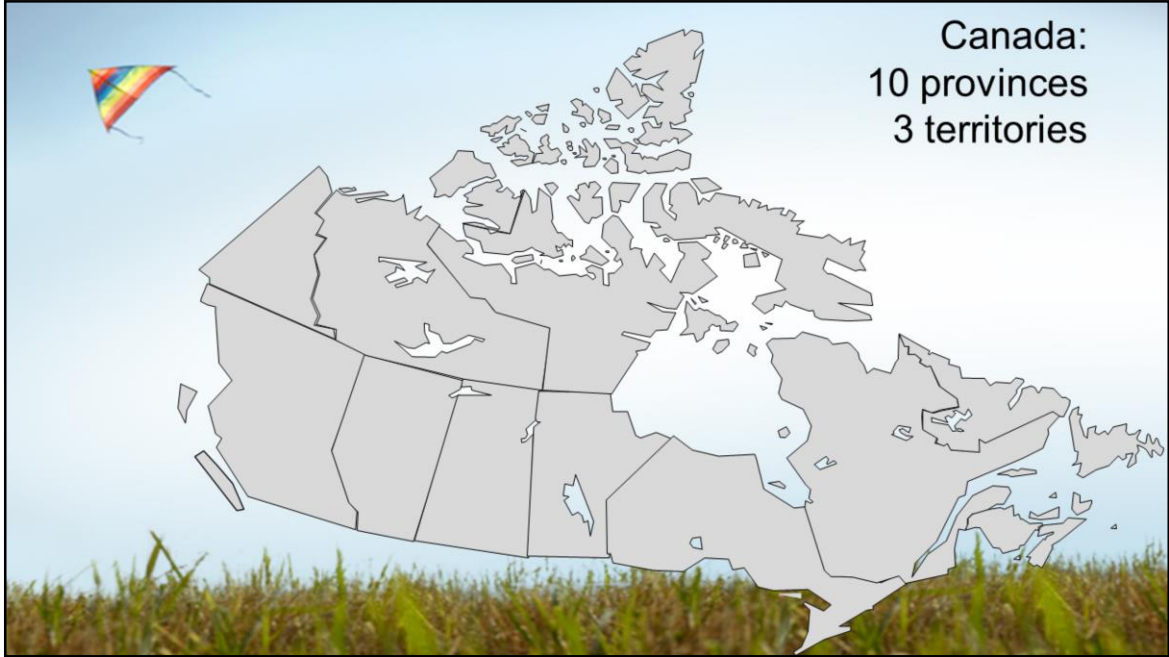


Ensemble for Education  
1st Early Childhood Education Action Congress

Hon. Margaret Norrie McCain  
Chair, Margaret & Wallace McCain Family Foundation

Paris, France  
June 2016

I would like to talk to you today about how the three Early Years Studies helped to mobilize change in Canadian early childhood policy and practice. This is not an account of breakthrough neurobiological research but rather how the studies synthesized such evidence, translated it for a broader audience and used it to inform policy development and professional practice.

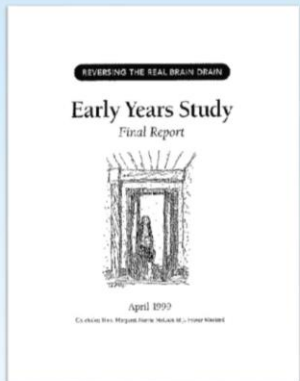


First to provide the Canadian context. Canada is a loose federation comprised of 10 provinces and 3 territories. It is sparsely populated, with an aging population that lives primarily along its southern border and a young Aboriginal population that lives primarily in northern and remote communities. Canada has no national education strategy. Early education also falls under provincial/territorial jurisdiction.



As such Canada has 13 early childhood service systems.

