



SUMMARY OF THE
LUCIE AND ANDRÉ CHAGNON FOUNDATION'S
POSITIONS ON PUBLIC POLICIES
RELATED TO ITS MISSION



March 13, 2017

SUMMARY OF THE LUCIE AND ANDRÉ CHAGNON FOUNDATION'S POSITIONS ON PUBLIC POLICIES RELATED TO ITS MISSION

The Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation (“the Foundation”) shares the desire to create better conditions to ensure the educational success of young Quebecers with many social and governmental actors. The public policies adopted by the various levels of government play a determining role in making these conditions a sustainable reality.

The Foundation is often asked to express its opinion during the development of these policies. Since September 2015, the Foundation has spoken out in a non-partisan spirit and submitted briefs in connection with several consultations that reflect its mission, related to youth, prevention, poverty, educational success, early childhood education and social development.

- ✓ October 2015: [“Pour que tous les jeunes du Québec réussissent à l'école et dans la vie”](#)
- Public consultation on the renewal of the Quebec Youth Policy
- ✓ November 2015: [“La pauvreté, le problème de santé prioritaire”](#) - Consultation on the government’s preventive health policy
- ✓ January 2016: [“Miser sur la prévention pour relever le défi de la pauvreté”](#) – Public consultation for the development of the 3rd action plan to combat poverty and social exclusion
- ✓ November 2016: [“La réussite éducative : un projet de société qui ne peut plus attendre”](#)
– Public consultations on educational success
- ✓ December 2016: [“Pour que les tout-petits québécois aient les mêmes chances de développer leur plein potentiel”](#) - Commission on early childhood education set up by the AQCPE
- ✓ December 2016: [“Développons un ‘réflexe social’ dans toutes les décisions à Montréal”](#)
– Public consultation of the Commission on social development and diversity for the city of Montreal

This document provides a summary of the Foundation’s positions.

Preventing poverty by focusing on the educational success of youth

Poverty does not have to be inevitable. In a society like ours, it is unacceptable that many children are still living and growing up in conditions that put them at a disadvantage. The poverty that affects these children and their families concerns us all: it is not only their development that is compromised, but that of our entire society.

We believe that educational success can prevent poverty—not only because it facilitates entry into the labour force, but because it provides young people with the intellectual and moral training they need to become engaged, independent citizens who are free to make their own choices and share the common values of living together in a world that values open-mindedness and equality.

Quebec is a supportive society whose social policies occupy a place of central importance. Our government plays an active role in ironing out social inequalities and ensuring decent living conditions for all its citizens. We believe that we must continue in this direction, as there is still much progress to be made. For example:

- 165,770 young people under 18 are growing up in families that are living below the poverty line, with all the difficulties that situation entails.¹
- 21.2% of young Quebecers did not obtain a diploma or certification/qualification before age 20.²
- 25% of children entering kindergarten present a developmental delay in at least one area. That rate is even higher in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (31%).³

We recognize the importance of working to ensure the province's economic prosperity and careful management of the public purse strings. In order to be effective in a context of sustainable social development, however, any “target for economic growth” must include a “target for social progress” that is capable of generating positive repercussions for society.

Investing in early childhood

Early childhood is a critical period in a young person's life. A child's development influences his or her ability to learn and achieve educational success. Research continues to show that children's living environments are critical, that quality education starting at a very young age has positive effects at the human, social and economic level, and that every dollar invested in early childhood keeps more children in school and contributes to their academic success.

Focusing on educational success by investing in early childhood is a strategy that provides medium- and long-term benefits for all of society. Increased investment would help to reduce the \$1.9 billion that dropping out of school costs Quebec society.

¹ For children under 18, the low-income measure after tax (*MFR-seuils après impôt*, Quebec, 2012) is 11%, according to the *Institut de la statistique du Québec*.

² [Diplomation et qualification - Par commission scolaire au secondaire - Édition 2016](#), *Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur*.

³ Data from an analysis prepared and published in 2016 by the *Institut national de santé publique du Québec* for the Early Childhood Observatory in cooperation with the *Institut de la statistique du Québec*.

- According to recent surveys⁴ conducted by Léger for the Chagnon Foundation (June 2015) and the Early Childhood Observatory (July 2016),
 - 84% of respondents agree that children’s academic success should be a priority for public decision-makers
 - 91% of Quebecers agree that early childhood should be a priority, receiving increased investment.

Accessible, quality daycare services

We believe that all children living in Quebec should have access to high-quality educational activities at a very early age. This would include a network of accessible, reputable daycare services, particularly for vulnerable children living in conditions that are less conducive to a good start in life.

Accessibility and quality are equally important criteria. A quality daycare operation employs educators who have received adequate training in early childcare. A truly accessible operation offers services that meet the needs of all children, avoiding the creation of different classes of service.

Current costs and tax breaks—that actually encourage parents to transfer their children from a quality education daycare service to another that is of lesser quality but more fiscally advantageous—need to be reviewed. In addition to keeping an eye on the potentially paradoxical effects of certain tax measures, we propose (as other organizations already have) that the government assess the feasibility of offering free educational daycare, including this service with other public services offered to young Quebecers in the areas of education, health and social services.

