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## NEWS RELEASE

### *New IRPP Report Sheds Light on Worrying Quality Gaps in Quebec's Child Care System*

**Montreal** – With the “Quebec model” of child care figuring prominently in the debate about family policy in the federal election campaign, the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP.org) today released “Quality Counts!” a report that presents the results of a study conducted between 2000 and 2003 to evaluate the quality of the services offered in more than 1,500 daycare settings in Quebec.

The report also examines the link between the socio-economic status of families and the quality of the daycare settings attended by their children. Written by Christa Japel (UQAM), Richard E. Tremblay (University of Montreal) and Sylvana Côté (University of Montreal), the report shows that:

- The majority (61 percent) of the daycare settings met the criteria for minimal quality (that is, they ensured the health and safety of children, but their educational component was minimal).
- Just over one-quarter of the daycare settings provided services whose quality was good, very good or excellent (that is, they offered services that were appropriate to the children's stage of development and a stimulating and educational environment). In 12 percent of daycare settings, the quality was inadequate.
- Nonprofit early childhood centres (centres de la petite enfance, or CPEs) generally offered better-quality services than other types of daycare settings. One-third of nonprofit CPEs were of good, very good or excellent quality, compared to only 14 percent of for-profit daycares and 10 percent of unregulated home-based daycares.
- Conversely, more than one-quarter of for-profit daycares and unregulated home-based settings were of inadequate quality.

The authors also focus on children from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds and highlight that:

- Not only are these children less likely to attend daycare, but for those that do, the average quality of the settings is significantly lower than that of those attended by children from more privileged families.
- The gap between children from privileged and less privileged families is more significant when one compares their attendance in inadequate daycare settings: one in five daycares attended by children from less privileged families was of inadequate quality, in contrast to less than one in ten for children of better-off families.
- In centre-based CPEs, however, children received services that were on average of the same quality, irrespective of their socio-economic status. This was not the case for home-based CPEs, for-profit daycares and unregulated home-based daycares.

According to the authors, “these results underline the need for a network of centre-based CPEs in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, while also raising questions about the development of home-based settings in these neighbourhoods. A universal approach that does not outline specific measures to reduce disparities may in fact aggravate those disparities,” they say.

The evaluation was conducted within the framework of the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (QLSCD), which annually surveys a cohort of 2,223 children representative of children born in Quebec in 1997-98.

There will be an informal media briefing on **Tuesday, December 13 at 2:30 pm** at the IRPP’s office (1470 Peel Street, suite 200, Montreal, Quebec) during which principal investigator **Christa Japel** (Professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal) will be available to answer questions, as well as **Sarah Fortin** (project director) and **France St-Hilaire** (Vice president of research at IRPP).

“Quality Counts! Assessing the Quality of Daycare Services Based on the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development” is the latest *IRPP Choices* study released as part of the Institute’s Investing in Our Children series. It is available on the IRPP Web site, at [www.irpp.org](http://www.irpp.org).

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For more information or to request an interview, please contact the IRPP.

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Founded in 1972, the Institute for Research in Public Policy (IRPP.org) is an independent, national, nonprofit organization based in Montreal.

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