# The study that started it all...



Changed the conversation

Grounded in evidence

Provided credibility

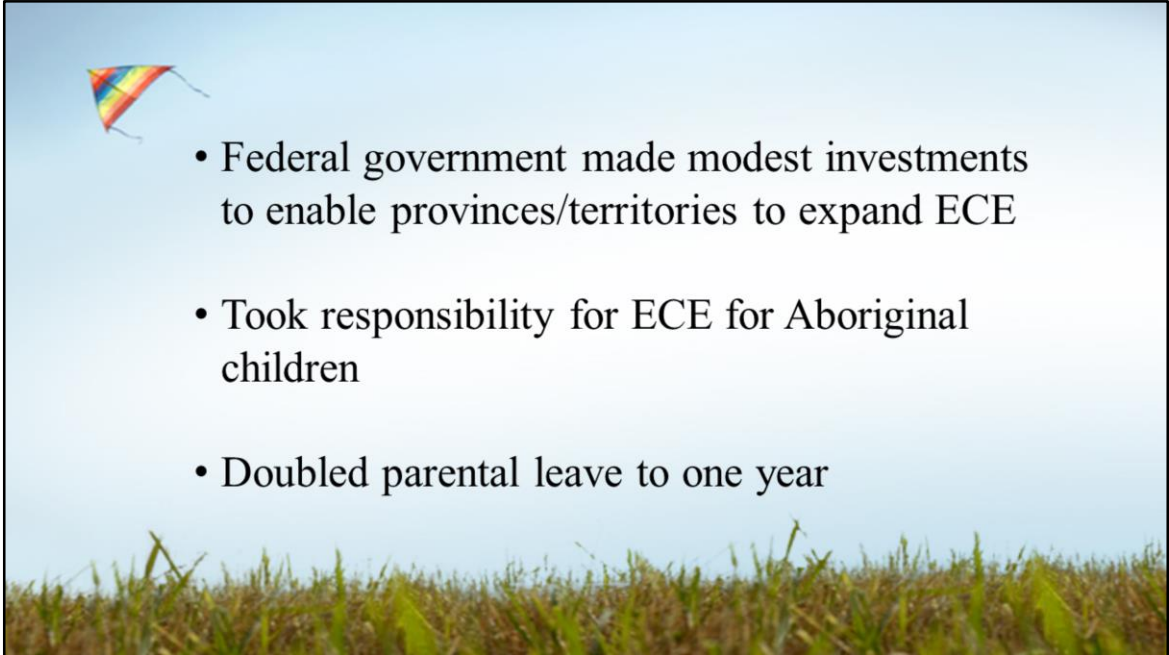
Recruited new audiences

Held governments responsible

Made key recommendations



Our story starts in 1999 with Early Years Study 1. This document is seminal to our work. It changed the conversation about early childhood by grounding the discussion in the science of early brain development. “The years before 5 last a life time” and “Pay now or pay later.” became part of the Canadian lexicon. It drew from neuro biology and emerging genetic research to provide credibility in ways previous discussions could not. It anchored early development not only to life-long learning, health and behaviour but to pluralistic, democratic societies. It recruited new advocates from education, health, business, psychology and justice. It argued that young children were not solely the responsibility of their families, but of the entire village, and in the that village governments should lead. And it made key recommendations for going forward – central was high quality early education for every child.



The study's findings resonated with the media, stakeholder and with policy makers. We saw the federal government make its first modest investments in early education and care.

It seized on an opportunity to break intergeneration cycles of disadvantage by directly investing for the early education of Aboriginal children.

And responding to the evidence about early infant/maternal attachment, it doubled parental leave to one year.



The Early Years Study inspired institutions and tools to support children’s foundational experiences.

The Early Development Instrument, now used internationally, is a population measure of children’s vulnerability at school entry.

The Encyclopedia of Early Childhood Development synthesizes the most current evidence on early development.

The Science of Early Childhood Development is an online resource available to practitioners both in the classroom and in the remotest communities.

Toronto First Duty demonstrated the main recommendations of the Early Years Study.

The Atkinson Centre at the University of Toronto launched a new partnerships where academic research informs workforce training institutions and public policy development.

And it inspired the creation of the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation; a foundation solely dedicated to the promotion of early education for every child.