- According to a survey conducted by the Early Childhood Observatory in July 2016:
 - 77% of respondents agreed that daycare services should be included in priority areas for reinvestment.
 - 87% of respondents agreed that it was important to reinvest in community organizations that offer services to very young children and their families—such as early childhood stimulation programs, training in parenting skills, emerging literacy programs and respite services—to ensure access to sustainable, quality services across Quebec.

We applaud the introduction of kindergarten for 4-year-olds in Quebec. Junior kindergarten offers quality educational services that are readily accessible, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. If these kindergarten facilities are offered *in addition* to daycare services—not replacing them—they will give thousands of children the opportunity to take advantage of tools that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

In addition to ensuring access to quality daycare and implementing family policies, we also need to be concerned about the living environments of very young children. It is important to support activities that are already firmly rooted in communities, run by local organizations or municipalities that offer services to families and young children.

⁴ 2015 [Survey on Quebec social policies](#) (*Sondage sur les politiques sociales du Québec*) conducted by Léger for the Chagnon Foundation / 2016 [Survey on early childhood investments](#) conducted by Léger for the Early Childhood Observatory

A coherent set of government policies fostering educational success

In order for Quebec to achieve the objective of educational success for all, we believe that there must be a coherent set of policies supporting that goal. Based on a comprehensive vision of childhood development from birth to adulthood, such policies would ensure universal access to quality educational daycare services and allow for continuity in academic paths by harmonizing critical transitions (starting kindergarten, primary school and high school), and facilitate the flow of services (between stakeholders in communities, early childhood, health and social services and education).

Any policy linked to educational success must be based on an equitable balance between universal and targeted measures that take the varying needs of individuals, communities and regional into account. It would propose services adapted to disadvantaged environments, children of newcomers to Canada and indigenous communities, and take geographical disparities into account. It would pay special attention to more vulnerable children and youth with adaptation, learning or behavioural problems or living with a disability. Finally, it would also include measures that reinforce good parenting practices while promoting work-family balance (with employers' cooperation).

The implementation of policies linked to educational success must be accompanied by priority objectives whose progress will be monitored. Setting up a monitoring and coordination mechanism allows data to be collected on processes and the effects of changes made so that measures can be adjusted as needed. Easy access to data will encourage more people to engage in the process, helping to make educational success a collective achievement.

The impact of government policies is enhanced if they are connected and complementary as opposed to being juxtaposed silos. The Foundation encourages the government to reconcile policies that concern education, family, poverty, health, youth, prevention and regional development in order to offer Quebec children and their families favourable environments. If these policies are to be truly effective, stable and sustainable, each one must be developed by the ministry concerned, in a non-partisan spirit. In short, the government must ensure the coherence and impact of all the policies it implements.

Mobilize all actors, recognize their role and support their actions

Young people's educational success is a societal as well as a community project. It is therefore important to take into consideration the specific characteristics of communities and regions, as well as the refined knowledge that communities have of their networks, realities, abilities and limits in order to offer all children and young people equal access to resources and the best opportunities for learning.

This major project will achieve its goals if parents, educators, teachers and practitioners in all sectors are part of a large-scale social mobilization. Every stakeholder has a role to play, with each one making a maximum contribution of his or her knowledge and skills in a context where each participant's role is recognized, responsibility encouraged and the necessary resources are available for action and collaboration.

The role of community organizations that work with young people and contribute to their educational success must be actively recognized, and they should be able to rely on adequate, sustainable government funding. Since these organizations, firmly rooted in all regions of

Quebec, offer essential support to both children and their parents, they are often the first step in actions aimed at improving educational success.

In the field of education, the focus should be on collaborative approaches and collective responsibility, making teachers, employees and management responsible for the success of all their students. We recognize the importance of relying on rigorous scientific data and making that information available. We must also acknowledge the existence of other forms of knowledge (such as the experience of teachers, specialists and management personnel in the schools and school boards), and ensure they are recognized and included in initiatives for knowledge-sharing and ongoing training.

Municipalities also have an important role to play, as they are in an ideal position for direct action in the environments where children are living, growing up and developing. By implementing policies for social development, families or healthy lifestyle habits, they create a framework for promoting and implementing measures that promote educational success: appropriate infrastructures, access to recreational activities, creation of family-friendly environments, mechanisms for dialogue, and more.

Getting citizens and actors in civil society involved and taking their opinions into account is another key aspect of the mobilization process. Not only is it necessary to encourage their participation by providing them with the tools they need, we must ensure that those who do not have the possibility or means of expressing themselves are given a voice.

Supporting every young person along the road to educational success, regardless of where they come from and the path they choose, is a collective investment that all of Quebec society must buy into and support. Every policy, every government initiative that affects the lives of young Quebecers must create favourable conditions that will allow every child—without exception—to succeed in school and in life. Educational success is the measure of Quebec's social and economic prosperity.