

MAJOR INITIATIVE — FOR — FAMILIES

Original text in French

ACTION PLAN
TO COMPLETE THE
EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE
SERVICES NETWORK

MAJOR INITIATIVE FOR FAMILIES

Action plan to complete the educational childcare services network

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Ministère de la Famille
Legal deposit - Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2021

ISBN (PDF) : 978-2-550-90619-3

A number of the actions proposed under this Major Initiative for Families require legislative and/or regulatory amendments.

These actions, marked with an asterisk in the text, are conditional on the enactment of regulations and/or the passage of the Bill by the National Assembly and could be subject to change during the legislative and regulatory process.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDC

Allowance for integration of a disabled child

BC or Coordinating Office

Home childcare coordinating office

CCO

Advisory committee on the supply of educational childcare services

CPE

Childcare centre

ECA

Educational Childcare Act

GNS

Non-subsidized daycare centre

GS

Subsidized daycare centre

HGC

Community drop-in daycare centre

MES

Exceptional assistance measure for the integration of disabled children with major needs into childcare services

PNR

Person not recognized, providing home childcare services

RSG or home childcare provider

Person recognized as a home childcare provider

SGEE

Educational childcare services

VGQ

Auditor General of Québec

A WORD FROM THE PREMIER

Twenty-five years ago, Québec made a bold move and created a network of affordable, high-quality childcare services. We have reason to be proud of this great legacy. Québec was a visionary in terms of both child development and work-family balance, as well as the economy. Today, we must continue to work in that same direction, guided by courage, initiative and the continuous search for solutions to help our families.

Québec is certainly one of the most credible benchmarks for childcare not only in North America but also in the rest of the world. However, it is high time that we follow through on our aspirations and complete this network.

I am confident that the Major Initiative for Families will allow us to resolve the issue of access to the network. The entire early childhood sector will finally be able to devote itself to its true mission, namely, providing quality services to children and their families. With this Major Initiative to complete the childcare services network, the follow-up on the Laurent Commission on Children's Rights and Youth Protection, the Agir tôt (Action at an early age) initiative and the roll-out of Kindergarten for 4-year olds, Quebec will be making an unprecedented commitment to its children over the next few years.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank all those who work with children in Québec. You are a top priority. Through this plan, we will continue to work with you to finally complete our childcare services network.

François Legault

Premier of Québec

A WORD FROM THE MINISTER

In 1997, the Québec government pioneered the creation of the educational childcare services network. It did so under difficult economic conditions as it was convinced of the role that childcare services had to play for families in our children's development, for women's status on the labour market and for an economic recovery.

Nearly 25 years later, and more than ever, our network still has a pivotal role to play for Québec families within our society. Educational childcare services are, in fact, the link between two main government priorities: the economy and education.

On assuming my duties as Minister of Families, I noticed however that this network had been mishandled. It was necessary to relaunch its development and change the ways of doing things in order to better meet the needs of families and provide a childcare space for each and every child.

The arguments in support of this choice are not new. Collectively, Québec already understood a long time ago that investing in quality educational childcare services stimulates both children's development and women's empowerment, as well as growth in the economy. Childcare services are also one of the best tools at our disposal to promote equal opportunity.

Moreover, it was on the basis of these findings that Premiers Lucien Bouchard and Pauline Marois proposed a family policy for Québec in 1997. This is also what parents, early childhood partners, businesses and municipalities came to tell us during the Québec-wide consultations on the future of the network held last spring.

Today, by launching its Major Initiative for Families, the Québec government has just made it loud and clear that this issue is a priority and, for the first time, it is committing itself specifically to providing a space for every little one within the educational childcare services network.

The time has come to complete, once and for all, this network that was created 25 years ago.

We cannot miss out on this.

We owe it to the children so that they can develop their full potential, regardless of the socio-economic conditions in which they live. We owe it to the parents and mainly to the women, who are wondering how they will be able to go back to work. We owe it to our businesses, which are growing as a result of the increased participation of young mothers and fathers in the job market.

We owe it to all the families in Québec, today's families of course, but also those that our children will have tomorrow.

Mathieu Lacombe
Minister of Families

SUMMARY

Even though the educational childcare services network created by Québec is indispensable, it is still facing many challenges. In spite of the actions of the Québec government since 2018, a number of problems still persist. In order to better meet the current and future needs of families, a major shift is therefore required.

During the consultations on the future of the educational childcare services network in the spring of 2021, which involved 483 organizations, experts, researchers and stakeholders, as well as 20,245 citizens, a consensus was reached on certain priority actions to be implemented to make changes that are in line with the needs expressed by families and to ensure its rapid and optimum development.

Based on the ideas discussed at the consultations and the findings of the past few years, the Québec government is now proposing a Major Initiative, incorporating both actions already announced and others to come, whose objectives are as follows:

1. **Create a sufficient number of spaces to meet the needs of families** and deliver on every child's right to a space by adding 37,000 new subsidized spaces to the existing network, by ensuring that a sufficient number of spaces are available at all times to meet the needs of all parents, and by increasing the supply of non-standard childcare hours.
2. **Contribute to greater financial equity among families** by converting non-subsidized spaces into subsidized ones and by amending the refundable tax credit for childcare expenses.
3. **Increase the network's efficiency in order to improve its development** by enhancing the processes to create new spaces, by refining the understanding of needs in order to create spaces where they are most needed, and by making the single window a true waiting list under the Government's responsibility.
4. **Consolidate home childcare** by improving the working conditions of home childcare providers and by harmonizing the practices of home childcare coordinating offices, in addition to incorporating non-recognized home childcare into the educational childcare services network.
5. **Ensure that there is enough qualified labour** by improving working conditions and supporting the training and qualifications acquired by educator staff in the educational childcare services network in order to generate interest in the profession and to better meet the need for qualified workers in educational childcare services.

6. **Make equal opportunity central to our action again** by prioritizing access to educational childcare services for children living in a precarious socio-economic situation and by providing services adapted to the needs of the most vulnerable children and those with special needs.

Through the 45 measures proposed under the Major Initiative, the Government will make available the spaces required to ensure access to every child whose parents want an educational childcare space. It will also ensure that there is a sufficient number of qualified workers available, which will guarantee more equitable access to the educational childcare services network and allow vulnerable children to be prioritized.

The Government also undertakes to develop the network based on needs, to enhance the quality of all educational childcare services, in particular by increasing the number of qualified staff.

An overall investment in the order of \$3 billion by 2024-2025 is granted for this purpose, of which \$1.8 billion will be for new measures. These amounts will be supplemented by subsequent allocations for workforce-related measures and measures for amending the refundable tax credit for childcare expenses.*

* Once this information is available, this document will be updated to reflect all the actual investments under this Major Initiative.

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THE MAJOR INITIATIVE

“The time has come to complete, once and for all, this network that was created 25 years ago. We cannot miss out on this.”

*Mathieu Lacombe
Minister of Families*

A NECESSARY REFORM

In 1997, the Québec government initiated the development of the educational childcare services network. This strong, ambitious decision enabled numerous parents to enter the labour market, making Québec a leader in family policy in North America. Today, this network is a source of pride for Quebecers, and the envy of other Canadian provinces as well as a number of countries.

However, nearly 25 years after the creation of the network, the objectives pursued have not been entirely achieved.

The socio-economic situation has changed, and the job market has suffered a number of disruptions. Parents' needs in terms of educational childcare services have become more complex, and their expectations have grown.

Despite the continually increasing number of available spaces, many families still have no access to the educational childcare services network. In 2021, the parents of just over 50,000 children registered in the single-window platform are waiting for a space in a diversified network.

