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CELEBRITY BUZZ

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# Child care's 'chaotic mess'

## Canada dead last in educational spending for early childhood

Canada ranks "dead last" among developed nations in its spending on early childhood education — despite overwhelming evidence of how crucial the first six years of life are, says a new study by the country's foremost expert in the field.

One problem is the countrywide "chaotic mess" of programs and assistance that exists now, says

renowned child development expert Dr. Fraser Mustard, one of the co-authors of the report, which is due to be released today.

To replace it, Mustard proposes a system of community hubs, ideally located in schools, that would offer play-based preschool activities, help for parents, social service referrals and child care.

In Ontario alone, Mustard estimates the cost of behavioural and mental health problems triggered by problems in early childhood to be \$30 billion; with programs in

### dead last

▶ The report puts Canada last among the 30 nations in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which includes most of Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Mexico.

place, "that could get down to less than \$15 billion a year, and probably even lower than that," he said in an interview last week from Adelaide, in South Australia. Mustard is advising the government

there how to implement such a network of child and parenting centres.

Canada spends just 0.25 per cent of its GDP on early childhood programs — less than even the United States — whereas other developed nations spend up to 2 per cent. Nationally, the report notes, child benefits, family leave and early childhood programs are "the three prongs of a sound family policy."

Such programs must target all families, regardless of income, because up to 80 per cent of children

with learning and behavioural difficulties are in the middle and upper classes, says the report.

Studies have shown that early learning and behaviour problems can lead to poor school performance, social maladjustment, criminal behaviour, substance abuse and health problems later on.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICES

### MORE COVERAGE

• School models new project in flexible child care.

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Royals deny Prince Harry involved in scuffle.



WORKOLOGY P. 21

Pair launches playful, chic and sexy apron line.



CANADA P. 9

Bootleggers not deterred by online options.



High 16°  
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70% WEATHER P. 35



**HITTING THOSE HIGH NOTES** Christina Aguilera belts out one of her smash hits last night when she brought her Back To Basics tour to the Air Canada Centre, accompanied by special guests the Pussycat Dolls.



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# Apron biz is booming

## who's HOT

LAWRENCE CHAU

whohot@rogers.com



One half artistry plus one half ambition equals a booming apron business.

Yes, you read that right. Twenty-six-year-olds Jessica Wong and Vanessa Lee have managed to turn heads by turning the tables on traditional kitchen wear with Domistyle, a stylish brand of aprons that are refreshingly playful, chic and even sexy. Who wudda thunk it?

Launched three years ago, sales of Domistyle have skyrocketed through the roof and their products are now retailed across Canada and the US. The designs have also been featured in a string of publications such as *Elle*, *House & Home*, *Fashion*, the *Toronto Star* and *Wish*.

The aprons even made it into last year's Fashion Rocks gift bag, which means that the likes of Beyoncé, Rihanna and Christina Aguilera could very well be prancing about in their kitchens decked out in a Canadian-made Domi.

Priced around \$40 and printed with a variety of motifs and designs, the one-size-fits-all poly-cotton aprons are machine washable and wrinkle-resistant.

There is also a kids' col-



NAMES JESSICA WONG, LEFT, AND VANESSA LEE | AGE BOTH 26  
| OCCUPATION ENTREPRENEURS

lection and a new men's line that will be unveiled

at the Spring One Of A Kind Show this Wednesday

at the Direct Energy Centre on the Exhibition Place



The Meshy Mini, shown above, is a special-edition apron by Domistyle featuring pink ribbon details. It's available for \$32 plus tax through [www.domistylegifts.com](http://www.domistylegifts.com).

grounds. Wong says the girls quit their day jobs last year to focus on the burgeoning business, which has seen sales triple in the past year alone — not bad considering it was founded on a small line of

credit. "You have to be really passionate about what you're doing because you're living and breathing it," adds Lee.

Browse or shop for a Domi at [www.domistylegifts.com](http://www.domistylegifts.com).

## Online psychic chat at work leads to resignation

A Wisconsin fire marshal who admitted to consulting online psychics at work didn't need a crystal ball to tell him it

the query, and said Weber had exchanged e-mails with other people seeking to remove the chief

son suburb in 2003 and later appointed to the position permanently. Harris has said that during restructuring of the de-



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