## Partnerships: Foundations

**ATKINSON**  
FOUNDATION

**Prévention**  
Fondation Lucie  
et André Chagnon

  
The Muttart Foundation

THE J.W. McCONNELL  
FAMILY FOUNDATION  

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LA FONDATION DE LA  
FAMILLE J.W. McCONNELL

  
LYLE S. HALLMAN  
FOUNDATION

THE  
LAWSON  
FOUNDATION

  
JIMMY  
PRATT  
FOUNDATION

To maximize our impact we work in partnership with Foundations with an interest in early development from across Canada





We share a common approach to our work. We seek to mobilize the best knowledge by investing in scientific and policy research, By investing in the professional capacity of the workforce, and in demonstration projects to test drive public policy, Together these equal sustainable change.

We do not invest in program operations. One: Because it is not viable.

Two: Because the provision of early education and care is an essential public service and as such is properly the responsibility of government.

Moreover, the more we **acquiesce** to the privatization of early education, the further we move away from it as a right for every child. In general, the more privatized the service, the less likely it is to respond to the needs of disadvantaged communities.



## Partnerships: Governments



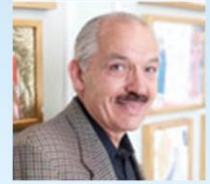
To achieve our goals, our foundation works in partnerships with governments

## Partnerships: Institutions

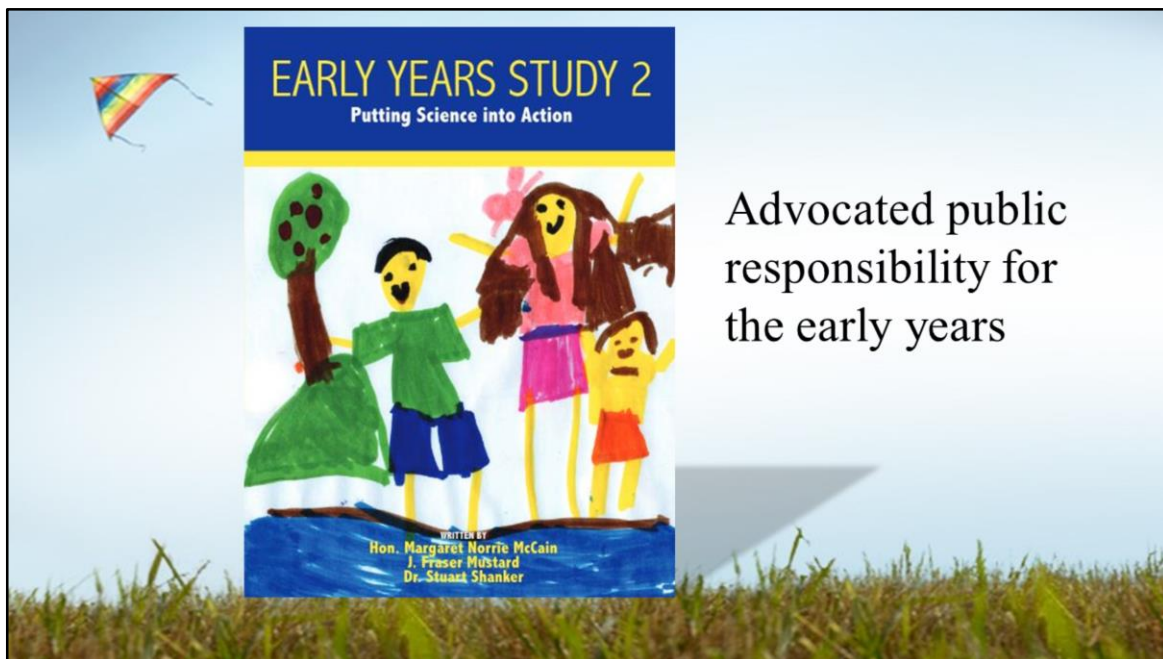


We harness the capacity of academic institutions.

