

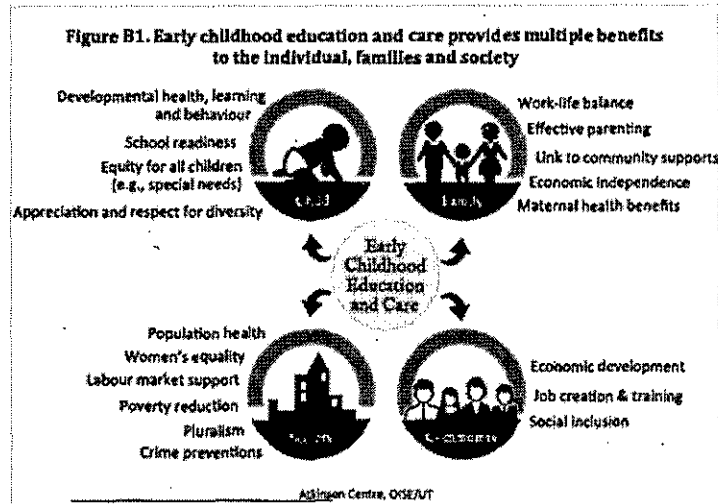
Universal child care study highlights benefits

September 30, 2015 - 14:42

Early childhood education and care has so many benefits it's little wonder it's an election issue both federally and territorially.

The *Feasibility Study of Universal, Affordable Day Care in the Northwest Territories* outlines those benefits in the graphic copied here.

This week's CBC headline focused on the yearly costs to the government of making early childhood education and care (ECEC) universal and affordable



(<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/universal-childcare-would-cost-n-w-t-20-million-a-year-study-1.3247185>).

That emphasis distracts from all the benefits and real savings that universal, affordable early childhood education and care could bring. The authors of the study and most experts agree that governments either pay for ECEC now, or pay later in special school supports, health care, social services, income security and crime prevention. Economically, governments miss out on tax revenue from working mothers and the opportunity to create new jobs.

"The persuasive evidence of the widespread benefits...creates a strong rationale for an efficient, high quality service system accessible to all children and affordable for parents," says the report.

Here are six important facts found in the report.

- Some of the socio-economic benefits of child care may be limited by the ban on licensed home day cares in social housing units.
- It can be counter-productive to restrict day care fee subsidies to parents in full-time employment or schooling.
- Barriers exist to child care subsidies with only 51 families in the NWT receiving a subsidy in 2013-14.
- In 2014, 31 staff in licensed child care programs had no post-secondary education; an additional 33 staff were enrolled in early childhood education courses.
- An estimated 68% of mothers with children younger than 6 years of age are in the paid labour force in the NWT, compared to 80% in Québec.
- The NWT would have to increase its spending by 50% to come up to the Canadian average for early childhood education and care. Canada itself performs poorly on the world stage when it comes to care access, spending and quality.

The NWT Literacy Council has long been an advocate for early education and care because of its

importance to childhood development. Even if you don't agree with everything in this report, the study is an important tool for anyone wanting to be informed about early childhood education and care in the NWT.

I hope parents, child care providers, Aboriginal governments, businesses and agencies use this information in constructive conversations during the upcoming territorial election campaign. Thanks to the Members of the Legislative Assembly (Bob Bromley and Norman Yakelya) who asked for the study. Let's elect more ECEC champions!

The study can be found at: <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/pages/1178/report-universaldaycarefeasibilitystudyjune2015.pdf>

An executive summary is at: <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/pages/1178/executivesummary-nwtfeasibilitystudyjune2015.pdf>

-- Kathryn Barry Paddock