2013 Ontario Budget

Ways to increase educated workforce, better health outcomes and lower social costs

Submitted by Kids Can Fly, Early Child Development and Parenting Support

The Issue

Many children are beginning life with disadvantages. Without intervention before entering school, these children will have more difficulty catching up and be less likely to become successful, contributing, adult members of society.

Investing in early learning is the smartest strategy for Ontario and has positive impacts on children's lives and the economy. The current government has made early learning a priority – yet it is still optional whether parents attend the Parenting & Family Literacy Centres. In order to maximize the benefit of full day kindergarten we need to nurture children and their parent's right from birth!
This program is universal!

The Solution

Many scientific research studies show that early literacy is the most effective way to increase school readiness. *This success follows them through school and into the workplace.*

A child's overall development is a product of experiences that enhance brain development in their first five years of life. They are born with only 20% of the brain formed and research has confirmed that the child's brain is almost fully formed by the time they reach kindergarten or age 5.

Start Behind…Stay Behind. The lack of basic early literacy skills results in children who do not catch up in subsequent years and are three to four times more likely to drop out of school.
(National Assessment of Adult Literacy. (1993) *National adult literacy survey*. Washington, D.C.)

The Strategy

The Imagination Library is a program that mails children a developmentally appropriate book each month from birth to age five. Research on this program demonstrates that the participants arrive at kindergarten with higher literacy levels, larger vocabularies, more awareness of the world and an eagerness to learn. The cost is only $300.00 per child for the full five years due to bulk purchasing. *(Retail value about $1000.00 + postage.)*

Currently over 800,000 books are mailed to registered children throughout the world each month. In Canada, 8600 children are registered. In the community of Brant we have 600 children on the program - with a long waiting list!

New York City has approximately the same number of children under 5 as the entire province of Ontario. Their Department of Education is enrolling <u>every</u> child into Imagination Library after realizing that they need to support children BEFORE they enter kindergarten to improve student success. They selected Imagination Library as their best investment after reviewing many early learning initiatives.

Reading is the key to early literacy. The feedback on parent involvement from the Imagination Library is that they report reading more often and for longer periods of time. The fact that the books arrive in the mail seems to bring an element of fun and engagement for both parent and child.

The beauty of Imagination Library is that it is **universal**. The opportunity would be there for ALL babies upon birth, regardless of socioeconomic situation, whether they were urban or rural. *Books could be made available in various languages and cultures as well.*

Ideally, all Ontario newborns can be registered to the Imagination Library through the New Born Registration Service when applying for

their child's birth certificate, Canada Child Benefits and Social Insurance Number.

Extended ideas to nurture learning can be provided through the Imagination Library mailings with the books or through email connections which would be gathered. Age-appropriate information regarding government services, child development and health issues could be distributed directly to families every month.

To evaluate the success of the program, a question could be added to the kindergarten intake form asking whether or not a child was signed up for the Imagination Library and track the data outcomes of the children.

EARLY LEARNING HAS LONG-LASTING IMPACTS ON CHILDREN, the better educated children makes for a better educated workforce and more contributing citizens.

> *"Building human capital through better educated children means that the country's future workforce will be more highly skilled – an important fact considering that changes in demographics are likely to result in a shortage of high-skilled workers around the world. Moreover, workers will be more productive, innovative and earn higher wages, while fewer will be in poverty. Together, these factors can boost the overall standard of living in the country. What's more, demand for social and healthcare costs would decline – due to lower high school dropout rates, fewer instances of drug and alcohol use, smoking, teen pregnancies, and criminal behaviour – allowing governments to allocate funds elsewhere. Indeed, the Canadian Council on Learning estimates the annual cost over the lifetime of one child who does not complete high school is $7515 due to lost income revenues, and higher social and criminal justice costs"*
>
> *TD Economics Report: Early Childhood Education has widespread and Long Lasting Benefits.*

According to World Bank, Toronto Dominion Bank reports and many other sources.... for every dollar you invest in early learning, society saves $17.00 in the future, This would include social services, health, policing, incarceration, rehabilitation and other costs.