## Partnerships: Experts



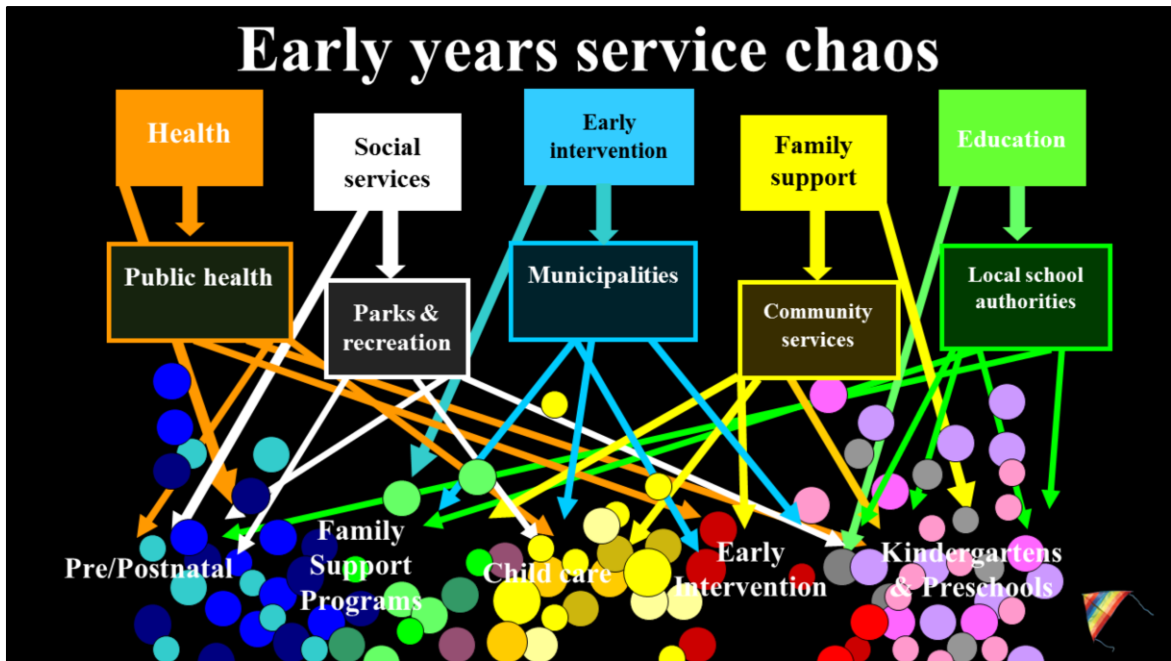
The scientists and policy experts we work with are our most effective resource.



## Advocated public responsibility for the early years

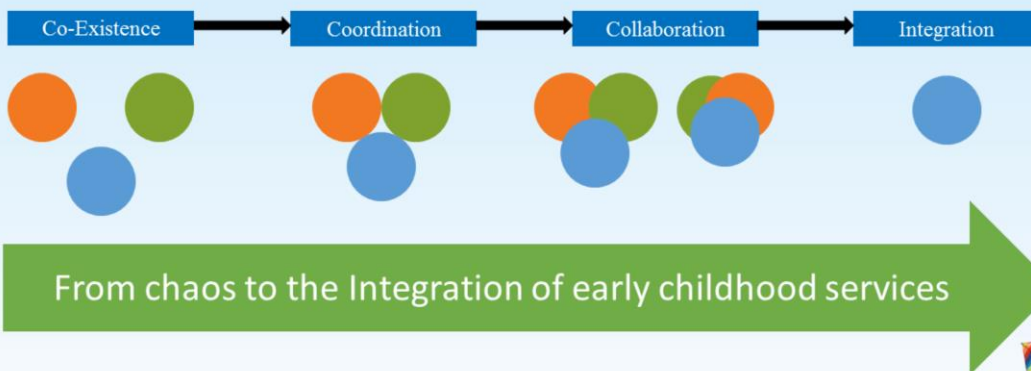
In 2007, our Foundation supported the Second Early Years Study. In it we updated the scientific and social evidence for investing in early education. Because the Early Development Instrument was in wide use assessing children's vulnerability at school entry, we were able to document the developmental gap that develops due to children's differing environments during their earliest years. We began to question the sustainability of Canada as a pluralistic and democratic society when so many children when 1 in 4 children were entering school with vulnerabilities likely to effect their life chances. We concluded that if we are going to see positive outcomes at a population health level, all children needed access to quality programs; that the best way of reaching vulnerable children was through universal access and that universal access was attainable only if public education took the lead. In the Canadian context education has wide public respect; it comes with a strong infrastructure and a well trained workforce. With less cost than starting a whole new social program from scratch, public education could reach down to include younger children and their families.

