

Canada doesn't invest enough in early childhood education, economist tells Kelowna audience ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A new report reveals troubling findings when it comes to accessing early childhood education (ECE) in Canada,

"Canada is deeply under investing in early childhood education when we look at enrollment relative to other advanced economies," Craig Alexander, the report's co-author and chief economist for the Conference Board of Canada, said in Kelowna on Friday.

According to the report released just ahead of National Child Day on Nov. 20, Canada lags behind many other countries when it comes to access to ECE.

The average ECE enrolment among those countries is 69 per cent. In some countries including France, Germany, Belgium, Croatia and Ireland, enrolment is as high as 90 per cent.

That's because governments subsidize ECE programs, making them more affordable.

In Canada, however, that's not the case, and as a result the number of Canadian children enrolled in ECE is only 58 per cent.

"This is hurting the prospects for our kids," Alexander said. "It means the kids are not having the opportunity to develop the skills they need to succeed later in life."

Alexander said Canada has to do better at providing access to ECE for all children.

"We know from science that brain development happens right after birth and yet the education system kicks in at age five or six," he added.

The report suggests the government invest in ECE by starting kindergarten sooner, first at age four instead of five and then eventually at age three.

It even outlines the costs associated with doing that.

If, for example, kindergarten was to begin one year sooner at age four, the report pegs the cost at \$1.8 billion to set up and \$2 billion a year to run.

An investment that if not made, Alexander fears will cost the economy in the long run.

"We are faced with an environment where Canada will be faced with a lot of international competition," Alexander said. "We're seeing big technological change, the race against machines...we need to build a labour force that has the skills to deal with the environment of the future."

-reprinted from Global News

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: investment ^[4]

affordability ^[5]

accessibility ^[6]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/11/canada-doesn%E2%80%99t-invest-enough-early-childhood-education-economist> [2] <https://globalnews.ca/news/3868098/canada-doesnt-invest-enough-in-early-childhood-education-economist-tells-kelowna-audience/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/investment> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility>