

## News Release

# New Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation Report Calls on Federal Government to Make Significant Investment in Early Childhood Education Funding

*Canada lags behind most OECD countries in early childhood enrolment, needs a universal early childhood education and care system*

**TORONTO, February 20, 2020** – The Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation is asking the federal government to make a significant investment in universal early childhood education (ECE) in order to ensure Canada’s future competitiveness. This investment will benefit preschool-aged children in Canada and Canadian society as a whole.

The fourth landmark study, titled *Early Years Study 4: Thriving Kids, Thriving Society*, led by the Honourable Margaret McCain, builds on over 20 years of research and reveals that Canada ranks not just in the bottom third, but 33rd out of 35 OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries for ECE enrolment. While Canada has expanded ECE opportunities for preschool children, other countries have done much more.

ECE is not an extension of school or custodial care in a home or centre, it is the facilitation of play between children under the age of five and experienced educators that boosts children’s language and cognitive skills before the children enter formal schooling.

“The first 2,000 days of a child’s life is a critical time for learning and development, and experiences during that period have a long-lasting impact,” said Mrs. McCain. “There is a bigger role for society to play early in children’s lives. If the next generation is to thrive in an increasingly complex world, Canada must improve its commitment to early childhood education right from the start. Inequality would be addressed from the earliest ages. And our society would be better for it, for generations to come.”

In order to achieve the OECD enrolment average of 70 per cent, the federal government will need to work with all levels of government. Specifically, the report calls on the federal government to invest an additional \$8 billion per year in ECE. The additional funding would be achieved by an increase in investment of \$1 billion per year until the shortfall is covered.

“An investment to bring Canada’s ECE enrolment level to match the OECD average would enable nearly 60,000 women to enter the workforce,” said Craig Alexander, Chief Economist, Deloitte Canada. “The tax revenue and public savings from parents returning to work as well as the future improved outcomes for children would meet, or even exceed, the cost of running an ECE system. It would also bring many families out of poverty.”

Mr. Alexander points to Quebec as a province that is already successfully implementing a low-cost childcare program and is experiencing the benefits, with 70,000 mothers entering the workforce as a result of the program. Further, their work has generated enough new taxes and reduced expenditures on social benefits to cover the costs of the entire program<sup>1</sup>.

For more information, please visit: <https://earlyyearsstudy.ca/eys4>.

### **About the Early Years Study Series**

The *Early Years Study*, authored by the Honourable Margaret McCain and Dr. Fraser Mustard in 1999, recommended early child development and parenting centres linked to the school system and sensitive to local communities. This led to a series of reports which have resulted in meaningful policy change in Canada including:

- The first study, *Reversing the Real Brain Drain*, led the federal government to expand parental leave from six months to one year, as well as establishing the first integrated early childhood education pilot program in Toronto.
- *Early Years Study 2: Putting Science into Action* was released in 2007 and led Ontario to establish play-based full day kindergarten for four- and five-year olds.
- *Early Years Study 3: Making Decisions, Taking Action* was released in 2011 and introduced a benchmarking tool, the *Early Childhood Education Report*, which is produced every three years to monitor the federal and provincial governments' policy and spending decisions.
- *Early Years Study 4: Thriving Kids, Thriving Society* released today, calls for an annual investment of \$8 billion to bring Canada up to the OECD average enrolment rate for early childhood education.

### **About the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation**

The Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation invests in young children and their families with practice, policy and knowledge objectives. For more information, please visit: <http://mwmccain.ca/>.

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For media inquiries, please contact:

Deb McCain  
Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation  
[Media@earlyyearsstudy.ca](mailto:Media@earlyyearsstudy.ca)  
416.402.5681

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<sup>1</sup> Fortin, P., Godbout, L., St.-Cerny, S.; *Impact of Quebec's universal low-fee childcare program on female labour force participation, domestic income and government budgets*; [https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/News/Fortin-Godbout-St\\_Cerny\\_eng.pdf](https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/News/Fortin-Godbout-St_Cerny_eng.pdf)