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----- I. NEWS & VIEWS -----

ONTARIO

ALMOST 90% OF PRIMARY CLASSES HAVE 20 OR FEWER STUDENTS

Education Minister Kathleen Wynne announced (Government of Ontario, 2008, January 9) that students in Junior Kindergarten to grade 3 are receiving more individual attention from their teachers, as almost 90% of primary classes have 20 or fewer students, and nearly all classes have 23 or fewer. Michael Fullan, professor emeritus at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and special advisor to Premier Dalton McGuinty, noted that "students in smaller classes receive more attention and have greater success in the early grades... Smaller class size combined with improved teaching of literacy and math makes it much more likely that students will excel in high school, graduate and reach their full potential." Wynne expressed the government's commitment to continuing to work with their education partners to fully implement their plan to cap 90% of primary classes in Ontario at 20 or fewer pupils (Government of Ontario, 2008, January 9).

http://ogov.newswire.ca/ontario/GPOE/2008/01/09/c7457.html?lmatch=&lang=_e.html

ELIMINATING POVERTY MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE

This article (Decter, 2008, January 11) explains how reducing poverty is good for economies, as is maintaining a strong social safety net to prevent poverty. For example, "just as it is much more costly to treat a disease than prevent one, it costs more to provide emergency hostels than affordable housing, more to take a child into the care of child welfare agencies than to make sure families have adequate incomes, and more to cope with school dropouts than to train our youth for the jobs Canada needs to fill in the coming years" (Decter, 2008, January 11). Dexter notes that Canada should set minimum targets of a 25% reduction in the child poverty rate over the next five years and a 50% reduction over 10 years and offers suggestions about how to get there.

<http://www.thestar.com/printArticle/292990>

CANADA

LATEST PRODUCT RECALLS

- Tot Tower Blocks: Plastic film laminate can be peeled off some blocks, posing a choking hazard

- Infantino® Lion Teethers: Plastic nose can detach, posing a choking hazard

http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/pr-rp/pr-rp_e.php

- Lactation stimulant "Galactogil": microbial contamination

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/fpa-ape_2008/2008_05_e.html

G.R. BAKER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL IN QUESNEL DESIGNATED 'BABY-FRIENDLY'

G.R. Baker Memorial Hospital in Quesnel is the first hospital west of Ontario to achieve the World Health Organization (WHO)/UNICEF Baby-Friendly designation (Prince George Citizen, 2008, January 10). The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC) provides Baby-Friendly designations to hospitals and community health facilities that meet the WHO/UNICEF "10-Steps to Successful Breastfeeding". The process of achieving the designation can take several years. The G.R. Baker Memorial Hospital began this process in June 1999 and made efforts such as: reviews, revisions and implementation of breastfeeding policies; education of maternity, support and administrative staff, physicians, clients and families on the science and benefits of breastfeeding, and; establishment of a multi-disciplinary Baby-Friendly advisory committee (Northern Health, 2008, January 9).

http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=111804&Itemid=557

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA LAUNCHES CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED FOOD AND CONSUMER SAFETY ACTION PLAN

The Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health, and the Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, launched a public consultation on the proposed Food and Consumer Safety Action Plan, which outlines a series of initiatives designed to modernize and strengthen Canada's safety system for food, health and consumer products (Health Canada, 2008, January 15). Minister Clement noted that "By first launching this 30-day consultation of the

plan, we are ensuring Canadians can review and provide valuable input before its implementation" (Health Canada, 2008, January 15). The proposed plan will focus on: (1) preventing problems in the first place, (2) targeting the highest risks, and (3) rapid response. The Government of Canada is encouraging interested groups, individual Canadians, and provinces and territories to provide input on how best to implement the elements of its plan in a fair, balanced, effective and responsible way.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/view/en/index.jsp?articleid=372029>

INTERNATIONAL

BABY BOTTLES: DEMAND FOR POLYCARBONATE ALTERNATIVES

This article (Newsweek, 2008, January 14) reports that parental concerns about the safety of plastics are bringing about a shift in the marketplace: a demand for more ecofriendly options such as polycarbonate alternatives.

