

# Canada lagging on early childhood education [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

At a dinner a few days ago on the elegant 40th floor of the Royal Bank in downtown Toronto, co-chaired by Margaret McCain and RBC executive vice-president Charles Coffey, a group of concerned Canadians gathered to discuss the urgent need for early childhood development in Canada and its importance for Canada's future economy.

...

But coinciding with the RBC dinner was the release of an important report from the OECD, "Starting Strong II," which found that out of 14 industrial countries, Canada ranked last in public spending on early childhood education and care at barely 0.25 per cent of GDP.

Compare that to 2 per cent in front-running Denmark, about 1.7 per cent in Sweden and Norway, and about 1.4 per cent in Finland. Even the United States was ahead of Canada, at almost 0.5 per cent of GDP, or nearly double Canada's commitment.

This is a disturbing finding because it demonstrates that Canada is not placing a high priority on its children, which, in turn, means that we are not placing a high priority on the future quality of our adult population and their ability to succeed in what will be a much more competitive world.

...

One of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's first acts was to kill the tentative start of the Martin government in building federal-provincial initiatives for early childhood development. It is a low-profile issue for Liberal leadership candidates and none of our provincial premiers is strongly committed.

Yet as the OECD report makes clear, "the early nurturance of infants and toddlers is seen to be of major importance because of the extraordinary neurological development that occurs in this period.

"Faced by this evidence, it is more difficult for governments to consider large-scale, extra-domestic child care for children under kindergarten age as having little importance for a country's human capital policies."

Except, it seems, in Canada.

...

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

**Related link:** More information on the OECD's Starting Strong II <sup>[2]</sup>

**Region:** Canada <sup>[3]</sup>

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