

# CONSULTATION on educational childcare services



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## A WORD FROM THE MINISTER

Close to 25 years ago, when the Québec government created the educational childcare services network, our society took a giant step forward for the well-being of our families and our children. Thousands of young children could benefit from quality affordable educational services while their parents headed to the job market. Such was its success that our network soon built an enviable reputation internationally, becoming a jewel of Québec society.

Despite the undeniable progress made both in the quality of educational childcare services and in access to these services, not a day goes by that parents, especially mothers, do not question me about the lack of spaces. Other parents speak to me with emotion of the difficulties they have obtaining the services required for their child who has special needs. Still others tell me of the recurring problems affecting one part or another of our complex system of educational childcare services.

These and many other questions have made me realize it is time to take stock of our network and propose a vision for its future in line with the present and future needs of Québec families.

This is why I invite you to join in carrying out a collective effort inspired by the reflections and good faith of the greatest number of people.

The first step consists of consulting the general public together with the network's partners and stakeholders so that their observations and concerns enrich the status report presented in this consultation booklet.

The questions raised in the pages of this booklet are aimed at directing the discussions towards concrete courses of action and solutions.

As Minister of Families, I would have wanted to open this consultation period last year. But during the past year, the global COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to focus the bulk of our energies on other, more pressing priorities. But the wait has been long enough! It is thus with eagerness and curiosity that I await your contribution to this vision of the future.

I truly believe we can do better for our children and I invite you to share this ambition with me.

I wish you a fruitful consultation process!

Mathieu Lacombe

**Minister of Families**



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### **ADP**

Call for projects

### **AIEH**

Allowance for the integration of a disabled child

### **BC**

Home childcare coordinating office

### **CCO**

Consultative committees on the offer of educational childcare services

### **CPE**

Childcare centre

### **CPSC**

Community social pediatrics centre

### **ECA**

Educational Childcare Act

### **GNS**

Non-subsidized daycare

### **GS**

Subsidized daycare

### **HGC**

Drop-in daycare

### **MES**

Exceptional integration support measure in childcare services for disabled children with significant needs

### **MRC**

Regional county municipality

### **OCF**

Family community organization

### **PNR**

Person not recognized

### **RSG**

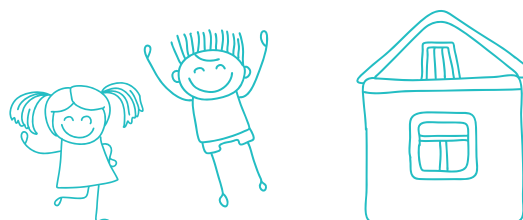
Home childcare provider

### **SGEE**

Educational childcare services

### **VGQ**

Auditor General of Québec



# INTRODUCTION





Educational childcare services (SGEE) have been offered for the past 25 years and constitute a core pillar of parents' participation, particularly that of women, in the job market. SGEE contribute greatly to a good family-work-studies balance.

In 1997, the Québec government announced a **new family policy that provided for various innovative measures, including the creation of the network of SGEE<sup>1</sup>. This network would be based on childcare centres (CPE), which, like the not-for-profit community childcares of the time, were to be managed by parents.**

Establishment of this vast network was aimed essentially at giving all children, especially children experiencing the effects of poverty, equal access to childcare services based on a pedagogical approach. In the interests of equal opportunity, it was decided that these services would be offered at a single affordable rate.

The multiple positive effects of this network have been greatly studied and applauded here and abroad. For example, the dramatic rise in women's participation in the Québec workforce resulting from the network's creation is a fact studied and cited by such internationally recognized organizations as the OECD and the World Bank. The employment rate among Québec women<sup>2</sup> rose from 59.9% in 1996 to 78.8% in 2019, substantially surpassing the Canadian average.

However, it must be acknowledged that 25 years later, the socioeconomic context that existed when the network of SGEE was created has changed. The evolving job market and families' changing realities have increased and complicated needs, so that today the SGEE are a key lever in Québec's economic development and prosperity.

According to a survey of parents and companies for the Ministry of Families in fall 2020<sup>3</sup>:

- 42% of parents experience or have experienced one or more problems accessing childcare services.
- These problems accessing SGEE have or have had negative consequences on employment for one-quarter of these parents.

The lack of spaces in SGEE is, moreover, seen by the majority of Québec businesses surveyed as a challenge in recruiting and retaining employees.

Thus, although the number of spaces available in SGEE is higher than ever before, the current offer still does not fully meet parents' expectations and needs and still does not ensure equal access and services of equal quality to all children.

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1 The term "educational childcare services" appeared in 2005. However, 1997 is considered the year that the network of SGEE was created.

2 Québec women 25 to 54 years of age with children under the age of 6 at home.

3 MINISTRY OF FAMILIES, *Sondage sur les préférences des parents, l'accessibilité aux services de garde et l'impact sur le marché du travail* (Survey on parents' preferences, accessibility to childcare services and impact on the job market), Québec City, Ministry, 2020. [Internal document prepared in collaboration with the Synopsis firm.]

Furthermore, as the Auditor General of Québec (VGQ) indicated in its latest report<sup>4</sup>, the most disadvantaged children, for whom the SGEE network was created at the outset, currently have less access to spaces than children not in this situation.

In addition, the network's current shortage of qualified workers constitutes a major issue regarding the efficiency, accessibility and sustainability of SGEE.

Given these facts and to meet the needs of Québec families now and in the future, the Québec government wishes to examine how to make the SGEE network more efficient and more accessible in order to:

- ensure equal opportunity by facilitating access to quality services that foster the development of children's full potential and ensure their health and security;
- enable parents, especially women, to equitably realize their professional or personal aspirations

In this spirit, this document seeks to guide the reflections of the stakeholders consulted on corrective measures and adjustments required, but also on more profound changes that could be made.

The list of challenges targeted in this document is not exhaustive. It represents the range of problems on which the Québec government wishes to obtain advice that would enhance its own analyses.

Owing to their distinct reality, the Aboriginal communities will be consulted separately. The Minister intends to give these communities a say and take into consideration their point of view on the future of SGEE, which all persons involved want to reflect their reality. A section of this document is specifically addressed to them.

Another section addresses municipal elected officials, who are also invited to take part in a special consultation. As proximity governments, municipalities seek to ensure not only the well-being of their citizens but also their territory's economic vitality. Because the development of the SGEE network contributes to these two goals, it is important for the Ministry to strengthen its partnerships with the municipal sector.

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4 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, 62 pp. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ]



The Québec government made a commitment to act early to foster equal opportunity so that all children can develop to their full potential. To this end, it has implemented various measures, including:

- deployment across Québec of kindergarten for 4-year-olds;
- deployment of the Agir tôt (Acting early) program by the Ministry of Health and Social Services;
- abolition of the additional contribution for subsidized spaces in SGEE (effective January 1, 2019);
- an increase in the Family Allowance;
- the opening of 13,500 new subsidized spaces in SGEE;
- conversion of 3,500 non-subsidized spaces into subsidized spaces.



This part of the consultation booklet deals with the two most critical inequalities in access to SGEE: inequality regarding the lack of available spaces and inequality concerning disparity in the cost borne by parents.

## 1.1 FOR AN EFFICIENT MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE SGEE NETWORK

### CONTEXT

The lack of spaces to meet all the needs of parents is the result of a spaces creation model that has been the subject of public debate for many years already. Creation of the network of SGEE in 1997, in particular, creation of the CPE model that is the basis for this network, was an important milestone in this debate.

To capitalize on the mobilization of parents and communities, the Québec government, through its 1997 family policy, gave CPE the responsibility of creating new spaces to satisfy demand. This creation process was based on converting old daycare centres, recognizing existing home childcare providers, creating new home childcares and building new facilities for CPE or daycare centres.

Faced with the network's exponential development and the need to ensure thoroughness and transparency in the process of allocating publicly funded spaces, the Québec government has over the years implemented an increasing number of supervisory and monitoring measures.

Today, 25 years after its creation, the SGEE network still does not offer enough spaces to meet the needs of the general public.

### SITUATION

The Educational Childcare Act (ECA, CQLR c. S-4.1.1) oversees the creation of spaces in all recognized childcare services. These services cannot create spaces at their discretion and the Ministry does not itself build facilities for childcare services.

The creation of subsidized spaces in SGEE is done through occasional calls for projects (ADP) (with the exception of home childcare; see axis 3 of this booklet). The Act provides for CPE or daycare centres to propose projects at the time of these ADP and for committees made up of local community representatives and representative associations of the different types of SGEE to choose the best projects (based on their quality, relevancy and feasibility).

The Ministry does not allocate new places unless they have been recommended by one of the 21 consultative committees on the offer of educational childcare services (CCO) that share the territory of Québec. Once the spaces have been allocated to one of the project promoters, this promoter can begin the creation of spaces.

Concerning non-subsidized spaces (non-subsidized daycares [GNS]), the promoters can submit projects at any time, without waiting for an ADP. However, allocation of these spaces is subject to the same criteria, in particular the obligation to receive the recommendation of a CCO.

In the particular case of CPE, development or construction of facilities is publicly financed. However, the rules for this financing have varied greatly over the years and this has had a decisive effect on the ability of CPE to create the allocated spaces. For example, in 2018, 80% of the 15,000 spaces announced in 2013 had yet to be created <sup>5</sup>.

## ISSUES

The lack of spaces in SGEE has undesirable socio-economic effects, such as children who cannot access educational services adapted to their age and condition and women and men who cannot fully contribute to their community's economy and growth.

The network developed without any real planning, based on the idea that local communities would correctly identify their needs and the law of offer and demand would do the rest. In 1997, this approach seemed sensible. There were needs everywhere and everything remained to be done. But today this approach has given rise to a problem of geographic distribution of the SGEE that accentuates the lack of available spaces in many communities, while other communities benefit from a significant oversupply of spaces.

Now, while the Ministry can map the needs of communities, it is not legally equipped to ensure that SGEE open their doors where the needs are greatest. In fact, the Ministry:

- has little control over the pace at which a promoter carries out its project;
- has no control over where an SGEE will be located, the final decision resting entirely with the promoter;
- has no power to itself create SGEE spaces in communities where it has nevertheless identified needs, even if no promoter has submitted a project to serve these areas.

**In addition to the issues surrounding the creation of new facilities, the present shortage of workers in the SGEE sector, in particular, qualified child educators, jeopardizes the carrying out of new projects<sup>6</sup>.**

**Furthermore, the Ministry has no control over an SGEE that decides to close and cannot prevent the resulting disruption of services. It can only take note of the fact and cannot, for example, reallocate the spaces to another SGEE. The families that benefitted from these services must quickly find an alternative solution.**

<sup>5</sup> This is why it was decided to change the project financing rules. Thus, the administrative rules provide for 100% governmental financing of the projects of a CPE except when the CPE has sufficient funds to contribute to financing. The Ministry also reduced, from 17 to 9, the administrative steps required for setting up or building new CPE.

<sup>6</sup> For this reason, the Ministry, in collaboration with network partners, recently decided to implement new financial measures to promote the expansion and qualifications of the workforce.



For all these reasons, the Ministry is unable to provide enough spaces in SGEE for families within an optimum time period.

This situation and its consequences have been highlighted by the VGQ in the report it submitted in fall 2020<sup>7</sup>.

## QUESTIONS

- How can the current model for creating spaces in SGEE be improved?
- Should the Ministry's powers concerning the distribution and creation of new spaces in SGEE be reconsidered? For example, what powers should the Ministry have in the case of an SGEE closure? When an oversupply of spaces is seen in certain communities, should the Ministry be able to reclaim allocated places and, if so, how?
- Should the role, function and make-up of the CCO be rethought?
- What means or incentives should be put in place to improve staff retention and the appeal of the occupation of SGEE educator?
- With exceptions, a facility may accommodate a maximum of 80 children. Could this number be raised without compromising children's well-being, development and educational success? In the same vein, would it be appropriate to allow CPE that already have five facilities, i.e. the established maximum, to have more?

## 1.2 FOR AFFORDABLE SPACES FOR ALL CHILDREN IN SGEE

### CONTEXT

In its initial phase, the SGEE network was based on a policy of accelerated creation of subsidized spaces at a single affordable rate. This policy was aimed at expanding access to SGEE and ensuring an offer of quality services for children, in particular, for disadvantaged children.

7 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, 62 pp. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ]

However, government policy directions in this regard have changed since the network's initial creation momentum. Between 2010 and 2015, following government decisions favourable to an increase in the number of non-subsidized spaces, these spaces jumped by 364%, for a total of 40,670 spaces. During the same period, the number of subsidized spaces increased by only 8%<sup>8</sup>.

Childcare fees paid for non-subsidized daycare services are eligible for a Québec income tax credit and a federal deduction. Thus, based on the parents' income, use of a non-subsidized space may be more or less advantageous compared with use of a single-rate subsidized space.

In 2015, given the growing proportion of non-subsidized spaces available and the disparity in the cost assumed by parents, the government added to the basic rate for subsidized spaces an additional contribution adjusted to the parents' income.

This policy distanced the Québec model from the initial 1997 policy, acclaimed though it was and cited as an example. This is why this additional contribution was abolished in 2019 and subsidized spaces are again offered at a single rate. Parents unable to benefit from a subsidized space are still entitled to the tax credit for childcare fees as mentioned on the Revenu Québec site.

Today, the GNS constitute a major and indispensable part of the Québec network of SGEE. They provide 69,874 spaces, or 23% of the network total.

## SITUATION

Effective January 1, 2021, the single rate for a subsidized rate is set at \$8.50 per day. By comparison, in 2020, the average rate charged by GNS varied between \$38 and \$51 in Québec's large cities<sup>9</sup>. This rate could go up to \$70 per day<sup>10</sup>.



**In 2021, the proportion of subsidized spaces across Québec stands at 75%. This offer varies, however, from region to region.**

Certain territories in remote regions benefit from 100% coverage with respect to subsidized spaces, while in other territories in urban areas non-subsidized spaces account for up to 50% of total places. This constitutes a big disparity in access to subsidized spaces between territories.

8 MINISTRY OF FAMILIES, *Places existantes et en cours de réalisation dans les services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance reconnus* (Existing spaces and spaces being prepared in recognized educational childcare services) [online], updated on January 25, 2021. [**Places existantes et en cours de réalisation dans les services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance reconnus (gouv.qc.ca)**] (Consulted March 10, 2021).

9 David MACDONALD and Martha FRIENDLY, *Sounding the Alarm: COVID-19's impact on Canada's precarious childcare sector* [online], [n.p.], Canadian Centre for Policy alternatives, 2021. [<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/tirer-la-sonnette-d%E2%80%99alarme>]. The GNS surveyed represent more than 68% of the non-subsidized authorized places in Gatineau, Laval, Montréal, Longueuil and Québec City.

10 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, *Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021* (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, p. 13. [[https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf)]

On December 31, 2020, 51,532 children occupied a GNS space. Although the Ministry does not have precise data in this regard, it should also be considered that, according to 2017 tax slips, approximately 41,000 children attended a non-recognized and non-subsidized home childcare facility having declared childcare fees of at least \$5,000 annually.

## ISSUES

For several decades, access to childcare service spaces has been coupled with a significant issue of disparity in the cost borne by parents. During setting up of the network of SGEE in 1997, this issue was to be resolved as the offer of subsidized spaces expanded and met all needs. However, this has yet to happen.

On the contrary, the major portion of the SGEE network now occupied by GNS raises a number of issues:

- While it constitutes the best policy with regard to low- and medium-income families, the return to the initial policy of a single affordable rate does not solve the problem of cost inequality between parents. In addition, this cost inequality is accompanied by inequality in territorial distribution of subsidized services.
- In principle, based on its pricing, the GNS model should provide parents with access to SGEE whose quality of services equals that of others. But for a considerable portion of GNS, although the cost of services is higher, quality is not in relation to the average quality of subsidized services. Furthermore, many of these childcare centres struggle to face the competition of subsidized services, which are able to pay their staff better and better maintain their facilities. Lastly, subsidized SGEE benefit from support measures specially put in place for children with particular needs.
- Inequality between families in terms of access to subsidized spaces translates into another inequality, that of access to services for the most disadvantaged children. In its report submitted in fall 2020 the VGQ points out that:
  - in the administrative regions of Laval and Montréal, disadvantaged neighbourhoods have a lower proportion of spaces in CPE than better-off neighbourhoods;
  - a considerable number of children from low-income families are waiting for a space in a CPE;
  - In November 2019, 1,600 children whose parents were receiving last-resort financial assistance were waiting for a space in a subsidized childcare facility<sup>11</sup>.

11 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, p. 21. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ].

## QUESTIONS

- How to ensure equitable access to subsidized SGEE in all regions of Québec?
- How to ensure that spaces in subsidized SGEE are offered in disadvantaged communities?
- What proportion of spaces should be offered in GNS?
- How to oversee development of the GNS so that new spaces adequately meet families' needs?

# AXIS 2

Meeting parents' expectations  
by offering them spaces in SGEE  
in line with their needs



## 2.1 A SIMPLE AND TRANSPARENT ADMISSION PROCESS

### CONTEXT

To simplify parents' efforts to find a space in an SGEE, in 2012 the Ministry undertook to create and implement a single-access childcare services window.

The model selected took into account the concerns expressed by the partners and met the Ministry's needs, namely:

- be administered by a neutral body;
- be a tool used by subsidized SGEE to fill vacant spaces;
- be free for parents;
- allow overall tracking of statistics on requests for spaces in SGEE.

In 2013, the Coopérative Enfance Famille (Child and family collaborative) was designed to ensure implementation, management and development of the La Place 0-5 single window for children 0-5 years of age.

Since September 1, 2018, childcare services providers (except those established in an Aboriginal territory) must, under the ECA, utilize only registrations made through the single-window access to fill their childcare services offer, in line with their admission policy.

### SITUATION

Presently, La Place 0-5 groups together, on a single web platform, all SGEE and informs parents about the offer of services and admission policies. The platform also allows parents to indicate their intention to register their child with SGEE that interest them.

The sole obligation of an SGEE regarding its admission policy is to inform the Ministry of its nature when obtaining or renewing its permit. The SGEE must then respect its policy and resubmit it to the Ministry if it is amended. No obligation as to its content is, however, stipulated.

Home childcare providers (RSG), for their part, have no obligations concerning admission policies.

The Ministry bases itself in particular on the information available in La Place 0-5 to plan network development in line with the needs expressed by parents. Recently, improved information sharing between La Place 0-5 and the Ministry has contributed to better planning of SGEE network development, in particular regarding data on requests for spaces.



## ISSUES



**In its current state, La Place 0-5 and the different SGEE admission policies raise questions for parents and the VGQ alike.**

Many parents wrongly believe that La Place 0-5 is a waiting list. This misunderstanding results in a sense of injustice among parents. Many have the impression that SGEE spaces are allocated through favouritism, irrespective of waiting lists. This, moreover, has led many parents to question the very functioning of La Place 0-5.

In fact, this platform enables parents to indicate their intention of registering their child with SGEE that interest them. Each SGEE then allocates spaces based on its admission policy and spaces available according to the age groups. Children who meet the specific criteria of these admission policies are thus selected first. It appears likely that a child whose registration date is later than that of another child is offered a space strictly because her or his situation corresponds to the admission criteria and the age group selected by the SGEE.

In its fall 2020 report the VGQ finds that the information presented on La Place 05 is insufficient to enable parents to make an informed choice and assess the probability of obtaining a space within a given time period. The VGQ even adds that between September 2018 and November 2019, approximately 30,000 children obtained a space while not registered with La Place 0-5<sup>12</sup>.

