

MEDIA RELEASE
MORATORIUM SOUGHT FOR ALL-DAY KINDERGARTEN & RELATED DATA-MINING

January 28, Burnaby - Kids First Parent Association of Canada is calling for a moratorium on all day kindergarten and the related massive data collection project. The group urges parents to “boycott Big Brother” and oppose the government’s collection of the “person specific” private data of “all BC children” and their families from “pre-conception to young adulthood” and beyond, as described on the website of the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP). HELP also steers the drive for expansion of school down to age 0.

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is one of many personal records being collected and “linked” by HELP. Other records include: school, perinatal, birth, medical, census, daycare, pharmaceutical, hospital, mental health, Workers Compensation Board, daycare, injury, stress, etc.

HELP Director Dr Clyde Hertzman, who also works for the World Bank, has recommended to Statistics Canada that personal income tax data be included for linkage.

Helen Ward, President of Kids First says, “Data-mining and all-day kindergarten are a two-pronged campaign undermining children’s well-being and parents. Spin-doctorates’ fabrications are called “evidence” and used to create policies that punish parents for looking after our own children. All-day kindergarten is state-run daycare re-branded as per the OECD’s “integrated approach” agenda. ‘Work-life balance’, ‘play-based learning’, however they spin it, the agenda is to decrease the time children spend with their parents. This has not been shown to benefit children or society. Are parents and little children asking for less time together?”

The EDI survey will take place starting Monday in February. Parents of kindergarten students can opt out their children. BC parents should have received letters from school written by Hertzman about the EDI. The process violates informed consent for two reasons: the letter fails to clarify the extent of the data “linkage”, and makes the illegitimate assumption that parents consent if they do not actively opt out their children.

Maple Ridge father, Jeff Laverton, whose child was subjected to the EDI last year, says, “My family’s rights have been violated by the government through the school. We read Hertzman’s letter and had questions about the data collection but we were busy and didn’t tell the school to keep us out.”

The EDI is a long questionnaire filled in by kindergarten teachers. It asks about thumb sucking, lateness, writing, reading, “problems at home”, daycare use, etc. It is the basis of the widely-reported claim that “nearly 30 percent” are “vulnerable” or “developmentally behind” or lack “school readiness” which is then used as “evidence” for extending schooling to ever-younger children.

These variable terms are defined as: the percent of children who score in the lowest tenth percentile on any one of five areas. By using a relative measure – percentiles – a ‘problem’ will always be found. ESL students, children born later in the year, and boys predictably score in this range more often.

However, it goes unreported that Canadian teens score far higher on OECD academic tests than those from France and Sweden where most children go to the type of state-run daycare/preschool planned here. Sweden also reports rising youth suicide and violence, preschool children nearly 7 times more likely to be sick, inadequate quality centre-based care, and increasing domestic violence against women.

HELP is lobbying the corporate sector and the federal government with the claim that \$3.1 trillion - \$400 billion in BC alone - will be saved by “eliminating early vulnerability” through increasing daycare funding and expanding kindergarten. HELP claims such programs will lead to “reductions in crime” and improvements to the health of children, called the “future stock of human capital.”

Hertzman and Dr Charles Pascal, Ontario’s kindergarten advisor, repeatedly claim such “investment” calculations are support of Nobel Prize-winning economist Dr James Heckman’s research. However Heckman rejects their policy prescription. He says, “none of this evidence supports universal preschool programs,” and, “people are very worried about the central government inculcating values in their children that they don’t agree with.” He recommends targeted voucher programs for very underprivileged families.

Ward asks, “Why is our government handing over policy for our children to advisors from the World Bank? What’s good for families is not always good for the GDP or corporate bottom lines. We need a moratorium before children and parents are harmed more.”