**SAMPLE OP-ED**

**[Catchy title related to your message]**

[*Lede – It is always best to start an op-ed with a short and snappy sentence that grabs the reader’s attention so they feel drawn to keep reading. You may want to open with a mention of the Laurent Commission report or something about the COVID-19 pandemic and its long-term effects on children.*]

[*Body of the letter – In this section, you need to convey the main point of your message. A few messages are included below to inspire you, but it’s best if you personalize the letter as much as possible and give it a local angle (statistics, impact on local organizations, etc.). We also encourage you to refer to the Key Messages document in completing this section. Highlight concrete examples of what you are doing or current initiatives in your area related to early childhood development. This is also where you need to link the content of your letter to Early Childhood Week.]*

* The 6th annual Early Childhood Week has officially begun, making it the ideal time to come together and give a voice to Quebec’s 534,000 children 5 and under.
* Let’s make early childhood development a priority for our society.
* Currently, there are [*Number of children 5 and under in your region – see list below]* children 5 and under in the [*Your region*] region. They are our future. Sadly, too many of them lack access to the opportunities they need to grow up to become their best selves.
* 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.
* 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 challenging one. It is critical that we bear all this in mind as we come up with new strategies.
* Too many children are denied, from birth, the chance to realize their full potential. About 1 in 4 kindergarten-age children (1 in 3 in low-income communities) exhibits vulnerability in at least one sphere of development. This may undermine their academic progress and impact their life.
* Various measures can be introduced to nurture children’s development. These include:
* Support for expecting and new parents to give every baby the best start
* High-quality, accessible educational daycare
* Collective measures to create a better family-work balance
* Accessible, family-friendly social and healthcare services
* Safe, suitable and affordable housing to grow up in
* Safe public spaces for play and learning

[*Highlight the measures that are particularly relevant to your organization.]*

* Children’s experiences from birth to 5 years old have a decisive impact on their development. Any actions undertaken during this period will help establish the solid foundations that will guide them in adulthood. Parents play a critical role in this, but they are not alone. Everyone – employers, elected officials, neighbours and friends alike – can take action early to ensure that each child has an equal chance of success.
* Young children are the future of our society. We need to act now to provide them with the best possible conditions to thrive.

[C*all to action – Conclude with a compelling call to action. What do you want readers to take away from your letter? For example: “Together, let’s work to make a difference for young children right from the start. Remember, the toddlers of today are the adults of tomorrow. Help give them an equal chance to realize their potential and grow into well-rounded members of society.”*]

*[Signature – Insert the names and signatures of the authors of the letter]*

**IMPORTANT:** To increase the chance of your op-ed being published, keep your text to a maximum of **500 words.**

**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>