# The Council for Early Child Development - *Putting Science into Action for Children*



In developing Early Years Study 2, we learned that “the early years are important” message had been heard. There was more investment and more activity than ever. But we also discovered that while multiple ministries and players were involved, no one was in charge. Communities could name a long list of early childhood programs but overlapping mandates, disjointed service hours and eligibility barriers left parents confused, unaware of what services were available. In some communities, we calculated that enough funding was going in to provide quality early education for every child, but because of chaotic service delivery, fewer than a third of children received any regular programming.

# Indicators of change



To assist policy makers and service providers to rationalize service delivery, we developed an “indicators of change” tool. A process that acts as a self assessment, planning and monitoring mechanism.



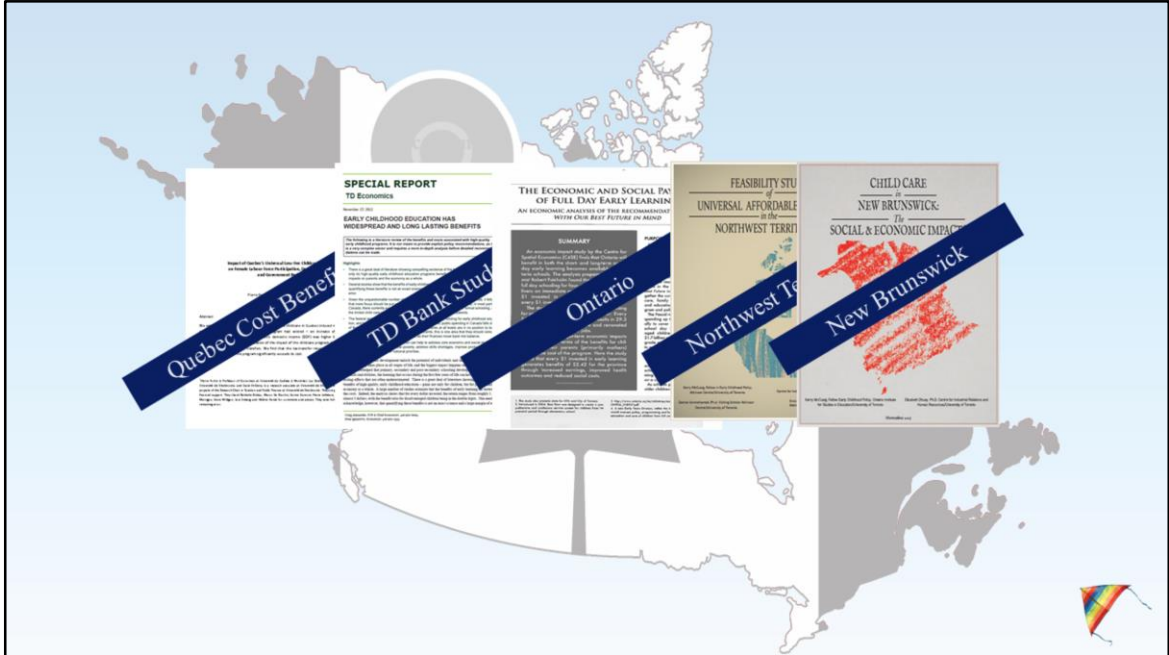
This all laid the ground work for the introduction of full day preschool in 2010..

Today, although others have made advances:

Ontario is the only jurisdiction in North American to provide 2 years of publicly delivered early education attended by over 240,000 children

It is a truly universal - available without costs to parents in every elementary school,  
 And it has created 10,000 new public sector jobs that have set a benchmark for the early childhood workforce





Knowing the need to justify the call for new public investment, we worked to put the early years economic story on the map.

We collaborated with researchers to document the economic benefits for Quebec; demonstrating how public investments more than pay for themselves.

We worked with a major Canadian Bank to produce its special report on the business case for investment.

And we continue to work directly with provinces and territories to quantify the regional benefits of spending in early childhood.



Investing in ongoing related research expands and solidifies the messaging, challenges the naysayers and builds the capacity of stakeholders and policy makers.



in 2011, in Early Years Study 3 we aimed to document ECE service development across Canada.

This gave birth to the Early Childhood Education Report, a tool that monitors early childhood policy across jurisdictions.

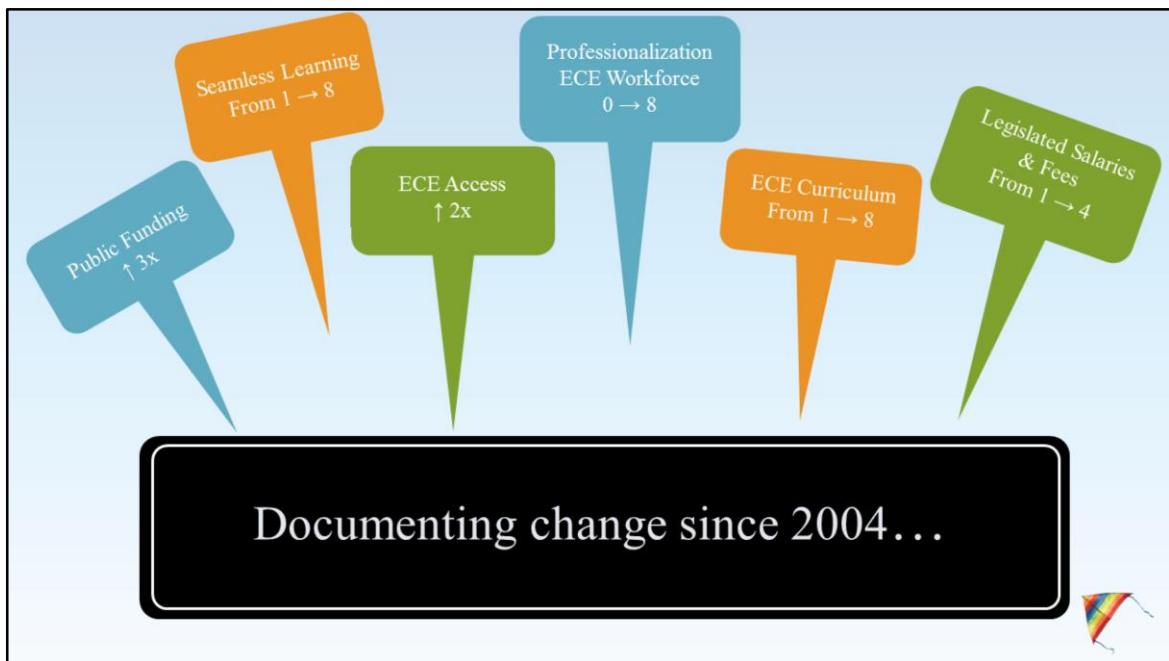
The report serves as a guide to policy makers

It identifies gaps in need of attention

It provides accountability to the public for investments

And supports advocates to engage for effective change.

The report is released every three years. The next, and third report, is due in 2017.



The report allows Canadians to document our ECE progress. Since 2004, when the OECD's Starting Strong report exposed Canada's last place in ECE spending -- our children were the least likely to attend an early education program of all the countries studied -- we have made modest progress.

Public funding for early education and care has tripled.

8 out of 13 jurisdictions have consolidated oversight for early childhood programming within their education departments

Access to ECE has doubled

8 jurisdictions now require professional certification for the early childhood education workforce

There are 8 jurisdictions where educators work with the support of a early childhood framework

And 4 jurisdictions now have legislated salary and fee programs – an indication of increased public management and professionalization of the sector

## Partnering to expand professional capacity



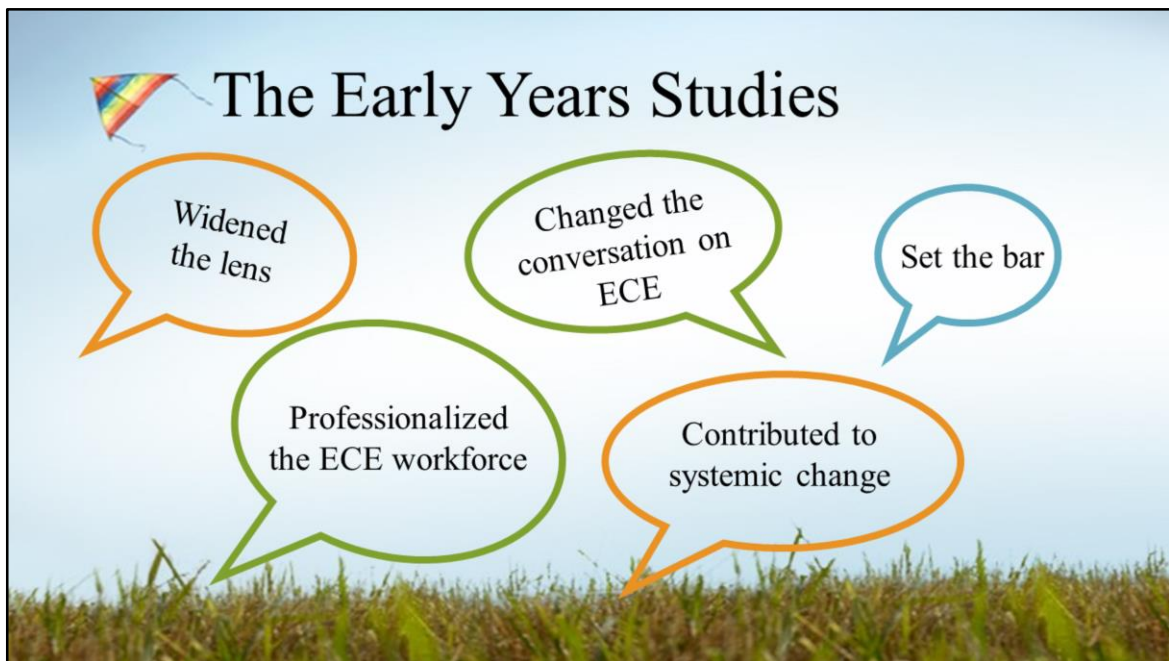
**SECD**  
SCIENCE OF EARLY  
CHILD DEVELOPMENT



Each Early Years Study emphasized the quality of the early childhood workforce as paramount to positive child and family outcomes. Through our partnerships we work to enhance the capacity of the early childhood workforce. With degree and doctoral level early childhood certification, online learning and an annual conference bringing together national and international expertise with practitioners and policy makers.







By effectively using research to inform policy and practice we have seen a change in the conversation about young children.

There is a broader view of early education not only as a child development benefit but as a contributor to broader health, economic and social goals.

There is a recognition of the need for quality programming.

The early childhood workforce is gaining wider respect.

And we are witnessing the beginnings of systemic change.





And, after a decade's absence, early education is again on the Canadian stage with the federal government offering to work with the provinces and territories to develop and fund a new early learning and care framework .

Our journey demonstrates the value of harnessing the scientific evidence to inform public policy for sustainable change. It shows the value of working across sectors to broaden ECEs allies. It points to the importance of respected champions and in building on assets already in place. It recognizes that social supports in early childhood may take many forms, but they are most effective when delivered from the solid platform that early education provides.

Thank you.



Margaret & Wallace McCain  
Family Foundation

Email: [info@mwmccain.ca](mailto:info@mwmccain.ca)

Early Childhood Education Report: [www.ecereport.ca](http://www.ecereport.ca)