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/84533>

NEW JERSEY ORDERS HIV TESTING FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

New Jersey launched an effort to control mother-to-child transmission of HIV and will be making screening tests mandatory for all pregnant women in the state beginning next year. Some groups are calling the law unneeded and intrusive. For example, the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey and the state's chapter of the National Organization for Women both questioned whether the mandated tests violate a woman's right to privacy and the right to make her own medical decisions. Other groups, like the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been recommending that HIV screening become a routine part of prenatal tests with no separate written consent required.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/27/AR2007122702136.html?wpisrc=_rsshealth

----- II. RECENT REPORTS AND RESEARCH RESULTS -----

ONTARIO

THE THREE CITIES WITHIN TORONTO: A CITY OF DISPARITIES

This research bulletin, by the Centre for Urban and Community Studies (CUCS) at the University of Toronto (Hulchanski, 2007, December), describes how the city of Toronto is becoming increasingly divided by income and socio-economic status. The study calls modern-day Toronto "a city of disparities" rather than a city of neighbourhoods and describes Toronto as three geographically distinct cities made up of 20% affluent neighbourhoods, 36% poor neighbourhoods, and 43% middle-income earner neighbourhoods (that are in decline) (Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, 2008, January).

<http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/redirects/rb41.html>

CANADA

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLMENTS, GRADUATES, AND EDUCATORS

Statistics Canada (The Daily, 2008, January 10) released data on regular enrolment in public elementary and secondary schools (including enrolments in minority and second language programs) and the number of educators for 2005/2006. Data on the number of graduates of those institutions are also available for 2006.

<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/080110/d080110f.htm>

INTERNATIONAL

METHADONE MAINTENANCE AND BREASTFEEDING IN THE NEONATAL PERIOD

This study (Jansson et al., 2008) examined the concentrations of methadone in breast milk among breastfeeding women and concentrations of methadone in maternal and infant plasma in a sample of methadone-maintained breastfeeding women and a matched group of formula-feeding women. At the times of trough and peak maternal methadone levels, eight methadone-maintained (dose: 50–105 mg/day), lactating women provided blood and breast milk specimens eight times (including paired specifics of foremilk and hindmilk). Eight matched formula-feeding subjects provided blood samples on the same days and infant blood samples for both groups were obtained. Infants in both groups underwent neurobehavioral assessments. The findings indicate that concentrations of methadone in breast milk were low (range: 21.0–462.0 ng/mL) and not related to maternal dose, however, there was a significant increase in methadone concentrations in breast milk over time. Concentrations of methadone in maternal plasma were not different between groups and were unrelated to maternal dose and concentrations of methadone in infant plasma were low (range: 2.2–8.1 ng/mL) in all samples. There were no significant effects of breastfeeding on neurobehavioral outcomes. Although the researchers (Jansson et al., 2008) found that fewer infants in the breastfed group required pharmacotherapy for neonatal abstinence syndrome, it was not a statistically significant finding. The authors suggest that this study supports the recommendation of breastfeeding for methadone-maintained women.

Abstract: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/121/1/106>

PHYSICIAN SCREENING FOR ALCOHOL IS COST-EFFECTIVE BUT UNDERUTILIZED

This study (Solberg, Maciosek, & Edwards, 2008) was designed to rate the clinically preventable burden and cost effectiveness (i.e., societal and health-system perspective) of complying with the he U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommendation for screening and behavioural counselling interventions in primary care to reduce alcohol misuse. In 2005, the researchers completed a systematic review of the literature from 1992 through 2004 to identify relevant randomized controlled trials and cost-effectiveness studies. The authors noted that alcohol screening and counselling is one of the highest-ranking preventive services among the 25 effective services evaluated using standardized methods, yet “only 8.7 percent of people with drinking problems reported receiving any screening or advice from their primary-care physician” (Join Together, 2008, January 8). The authors recommend that this service deserves special attention by clinicians and care delivery systems (Solberg, Maciosek, & Edwards, 2008). <http://www.prevent.org/images/stories/clinicalprevention/ajpm%20-%20solberg%20feb08%20-%20embargo%20version.pdf>

MATERNAL AGE AND RISK OF STILLBIRTH: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Increasing numbers of women are delaying childbirth to their late 30s and beyond. This (Huang, Sauve, Birkett, Fergusson, & van Walraven, 2008) systematic review of all cohort studies and case-control studies explores whether older maternal age is associated with an increased risk of stillbirth. The researchers synthesized the evidence from 37 studies and found that most studies supported an increased risk of stillbirth among women over 35.