Table 1 – Number of spaces available by type of educational childcare services (July 31, 2021)

Type of educational childcare services	Number of spaces	Percentage of spaces
Childcare centres (CPEs)	98,468	35%
Home childcare	66,240*	23%
Subsidized daycare centres	47,789	17%
Non-subsidized daycare centres	70,004	25%
TOTAL	282,501	100%

* As at July 31, 2021, 91,604 spaces had been scheduled for accreditation by home childcare coordinating offices. Of this number, 66,240 spaces had actually been supplied by home childcare providers.

Note: The number of available spaces does not take into account spaces in Indigenous communities.

In addition to the issue of the number of available spaces, Québec families must also deal with numerous challenges. In fact, children with special needs, those living in a precarious socio-economic situation, and parents who need non-standard childcare hours are faced with major obstacles limiting their access to educational childcare services. These obstacles include especially unequal access to subsidized spaces, the supply of which varies from one region to

another. For example, the subsidized spaces in the administrative regions of Montréal and Laval account for 67% of the total spaces available at educational childcare establishments, while those in the regions of Côte-Nord and Nord-du-Québec account for 100%.

**Table 2 – Percentage of subsidized spaces by administrative region
(July 31, 2021)**

Administrative region	Percentage of subsidized spaces
Côte-Nord	100%
Nord-du-Québec	100%
Gaspésie–Îles-de-la-Madeleine	99%
Bas-Saint-Laurent	96%
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	95%
Mauricie	92%
Centre-du-Québec	91%
Estrie	91%
Chaudière-Appalaches	86%
Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean	85%
Outaouais	82%
Lanaudière	82%
Laurentides	79%
Montérégie	78%
Capitale-Nationale	74%
Montréal	67%
Laval	67%

This disparity creates inequity between Québec families because, despite the refundable tax credit for childcare expenses, some have to pay a higher cost for the services they obtain.

The single-window platform *La Place 0-5* may also contribute to the sense of injustice experienced by parents, who perceive it as a waiting list when, in fact, it constitutes a pool of children waiting for a space from which the educational childcare services can freely draw, in accordance with their own admission policies, to fill their vacant spaces. Moreover, the Government currently has no control over the content of these admission policies.

The report of the Auditor General of Québec (VGQ), filed in October 2020,¹ and that of the Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (the Laurent Commission), filed in May 2021², shed light, in fact, on certain shortcomings with regard to access to educational childcare services, particularly the shortage of spaces to meet demand and the

¹ Auditor General of Québec, [Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021](#), Chapter 2: *Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance* (Access to educational childcare services), p. 33.

² Special Commission on the Rights of the Child and Youth Protection (CSDEPJ), [Instaurer une société bienveillante pour nos enfants et nos jeunes – Rapport de la CSDEPJ](#) (Creating a caring society for our children and our youth – CSDEPJ Report), Chapter 2: *Agir en prévention, d'abord et avant tout* (Taking preventive action, first and foremost), p. 108.

underrepresentation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Several reasons explain why the objectives set in 1997 have still not been entirely achieved, in particular:

- The past choice of prioritizing the development of spaces in non-subsidized daycare centres.
- A procedure for developing subsidized spaces that, over time, has proven to be slow and inflexible.
- Planning based on inaccurate and incomplete data.
- Admission policies that may restrict access to certain client bases.
- An exodus of home childcare providers.
- Insufficient supply of non-standard childcare hours.

In addition, there is a significant labour shortage, which was exacerbated during the pandemic and can be explained by a drop in enrolment for the Diploma of College Studies (DCS) in Early Childhood Education (ECE), which is now having an impact on graduation rates.

Enrolments for the DCS in ECE plunged by 32% between the 2014-2015 and 2020-2021 school years, dropping from 4,468 to 3,059 for the fall semester. Graduation rates fell by 28% in three years for the DCS and the Attestation of Collegial Studies (ACS).

In order to turn things around and ultimately achieve the objectives of the 1997 family policy, the Ministère has achieved significant advances since 2018, and rolled out numerous measures to reduce the time it takes to create subsidized spaces and to create tens of thousands of them. However, several challenges still remain.

Québec showed visionary leadership when it set up the educational childcare services network. Today, in order to complete it and ensure access, and to achieve the objectives set in 1997, we must act differently. We need new tools.

However, the current legal framework does not allow the Ministère to go any further to properly meet the childcare needs of parents. In fact, because of the current provisions of the *Educational Childcare Act (ECA)*:

- The role assigned to the advisory committees on the supply of educational childcare services (CCOs) creates a bottleneck in the space allocation process and delays the start of educational childcare space creation projects.
- The Ministère cannot reallocate unoccupied facility spaces or convert them to subsidized spaces without first consulting the CCOs; nor can it reallocate unallocated home childcare spaces without first asking a home childcare coordinating office (Coordinating Office).
- The Ministère only has little control over the contents and application of admission policies of educational childcare establishments.
- To create educational childcare spaces, the Ministère has little control over the pace and location of project development by the sponsors.

- Since non-recognized persons providing home childcare services (PNR) are operating on the sidelines of the educational childcare services network, the Ministère cannot have a comprehensive, integrated picture of the services offered or the real needs of families. Consequently, it cannot adequately plan the development of the network.
- Regulatory requirements for home childcare and the lack of consistency in their application by different Coordinating Offices in charge of applying standards, have led to an exodus of a number of home childcare providers, thereby restricting access to subsidized spaces.

Therefore, without major changes, the Ministère cannot further improve the process to create spaces and complete the network quickly.

The findings from recent years³ and the recommendations made during consultations are clear: the ECA must be updated and adapted to the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Québec showed visionary leadership when it set up the educational childcare services network. Now, to complete its development and ensure access, as well as to achieve the objectives set in 1997, we must do things differently. New tools are needed.

With labour shortages and uncertainties regarding the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, this choice is necessary and unavoidable. We must make the completion of the educational childcare services network a priority to ensure the economic recovery and prosperity of Québec by synergizing all its strengths.

The current situation is conducive to a new vision and the consolidation of the progress made in achieving the objectives that Québec set for itself over the past few decades. We must move forward and realize the dream of the generations that came before us, which has become the dream of today's parents, namely, to give every single child access to quality educational childcare services.

³ For a complete presentation of the problems identified, please refer to the consultation paper on educational childcare services, <https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/publication/Documents/cahier-consultation-SGEE-ang.pdf>.

A PRIORITY INITIATIVE FOR THE QUÉBEC GOVERNMENT

Among the many imperatives related to the end of the state of public health emergency, the Québec government is making the completion of the educational childcare services network a priority. This is an investment in the future that will benefit Québec families and society as a whole. Indeed, early childhood educational services bring together two of the government's priorities that are shaping Québec's future: the economy and education.

From an economic standpoint, the multiple positive effects of creating the educational childcare services network are well documented. This network is an essential pillar for the participation of parents, and particularly of women, in the labour market. Between 1996 and 2019, the employment rate for Quebec women rose from 59.9% to 78.8%,⁴ significantly exceeding the Canadian average and thereby ranking Québec at the top as having the highest participation rate of women in the labour market in the world.⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted how essential educational childcare services are for the economic development and prosperity of Québec. This situation has exacerbated the lack of childcare spaces and made women's financial situation weaker. As the Conseil du statut de la femme has pointed out, job losses resulting from the pandemic were more significant for women, they were slower to catch up after the first wave and many women withdrew from the labour market. As a result, 120,200 women lost their jobs in Québec during the first wave, compared to 55,100 men.

Employers also recognize the significant contribution of educational childcare services to the economy. According to a survey conducted on behalf of the Ministère in the fall of 2020, the shortage of educational childcare spaces was a challenge for the recruitment and retention of the workforce for 92% of the Québec enterprises surveyed.⁶

In terms of education, the positive effects of educational childcare services have been widely studied and recognized, both here and abroad. In fact, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), investing in early childhood education is one of the most effective policies for reducing social and economic inequalities.⁷ Quality, timely interventions provide an opportunity to correct delays or gaps before they translate into difficulties in personal, social, and academic development. Thus, educational childcare establishments are the first link in the chain leading to a successful education because early childhood is a critical period for a child's overall development.

