

Webinar: Getting to Systems Change: Canada's Report on Poverty

Presentation notes from Sylvie Veilleux

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What can you tell us about the impact of the arrival of the child care system on poverty in Quebec?

First of all, thank you for the invitation and thank you all for coming to hear us. Today I will speak to you in French, I want to speak to you from my heart and these words are always easier to find in my mother tongue.

In our conversation sessions, we have heard that *“children are poor because their parents are poor.”* Speakers have told us that *“child poverty is first the poverty of their families.”*

- ... and because the poverty of children is also unfortunately often **the poverty of their future families...** and that the precious minutes stolen from childhood will not return while the traumas' weight persists
- we have to provide them with the enabling environments and the support they need **to break the vicious cycle of generational reproduction of poverty.**

The first daycare where I worked in the 70s was born from a community need and the well-being of the children was its **main objective.**

We welcomed:

- extremely vulnerable children,
 - from a variety of backgrounds that were growing up in underprivileged neighborhoods,
 - with a mix of children who'd just arrived to Quebec following the coup d'état in Chile,
 - some children with special needs,
 - and also some children from the middle-class
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- It was a **safe and inspiring environment** where, engaging with others, they developed skills that would better prepare them for school.
 - We were working **intersectorally** with social and health workers that could **be involved early** in the lives of these children.
 - It was also a place where parents broke their isolation and developed trust relationships, **which encouraged referrals to different resources** which supported them in their role as parents.

Following pressure from women's groups, 25 years ago, the **réseau des Centres de la petite enfance** (CPE) was implemented with a political will and progressively developed in Quebec to provide affordable and quality spaces for children from the age of 0 to 5, enabling their global development and allowing parents to find their place in the labour market.

- The **low rates** (currently \$8.70 in a subsidized child care) and the quality of child care services were important influences on mothers' decisions to work;

- **family incomes increased;**
- single-parent families were able to overcome poverty.
- With more continuity and fewer interruptions in their careers, women's employment income has become greater over **their entire working lives**, providing them with greater economic security and more power over their lives.
- In terms of **child development**,
 - research published in major scientific journals in medicine and psychology recognizes the positive effect of daycare centres on children's short- and long-term wellness and on their cognitive and relational skills, which are factors in school success.
 - The daycare centre and social pediatrics formulas work wonders.
 - However, the proportion of vulnerable and underprivileged children who have access to these is lower than that of children from more favorable economic backgrounds. We need a clear and committed strategy to attract a larger fraction of disadvantaged children and adequately address their needs.
- Quebec is now among the nations where women are the most present in the labour market. According to the economist Pierre Fortin,
 - **in 2021**, the participation rate of women in the Quebec labour market reached 87%; 80,000 more women than 25 years ago; representing, according to him, a gain of 7 billion on the gross domestic income of Quebec.
 - This network of child care services, which many saw at first as a huge expense, is actually an investment that has contributed to Quebec's prosperity.
 - Studies show that for every dollar invested in early childhood, the entire economy receives between \$1.50 and \$2.80 in return.
- The network has enabled exchanges, co-development of expertise, training, research, innovation, development of structured programs and tools.
- Thousands of jobs have also been created for staff members who work directly with children, and **the pandemic has highlighted the critical nature of their work** and the importance of recognizing them and giving them fairer working conditions and pay.

Many studies will be able to tell you the numbers better than I can. I'll leave some links that will allow you to go deeper into the question.

- Over the course of the various governments that have succeeded one another,
 - divergent views,
 - budget cuts,
 - the interruption of spaces' development,
 - and bureaucracy,
 - more spots have been made available in private daycares... which don't offer the same quality.
 - In addition, the lack of recognition in recent years **has driven many educators away**.

- I dream of the day when access to high-quality child care **will become a right for children just like the right to education** and will ensure even more inclusive, high-quality services with sufficient spots and flexible models to meet parents' realities.

What can we expect from a national \$10/day child care system?

- The cost and quality of child care services will have a major influence on mothers' decisions to return to work.
- Developing a space allocation system that ensures the inclusion of the most vulnerable children
- Focus on recruitment and ongoing training and support for staff members, good wages and working conditions to ensure retention and more stability for the children.

It is important that through this large network

- there is room for regional disparities to allow for accessibility and proximity of services, flexibility of schedules,
- openness and ability to accommodate children with special needs,
- the involvement of the community (parents, municipalities, social services, health services, etc.). A formula where parents are involved in the decisions that concern their children. Respecting cultures and supporting parents in their parenting skills.

Explain why a national child care program is one of the most effective strategies available today.

These affordable services are **essential to ensure equal opportunities** by facilitating the access to quality services that guarantee the health and safety of children and promote the development of their full potential, enabling their parents to play a role in the economic recovery and to enjoy a better income that provides economic security.

Impact for Communities

- It all starts with the children. If they benefit from an environment that allows them to develop in health, to develop their full potential, their openness to differences, their kindness, tolerance, inclusion, resilience, I have hope for a more just and more inclusive world