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Kids First Parent Association of Canada

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**BIG BROTHER GOES TO KINDERGARTEN:**

**BC GOVERNMENT COLLECTING ‘SPERM TO WORM’ PERSONAL DATA OF ALL BC CHILDREN**

In a massive violation of privacy and parental rights, the BC government is using schools to systematically collect the personal data of thousands of BC children and their families without informed parental consent.

Data from many sources is collected, cross-referenced, and then “linked.”

The government funds the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) directed by Clyde Hertzman and based at UBC, to gather children’s personal data.

According to HELP’s website, the goal is to collect “person-specific” data on “all children in British Columbia” [1] from “pre-conception to young adulthood.” [2]

Personal data includes the following records: school, medical, birth, hospital, pharmaceutical, census, and Workers’ Compensation Board. Personal income tax data linkage is a goal Dr Hertzman states in a Statistics Canada report. [3]

Also included is the ‘Early Development Instrument’ (EDI), a long questionnaire HELP administers, completed by Kindergarten teachers on each of BC’s approximately 40,000 Kindergarten children per year in 2003, 2006 and February 2009. The EDI - and with it the related data ‘linkage’ - is now to be done annually, HELP reports. [4]

The EDI is a crucial data-mining tool as through it the schools provide HELP with each child’s Personal Education Number (PEN), personal medical number, and postal code - which links to census data.

In 2006, Kindergarten parents received a brief letter [5] about the EDI that failed to mention the data linkage and did not ask for consent.

Burnaby parent, James Ward, and Kids First Parent Association of Canada made a complaint about the 2006 EDI after his child was involved.

This year's letter [5] provided some information about data linking and offered the possibility of 'opting out' of the EDI. However opting out required parents to actively request to do so. This is the reverse of standard procedure in which a response is necessary for participation, and a non-response is assumed to be an 'opt out.' Both letters informed parents that their child's name will not be used. However, this is a false assurance of privacy as names are not needed when personal numbers are used.

These changes in the letters to parents indicate that the BC government knows there are grave privacy violation problems with the data collection process.

Maple Ridge father, Jeff Laverton, whose child was subjected to the EDI this year, is angered that his family's rights have been violated by the government through the school.

Kids First President, Helen Ward, says, "Why is our government playing Big Brother, conducting sperm to worm data-mining on our children with no end in sight?"

"Our children are not resources to be mined through schools at huge public expense while many parents struggle to pay for basics."

"The public has not consented to this. We seek a public apology from the government and the destruction of the data collected in this manner and the 'linkages'."

HELP is directed by Dr Clyde Hertzman, a long time World Bank staff/consultant. [6] He and others have presented BC's data collection methods to the World Bank as a model for international use. [7] Hertzman seeks "strong partnerships between the public and private sectors." [8]

The World Bank sees early childhood as a "business imperative" which includes data collection [9] and has put over \$1 billion into its early childhood initiatives. [10]

The public pays for substitute teachers for all Kindergarten teachers while they fill out the questionnaire, about 30 minutes per child.

The questionnaire asks about writing skills, thumb-sucking, child care arrangements, Sunday school, shyness, peer-relationships, and "problems at home." [11]

Results from the EDI are the source of such questionable claims as: 25 percent of children are "not ready to learn" - or "at risk" or "vulnerable" - and that poor children in Mexico are doing better than Canadian children. [12] Hertzman reports that there is "no consensus...on value of [the EDI] measurement." [13]

HELP also collects data from Strong Start, a school-based drop-in program for children age 0-5.[14] Parents must register, providing the child's medical number.[15] Children

get a PEN. BC legislation was changed to allow PEN's for children under school age. The government states: "With the new legislation, information may now be collected about children participating in StrongStart BC centres." [16]

Hertzman and HELP led the government's recent push for all-day Kindergarten for 3-5 year olds.[17]

## NOTES

[1] [http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/CYDTRU/developmental\\_research.htm](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/CYDTRU/developmental_research.htm)

[2] [http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/HELP\\_Crosswalk\\_Update\\_07-26-04.doc](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/HELP_Crosswalk_Update_07-26-04.doc)  
[http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/CYDTRU/developmental\\_data.htm](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/CYDTRU/developmental_data.htm)

[3] <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/11F0019MIE/11F0019MIE2006284.pdf>

[4]

[http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/2009/EDI%20Newsletter\\_Winter%202009.pdf](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/2009/EDI%20Newsletter_Winter%202009.pdf)

[5] letters posted at <http://www.kidsfirstcanada.org/bigbrother.htm>

[6] [http://depts.washington.edu/uweek/archives/1998.10.OCT\\_01/\\_article24.html](http://depts.washington.edu/uweek/archives/1998.10.OCT_01/_article24.html)

[7] see EDI and Janus, Mustard, and Hertzman presentations at  
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTCY/EXTECD/0,,contentMDK:20251977~menuPK:527317~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:344939,00.html>

[8] [http://www.investinkids.ca/ContentPage.aspx?name=Our\\_Partners\\_CorporatePartners](http://www.investinkids.ca/ContentPage.aspx?name=Our_Partners_CorporatePartners)

[9] see speech at World Bank by RBC VP C Coffey  
<http://www1.worldbank.org/hdnetwork/External/cy/ccoffey.htm>

[10] [http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0100-15742006000300002&script=sci\\_arttext&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0100-15742006000300002&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en)

[11] see EDI and EDI Guide for teachers at  
[http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/files/EDI\\_2008\\_General\\_CON.PDF](http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/files/EDI_2008_General_CON.PDF)

[http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/pubs/2008\\_EDI\\_Guide\\_for\\_teacher.pdf](http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/pubs/2008_EDI_Guide_for_teacher.pdf)

[12] Toronto Star, July 29, 2008,. pg. A-4

[13] see Hertzman Power Point presentation to World Bank "The Case for the EDI as an International Outcome Indicator of Early Child" Development" slide 35

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTCY/EXTECD/0,,contentMDK:20251977~menuPK:527317~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:344939,00.html>

[14] [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/strongstart\\_bc/guidelines.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/strongstart_bc/guidelines.htm)

[15] [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/pdfs/registration\\_form\\_pen.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/pdfs/registration_form_pen.pdf)

[16] [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/strongstart\\_bc/qa\\_pen\\_reporting.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/strongstart_bc/qa_pen_reporting.htm)

[17 ] see HELP/BC gov't joint paper 2007 "A Bold Vision: Documenting the Pivotal Role of Schools in Early Child Development

<[http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/2007/boldvision/A\\_Bold\\_Vision.pdf](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/documents/2007/boldvision/A_Bold_Vision.pdf)>" .