So if we invest $300.00 today for <u>every child</u> in Ontario under the age of five--- we will save $5,100.00 per child- in the future.

"IF we can address needs of children early, rather than later, we can help each child reach their maximum potential. Better educated children make for a better educated workforce and more contributing adults "
Dr. J Fraser Mustard

For more information on Imagination Library go to
www.imaginationlibrary.com or www.kidscanfly.ca

Imagination Library was founded by Country Singer and Icon Dolly Parton.

Respectfully submitted by,

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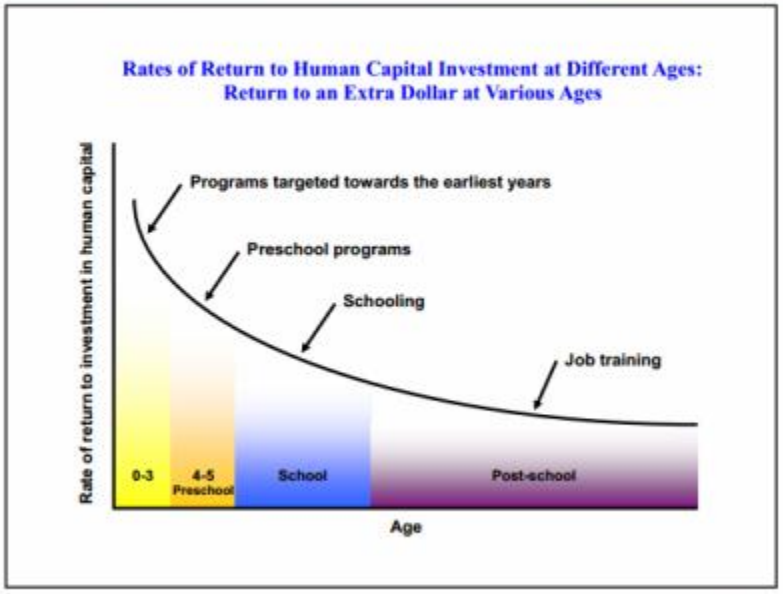
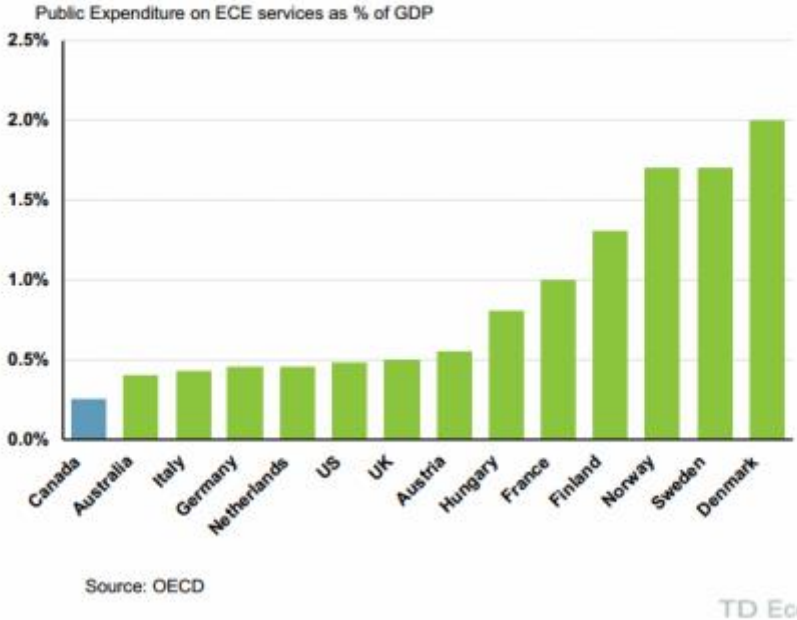
Supporting Materials

HIGHEST RETURN ON INVESTMENT IS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN



TD Economics

PUBLIC SPENDING IN CANADA HAS FALLEN SHORT OF MANY OF ITS PEERS



Source: OECD

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