<http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/reprint/178/2/165>

COMMENTARY: ADVANCED MATERNAL AGE

In the commentary “Advanced maternal age: Are decisions about the timing of child-bearing a failure to understand the risks?”, Benzies (2008) highlights that on average, first-time mothers in Canada are older than women in developed countries; and that Canadian men and women do not fully understand the link between advanced maternal age and adverse outcomes. The author suggests that physicians can contribute to more informed decisions about the timing of child-bearing by providing information to all patients of child-bearing age about the medical risks of advanced maternal age.

<http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/content/full/178/2/183>

AIR POLLUTION AND POSTNEONATAL INFANT MORTALITY IN THE UNITED STATES, 1999-2002

This study (Woodruff, Darrow, & Parker, 2008) evaluated the relationship between cause-specific postneonatal infant mortality and chronic early-life exposure to particulate matter and gaseous air pollutants across the United States by linking county-specific data for particles (i.e., ozone, sulphur dioxide, and carbon monoxide) to birth and death records for infants born from 1999 to 2002 in counties with more than 250,000 residents. The findings suggest that particulate matter air pollution is a risk factor for respiratory-related postneonatal mortality and that ozone may be associated with SIDS in the United States.

<http://www.ehponline.org/members/2007/10370/10370.pdf>

BABIES AND BOSSES – RECONCILING WORK AND FAMILY LIFE: A SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS FROM OECD COUNTRIES

The Babies and Bosses reviews of work and family reconciliation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2007) analysed policies and family outcomes in Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands (OECD, 2002); Austria, Ireland and Japan (OECD, 2003); New Zealand, Portugal and Switzerland (OECD, 2004); and Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2005). This report synthesises these findings and includes other OECD countries. Based on OECD-wide indicators, it examines tax/benefit policies, parental leave systems, child and out-of-school-hours care support, and workplace practices that help determine parental labour market outcomes and family formation across the OECD.

http://www.oecd.org/document/45/0,3343,en_2649_201185_39651501_1_1_1_1,00.html

EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN: WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

This article (Takanishi & Bogard, 2007) provides an overview of what is currently known and what needs to be determined about the factors that contribute to positive outcomes from early education programs from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade Three (PK-3). The authors identify five gaps in knowledge about effective programs: (1) designing programs for an increasingly ethnically diverse group of young children, including those of immigrants; (2) connecting classroom teaching and learning processes to child outcomes; (3) bringing multiple disciplinary perspectives to bear on what constitutes effective PK-3 programs; and (4) continuing to address how research and practice can be better integrated to inform policy (Takanishi & Bogard, 2007). The authors note that longitudinal studies and secondary analyses of recent large-scale longitudinal studies are needed to inform issues of program design and impact.

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2007.00008.x>

HOW PK-3 ALIGNMENT CAN CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FROM THE START

This report "Making the Most of Our Investments: How PK-3 Alignment Can Close the Achievement Gap from the Start" (2007) demonstrates the need for aligning education for children from 3 to 8 years of age, outlines the elements of an aligned PK-3 system, and highlights effective grantmaking strategies (Foundation for Child Development, 2007).

http://www.fcd-us.org/usr_doc/MakingTheMostOfPK3Investments.pdf

CHROMOSOME ABNORMALITY LINKED TO AUTISM

A group of U.S. researchers (Weiss, et al., 2008), associated with a group of Boston-based hospitals known as the Autism Consortium, conducted complete genome scans of samples of DNA from families of autistic children (cbc.ca, 2008, January 9). Researchers have identified a chromosomal abnormality (i.e., recurrent microdeletion and a reciprocal microduplication) that seems to carry substantial susceptibility to autism and appears to account for approximately 1% of cases.

