**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. Once again this year, we are speaking up on behalf of no fewer than 514,747 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 five and under in your region — see below] children aged five and under living in [name of your region]. They will grow up to lead our society. And they should all have the same chance to thrive, regardless of where in the province they are born and raised.

The rallying cry 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.**

Most young children in Quebec are faring well and living in environments that foster healthy development. However, [indicate problems or statistics concerning your region, for example]:

Geographic disparities:

* + The 2022 edition of the Quebec Survey of Child Development in Kindergarten (QSCDK) showed that certain regions of Quebec have significantly higher proportions of children considered “vulnerable” in at least one area of development.
    - Rates are particularly high in the Côte-Nord, Estrie, Laval and Outaouais regions.
  + Research shows that children living in rural areas are much more likely to experience child protection involvement than their urban counterparts.
    - Children in rural areas are 27% more likely to have a child protection report accepted and to become the subject of an assessment.
    - Children in rural areas are 29% more likely to be found, through the assessment, to be at risk of compromised safety and/or development.
    - Children in rural areas are 52% more likely to be placed in care

Socioeconomic disparities:

* + The 2022 edition of the Quebec Survey on the Preschool Path of Kindergarten Students (QSPPKS) confirms that there has been a rise in the likelihood that a child from a low-income household will be considered “vulnerable” in four of the five development areas (likelihood of vulnerability in the area of “emotional maturity” is not higher).
    - This may undermine their academic progress and impact their whole life.
  + Like children in rural areas, children who grow up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are much more likely to experience child protection involvement in their lives.
    - Children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are 69% more likely to have a child protection report accepted and to become the subject of an assessment.
    - Children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are 90% more likely to be found, through the assessment, to be at risk of compromised safety and/or development.
    - Children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are 113% more likely to be placed in care.]

Various measures can be taken to nurture children’s development. These include [adapt as relevant to your region].

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 specific goals/demands you may have].

As **early childhood professionals and citizens**, we must continue to advocate for this cause. Our networks must strive to make services for young children and parents accessible to families throughout the province. 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 children and their families, from pregnancy onward.

In a society as rich as ours, we cannot allow geographic and socioeconomic disparities to negatively impact the future of our youngest citizens.

Thank you and Happy Early Childhood Week to you all!

**Early childhood statistics by region**

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

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