

Access makes the difference ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Universal access to day cares and community centres are a few of the essentials for children to be ready for kindergarten, says a UBC professor.

Dr. Clyde Hertzman, director of the Human Early Learning Partnership, identified five elements that stunt a child's development.

They are: Physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication and general knowledge.

Nearly one in three children are not ready to enter kindergarten, contends Hertzman.

Vulnerable children are more susceptible to school failure, pregnancy and criminality in the second decade of life.

When vulnerable children reach their 30s and 40s health problems become prevalent and continue into the later years of life.

Hertzman suggests lobbying senior levels of government to invest \$3 billion annually to expand parental leave, change employment standards allowing parents to obtain health benefits, increase income and employment supports and a push for stronger community including seamless early childhood education programs.

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"We see universality as a way of making a difference in the most vulnerable communities and a moderate difference in others."

If government makes a financial commitment to support children in their early years, Hertzman projects a \$20 billion increase in the provincial gross domestic product.

"It's feasible and possible to get real world vulnerability down to 10 per cent," he said.

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Region: British Columbia ^[2]

Tags: health ^[3]

child development ^[4]

accessibility ^[5]

outcomes ^[6]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/09/11/access-makes-difference> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/health> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-development> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/outcomes>