⁴ Women between 25 and 54 years of age, with children under age 6 at home.

⁵ Conseil du statut de la femme, *Pandémie : quel effet sur les salaires des femmes?* Québec, 2021.

⁶ Ministère de la Famille, *Sondage sur les préférences des parents, l'accessibilité aux services de garde et l'impact sur le marché du travail, Québec, 2020.* [The survey on parental preferences, access to childcare and the impact on the labour market is an internal document produced in collaboration with the firm Synopsis.]

⁷ OECD, *Early Childhood Education: Equity, Quality and Transitions – Report for the G20 Education Working Group*, p. 4, 2020.

In this context, it is essential to make the missing spaces available as quickly as possible to help parents return to work, to support businesses in their recovery and to guarantee truly equal opportunity to all children.

The Québec government's firm commitment to complete the network of educational childcare services is reflected in the content and scope of actions deployed and the changes proposed.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this Major Initiative for Families is to achieve the vision that Québec created in 1997, which included its aspiration, in particular, of building an educational childcare services network that provides a high-quality space for every single child.

All the 45 measures presented in this document give, in their own way, concrete expression to every child's right to a quality educational childcare space. They represent an overall investment in the order of \$3 billion by 2024-2025. This amount will be supplemented by subsequent allocations for workforce-related measures and measures for amending the refundable tax credit for childcare expenses.

Some of these measures are already being applied, while others are new and complement the strategy undertaken by the Government in 2018. Altogether, they contribute to the Action Plan, which will finally complete the educational childcare services network and provide a space for each and every child.

All of these actions aim to introduce changes that are part of an overall vision with six objectives:

1. Create a sufficient number of spaces to meet the needs of families.
2. Contribute to greater financial equity among families.
3. Increase the network's efficiency in order to improve its development.
4. Consolidate home childcare.
5. Ensure that there is enough qualified labour.
6. Make equal opportunity central to our action again.

Each of these six objectives contributes equally to the Government's impetus for the educational childcare services network as a social project. Together, they will complete the network and meet the diverse needs of families.

OBJECTIVE 1: CREATE A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF SPACES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES

By rolling out this Major Initiative, the Québec government undertakes today to provide a space for every child whose parents express a need for it. In order to achieve this objective, which is based on a strong social consensus, we must obtain all the tools and instruments to finally complete the SGEE network.

A MAJOR INITIATIVE FOR FAMILIES

1. *Make the right to an educational childcare space a reality**

This Major Initiative aims to give effect to the right already enshrined in the ECA for every child,⁴ to receive quality educational childcare services provided that the network has the necessary resources. Indeed, the current difficulties in accessing educational childcare services do not stem from a lack of entitlement but rather from a capacity problem.

The purpose of the Major Initiative is to remedy this situation by creating the number of spaces required and by proposing that an obligation be included in the ECA for the Ministère to use the means to achieve this.

Under this new legislative provision, the Ministère would be obligated to initiate a call for projects, within six months, for subsidized spaces in all the territories where a shortage of spaces is anticipated based on projections. In order to achieve a completed network with a sufficient number of educational childcare spaces, this legal provision would allow a balance to be maintained between the supply of and demand for the spaces.

This approach is in line with the current structure of the educational childcare services network, which is comprised of many autonomous organizations (CPEs, daycare centres, and home childcare). It achieves a beneficial outcome for families, while respecting the autonomy of educational childcare services. Lastly, it consolidates the sharing of responsibilities between the Ministère and educational childcare services, where each one must help meet the needs of families.

2. *Add enough educational childcare spaces*

Québec has about 430,000 children aged five years and under. Of this number, some are less than a year old and are at home with their parents, who are receiving benefits under the Québec

⁴ It is proposed to amend this section of the ECA, which currently targets children up to the end of elementary school education, so that it applies to children until their admission to preschool or elementary school education.

Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP). Others attend Kindergarten for 4-year olds.

It is therefore estimated that a total of approximately 320,000 children need a space in the educational childcare services network.

As at December 31, 2020, nearly 51,000 were registered for the single-window platform and were waiting for a space.⁸ Among these children, 36,000 were more than nine months old and were likely to enter the educational childcare services network quickly, with the time interval for this corresponding to their parents' average eligibility period under the QPIP. It should be noted that this parameter is used strictly for computation purposes, as children under nine months of age can also attend an educational childcare establishment.

Considering the number of spaces currently available in educational childcare services and the actual demand, including in Indigenous communities, the Ministère estimates that there is still a shortage of 37,000 spaces today to meet the needs of families.

Educational childcare spaces required	
Estimated number of children under 5 years of age who do not attend preschool and whose parents currently do not receive benefits under the QPIP	320,000
	-
Educational childcare spaces available as at April 30, 2021 This number includes spaces in Indigenous communities	283,000
	=
Additional educational childcare spaces to be created⁹	37,000

Admittedly, this situation has undesirable socioeconomic effects, such as children not having access to adequate services, and men and women not being able to fully realize their career aspirations and contribute to the economy. For employers, this shortage of spaces causes a significant recruitment and retention challenge.¹⁰

In order to complete the educational childcare services network, the Québec government is committed to making an additional 37,000 subsidized spaces available by 2024-2025, including spaces for infants. These spaces **will accommodate every child whose parents have expressed the need for a space.**

⁸ This number does not include children waiting for an educational childcare space in an Indigenous community because such educational childcare services are not required to join the single-window platform *La Place 0-5*.

⁹ This estimate takes into account the needs at Indigenous educational childcare establishments under a delegation of authority agreement.

¹⁰ Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, *L'accès à des services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance pour la relance économique de nos entreprises en région*, Québec, 2021 [Submission on access to educational childcare services as it relates to the economic recovery of our businesses in the region, filed as part of the Québec-wide consultations on the future of educational childcare services.].

It is worth mentioning that beyond the number itself, which is likely to change,¹¹ the government's commitment is to do everything possible to ensure that every child actually has the right to an educational childcare space. To this end, it is proposing a series of new measures to accelerate and support the development of a sufficient number of subsidized spaces.

In order to complete the educational childcare services network, the Québec government has made the commitment to make an additional 37,000 subsidized spaces available by 2024-2025, including spaces for infants.

3. Boost the development of the network through a major rolling call for projects

Until just recently, new subsidized spaces were allocated to respondents through calls for projects that were issued sporadically and at irregular intervals, with several years between calls. For respondents (contractors, non-profits, or others), this process was particularly difficult to anticipate.

Under this Major Initiative, the allocation process for subsidized spaces will be done through a rolling call for projects rather than on a fixed date. The call for projects will remain open in each territory until the desired balance of supply and demand for spaces has been achieved.

This major call for projects will be more dynamic and will take into account the realities experienced by sponsors, allowing them to seize development opportunities.

Possible solutions frequently proposed during consultations

Streamline the space allocation process and allow respondents to submit projects on an ongoing basis.

[Regional consultations, in particular for the Bas-Saint-Laurent/Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Centre-du-Québec/Estrie/Mauricie groups]

This new rolling submission process for projects will accelerate the creation of 17,000 new spaces. These spaces will be in addition to the spaces already in the pipeline. Moreover, the requirement to provide for the accommodation of at least one group of five infants for new facilities with 59 spaces or less, and at least two such groups for new facilities with 60 or more spaces, will promote the creation of spaces for children 18 months and younger. The launch of this call for projects will help meet the goal of creating 37,000 new subsidized spaces and complete the network to meet the needs of all families.

¹¹ Estimating the demand for educational childcare spaces will depend on several constantly changing data sources (single-window enrolment, demographics, regional economic development, etc.).

Subsequently, the balance between the supply and demand for spaces in the various territories in Québec will be maintained through smaller targeted calls for projects.

Table 3 – Projection of spaces available

	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Annualized projection	5,000	10,500	14,500	6,100
Cumulative projection	5,000	15,500	30,000	36,100*

*Taking into account close to 1,000 spaces to be added to the Indigenous community, there is a total of 37,000 spaces.

In addition, to optimize the use of existing facilities and to stimulate the capacity to create new spaces, discussions will be undertaken with Ministry partners. In the meantime, two major changes proposed during the consultations are being proposed for the ECA: increasing the maximum number of children per facility and lifting the permit limit for CPEs.

OPTIMIZING THE ACCOMMODATION CAPACITY OF SUBSIDIZED EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE ESTABLISHMENTS

4. Increase the maximum number of children per facility*

To allow for the immediate accommodation of more children in existing facilities with premises that meet current standards, it is proposed that the maximum number of children permitted per facility be increased from 80 to 100.

In addition, increasing the maximum number of spaces per daycare permit holder from 300 to 500 would help make new spaces available quickly through the optimization of existing facilities or the construction of new ones.

Possible solution frequently proposed during consultations

Increase the maximum number of spaces per facility as well as the maximum number of facilities per permit and the maximum number of children per permit holder.

[Regional consultations, particularly in the Laval/Montréal/Montérégie group]

5. Lift the permit limit by CPE*

Removing the double limit of five facilities per CPE, or a maximum of 300 children, would also allow for a better distribution of services over the territory, particularly in less densely populated regions. The CPEs that wish to do so could develop several small facilities in the region to serve a larger territory.

SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CPEs IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

6. Promote the development of smaller facilities

The Ministère is committed to promoting the development of smaller facilities in the region, in locations where the demand does not justify the construction of large facilities. As of the fall of 2021, it will initiate work to determine the actions to be subsequently deployed.

IMPROVING THE SUPPLY OF NON-STANDARD CHILDCARE HOURS

7. Expand the supply of non-standard childcare hours

In order to provide a space for every child, including children of parents who need non-standard childcare hours, the Ministère is committed to supporting educational childcare establishments that wish to develop such services, based on the results of the market study on the need for non-standard childcare hours that it conducted in the summer of 2021 in different settings, both urban and rural. It will also rely on the results of the Ministère's ongoing pilot project for non-standard childcare hours in order to review the terms and conditions for this type of childcare services, revise the single window's data collection methods, and work with businesses and organizations that want to participate in supplying non-standard childcare hours.

Possible solution frequently proposed during consultations

Encourage educational childcare services to provide more non-standard childcare hours by easing some of the requirements and increasing the allowance provided to cover the additional costs associated with it.

[Online consultation of citizens]

DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE SERVICES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Indigenous educational childcare services primarily consist of facilities located in the communities of 10 of the 11 First Nations and in urban areas. There are a total of 4,361 licensed spaces in these communities. Of these childcare spaces, 4,182 are subsidized and are distributed among 69 CPEs and two subsidized daycare centres. The 179 non-subsidized spaces are distributed among 3 Coordinating Offices and one non-subsidized daycare centre. Educational childcare services in Indigenous communities are sometimes governed by delegation of authority agreements or covenants, while others must answer to the band council.

The realities of Indigenous communities differ from those of the rest of Québec society. These realities, which are specific to Indigenous communities, translate into distinct local services in an environment where there are different cultural approaches and competing authorities.

Adapting legislative and regulatory frameworks to Indigenous socio-cultural and geographic realities is a major challenge. For example, traditional activities and geographic remoteness can make it difficult to achieve the annual occupancy rates set out in the budgetary rules for facilities subsidized by the Ministère. A more tailored approach to Indigenous realities is needed.

8. Complete the educational childcare services network in Indigenous communities

As part of its Major Initiative, the Québec government intends to complete the educational childcare services network in Indigenous communities.

A first step in this direction will be taken through a call for projects for spaces in Indigenous communities. The purpose of this call for projects will be to create nearly 1,000 new subsidized spaces. These spaces will be created quickly to meet the immediate needs of Indigenous families. At the same time, and in collaboration with the Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones and the Indigenous communities that so desire, the Ministère will undertake an in-depth analysis of their needs and make available the number of spaces required to meet such needs.

An approach that is better adapted to Indigenous socio-cultural and geographic realities is needed.

9. Affirm the distinct nature of educational childcare services in Indigenous communities*

The Government is also taking the unprecedented step of proposing that any standard under the ECA be adapted, through agreements, to be harmonized with any custom, tradition or way of life of an Indigenous community.

Such a provision would ensure that legislative and regulatory frameworks would be better adapted to the socio-cultural and geographic realities of the Indigenous peoples, including the practice of their traditional or cultural activities.

[Possible solution frequently proposed during consultations](#)

[Take into consideration the culture and realities of diverse Indigenous communities in the application of the legislative, regulatory and administrative framework related to educational childcare services](#)

[\[Consultation with Indigenous communities\]](#)

OBJECTIVE 2: CONTRIBUTE TO GREATER FINANCIAL EQUITY AMONG FAMILIES

As part of this Major Initiative, the Government is committed to restoring greater financial equity among families. Unequal access to subsidized spaces, the supply of which varies from one region to another, effectively compromises financial access to the educational childcare services network for many families, including those living in a precarious socio-economic situation. This is particularly the case in the Laval and Montréal regions, where about 17% of the children, whose parents have an annual income of \$25,000 or less, do not have access to a subsidized space.⁵

RESTORING GREATER FINANCIAL EQUITY

10. Abolish the additional parental contribution introduced in 2015

One of the foundations of the 1997 family policy was to offer educational childcare spaces at a single rate that was accessible to the majority of Québec families. This generous choice has been identified, in Canada as well as elsewhere in the world, as a factor in the success of Quebec's educational childcare services network. To return to a pricing policy that is accessible to everyone, in 2019, the Government announced the complete abolition of the additional contribution introduced in 2015. This marked the return to a single rate for subsidized spaces.

Under the Major Initiative, the Government is committed to restoring greater financial equity among families.

11. Convert non-subsidized spaces to subsidized spaces

The conversion of non-subsidized spaces to subsidized spaces is a measure to increase equity among families. It will effectively reduce the cost to parents who do not have access to a subsidized space. It will also help support the development of the educational childcare services network and provide better services, particularly for children with disabilities, who will be able to benefit from the Ministère's support measures.

In fact, by providing a stable source of income to the converted daycare centres, the subsidy will help them attract and retain staff, as well as to promote the quality of the facilities. In addition, since the occupancy rate for non-subsidized daycare centres is considerably lower than for subsidized facilities, it is likely that the conversion of non-subsidized daycare will also optimize the use of existing spaces in the current network.

⁵ Auditor General of Québec, [Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021](#), Chapter 2: *Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance* (Access to educational childcare services), p. 20.

For the first time since the network was set up, and in order to allow more families to access a subsidized space in an educational childcare establishment, the Ministère issued a two-phase call for projects in the fall of 2020, to convert 3,500 non-subsidized spaces into subsidized spaces. For the first phase of conversion, 1,767 spaces were authorized in August 2021. The second call for projects to convert 1,733 spaces was issued at the same time.

At the end of these first two phases of conversion, which are intended to serve as a test, the Ministère will carry out an assessment that will provide it with the information necessary to plan the next steps in the conversion process for non-subsidized spaces.

12. Amend the refundable tax credit for childcare expenses

Because of past choices that led to the rapid development of non-subsidized spaces, a quarter of the spaces available to Québec families are not subsidized. This creates a source of inequity. Despite the desire to convert non-subsidized spaces into subsidized ones, this situation cannot be resolved as quickly we would like. Therefore, in order to restore greater equity among families, the Government will make changes to the refundable tax credit for childcare expenses.

OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE THE NETWORK'S EFFICIENCY IN ORDER TO IMPROVE ITS DEVELOPMENT

In 1997, the educational childcare services network was designed on the basis of an existing set of community-based or for-profit daycare centres. This initial configuration continues, even today, to shape a network of over 3,000 autonomous organizations with a variety of legal statuses.

Under this model, the creation of new spaces in a facility is a shared responsibility between the Ministère and the sponsors: the former administers the subsidies and ensures compliance with the legal and regulatory framework for projects, while the latter propose and implement these projects. However, in 2021, several thousands of spaces that were allocated to sponsors in 2011 and 2013 have still not been created. It is therefore clear that several aspects of the model must be reviewed and corrected.

Without altering the distinct nature of this network, the aim of the Major Initiative is to ensure that the educational childcare services network addresses the legitimate expectations of Québec families that each and every child has access to a childcare space.

That is why, as part of this Major Initiative, the ECA and its regulations would be adapted to increase the efficiency of the process of developing spaces in educational childcare services.

STIMULATING DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE SERVICES ACROSS QUÉBEC

13. Participate in the development of real estate projects*

While educational childcare service projects abound in most regions, in some territories, projects are struggling to emerge. These territories, which are sometimes more disadvantaged, are nonetheless those that would benefit the most from quality educational childcare services projects.

In order to make spaces accessible where needs are identified, it is proposed that, when no sponsor submits a quality project in a territory where there is a shortage of spaces, the Ministère will designate a person in charge to construct a building for a CPE operator. This is not to change the existing model, but rather to complement it with a new tool.

The Ministère could, in particular, participate in financing and planning a construction project and designate a third party for the planning, management or control of the development or construction project, or in supplying the facility.

This measure would improve, for instance, access to subsidized spaces for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and help improve equal opportunity.

INCREASING EFFICIENCY TO ACCELERATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDCARE SPACES

14. Continue the Plan to accelerate access to spaces

At the beginning of CPE development, the lead time for new facilities was about five years. In the last decade, new spaces have been created in an average of four years.

To shorten this time, the Government implemented a number of measures.

Consequently, in the winter of 2019, the Ministère launched the plan to accelerate access to educational childcare spaces (PAAP). This plan jumpstarted the creation of thousands of spaces awarded in 2011 and 2013, but still not created in 2019. Moreover, under this framework, a new requirement was imposed on all project sponsors, who must now create these spaces within a maximum of 24 months. To achieve this objective, the Ministère has also provided close and constant support to all sponsors.

15. Streamline the CPE development process

To reduce the time it takes to develop subsidized spaces, the Ministère also reviewed the process related to the opening of new childcare centres (CPEs), reducing it from 17 to nine steps. Delayed due to delays caused by the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, this optimization process, which was completed in March 2021, will reduce the average time to create spaces from three to two years. These measures will help reduce the time to create new spaces to 24 months.

To achieve this ambitious goal, however, it is also necessary to review and correct the entire process. In addition to the measures already announced for this purpose, others are now being proposed to complement the strategy begun in 2018.

16. Reduce project analysis delays*

It is now proposed that the role, operation and composition of advisory committees on the supply of educational childcare services (CCOs) be reviewed. This change to the ECA would eliminate duplication of the analysis of new space projects. In fact, the Ministère is currently assessing projects for eligibility, and then referring them to the CCOs for analysis. The Ministère then evaluates the CCOs' recommendations. Because of the large number of projects to be evaluated at the same time, this process can generate significant delays. The proposed change, combined with the rolling call for projects mentioned earlier, could shorten the process of allocating spaces that precedes the space creation period by nearly six months. The revision of the composition and mandate of the CCOs would also make it possible to obtain more detailed data on educational childcare services needs and to better plan the development of the network (see Measure 20).

17. Authorize temporary facilities*

Also in the interest of efficiency, in the spring of 2021, in order to further accelerate the creation of subsidized spaces and increase access to them, the Ministère allowed the opening of CPEs in temporary facilities in order to accommodate children even before a construction or expansion project is finalized. This new approach has produced immediate results and is well received by the network's stakeholders. A legislative amendment would now make it possible to extend this authorization to daycare centres.

18. Support the development of temporary premises by municipalities

To complement the measure that allows the opening of CPEs in temporary facilities, the Ministère will launch a financial support program to cover a portion of the costs incurred by municipalities and band councils that set up and provide temporary premises for a CPE until new infrastructure is built. This financial assistance may total \$56,250.

OBTAINING DETAILED DATA ON EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE SERVICES NEEDS

19. Improve the model for estimating the supply and demand for educational childcare spaces

In order to have a better understanding of the educational childcare services needs and to adjust the creation of spaces accordingly, the Ministère recently made changes to its model for estimating the supply and demand for spaces.

In order to improve the quality of the data available to the Ministère, a socio-economic disadvantage index has been added for each territory. In addition, estimates are now produced on a smaller geographic scale (1,253 territories rather than 160) and spaces for home childcare providers whose recognition is temporarily suspended (for example, due to illness or to maternity leave) are no longer recorded.

An improved supply and demand estimation model for spaces to better understand educational childcare service needs.

20. Review the composition and mandate of the advisory committees on the supply of educational childcare services*

The Ministère proposes to optimize the assessment of regional needs and priorities in terms of educational childcare services by relying on the CCOs' extensive local knowledge and more comprehensive forecasting of needs. To better reflect this role, the name of these bodies would be changed to regional advisory committees.

Regional advisory committees would now be made up of a minimum of seven members from local authorities associated with a variety of sectors concerned with the development of the educational childcare services network: business, community, municipal, health and social services and education sectors.

The new regional advisory committees would provide a qualitative reading of the social and economic development issues in their territory, which would complement the quantitative data improvements recently made to the Ministère's estimation model. This would improve network development planning. For example, if a regional advisory committee informs the Ministère that a major employer is coming to the area soon, the Ministère could revise its projected demand for spaces accordingly.

Possible solution frequently proposed during consultations

Work more closely with the local stakeholders to develop a deeper understanding of the real needs of parents and territories and take local specificities more into account.

[Consultation with municipal sector]

BETTER CONTROL OF ADMISSION POLICIES

21. Determine admission criteria for subsidized educational childcare services*

To promote equal opportunity, it is proposed that the Ministère determine, by regulation, the main admission criteria for CPEs and subsidized daycare centres. As a result, these educational childcare services would no longer be able to select their clientele on the basis of their own criteria. In particular, they would have to give priority to children living in a precarious socio-economic situation. Furthermore, any refusal to accommodate a child proposed to them would have to be justified by educational childcare services.

In line with this objective, the Government is proposing that the single window for access to educational childcare services be overhauled to make it a true waiting list.

MAKING THE SINGLE-WINDOW PLATFORM A TRUE WAITING LIST

22. Put the single window under the government's responsibility*

The expectation of Québec parents with regard to the single window for access to educational childcare services could not be clearer: the single window must become a real waiting list that allows parents to know how their child is ranked for each educational childcare establishment where they have registered.

Until now, the single window has been the responsibility of educational childcare services and has been administered in a cooperative manner. However, a change in approach has become necessary to restore public confidence in the admission process for subsidized educational childcare services as the single-window platform is the primary interface between parents waiting for a space and the educational childcare services network.

That is why, as part of its Major Initiative, the Québec government is proposing to assume direct responsibility for the operation of the single window to ensure that a real waiting list is created and that the priority rank of each child is respected. This implies a change in the ECA.

