**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.]*

*[Body of the letter – In this section, you need to convey the main point of your message. A few ideas 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 connect the dots between this letter and Early Childhood Week.]*

* The ninth annual Early Childhood Week has officially begun, making it the ideal time to come together and give a voice to Quebec’s 514,747 children aged five and under.
* Let’s make early childhood development a true priority for our society.
* Currently, there are [number of children five and under in your region – see list below] children aged five and under in [name of your 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.
* The theme for this year’s event is **Together, we can level the playing field for all young children. Let’s help them achieve their full potential.** All children should have the same chance to thrive, regardless of where in the province they are born and raised.
* **The following top the list of priorities aimed at making sure efforts to improve children’s well-being are invested wisely:**
* **Ensure an adequate standard of living:** Provide access to affordable housing, healthy food in sufficient supply and a balance between family, work and studies, achieved through financial support proportionate to families’ needs.
* **Work together:** Break down silos by building bridges between the various stakeholders and aligning our advocacy efforts with those of policy-makers.
* **Take action as early as possible:** Safeguard the health, well-being and development of all children, and ensure the best possible conditions and access to support are available to all parents, from pregnancy onward.
* **Focus on services at the community level:** Support locally delivered services and existing community networks so that they can work in an upstream capacity and serve as a catalyst for prevention.

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

* Early childhood experiences have a decisive impact on 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. As **early childhood professionals and citizens**, we must continue to advocate for this cause. Additionally, **our governments and institutions** must invest in a better future by prioritizing early childhood in their decision-making. To ensure equality of opportunities for our youngest children, our leaders must develop comprehensive public policies that will lead to the implementation of a full range of services for them and their families, from pregnancy onward.

*[Call to action – Conclude with a compelling call to action. What do you want readers to take away from your letter? For example: “In a society as rich as ours, we cannot allow geographic and socioeconomic disparities to adversely impact the future of our youngest citizens. Together, let’s work to make a difference for 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.” OR “Our collective prosperity in Quebec hinges on making sure all children have a fair chance in life. Let’s all join forces to ensure the right conditions are in place for them to become their best selves. By investing in their future today, we can build a fairer, stronger and more united world tomorrow.”]*

*[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**

You may want to incorporate the following information, especially as it pertains to your region, in your op-ed:

**There were more than 514,700 children aged five and under living in Quebec in 2023, based on provisional figures, accounting for 5.8% of the total provincial population.**

Population estimates for children aged five and under for each of the administrative regions, July 1, 2023.

**Note:**  The percentages for each of the regions are based on total regional population, not the population of the province as a whole.

* Bas-Saint-Laurent: 4.8% of the population, 9,799
* Saguenay−Lac-Saint-Jean: 5.4% of the population, 15,191
* Capitale-Nationale: 5.6% of the population, 44,333
* Mauricie: 5.1% of the population, 14,530
* Estrie: 5.5% of the population, 28,219
* Montreal: 5.7% of the population, 120,350
* Outaouais: 6.1% of the population, 25,526
* Abitibi-Témiscamingue: 6.2% of the population, 9,224
* Côte-Nord: 5.7% of the population, 5,119
* Nord-du-Québec: 10.9% of the population, 5,080
* Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine: 4.6% of the population, 4,231
* Chaudière-Appalaches: 5.9% of the population, 26,418
* Laval: 5.6% of the population, 25,200
* Lanaudière: 6.3% of the population, 34,702
* Laurentides: 6.0% of the population, 39,700
* Montérégie: 6.1% of the population, 91,560
* Centre-du-Québec: 6.0% of the population, 15,565

**Provisional figures for 2023**

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Annual Demographic Estimates, Subprovincial Areas (May 2024). Adapted by the Institut de la statistique du Québec.