integral development coach, lawyer
- Dr. Stanley Vollant, Surgeon and President, Puamun Meshkenu

Friday, November 20 — World Children's Day

The public is invited to show their support for this important movement all week long, especially on Friday, November 20, which marks World Children's Day. Wearing the iconic "blankie square," made of fabric resembling a baby blanket, is a symbolic way to send a message that early childhood development matters to our society.

About Early Childhood Week

Running from November 15 to 21, 2020, the 5th annual Early Childhood Week is an opportunity to share information and encourage dialogue about early childhood development, to shine the spotlight on local and regional initiatives designed to support young children and to spur the various levels of society to take action. A number of activities and events will take place across the province throughout the week. www.grandesemaine.com

Early Childhood Week is an initiative of the Collectif petite enfance.

About the Collectif petite enfance

The Collectif petite enfance is made up of 19 member organizations, together representing thousands of early childhood development advocates who are determined to make this issue a priority for Quebec. The Collectif petite enfance is committed to taking the lead on various matters central to the future and well-being of young children across the province, from the womb through to preschool years.

Social inequalities in Quebec have many tangible impacts on society as a whole, and young children in particular. The latest statistics show that one out of every four children in the province — one out of three in some communities — exhibits vulnerability in at least one sphere of development by the time they start kindergarten. These numbers are even more alarming in some specific contexts and only confirm that immediate action is needed. Young children are the adults of the future. It is essential to give them the best possible start in life and an equal chance to thrive, while taking into account each child's unique strengths and the diverse experiences to which they are exposed.

www.collectifpetiteenfance.com

The 19 member organizations of the Collectif petite enfance: Association d'éducation Préscolaire du Québec, Association des haltes-garderies communautaires du Québec, Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance, Community Health and Social Services Network, Conseil québécois des services éducatifs à la petite enfance, Espace MUNI, Fédération québécoise des organismes communautaires Famille, First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health

and Social Services Commission, Fondation Olo, Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation (Naître et grandir / Early Childhood Observatory), Marie-Vincent Foundation, Ordre des optométristes du Québec, Quebec Public Library Association, Regional Early Childhood Steering Committees, Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec, Regroupement pour la Valorisation de la Paternité, Réseau des Centres de Ressources Périnatales du Québec, Réseau pour un Québec Famille and Réseau québécois pour la réussite éducative.

Facebook: facebook.com/Collectifpetiteenfance

Twitter: twitter.com/CollectifPE

#GrandeSemaine #toutpetits #PrioritéPetiteEnfance #EarlyChildhoodWeek

-30-

Source : Early Childhood Week / Collectif petite enfance

Information: Josée Massicotte

joseemassicotte@gmail.com

514-388-0169