As a result of this new way of doing things, it would be possible to:

- Clarify for the public how the admission policies of educational childcare service providers are applied, which would reassure parents that the management of this list is transparent.
- Create a true waiting list that meets the needs of parents who want to know their ranking at the various educational childcare service providers.
- Guarantee the protection of personal data by placing the single window under the responsibility of the government, which would ensure its secure management. In addition, since data are essential to the proper planning of the development of the educational childcare services network, their compilation by the Government would enrich and improve the reliability of the estimation model used by the Ministère.

This overhaul, which would be done in collaboration with the network, would also benefit educational childcare establishments by making the admission process more efficient.

This, combined with better control of admission policies, would ensure equitable access to educational childcare services for all children.

Possible solution frequently proposed during consultations

Improve the operation of the single window and registration process, in particular by providing more information about educational childcare services, and maintaining a centralized waiting list.

[Regional consultations, particularly in the Chaudière-Appalaches/Capitale-Nationale and Côte-Nord/Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean groups]

ENSURING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN IN THE EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE SERVICES NETWORK

23. Strengthen the tools needed to ensure the health and safety of children*

To strengthen the tools for ensuring the health and safety of children in all educational childcare establishments, it is proposed that the Ministère be given the authority to establish, by regulation, mandatory standards and to require an educational childcare establishment to report the results of any analysis conducted and to take corrective action as necessary. The Ministère does not currently have the authority to require a provider to perform certain tests, for example, for lead in water, and to take appropriate action based on the results.

It is also proposed to allow the Government to determine, by regulation, who may teach the first aid course and to provide for the application of a particular course or prescribe its contents.

OBJECTIVE 4: CONSOLIDATE HOME CHILDCARE

There has been a significant and steady decline observed in subsidized spaces in recognized home childcare: from 2014 to 2020, the number of recognized home childcare providers has declined by more than 20%. Several factors account for this decline, including demographic and economic causes, dissatisfaction on the part of some home childcare providers with the rules to be followed, an administrative burden deemed too heavy, and the lack of concerted efforts in terms of recruitment.

Maintaining the supply of home childcare services, which currently accounts for 30% of available spaces at educational childcare establishments, is however essential to guaranteeing access to educational childcare services for all children, especially in certain rural and remote areas, where it is often the most appropriate service offer.

In order to curb the growing exodus of home childcare providers, recently accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has put in place certain measures to improve the income of home childcare providers and make their daily lives easier. We must now go even further in this regard.

INCREASING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE PROFESSION AND STIMULATING THE CREATION OF ADDITIONAL SPACES

24. Increase the subsidy for home childcare providers

Between 2019 and April 1, 2022, as part of the conclusion of collective agreements and work on the analysis of substantially identical employment, the subsidy income of home childcare providers will have been increased by nearly 30%. In addition, various advances have been made to enable them to increase their subsidized service delivery. These are concrete actions to enhance the attractiveness of the occupation of home childcare provider.

25. Support the start-up of a home childcare provider

To stimulate the creation of new spaces, start-up assistance of \$3,500 for new home childcare providers was announced in the spring of 2021.

Some municipalities have even set up their own financial support program for the creation of new home childcare, thus enhancing the assistance offered by the Ministère.

26. Provide financial incentives to ensure the retention of home childcare spaces

To maintain the supply of home childcare spaces that are already available, the Ministère also announced financial incentives for subsidized home childcare providers:

- Up to \$6,000 for home childcare providers who provide nine spaces instead of six.
- \$3,000 paid out to home childcare providers who have kept at least six subsidized spaces throughout the year in 2021-2022. As of April 1, 2022, this measure will be replaced by the nearly 16% income enhancement agreed on during the committee's work on the analysis of substantially identical employment.

These two incentives are cumulative.

MAKING EVERYDAY LIFE EASIER FOR HOME CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

27. Remove school-age children from the calculation of the child ratio

In order to quickly increase the number of spaces available in home childcare, a legislative relief measure was also introduced to allow the children of home childcare providers and of their assistants, who attend school and are 9 years old and under, to no longer be counted in the ratio if they were there for only a short period of time. This was a historical demand of home childcare providers, which immediately freed up many spaces in already active home childcare settings.

Recognizing the essential role of home childcare in the educational childcare services network, the Government is now proposing other structuring actions to enhance and recognize them.

28. Ease requirements for home childcare providers*

Thus, in order to increase the autonomy of home childcare providers, and to recognize the role they play with the families who entrust their children to them, relief measures will be proposed. These aim to reduce the obstacles to the recognition of new home childcare providers, but above all to reduce the irritants in their daily lives, thus promoting the attractiveness of the profession and the retention of staff. Among these, the following should be noted:

- Renewal of recognition every five years instead of every three years.
- Reducing the number of supervisory visits by Coordinating Offices from three to two per year.
- Standardization and clarification of communications from Coordinating Offices.
- Removal of the requirement to provide a medical certificate when applying for recognition.
- Revising the time frame for completing professional development activities from six hours per year to 12 hours every two years.
- Hosting and evaluating pilot projects that allow for innovative ways of providing home childcare services.

- Providing a sample educational program.
- Simplification of the child's educational record form.

REVIEWING THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COORDINATING OFFICES

29. Harmonizing practices of Coordinating Offices*

In order to stimulate the development of home childcare and to correct certain irritants, the practices of Coordinating Offices would be harmonized. To this end, the Ministère will work closely with them to ensure that guidelines and instructions are applied consistently throughout Québec and that documentation is standardized.

30. Assign the role of prospecting for new home childcare providers to Coordinating Offices*

In addition, to give a new impetus to the recruitment of home childcare providers, it is proposed that Coordinating Offices be explicitly given the role of prospecting their territory for individuals interested in becoming home childcare providers and of promoting this type of educational childcare services. This would energize home childcare.

31. Support Coordinating Offices in developing a new service offer to support the work of home childcare providers

Lastly, Coordinating Offices that have not already done so will be encouraged to develop optional services for home childcare providers, such as administrative services, accounting, catering or replacement banks. Home childcare providers who wish to do so could take advantage of these services to lighten their daily workload.

Possible solution frequently proposed during consultations

Standardize Coordinating Offices' practices and review their role so that they can play a more supportive role.

[Regional consultations, particularly in the Laurentides/Lanaudière/Montérégie group]

BRINGING TOGETHER ALL PERSONS PROVIDING HOME CHILDCARE SERVICES IN THE EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE SERVICES NETWORK

32. Incorporate non-recognized persons into the educational childcare services network*

As part of this Major Initiative, in order to consolidate the educational childcare services network and ensure its coherent development, the Government will invite non-recognized persons, who can currently provide home childcare services without a permit from the Ministère and who do not have the same requirements to meet, to obtain recognition from a Coordinating Office.

It should be noted that some paid childcare activities would not, however, be regulated under the ECA, including:

- The care of children living together, whether in their own home or in another home.
- The care of up to two children who do not live together in a home other than their own.

Including non-recognized persons (PNRs) into the educational childcare services network is intended to provide parents with minimum guarantees of quality educational services and professionally verified environments to ensure the health, safety, development, educational success and well-being of the children.

This is a significant change that requires an amendment to the ECA. However, a transition period would allow PNRs to continue their current activities for four years (48 months).

During this period, the PNRs who wish to do so could benefit from an integration and support plan as well as tools to facilitate their integration into the network, particularly with regard to training requirements.

Those who choose to join the network would automatically benefit from the \$3,500 start-up assistance offered to new home childcare providers as well as the financial incentives provided for the development and retention of home childcare spaces announced in the summer of 2021.

When being integrated into the network, the PNRs who wish to do so could choose to maintain their status as non-subsidized childcare providers. In fact, it is possible to operate in home childcare as a non-subsidized home childcare provider. This status allows the persons concerned not to join a representative union association. However, those who wish to do so, could provide subsidized spaces.