**Over and above the problems associated with La Place 0-5, the Ministry currently has little power over the content of the admission policies of the SGEE, their application and compliance with stated criteria. The ECA gives SGEE great autonomy in this regard. Thus, they can choose their clientele and some may at times be guided by subjective criteria.** This, moreover, is emphasized by the VGQ, which points out that:

- only half of CPE use criteria that prioritize children from disadvantaged environments in their admission policy;
- children with a diagnosed syndrome and whose condition has been reported by the parents when registering at the single window have a lower placement rate than children without special needs (73% versus 83%)<sup>13</sup>;
- the most common criteria favour sisters and brothers and the children of the childcare facility's staff.

12 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, p. 23. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ]

13 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, p. 12. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ]



Regarding this last point, the VGQ cites the example of a CPE with 11 admission criteria, including:

- be the grandchild or niece or nephew of an employee;
- be the child of the family of an ex-employee;
- be the brother or sister of a child attending a particular school<sup>14</sup>.

**The current situation undermines parents' confidence in the SGEE admission process.**

## QUESTIONS

- Should the Ministry be able to impose criteria on SGEE regarding their admission policy. If so, which criteria?
- Should the Ministry impose prioritization criteria for children with special needs or from disadvantaged environments?
- Is third-party management of the single window optimal based on the issues raised?
- What information do parents need to make an informed SGEE choice?

## 2.2 THE CHALLENGE OF NON-STANDARD HOURS CHILDCARE

### CONTEXT

In 2016-2017, the Ministry wanted to offer parents with non-standard hours childcare needs diversified and more flexible services fostering a good family-work-studies balance. It thus increased the allowance offered for evening, nighttime and weekend childcare, in addition to offering a new allowance for part-time childcare for SGEE providing this type of service. These allowances compensate for additional costs, which primarily result from difficulty in optimizing the number of children per educator.

<sup>14</sup> «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, p. 27. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ]

## SITUATION

The Ministry does not have complete data concerning the specific needs of parents with regard to non-standard hours childcare. Since this type of childcare addresses particular clientele, it appears nevertheless that these needs are experienced essentially in certain workplaces where schedules are different, among parents who are students and in disadvantaged environments where there are also more families working non-standard hours. And the available data show that the types of non-standard hours childcare most frequently offered in SGEE are part-time childcare and on-call childcare.

Added to non-standard hours SGEE are temporary and respite childcare services, which community organizations are authorized to offer under an exception to the ECA if these services are intended to:

- allow families to participate in the activities and the support and accompaniment services offered by the community organizations;
- enable parents or children to participate in specific activities proposed by the community organizations or third-party groups (public or para-public organization or not-for-profit organization) that carry out an accompaniment, assistance or support mission with families or children.

Lastly, some parents have different non-standard hours childcare needs that can take several forms, such as unscheduled care (emergency or on-call care), occasional or temporary care (one-time, for a short period during the year, seasonal) or block of hours care, recurring or not.

**In 2019-2020, 1,295 SGEE offered part-time emergency childcare services, including 1,113 CPE. Furthermore, 25 SGEE concentrated in the Capitale-Nationale, Montérégie and Montréal regions provided non-standard hours services. The most frequent scheduling was weekday evenings and daytime on weekends.**

## ISSUES

In the fall of 2020, the VGQ<sup>15</sup> pointed out that the existing offer of subsidized spaces in SGEE did not meet families' needs.



**Access to these spaces is even more difficult for parents with non-standard hours care needs.**

15 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, p. 11. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ]

The data show that increasing the allowance for non-standard hours care at CPE and daycare centres has not allowed for increasing accordingly the offer and use of this type of childcare. In addition, the complications arising from the combination of various childcare schedules can hinder development of part-time child accommodation, even though it is more widespread.

Not knowing exactly the reasons why subsidized SGEE offer little non-standard hours childcare and parents' needs in this respect, it is harder for the Ministry to plan incentive and facilitating measures to adequately respond to this situation.

In parallel, various organizations, including those that offer drop-in daycare (HGC) activities, seem to more easily surmount the obstacles encountered by SGEE and better meet parents' non-standard hours care needs, notably by offering flexible services (part-time care, evening care, care strictly during study periods, on-call care). This offer of services deviates, however, from their primary mission, which must be maintained. In the face of such a situation, it is appropriate to assess the possibility of extending to organizations other than SGEE the possibility of offering non-standard hours care services while anticipating the requirements for supervising such services.

## QUESTIONS

- What are parents' needs and preferences (type of childcare service, schedule, frequency and territory) regarding non-standard hours care?
- What conditions are required to foster the offer of non-standard hours care in SGEE that would adequately meet parents' needs?
- Should the range of reasons for which HGC activities can be offered be expanded, particularly to better meet parents' diversified non-standard hours care needs (unscheduled care, occasional or temporary care, block of hours care)? If so, according to what criteria and within what limits? What accompaniment should the Ministry offer to organizations that thereby wish to expand their offer of services?

# AXIS 3

Promoting home childcare

to meet parents' needs



## CONTEXT

The offer of home childcare services has historically been and remains essential to adequately meet families' needs. For example, home childcare settings offer proportionately more spaces for babies than SGEE facilities. Many parents want their infant to be in a small-scale family environment.

In 1997, when the network was created, home childcare services were recognized as a key component of the network. The legislator sought to ensure qualitative and quantitative improvement of these environments. The CPE were then responsible for accompanying these centres in enhancing the pedagogical quality of the services offered.

Despite this recognition, a significant portion of home childcare services has remained outside the network of SGEE recognized by the Ministry. To foster lasting integration of these services into the network of recognized SGEE, the legislator officially established home childcare not recognized by the Ministry.

Thus, two types of home childcare services exist under the ECA:

- An RSG recognized by the home childcare coordinating office (BC) in its territory can offer care services in a private residence up to a maximum of six children. This total increases to nine children if the home childcare provider is accompanied by an assistant.
- A person may also offer home childcare services not recognized by the Ministry (non-recognized person [PNR]) provided, in particular, that this person accommodates a maximum of six children at the same time.

## SITUATION

Since 2018, the ECA has set a sort of double standard in home childcare facilities with regard to quality, health and security. The PNR must respect the minimum conditions discussed in section 6.1 of the ECA (see box below).





Minimum conditions stipulated in section 6.1 of the ECA for a person offering a non-recognized home childcare service:

- the person is an own-account worker;
- the person provides the service in a private residence;
- the person provides childcare to up to 6 children of whom not more than 2 are under the age of 18 months, including the person's own children under 9 years of age and children who live with the person and are present during the hours of service;
- the person holds, as do the other adults living with this person, an attestation establishing the absence of any impediment (i.e. that the person has not been accused or convicted of behaviour that might reasonably raise concerns for the physical or moral safety of a child);
- the person holds a certificate attesting to successful completion of a first-aid course;
- the person is covered by a civil liability insurance policy;
- the person notifies the parent that she or he offers unrecognized home childcare and is neither supervised nor monitored by a BC or the Minister;
- the person has not been convicted of an offence under section 6.2 or more than two years have elapsed since the conviction (e.g. exaggerated punishment, belittlement or threats).

