

# Allison Hanes: For a start, boost funding for early childhood education <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

The chapter of the Quebec budget devoted to reinvesting in education starts with a promising title.

“A plan for success: A lifelong process from early childhood.”

This appears to be a recognition that giving kids from all backgrounds the best shot in school must start with the smallest Quebecers. But the fine print of this week’s budget suggests Quebec’s Liberal government still hasn’t quite grasped this lesson.

Quebec is putting \$3.4 billion back in all levels of education, from daycare to universities, after three years of such meagre increases in funding that it resulted in deep cuts. This is a welcome reinvestment — a no-brainer, really, for a government so driven to secure Quebec’s long-term economic prosperity.

But the amount devoted to early childhood education as part of this effort is a mere \$130 million. Over five years. That adds up to just 4 per cent of the new money.

As the president of the Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance Louis Senécal noted in a statement: “Given that 85 per cent of a child’s brain is developed by age 5, how can the government justify spending less than 4 per cent of its budget for educational success on CPEs?”

The funds for early childhood education are earmarked to “enhance educational intervention among young children, facilitate children’s transition to school, offer school excursions to disadvantaged children, support community organizations that offer activities to families (and) cover equipment purchases adapted to the needs of disabled children.”

It doesn’t appear that much if any of this money will go to opening more places in CPEs, the one thing the government should be doing to bolster its strategy of “early intervention to ensure the children’s educational success” (their words).

This is a missing piece of the lifelong learning puzzle. And an important one.

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