This measure would make it possible, for the first time in the network's history, to obtain a complete and accurate picture of the entire childcare supply on the Québec territory. The Ministère would then be in a position to develop an overall vision of the network, to precisely define the needs and the supply, and to plan the harmonious development of educational childcare services.

Possible solution frequently proposed during consultations

Include all home childcare services into the educational childcare services network, under the supervision of the Coordinating Offices, to ensure the quality of educational services.

[Québec-wide consultation]

OBJECTIVE 5: ENSURE THAT THERE IS ENOUGH QUALIFIED LABOUR

The current shortage of qualified workers in the network is a major issue for the quality, accessibility and development of educational childcare services. Bearing in mind the network's current needs and the creation of 37,000 new spaces, it is expected that 17,800 new educators will need to be hired.

The Government recognizes that there is a direct link between the quality of educational childcare services and the qualifications of the staff, and that workforce issues must be subject to long-term planning. It will therefore conduct in parallel a major qualifications exercise for current and newly recruited educators. Consequently, at the end of this exercise, the network will be able to count on 13,900 additional qualified people to ensure the quality of services and compliance with regulatory ratios.

It should be remembered that to meet the workforce needs and significantly increase the number of qualified educators, significant investments were announced as part of a workforce plan in the spring of 2021, and other measures will be added. More is still to come as part of the collective agreement negotiations currently under way.

IMPROVING THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE EDUCATOR STAFF

33. Increase the salary of educators

Recognizing the urgency of the need for action and the essential contribution that educators make to the development of young children and their educational success, the Government is committed to improving the working conditions of educators and to providing them with a significant wage increase. The recent adoption of temporary salary enhancement measures and continued negotiations will ensure that educators are recognized for their contributions, that there is interest in employment, and that there is an adequate supply of qualified workers. These advances will help ensure the quality of services offered and meet the needs of families.

Possible solution frequently proposed during consultations

Improve the working conditions of educator staff, particularly by increasing salaries.

[Regional consultations, notably in the Abitibi/Nord-du-Québec group]

34. Launch the Early Childhood Work/Study Program

The Government's workforce attraction strategy includes a major investment in the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail's Early Childhood Work/Study Program, which is in response to a request made by the educational childcare services sector.

This paid training program, available as of the fall of 2021 semester at several college institutions, will meet some of the needs for short-term relief by allowing students to alternate between periods of study and periods of work. It includes 735 hours of theoretical training as well as a 240-hour work placement for a total of 975 hours of training. The program ends with a short recognition of acquired competencies process for the candidates. Ultimately, the training will lead to an Attestation of Collegial Studies in Early Childhood Education (ECE).

35. Develop short Early Childhood Education courses

At the Government's request, educational institutions will also develop new specialized short courses in early childhood education (0-5 years) to broaden the range of training programs in order to improve recruitment, ensure greater retention and raise the level of training of the educator staff.

36. Support the Recognition of Acquired Competencies process

To increase the number of qualified staff, the Government will also support the Recognition of Acquired Competencies (RAC) process, which aims to enable unqualified staff to obtain an Attestation or a Diploma of College Studies in Early Childhood Education by the official recognition of the competencies that they have developed through work or life experiences. This process is individualized and can lead quickly to graduation.

37. Offer scholarships to Early Childhood Education students

In addition to these new training programs, there are also complementary measures to increase the number of educators who obtain a Diploma of College Studies in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Until now, only successful completion of the third and final internship came with a \$2,300 scholarship. As announced in the 2021-2022 budget, this measure now also extends to the first two ECE internships. A total of \$6,900 is therefore available in scholarships to ECE students to encourage them to complete their training.

38. Establish a certification service for educators*

In the absence of a common process for the entire network, verification of the qualifications of the educator staff too often leads to parallel steps by educational childcare services and the Ministère. This results in unnecessary delays and frustration for those involved. It is therefore proposed that the Ministère establish a central credential recognition service for educators. This would enhance the organizational performance of the network.

39. Launch a campaign to promote and enhance the value of the educator profession

In order to promote and enhance the profession of educator, the educational childcare services network, and Early Childhood Education training, the Government will roll out a number of actions as of fiscal year 2021-2022.

Other measures aimed primarily at attracting foreign workers to the educational childcare services sector and encouraging students to stay in school are also planned.

Through all these measures and initiatives, the labour pool will grow to meet the needs of the educational childcare services network. This will support the creation of thousands of subsidized spaces and ensure the quality of services.

In order to increase qualified staff, the Government will also support the recognition of acquired competencies process.

OBJECTIVE 6: MAKE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CENTRAL TO OUR ACTION AGAIN

This Major Initiative would not be complete without measures to ensure equal opportunity for our little ones. Every day, the Ministère, the educational childcare establishments and the various local stakeholders are faced with situations that demonstrate the inequity of access to educational childcare services. This is particularly the case for children living in a precarious socio-economic situation or for those with disabilities or special needs.

Already in 2017, the Early Childhood Education Commission pointed out that the development of the educational childcare services network had not reached out to enough vulnerable families.¹² Three years later, the same observation was made in the report of the advisory committee *Agir pour que chaque tout-petit développe son plein potentiel*.¹³ In 2020, the VGQ also highlighted the fact that children from low socio-economic backgrounds and those with special needs have more difficulty than others in accessing the educational childcare services network. Therefore, children whose parents have an annual family income of \$50,000 or less are found to be less likely to attend CPEs (32.6%) than those whose parents have a family income of \$200,000 or more (44.3%).¹⁴ Finally, children with a syndrome diagnosed by a health professional, such as autism spectrum disorder, have a lower placement rate than children without special needs.¹⁶

In this context, equal opportunity, which consists of offering the same development opportunities to all children regardless of their socio-economic situation, has not been fully achieved in educational childcare services.

These findings highlight the need to make the most vulnerable children the focal point of our priorities again. Actions must be implemented to ensure more equitable access to educational childcare services and a response that is more sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable families.

¹² Co-chaired by the commissioners André Lebon, Martine Desjardins and Mtre Pierre Landry, the Early Childhood Education Commission filed a report in February 2017.

¹³ Report of the advisory committee, *Agir pour que chaque tout-petit développe son plein potentiel*, p. 47.

¹⁴ The income data of the families used by the VGQ were provided for the 2018 calendar year by Revenu Québec.

¹⁶ Auditor General of Québec, *Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021*, Chapter 2: *Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance (Access to educational childcare services)*, p. 12.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND THOSE LIVING IN A PRECARIOUS SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

40. Prioritize access to educational childcare services for children living in a precarious socio-economic situation*

Since children living in a precarious socio-economic situation are those who benefit the most from attending a quality educational childcare establishment, every effort must be made to facilitate their access to the network. The Government is making a commitment to these children by proposing, in an unprecedented move, the addition of a requirement for subsidized educational childcare services to give priority admission to children living in a precarious socio-economic situation, in accordance with terms and conditions that will be set out in regulations.

Possible solutions frequently proposed during consultations

Give vulnerable children priority access to subsidized spaces in educational childcare establishments.

Review the allocation process for AIDCs and MESs.

[Québec-wide consultation]

The Government will add a requirement for subsidized educational childcare providers to give priority admission to children living in a precarious socio-economic situation.

41. Better support children with disabilities and those with special needs

In order to promote harmonious and successful integration into educational childcare services, the Ministère will conduct a performance audit for the Allowance for integration of a disabled child. Based on the results, it will revise the AIDC and review the Exceptional assistance measure (MES) in order to optimize the use of allowances for these children. Lastly, it will assess the appropriateness of providing more resources to support children with special needs who are not disabled.

42. Review protocols for reserved spaces

In collaboration with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, the Ministère will review the processes for spaces reserved under the protocols made by educational childcare services and health and social services institutions, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved. Work on the assessment and allocation of spaces will also make it possible to quickly make the necessary adjustments to ensure an optimal match between the children's needs and the supply of services.