For their part, RSG, in addition to these same conditions, are subject to other legislative, regulatory and administrative requirements intended, notably, to ensure the quality of the service offered to children for their development, well-being, educational success, health and security. These rules cover, among other things:

- compulsory training;
- the security and maintenance of the residence, furnishings, equipment and play materials;
- the obligations regarding application of an educational program in compliance with Ministry requirements.

Furthermore, unlike PNR, RSG are subject to monitoring by a BC that visits the care facility three times per year. They can offer subsidized spaces but are not required to do so. A non-subsidized RSG can set its own rate, does not have to follow the various rules concerning subsidized spaces and is not subject to the Act respecting the representation of certain home childcare providers and the negotiation process for their group agreements (CQLR c. R-24.0,1).

Lastly, the situation in terms of figures is as follows:

- On December 31, 2020, 11,217 recognized RSG<sup>16</sup> offered care services to 60,588 children.
- **Between 2014 and 2020, the offer of recognized home childcare services diminished significantly and constantly. The number of RSG dropped from 15,607 to 11,217, a decrease of 28%.**
- The Québec government does not have precise data on PNR. Based on 2017 financial data, an estimated 9,000 PNR declared childcare fees of at least \$5,000 annually for children under the age of 5. These fees appear to correspond to care of approximately 41,000 children.

## ISSUES

Two types of issues need to be discussed: those arising from the significant and constant decline in the number of RSG observed since 2014-2015 and those arising from the existence of PNR status.

Firstly, the historic drop in the number of RSG hinders accessibility to the network of recognized SGEE by reducing the offer of subsidized spaces. **In certain localities, notably in rural and more remote areas, the RSG often represent the most adapted solution and sometimes are the only SGEE option possible. Moreover, parents living in these areas prefer this type of services<sup>17</sup>.**

A number of factors may explain this drop in the number of recognized home childcare providers (RSG). The following factors are among those most often cited:

- the simultaneous appearance of structural economic factors concerning women, such as a highly dynamic job market offering them income greater than previously, the historic growth in the graduation rate among women (making them more active and mobile in the job market), the diminished appeal of income generated by home care;
- RSG dissatisfaction with the regulatory and administrative conditions to be respected. In addition to administrative irritants, including those regarding the payment of subsidies, certain measures called for in the regulations, notably those concerning equipment required in the residence or those regarding the RSG assistant, are apparently at the root of this discontent;
- the legalization of PNR status that allowed some RSG to drop their recognition in order to adopt PNR status to avoid the supervision of a BC and application of the administrative and regulatory constraints that come with RSG status;
- the absence of concerted recruitment efforts to offer new home childcare providers contributes to a slow reduction given that, for a portion of these home childcare providers, their motivation to offer this type of service may be temporary in nature (e.g. tied to a specific family situation that changes over time).

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16 RSG whose recognition is temporarily suspended (e.g. sick leave or maternity leave) are accounted for in the number of RSG offering services.

17 MINISTRY OF FAMILIES, *Sondage sur les préférences des parents, l'accessibilité aux services de garde et l'impact sur le marché du travail* Survey on parents' preferences, accessibility to childcare services and impact on the job market), [Québec City], [The Ministry], 2020. [Internal document prepared in collaboration with the Synopsis firm].

Secondly, the very existence of PNR status sets a sort of double standard that is difficult to justify and constitutes a challenge in many respects. First of all, for parents and children, this status does not offer the same kind of guarantees as recognized facilities in terms of pedagogical quality of services and children's health and security. It does not, for example, provide access to certain specific support measures such as the allowances paid for children with special needs.

Moreover, this status prevents the Ministry from:

- monitoring the quality of the services offered by PNR, because they do not have to request a permit or recognition from a BC;
- offering the public a minimum guarantee regarding the health and security of the children in home childcare settings;
- keeping an updated register of the addresses of these facilities; this represents a risk in a number of situations, such as the case of a large-scale intervention, for example, concerning a problem of lead in the water;
- guaranteeing equal opportunity for all children and offering services that adequately meet the needs of children requesting PNR services (due to not knowing the number of children in these facilities, their profile and the services they require);
- precisely identifying needs (with regard to spaces) and planning development of the offer of services accordingly, since the existence of non-listed childcare services on the margins of the official network makes the Ministry's job in this regard very difficult.

## QUESTIONS

- What conditions would encourage more persons to offer a recognized home childcare service?
- What supervision requirements and measures are required to ensure comparable service quality among all home childcare providers?
- Should non-recognized home childcare, which has no regulated educational component, be permitted? If so, based on what criteria and within what limits?

# AXIS 4

Reaching the most

vulnerable children to offer them

services adapted to their needs



## 4.1 BETTER REACHING CHILDREN OF VULNERABLE FAMILIES

### CONTEXT

One of the goals in creating the network of SGEE with a single affordable rate was to ensure the overall development of and equal opportunity for all children in Québec, particularly children experiencing the effects of poverty.

In the same spirit, in 2002 the Ministry signed a framework agreement with a number of childcare service partners and partners in the health and social services network to foster access to SGEE for the most vulnerable children, including children at risk of neglect and children with special needs.

Since 2018, families receiving last-resort financial assistance have had access to full-time SGEE without having to pay the parental contribution.

In addition, the present government has undertaken to act early with regard to all children to reduce the proportion of them who are vulnerable in at least one area of their development upon entering kindergarten for 5-year-olds. To do so, the Ministry has introduced a series of measures:

- improve access to quality SGEE;
- ensure collaboration between SGEE and the health and social services network;
- implement strategies to reach children who do not attend any educational facility (SGEE or kindergarten for 4-year-olds).

### SITUATION



**According to data from the 2017 Enquête québécoise sur le développement des enfants à la maternelle (Québec inquiry into the development of children in kindergartens)<sup>18</sup>, 27.7% of children in kindergarten for 5-year-olds were vulnerable in at least one area of development. This proportion reached 33% among children living in the most disadvantaged environments.**

Children experiencing difficulty in one or more areas of their overall development are considered vulnerable. They are more likely to be less well equipped than other children to be successful scholastically. Although they may come more from a socio-economically disadvantaged environment, vulnerable children may also be from a better-off environment.