<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/reprint/NEJMoa075974v1.pdf>

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE: AVOIDING INTERNET MISINFORMATION

This article (MayoClinic.com, 2008, October 26) highlights the importance of being open-minded about alternative therapies yet sceptical of internet medical claims. Guidelines for avoiding internet

misinformation are provided, including: seeking recent information, checking sources of information, and comparing the information on several health sites for supporting evidence.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alternative-medicine/SA00078>

----- III. CURRENT INITIATIVES -----

WINTERACTIVE

WinterActive is an annual national campaign designed to help Canadians of all ages improve their health by encouraging and supporting their first steps towards regular physical activity, healthy eating, living tobacco-free, and participating in sport activities. The campaign is from January 18 to February 29, 2008.

<http://www.winteractive.org/en/>

Parks and Recreation Ontario offers free downloadable posters to promote WinterActive and provides information about a community challenge, a daily physical activity school challenge, and a workplace challenge.

<http://www.prontario.org/winteractive2008.htm>

NATIONAL NON SMOKING WEEK

The theme for this year's National Non Smoking week, January 20-26, is "taking my life back from tobacco". The Canadian Council for Tobacco Control offers printable posters and fact sheets.

<http://www.nnsw.ca/>

RUTH ATKINSON HINDMARSH AWARD

The Ruth Atkinson Hindmarsh Award was established in 1998 to celebrate and encourage the outstanding efforts of organizations whose work has significantly improved the wellbeing of disadvantaged children. The annual award, the largest of its kind in Canada, provides a one-time gift of \$50,000 to an Ontario based charitable organization. The gift will allow the winning organization to build on its success. The funds may be used to further develop its activity, educate the public, or influence other organizations that help disadvantaged children. The deadline for nominations is April 14, 2008.

http://www.atkinsonfoundation.ca/what_we_fund?PROGRAM_ID=9

----- IV. UPCOMING EVENTS -----

ONLINE

CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANTS: AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH COLLEAGUES

Date: January 28-February 1, 2008

In this one-week online discussion, health professionals around the world will share their experiences with contraceptive implants in diverse service delivery settings. This forum will be an opportunity to review the latest guidance on contraceptive implants featured in "Family Planning: A Global Handbook for Providers" (USAID, John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, & WHO, 2007) and exchange information and experiences with colleagues who are working to provide good-quality implant services. The forum will focus on technical as well as programmatic issues.

<http://my.ibpinitiative.org/public/implants/>

ONTARIO

WHO/UNICEF 20-HOUR LACTATION MANAGEMENT COURSE

Date: February 25-27, 2008

Location: Toronto, ON

The course is meant for any person wishing to understand the practice of and issues surrounding breastfeeding more fully. The goal of the course is to facilitate the need to provide those working with mothers and their families the information required to adequately support breastfeeding.

http://www.infactcanada.ca/Lactation_Mgmt_Course.htm

2008 MULTIPLE BIRTHS CANADA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Date: October 16-19, 2008

Location: Toronto, ON

Parents, volunteers, and professionals all with an interest in multiple birth issues will come together for Multiple Births Canada's National Conference. This educational weekend will focus on: (1) volunteer development, (2) multiple-birth-related workshops and guest speakers, (3) celebrating Multiple Births Canada's 30th anniversary. Share the news about the upcoming conference and this call for presenters with your personal or professional networks, members, associates and colleagues. Deadline for submissions is February 29, 2008.

<http://www.multiplebirthscanada.org/english/conference2008.php>

CANADA

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CHANGE: SOLUTION-FOCUSED TREATMENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDERS

Date: Feb 12-13, 2008

Location: Duncan, BC

Finding solutions to domestic violence involves working with domestic violence offenders as well as the victims of violence to initiate positive change. John Sebold and Adriana Uken have used unique solution-focused methods in group treatment programs to do just that since 1990. They are coming to Duncan to share their experiences with other domestic violence treatment providers, mental health professionals, child protection workers, parole and probation officers, family counsellors, and support workers. Learn how to work respectfully and effectively with voluntary and mandated clients; to overcome resistance and hostility; to elicit realistic and meaningful goals; to utilize small changes to develop larger changes; and to hold clients accountable for solutions, not problems.

