



## **PRESS RELEASE**

*For immediate release*

**MONTRÉAL, October 17th, 2017**

### **The framework for homeschooling : the opposition takes on women's autonomy and children's rights.**

As the National assembly returns to the detailed study of Bill 144, the Québec Association of Home-Based Education (AQED/QAHBE) is pained to note that the three opposition parties have not done their homework, in terms of understanding the issues surrounding homeschooling in Québec. AQED/QAHBE insists that the PQ, CAQ, and QS are directly targeting the autonomy and freedom of choice of Québec families, and more specifically those of mothers. “The paternalism displayed by the three opposition parties, dismisses not only the rights of Québec mothers/parents to take charge of their children’s education, it is ultimately at odds with the best interest of children”, notes Noémi Berlus, president of AQED/QAHBE.

Home-based education, in Quebec as elsewhere, is a movement birthed and sustained primarily by women. It is part of the larger feminist movement to reappropriate motherhood, and the importance of family, community, collaboration, connection, and respectful relations. It often accompanies a desire to establish egalitarian and democratic family relations, and respond to the individual needs of their children, in order to better serve society and its changing dynamic.

Québec is already the most heavily regulated province; everywhere else in Canada, the provinces trust women to have their children's best interest at heart. In Quebec, the state unabashedly expresses that it knows and cares best. It is important to note that the women we are referring to are more likely to have post-secondary degrees, although this should not be a requirement, and have chosen, for a variety of reasons, to exercise their freedom to use their capacities toward supporting the success of their child(ren), and a fairer society.

The opposition is posturing, by also choosing to ignore the facts, and recommendations, presented by researchers who presented their findings and concerns at the commission:

Researcher Christine Brabant stated : “Research has shown that home-based learning is a viable educational option, at the very least equal to that of public school – although with its different strengths and weaknesses, which is what makes it interesting – and has not, to date, shown any scientific reason to justify a ban, or even a tight control, of such a practice.”<sup>1</sup>

The Quebec Ombudsman states ”studies show that children taught at home do on average as well as those taught in establishments. They generally do not experience any particular difficulties during reintegration

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<sup>1</sup> Brabant, Christine. 2017. *Mémoire sur le projet de loi N°144 : Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’instruction publique et d’autres dispositions législatives concernant principalement la gratuité des services éducatifs et l’obligation de fréquentation scolaire*, Université de Montréal, Département d’administration et des fondements de l’éducation.

into the school system nor in the pursuit of collegiate and university studies. The proportion of youth taught at home that successfully continue with post-secondary studies would be similar to those of graduates who attended school. Finally, in these studies, there is no indication that homeschooling has adverse affects on the childrens' socialization.”<sup>2</sup>

**Researcher Sivane Hirsch states : “In a society that wants to expand, it seems important to us to also recognize a certain plurality of educational models that also recognizes those visions which parents may have for their childrens’ education.”<sup>3</sup>**

“It is astounding that in Québec, in 2017, it is still possible for men to tell women either that they are not competent, or that they know best and have children's interests and education at heart, more so than the mother's themselves. Québec has a long way to go in recognizing the rights of women, and value their perspectives and choices.” concludes Amélie Delage, administrator for AQED/QAHBE.

**Although AQED/QAHBE values the equal participation of men and women in home-based education, the fact remains, that women are the majority stakeholders. Sacrificing financial independence, cut off from any and all state funding for education, while still paying school taxes, mother's have been choosing this as a life-boat for their children. The decision to homeschool is often made, with the child, in response to an intolerable or sub-optimal situation at school, which the school failed to resolve. 60% of families who homeschool were in the school system before withdrawing their children.**

Quebec education minister Sébastien Proulx, following the consultations on his original proposal, revised his bill to ensure that it is adequately adapted to the reality of homeschooling, is informed by best practices across the globe, as well as the recommendations of Quebec academic experts on the subject. It is distressing to witness the opposition interfering in this collaborative effort between families and the State. The minister had put forth a framework that permitted the two most significant goals to be met: That of giving parents the needed flexibility in order to best respond to the personal needs of their child(ren), while also ensuring that children’s rights to an education is being respected. Although the amendments of October 3rd proposed by M. Proulx did not go as far as parent educators may have liked, they constituted an acceptable compromise. “We are pleased that M. Proulx’s team has taken the time to understand this complex subject, has actively listened to the concerns brought forth by the parents, as well as integrated the views of the academic researchers, to table an informed bill.”, notes Amélie Delage.

With regards to the misguided debates surrounding Bill 101, “it would be unfortunate for political opportunism to outweigh the best interests of our children”, says Ms. Delage. Although AQED/QAHBE supports the protection of the French language, Bill 101 does not apply in the context of non-institutionalized learning. Bill 101 cannot legislate on the language spoken at home. The children’s interest is best served when the parents understand the language the child is educated in.

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<sup>2</sup> Protecteur du Citoyen. 2015. *La scolarisation à la maison : pour le respect du droit à l'éducation des enfants.*

<sup>3</sup> Hirsch, Sivane. 2017. *Pour une prise en compte d'une pluralité des modèles éducatifs : Mémoire déposé à la commission parlementaire de la culture et de l'éducation en lien avec le projet de loi.*



“We hope that M. Proulx will stand strong in his proposal to recognize mothers, the international tribunals, and scientific research, all of which supports home-based learning as a and viable alternative to the classroom. AQED/QAHBE encourage him to return to his amendment of October 3rd and spread the message that would help us dispel the ignorance, and prejudices which exist, to better support parent educators in their ultimate goal : allow their children to be accomplished, in both their personal and professional lives.” concludes Mme Berlus.

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### ***À propos de l'Association québécoise pour l'éducation à domicile (AQED)***

*L'Association québécoise pour l'éducation à domicile (AQED) est un organisme à but non lucratif et laïc qui regroupe plus de 530 familles comprenant plus de 2 000 enfants. Elle informe et apporte du soutien aux parents québécois qui choisissent de faire l'école à la maison. Elle représente ses membres auprès du Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, des commissions scolaires et des autres organismes reliés à la jeunesse et à l'éducation. Elle soutient et défend les droits des parents d'éduquer leurs enfants selon la méthode pédagogique qu'ils privilégient, tout en protégeant les droits de l'enfant à recevoir une éducation saine et équilibrée. [www.aqed.qc.ca](http://www.aqed.qc.ca)*

### **SOURCE AQED**

Pour plus d'information : Noémi Berlus, présidente de l'AQED, (514) 647-4965 [n.berlus@aqed.qc.ca](mailto:n.berlus@aqed.qc.ca)  
Amélie Delage : [adelage@aqed.qc.ca](mailto:adelage@aqed.qc.ca)  
[www.aqed.qc.ca](http://www.aqed.qc.ca)