18 INSTITUT DE LA STATISTIQUE DU QUÉBEC (Québec institute of statistics), Enquête québécoise sur le développement des enfants à la maternelle 2017 (2017 Québec inquiry into the development of children in kindergartens), Québec City, L'Institut, 2018. [ <https://www.eqdem.stat.gouv.qc.ca/> ]



In 2020, 166,551 children under the age of 5 did not attend any educational facility (SGEE or kindergarten for 4-year-olds). Of this number, 67,281 were under the age of 1 and could be found at home with their parent receiving parental benefits from the Régime québécois d'assurance parentale (Québec parental insurance plan).

However, when recent data are considered, it is seen that:

- families living in a disadvantaged environment have proportionately less recourse to an educational facility on a regular basis;
- many low-income households are waiting for a subsidized SGEE space.

It can be assumed that it would be in the interests of a portion of the children from these families and households to attend an SGEE.

Seeking to facilitate access to SGEE for the most vulnerable children, the Ministry offers financial support to childcare services that accommodate children from disadvantaged environments, namely:

- an allowance for the exemption from the basic parental contribution, which covers the parental contribution for children whose parents are eligible for an exemption;
- an allowance for a childcare facility accommodating children from disadvantaged environments.

Under the framework agreement signed for this purpose, health and social services network establishments can also reserve up to 5% of the spaces in a subsidized SGEE for children in whose interests it would be to attend an SGEE. So that they are not financially penalized when a space is unoccupied, the Ministry pays the SGEE concerned a compensation allowance.

**In 2019-2020, 1,640 children used reserved spaces under these protocols. The rate of occupation of reserved spaces averaged 71% in CPE, 60% in subsidized childcares (GS) and 60% in home childcare facilities.**

## ISSUES

Many are of the opinion that, despite efforts made, development of the SGEE network has not allowed for sufficiently reaching vulnerable families. Many barriers impede access to services for children from disadvantaged environments and children in vulnerability situations.



The VGQ's report points out, moreover, that disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Laval and Montréal have a lower proportion of spaces in CPE than better-off neighbourhoods. The VGQ also notes that many children from low-income families are waiting for a space in a CPE<sup>19</sup>.

Access to quality SGEE spaces for vulnerable children also depends on the availability of qualified workers. The lack of qualified child educators thus constitutes an obstacle to ensuring that the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged children have access to the quality services they need.

**The VGQ also finds that the Ministry is unable to ensure that spaces reserved by subsidized SGEE are sufficient in number and meet the needs of children, their parents and health and social service network establishments. Furthermore, there seems to be a mismatch between certain needs and the services offered.** The analysis showed that for one facility in the health and social service network, 150 vulnerable children were awaiting a space, while more than 60 spaces reserved under these protocols had not been filled<sup>20</sup>.

Because more disadvantaged families have less tendency to use an SGEE, community organizations can represent an appealing solution to the extent they foster access to different resources for parents. If these organizations cannot replace the SGEE, they can, nonetheless, constitute a resource for parents who choose not to register their child in an SGEE.

These organizations are also essential in reaching the most distanced families and offering them the services they need to facilitate development of children's full potential<sup>21</sup>. It is in fact essential to reach these families in their environment by creating a relationship of trust with them and fostering their power to act in the interests of their children's development<sup>22</sup>.

19 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, p. 16. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ]

20 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, p. 30. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ]

21 F. DAGENAIS, J.-P. HOTTE, Rapport du comité-conseil Agir pour chaque tout-petit développe son plein potentiel (Advisory committee report: Acting so that all young children develop to their full potential), Montréal, Le Comité, 2019. [ <https://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/publication/Documents/rapport-de-recommandations.pdf> ]

22 Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de l'Estrie – Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke, *Voir grand pour nos tout-petits: 0-5 ans en Estrie – Rapport du directeur de santé publique* (A big vision for our little ones: 0-5 years of age in the Eastern Townships – Report of the public health director), [online], [n.p.], Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de l'Estrie – Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke, 2019. [ [RapportAnnuelSantepublique\\_0-5-ans.pdf \(santeestrie.qc.ca\)](#) ].

## QUESTIONS

- How to foster accessibility to educational childcare services for vulnerable children or children from disadvantaged environments?
- Should ADP provide for specific criteria covering territories with a high deprivation index?
- How to better inform vulnerable families about available services (offered in SGEE, HGC, Family community organization [OCF], community social pediatrics centre [CPSC]) and accompany them properly according to their needs?
- How to strengthen the accompaniment role of parents and the entry-point role of family support organizations (OCF, HGC, CPSC) towards SGEE?

## 4.2 ENHANCING SERVICES ADAPTED TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

### CONTEXT

To foster disabled children's access to and integration in SGEE, a specific allowance has been offered continually to SGEE since 1977.

In 2005, the Ministry added the *Mesure exceptionnelle de soutien à l'intégration dans les services de garde pour les enfants handicapés ayant d'importants besoins* (Exceptional integration support measure in childcare services for disabled children with significant needs [MES]).

### SITUATION

Measures offered to subsidized SGEE are:

- the Allocation pour l'intégration d'un enfant handicapé (Allowance for integration of a disabled child)<sup>23</sup> (AIEH) for purchasing equipment, adapting materials, setting up rooms, paying or training staff;
- the MES for subsidized SGEE to make them accessible for disabled children with significant support needs. The MES allows for rounding out the services that can be financed with the AIEH.

No financial assistance is provided for children who, without being considered disabled, nevertheless have special needs and may require special accompaniment or adapted services (for example, children going through difficult transitional situations or with behavioral problems).

In 2019-2020, 1,443 CPE, 579 childcares and 152 BC received the AIEH, which thereby benefitted 11,720 children. The MES benefitted 712 children.

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<sup>23</sup> For the purposes of this allowance, a disabled child is defined as a child who has a deficit resulting in a significant and persistent incapacity and who is likely to encounter obstacles in his or her childcare facility integration efforts.



## ISSUES

Notwithstanding the allowances provided for children, the integration of children with special needs remains a challenge for many stakeholders.

This may be in particular explained by the fact that the competency related to creating inclusive environments for children with special needs is not part of the initial training of child educator staff. What is more, in the absence of mandatory continuous training, nothing ensures that staff have the necessary resources to support the overall harmonious development and integration of special needs children. This situation is further exacerbated given that, presently, the SGEE network faces a major shortage of qualified workers.

Moreover, children who do not attend a subsidized SGEE are not entitled to the allowances provided for. They therefore have more difficulty receiving services adapted to their condition.

In 2017, the Commission sur l'éducation à la petite enfance (Commission on childcare education) indicated that the lack of adapted services for children with special needs might effectively constitute a barrier to accessing SGEE. For example, SGEE might have physical access problems (lack of an access ramp or elevator, for example) or might decline to accommodate these children.

SGEE are required to implement reasonable accommodation measures to facilitate the integration of disabled children. In certain cases, the adaptations required to meet these children's needs are such that the consequences of the accommodation measures for the SGEE prove too great. In these circumstances, these children find themselves deprived of services.