The ministries concerned will also assess the possibility of expanding the pool of organizations that can refer children in vulnerable situations to health and social services institutions so that they can in turn refer these children to subsidized educational childcare services with which they have a childcare space reservation agreement. This would help them to better reach children in vulnerable situations and provide them with services tailored to their situation, while promoting their overall development.

MEETING OCCASIONAL AND TEMPORARY CHILDCARE NEEDS

43. Expand drop-in daycare activities*

In order to support the mission of community organizations, particularly those working with the most vulnerable families, it is proposed that the exception for drop-in daycare activities in the ECA be expanded so that they could then organize occasional childcare for the children of parents who are working or in school, in addition to their regular activities. The exception would also be extended to organizations located in an educational institution that provide such services to parents.

In so doing, the organizations concerned could provide activities that would meet, for instance, the following childcare needs:

- Unexpected needs (emergency or with a phone call)
- Occasional or temporary needs (one-time, short period during the year, seasonal, respite care)
- By blocks of time, recurrent or non-recurrent

Since occasional or temporary childcare needs often concern more vulnerable families, which are less likely to attend an educational childcare establishment, this action would also allow us to reach more children living in a precarious socio-economic situation and to offer them the services they need to encourage them to develop to their full potential.

44. Continue to roll out the child's education record

Pursuant to government objectives to act at an early age in a collaborative manner, the Ministère will continue to roll out the education record in educational childcare services and propose other tools, including the supervision grid inspired by those used in the health and social services network, but adapted to educational childcare services intervention, with the help of which difficulties encountered by a child will be able to be identified so that the child can be referred to specialized resources and receive the support he or she needs.

45. Conclude a cooperation agreement with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

In order to promote the implementation of a continuum of services, the Ministère will enter into a cooperation agreement with the MSSS to specify, in particular, the role of educational childcare services in the early detection of difficulties encountered by some young children and their contribution to the MSSS's *Agir tôt* program.

In accordance with the objectives of the Government's *Agir tôt et de manière concertée* initiative and the recommendations of the Laurent Commission, the agreement will support the cooperation between educational childcare services and institutions in the health and social services network, as well as the early detection and referral of the children concerned to services adapted to their needs. This will make it possible to better support vulnerable children. In this sense, this measure will also support the achievement of the Government's objective to increase to 80% the percentage of children who begin their schooling without presenting a vulnerability factor.

CONCLUSION

Today the Québec government is launching a Major Initiative for Families. This is a very ambitious but long awaited initiative to create enough spaces to accommodate every child. This Major Initiative represents an important step forward for the educational childcare services network and for all families in Québec. It is a reflection of the shared responsibility of all those involved in the early childhood sector. Let us be proud of this collective commitment that makes Québec one of the best places for families to live.

However, this action plan requires the prior passage of the proposed legislative amendments and the enactment of regulations.

This important step forward will have to be followed by other actions. As a result, in the years to come, the Government will need to deploy actions aimed at continuously enhancing the quality of all educational childcare services. This is an essential condition for ensuring true equality of opportunity for all children. It will then be necessary to continue to develop the network in line with social changes and the evolving need of parents.

The completion of the educational childcare services network and enhancement of the quality of such services supplement the Government's *Agir tôt et de manière concertée* initiative, the roll-out of Kindergarten for 4-year olds and the answers to be provided regarding the Laurent Commission's recommendations. All these approaches combined will make it possible to better support the development of young children in Québec.

With the Major Initiative, the Government reaffirms its priority focus on educational intervention, from the earliest years of a child's life, to ensure the development of his or her full potential and future contribution to Québec society. It also confirms the essential role played by the educational childcare services network in enabling parents, and especially mothers, to contribute to the Québec economy and achieve their professional aspirations.

ANNEX

SUMMARY TABLE

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	
1. Create a sufficient number of spaces to meet the needs of families	A Major Initiative for Families	
	1*	Deliver on the right to an educational childcare space
	2	Add enough educational childcare spaces
	3	Boost the development of the network through an major rolling call for projects
	Optimizing the accommodation capacity of subsidized educational childcare establishments	
	4*	Increase the maximum number of children per facility
	5*	Life the permit limit by childcare centre (CPE)
	Supporting CPE development in small communities	
	6	Promote the development of smaller facilities
	Improving the supply of non-standard childcare hours	
	7	Expand the supply of non-standard childcare hours
Develop educational childcare services that meet the needs of Indigenous communities	8	Complete the educational childcare services network in Indigenous communities
	9*	Affirm the distinct nature of educational childcare services in Indigenous communities
2. Contribute to greater financial equity among families	Restoring greater financial equity	
	10	Abolish the additional parental contribution introduced in 2015
	11	Convert non-subsidized spaces to subsidized spaces
	12	Amend the refundable tax credit for childcare expenses
3. Increase the network's efficiency in order to improve its development	Stimulating development of educational childcare services across Québec	
	13*	Participate in the development of real estate projects
	Increasing efficiency to accelerate the development of childcare spaces	
	14	Continue the Plan to accelerate access to spaces
	15	Streamline the CPE development process
	16*	Reduce project analysis delays
	17*	Authorize temporary facilities
	18	Support the development of temporary premises by municipalities
	Obtaining detailed data on educational childcare services needs	
	19	Improve the model for estimating the supply and demand for educational childcare spaces
	20*	Review the composition and mandate of the advisory committees on the supply of educational childcare service supply
	Better control of admission policies	
	21*	Determine admission criteria for subsidized educational childcare services
	Making the single-window platform a true waiting list	
	22*	Put the single-window platform under the government's responsibility
	Ensuring the health and safety of children in the educational childcare services network	
23*	Strengthen the tools needed to ensure the health and safety of children	

OBJECTIVE	ACTION
4. Consolidate home childcare	Increasing the attractiveness of the profession and stimulating the creation of additional spaces
	24 Increase the subsidy for home childcare providers
	25 Support the start-up of a home childcare provider
	26 Provide financial incentives to ensure the retention of home childcare spaces
	Making everyday life easier for home childcare providers
	27 Remove school-age children from the calculation of the child ratio
	28* Ease requirements for home childcare providers
	Reviewing the roles and responsibilities of Coordinating Offices
	29* Harmonize the practices of Coordinating Offices
	30* Assign the role of prospecting for new home childcare providers to Coordinating Offices
	31 Support Coordinating Offices in developing a new service offer to support the work of home childcare providers
	Bringing together all home childcare providers in the educational childcare services network
	32* Incorporate non-recognized persons into the educational childcare services network
	5. Ensure that there is enough qualified labour
33 Increase the salary of educators	
Training and retention of a larger number of qualified workers	
34 Launch the Early Childhood Work/Study Program	
35 Develop short Early Childhood Education courses	
36 Support the Recognition of Acquired Competencies process	
37 Offer scholarships to Early Childhood Education students	
38* Establish a certification service for the educator staff	
39 Launch a campaign to promote and enhance the value of the educator profession	
6. Make equal opportunity central to our action again	Supporting children with special needs and those living in a precarious socio-economic situation
	40* Prioritize access to educational childcare services for children living in a precarious socio-economic situation
	41 Better support children with disabilities and those with special needs
	42 Review protocols for reserved spaces
	Meeting occasional and temporary childcare needs
	43* Expand drop-in daycare activities
	Acting at an early age to promote the development of each child's full potential
	44 Continue to roll out the education record for children
	45 Conclude a cooperation agreement with the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux

Actions marked with an asterisk (*) are conditional on the Bill being passed by the National Assembly and could be subject to amendments during the legislative process. Some could also require regulatory amendments. The lines highlighted in gray show the concrete action taken since 2018.

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