

## **Ontario Pointed in the Right Direction on Early Learning**

**Toronto, ON, Canada, 17 Jun 09**

Toronto – Ontario Campaign 2000 welcomes the recommendations of the Pascal report on full-day learning for 4 and 5 year olds in Ontario.

“Our work on child and family poverty highlights the importance of a universal system of affordable early education and care as a key component of an effective poverty reduction strategy. We welcome this report which outlines a plan to ensure 4 and 5 year olds are entitled to a full day Early Learning Program as part of a seamless and integrated system for children aged 0-12 and their families. We are pleased that the first phase includes low income neighbourhoods in support of the goals of Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy” said Jacquie Maund, Coordinator, Ontario Campaign 2000.

“This report transforms Ontario's thinking about young children and about how to support families. It repositions our publicly-supported education facilities as collective community assets serving not only young children but their parents too. Instead of counting child care spaces, the report envisions welcoming all 4- and 5-year-olds so they can benefit from high-quality early education with continuous learning environments up to age 12. Child and Family Centres offering everything from flexible child care to prenatal supports and parent resources will be a platform to expand opportunities for younger children and will be applauded by parents. Making this report a reality will truly be historic for us all,” said Martha Friendly, Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

“This report is bold and hugely encouraging because it takes Ontario in a direction that will support all families. It commits to high quality services that will be available in each neighbourhood. For low and modest income families it means there is hope that as they put together the pieces – affordable, secure housing, and education and training for employment – they will be able to count on quality early learning for their children,” said Laurel Rothman. “We expect that this will be a model for other provinces to emulate.”

“We are very pleased to note the recommendation of enhanced parental leave including 10 days of legislated job-protected leave annually for parents of children under 12. This will be an important support for families dealing with illness or unexpected family emergencies,” commented Margaret Hancock, Executive Director, Family Service Toronto.

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