**Sample Address**

*[Thank the person who introduced you, if appropriate/applicable]*

Distinguished guests,

*[Identify any VIPs present, from most to least important]*

Good [morning/afternoon/evening],

I’m delighted to be with you here today, as we celebrate Early Childhood Week across the province. This is the sixth year in a row we are speaking up on behalf of no fewer than 534,000 babies, toddlers and preschoolers in Quebec, and driving home the fact that they must be, and are, a true priority for our society. There are currently [*number of children aged 0 to 5 in your region*] children aged five and under living in the *[name of region]* region. They will grow up to be the adults of tomorrow. And they all deserve an equal chance to realize their full potential.

In May 2021, the Laurent Commission issued a series of recommendations, and it is these recommendations that are the inspiration behind this year’s focus on prevention and on creating caring communities to protect our youngest citizens.

We must shine the spotlight on their needs and on the importance of supporting them from the womb through their first five years of life to make sure they have the right tools to grow and thrive. That is what Early Childhood Week is all about.

Thankfully, in Quebec most young children are faring well and living in environments that foster healthy development. We have every right to be proud of this fact.

Unfortunately, however, the same chances at succeeding are still denied far too many children, from birth onward. About 1 out of every 4 — or as many as 1 out of every 3 in low-income communities – exhibits vulnerability in at least one sphere of development by the time they start kindergarten. This can have a real and lasting impact on their academic performance and their ability to get ahead in life.

The situation has become even more worrisome in the age of COVID-19. The pandemic has had major repercussions on the entire ecosystem surrounding young children. The broader impact will be felt for a long time to come. Children’s social interaction has been limited. Young families are experiencing financial hardships. Access to affordable housing has become increasingly difficult. And parents are under more stress than ever. For many of them, lockdown restrictions and the cancellation of school and family activities have made the transition from home or daycare to school a difficult one. It is critical that we bear all this in mind as we come up with new strategies moving forward.

For concrete examples of initiatives in this vein, we need think only of [*Insert examples of success stories in early childhood development in your region and/or requests you may have*].

By pooling our strengths and our resources, we will be able to create the caring communities they unquestionably need and deserve.

Together, we can make a difference for young children right from the start.

Thank you and Happy Early Childhood Week to you all!

**Early childhood statistics by region**

We invite you to use the following information in your communication materials (press releases, speeches, op-eds, etc.)

Number of children 5 and under in Quebec: 534,939 or 6.4% of the provincial population

* Bas-Saint-Laurent: 5.5% of the population, 11,095
* Saguenay−Lac-Saint-Jean: 5.9% of the population, 16,446
* Capitale-Nationale: 6.2% of the population, 45,418
* Mauricie: 5.5% of the population, 14,656
* Estrie: 6.1% of the population, 19,840
* Montreal: 6.7% of the population, 134,098
* Outaouais: 6.7% of the population, 26,022
* Abitibi-Témiscamingue: 6.8% of the population, 10,044
* Côte-Nord: 6.2% of the population, 5,926
* Nord-du-Québec: 10.7% of the population, 4,815
* Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine: 4.7% of the population, 4,291
* Chaudière-Appalaches: 6.5% of the population, 27,549
* Laval: 6.5% of the population, 27,719
* Lanaudière: 6.7% of the population, 33,631
* Laurentides: 6.2% of the population, 37,460
* Montérégie: 6.5% of the population, 100,426
* Centre-du-Québec: 6.4% of the population, 15,503

Reference: <https://tout-petits.org/media/1801/portrait2017_complet_web_en.pdf>