<http://www.orcas.bc.ca/new.htm>

SCREENING OF THE DOCUMENTARY "THE BUSINESS OF BEING BORN"

Date: Tuesday, February 19th, 2008 at 7:30 pm

Location: Winnipeg, MB.

The Women's Health Clinic Birth Centre Planning Committee, the Midwifery Consumer Group, and La Leche League Canada are pleased to announce a premier screening of the new documentary "The Business of Being Born". Please bring friends, clients, and health professionals, etc. to this groundbreaking look at childbirth in North America. There will be a brief introduction from Madeline Boscoe of the Women's Health Clinic about the planning of the Winnipeg Birth Centre. A question and answer session will take place after the screening.

Contact Linda Romphf at peerswork@yahoo.com or Sonya Jantz at sonyajantz@shaw.ca.

----- V. RESOURCES -----

ENCYCLOPEDIA ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

This Encyclopedia, produced by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, was published on the Internet and is available free of charge. This resource is for policy-makers, service planners, service providers, and parents. It covers 33 topics related to the psychosocial development of the child, from conception to the age of five, and presents the most up-to-date scientific knowledge from

three perspectives: development, services, and policies. For each topic there is a synthesis that provides, in a simplified format, the key points that will be most useful to practitioners and planners (knowledge matters, 2008, January 7). This synthesis addresses three questions: (1) What is the importance of this topic? (2) What are the most up-to-date and conclusive data available on this subject? and (3) What can be done to improve services, policies and research (knowledge matters, 2008, January 7).

<http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/home.html>

PRESENTATION FOR EDUCATORS: EATING WELL WITH CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE – FIRST NATIONS, INUIT, AND METIS

This ready-to-use PowerPoint presentation is designed to help nutrition educators introduce and share information about healthy eating and physical activity. The presentation helps to explain the messages found in the food guide, contains attractive images, and includes interactive teaching activities to help keep audiences engaged (knowledge matters, 2008, January 7). Speaking notes are provided to assist the nutrition educator in delivering the presentation.

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/educ-comm/ fnim_pnim/ppt_e.html

A GENDER GUIDE TO PRODUCING GENDER-SENSITIVE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PUBLICATIONS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

This guide (Kols, 2007) is designed for the editors, writers, designers, and distribution specialists who help develop and disseminate reproductive health publications for professional audiences. This guide outlines a five-step process for publications staff to follow: (1) build organizational capacity so that staff have the awareness, skills, and supportive work environment needed to produce gender-sensitive publications; (2) conduct a gender analysis of the audience to guide the content and distribution of each publication; (3) produce a publication that considers gender in the choice of subject matter, language, program examples, training exercises, illustrations, design, and layout; (4) design a dissemination strategy that makes sure a publication will reach both men and women in the audience; and (5) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness, impact, and benefits of the publication for women and men in the audience.

<http://www.inforhealth.org/pubs/GENDERGD.pdf>

askON LIBRARY CHAT-BASED RESEARCH SERVICES (TO BE LAUNCHED)

The Honourable Aileen Carroll, Ontario Minister of Culture, will attend the formal launch of Knowledge Ontario's askON online research and virtual reference service on January 31, 2008 at 5pm at the Knowledge Ontario exhibit booth (813/815) of the Ontario Libraries Association SuperConference (Knowledge Ontario, 2008, January 10). askON is a leading edge virtual service that allows Ontarians to chat, in real time with expert library staff who can help them find information, answer questions, deliver articles and improve web searching skills. askON, in its first phase, is a collaboration of 10 public and 7 post-secondary libraries. Using state-of-the-art software askON will offer 40 hours a week of chat reference service to public library visitors (10 hours in French) and over 60 hours a week to post-secondary students. Visitors to askON will access the service via the askON link from the web sites of the participating libraries.

http://www.knowledgeontario.ca/KO_News-p08.html