For parents of a child with special needs, the search for an SGEE requires much time, with no guarantee of the desired results.

In its 2020 report the VGQ confirms that children whose parents reported a diagnosis at the time of registration in La Place 0-5 have a lower placement rate than children without special needs (73% versus 83%)<sup>24</sup>.



**For its part, the Ministry does not have a lever to ensure that the offer of a promoter whose project was accepted because it provided for integrating children with special needs is actually carried out. The Ministry cannot even ensure that this is provided for in the SGEE admission policy.**

24 «Accessibilité aux services de garde éducatifs à l'enfance» (Accessibility to educational childcare services), in VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL DU QUÉBEC, Rapport du Vérificateur général du Québec à l'Assemblée nationale pour l'année 2020-2021 (AUDITOR GENERAL OF QUÉBEC, Report of the Auditor General of Québec to the National Assembly for the 2020-2021 year), [Online], [n.p.], The Auditor General, 2020, chapter 2, p. 12. [ [https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq\\_ch02\\_cpe\\_web.pdf](https://www.vgq.qc.ca/Fichiers/Publications/rapport-annuel/165/vgq_ch02_cpe_web.pdf) ]

## QUESTIONS

- How to foster access to SGEE for disabled children?
- How to facilitate the adapting of services and of the care facility to meet the child's needs?
- To better meet children's special needs, should arrangements to allow for forming separate groups within the SGEE themselves be considered?
- Concerning children whose integration requires unreasonable adaptations to be made in SGEE, should consideration be given to the possibility of supporting the opening of specialized SGEE whose services would be adapted to these children's needs?





## CONTEXT

Since the implementation of the network of SGEE, the Ministry has counted on its Aboriginal partners in developing it in line with the needs of Aboriginal children and parents. The Ministry is well aware that the realities of Aboriginal communities differ from those of the rest of Québec society. These realities that are specific to Aboriginal communities translate into proximity services in an environment where there exist different cultural approaches and competing authorities. In this context, the Ministry wishes to consult its Aboriginal partners, drawing upon mutual recognition in a context of governmental autonomy.

Aboriginal SGEE<sup>25</sup> are comprised of SGEE facilities and total 4,361 spaces. Of these spaces, 4,182 are subsidized and distributed between 69 CPE and 2 GS. The 179 non-subsidized spaces are distributed between 3 BC and 1 GNS. Some Aboriginal SGEE are regulated by delegation of powers agreements or conventions, while others must answer to the band council.

In connection with this consultation, the Ministry has made certain findings concerning the issues affecting Aboriginal SGEE and it will count on its partners in making the required changes and thereby meet the needs of children and parents. These findings, presented for information purposes, will allow for suggesting solutions consistent with the Ministry's mission. The issues affecting the network of Aboriginal SGEE are, in particular:

- access to spaces in SGEE, which involves numerous steps and is administratively cumbersome;
- the capacity of Aboriginal SGEE to meet the needs of vulnerable children through proximity services, supported by a mobilization of community stakeholders;
- adapting legislative and regulatory frameworks to Aboriginal sociocultural and geographical realities.

First of all, it is important to mention that the lack of financial resources and spaces for SGEE does not allow for meeting the needs of all children. Added to this lack of resources are administrative realities having direct repercussions on the resources available for children. The traditional activities of Aboriginal communities, their lifestyle and their geographical situation also have a major impact on the management of SGEE and on the resources for financing them.

The Ministry is fully aware that traditional activities and geographical remoteness can be obstacles to attaining set annual occupation rates. This can result in not only financial penalties, but also ineligibility for compensatory allowances related to spaces reserved under the framework agreement of protocols between the SGEE and the health and social services network establishments.

Lastly, the Ministry has observed that Aboriginal communities, like other Quebecers, faced a challenge regarding accessing SGEE attributable to a shortage of spaces. However, Aboriginal communities cannot count on a home childcare services network as developed as that of the non-Aboriginal network to meet their needs with regard to spaces.

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25 Aboriginal SGEE are principally comprised of SGEE facilities spread among 10 of the 11 Aboriginal nations and in urban areas, the Wolastoqiyik Wampanoag First Nation (Malecite de Viger First Nation) having no facility. In all, there are 4,361 spaces under permit distributed across these communities. The total budget for financing the running of these facilities for fiscal 2020-2021 is close to \$48M.

The response to the issues raised above rests on an expansion of resources and a mobilization of partners under the Ministry's direction, but also on a rapprochement between the Ministry and its Aboriginal partners. This rapprochement could foster:

- an understanding of the communities' needs in the absence of tools such as the single window and the costing model used to determine and quantify families' needs;
- understanding the duality of Aboriginal Peoples living in the urban environment and in the community;
- implementing measures to meet workforce needs.

## QUESTIONS

- What elements of the situation and the issues raised are priorities for the Aboriginal communities and what concrete measures or paths of action could be proposed to deal with them?
- How to ensure a better response to the specific needs of the most vulnerable Aboriginal children?
- What should the Ministry do to strengthen its partnership with the First Nations and Inuit people with regard to SGEE? For example:
  - What requirements stipulated by the ECA should be revised to allow for a greater taking into account of Aboriginal communities' sociocultural and geographical realities, as well as the overlapping of authorities?
  - What modifications to the ECA, the regulations and the financing rules would allow for greater consideration of the different Aboriginal realities and, thereby, optimal financing?
  - How should the Ministry learn about the needs of the Aboriginal communities regarding spaces in SGEE in order to adequately address them?





## CONTEXT

The local municipalities (municipalities) and the regional county municipalities (MRC) are the decision-making bodies closest to the public. Their mission is to ensure the well-being of their citizens and the vitality of their territory. In this respect, they contribute to establishing and maintaining family-friendly living environments, as attested to by the municipal family policies in effect in more than 700 municipalities and MRC. These bodies also play a leading role in putting in place conditions favourable to economic and social development.

The SGEE contribute both to families' well-being and to a community's economic activity. They are among the indicators for measuring people's general quality of life. They contribute to the occupation of the territory and the vitality of communities and constitute a lever of attraction and of retention of young families. It is therefore in municipalities' best interests to play a part in their development.



**The ECA expressly prohibits a municipality from being issued a childcare centre permit and operating a CPE. It does, however, provide for the possibility of municipalities permitting the use of land or the construction of buildings for a CPE or a daycare centre despite any zoning regulations. Also, the ECA provides for the participation of municipalities to appoint members to sit on the CCO in their territory (sec. 103.5, par. 1). The Act also has a provision (sec. 134, par. 2) prohibiting municipalities from using zoning to restrict the establishment of a home childcare facility.**

Be it the Municipal Powers Act (CQLR c. C-47.1), the Cities and Towns Act (CQLR c. C-19), the Municipal Code of Québec (CQLR c. C-27.1) or the Act respecting Land User and Development (CQLR c. A-19.1), the municipal bodies have a number of levers in order to be pro-active in the development of educational childcare services on their territory.

The most obvious example is financing, in whole or in part, of the real estate investments related to a new day care centre. Section 29 of the Cities and Towns Act and section 7 of the Municipal Code permit, in fact, a municipality to:

- acquire, construct or equip a building that may be leased or sold for the benefit of a day care centre;
- lease premises to childcare centres in municipal buildings, including in the form of a lease by emphyteusis where the municipality remains the owner of the building and imposes conditions regarding its use but without having to assume the costs and obligations related to its capacity as owner;
- take charge of certain costs or the offer of professional services through subsidies.

For its part, section 28 of the Cities and Towns Act allows a municipality to become surety for day care services (e.g. guarantee loans).

These provisions thus allow a municipality to assign or lease premises or land at an affordable price or even at no charge to facilitate implementation of a new childcare centre on its territory.



Home childcare facilities, because they are run by self-employed workers, may benefit from various entrepreneurial support subsidies. Some municipalities offer them start-up subsidies while others offer them retention subsidies.

Other than with respect to financing, municipalities and MRC can also act in different ways to support the development of childcare centres on their territory. They can for example:

- facilitate childcare facilities' access to an adequate location and suitable premises and guide them in their choice;
- determine, based on families' changing needs, places that are suitable for childcare centres;
- provide, both in inhabited areas and in territories under development, adequate spaces for childcare facilities;
- in more densely populated territories, set up parks in accordance with section 39 of the Educational Childcare Regulation in areas where it would have been difficult for permit holders to set up outdoor play spaces adjoining their facility;
- establish a special channel of communication with the childcare stakeholders on their territory by designating a case officer from among the elected officials or by setting up a working group between the municipality and SGEE.

## QUESTIONS

- What issues raised in the consultation document are priorities for the municipalities or the MRC and what concrete measures or paths of action could be proposed to deal with them?
- What should the Ministry do to strengthen its partnership with the municipal sector to stimulate the creation of spaces in SGEE?
- How can the municipalities and MRC better support the development of SGEE on their territory? For example:
  - What incentive measures can they implement?
  - How can they contribute to accelerating the development of SGEE?
  - How can a municipality or MRC contribute to increasing the number of home childcare spaces offered to families on its territory?
  - Are municipal family policies in line with initiatives supporting the development of childcare centres in the municipalities and MRC?
  - How can the municipal sector contribute to improving knowledge and foreseeing territorial needs with regard to childcare centres?
  - Must municipalities invest more financially in childcare services projects on their territory?

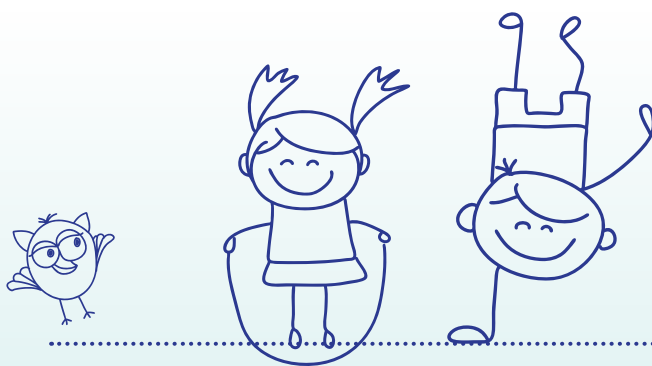
# CONCLUSION



The creation of the SGEE network in 1997 represented an immense success for Québec.

But 25 years later, the situation reveals the limits of a model that no longer adequately meets families' needs and has not achieved the goals set, in particular, the goal of ensuring equity through universal support to families and additional assistance to low-income families. Given this reality, changes are needed to ensure accessibility to SGEE and sustainability of the network, whose importance for Québec's economic prosperity and children's development has been so clearly demonstrated.

This consultation booklet constitutes the basis on which parents and the different stakeholders and organizations concerned are invited to reflect on the present issues and propose possible structural solutions for the development of the SGEE network in line with the needs of Québec families.



# APPENDIX











# EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE SERVICES

A quality network made up of:

	 <b>CENTRES DE LA PETITE ENFANCE (CPE) (CHILDCARE CENTRES)</b>	 <b>SUBSIDIZED DAYCARES</b>	 <b>NON-SUBSIDIZED DAYCARES</b>	 <b>HOME CHILDCARE PROVIDERS (RSG)</b>	
<b>Business status</b>	Not-for-profit organization or cooperative holding a permit issued by the Ministry	Generally, a for-profit private business holding a permit issued by the Ministry	Generally, a for-profit private business holding a permit issued by the Ministry	A female self-employed worker recognized by a home childcare coordinating office (BC)	
<b>Subsidized spaces (\$8.50)</b>	<b>Yes</b> The Ministry pays a subsidy based on the occupied spaces. Additional allowances are provided for children with special needs. A permit holder may have up to 5 facilities, with a maximum of 300 spaces.	<b>Yes</b> The Ministry pays a subsidy based on the occupied spaces. Additional allowances are provided for children with special needs. A single person or related persons may hold up to 5 daycare permits for a maximum of 300 spaces.	<b>No</b> Pricing is at the discretion of the permit holder. Parents may benefit from the refundable tax credit for childcare fees.	<b>Subsidized</b> The Ministry pays a subsidy to the BC, which pay an allowance to the RSG based on the occupied spaces.	<b>Non-subsidized</b> Some RSG are not subsidized. Pricing is at their discretion and parents may benefit from the refundable tax credit for childcare fees.
<b>Distribution of 306,593 spaces</b>	97,326 (32%)	47,789 (16%)	69,874 (23%)	91,604 (30%)	–
<b>Government financing of the infrastructures</b>	<b>Yes</b> The Ministry finances the construction, purchase, leasehold improvements, maintenance or renovation of buildings.	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Maximum number of children who may be accommodated</b>	80 children per facility	80 children per facility	80 children per facility	▶ 6 children for an RSG alone ▶ 9 children for an RSG with a female assistant This number includes her children and the assistant's children if they are under age 9.	

They all have the same obligations, namely:



## NON-RECOGNIZED HOME CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

Subject to respecting certain conditions, a person may provide childcare services in a private residence without being recognized by a BC. This childcare environment is not the subject of compliance visits and educational quality is not evaluated..

This person may accommodate six children, including hers, if they are under the age of 9 and a maximum of two infants. Parents may benefit from the refundable tax credit for childcare fees because the spaces are not subsidized.



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