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New Report Finds Support Lacking for Canadians Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities

Ottawa – Families in which both parents of young children work would find more support in balancing their work and family responsibilities if they lived in some European countries rather than in Canada, says a new report released today by Canadian Policy Research Networks. This, in spite of the fact that unlike mothers in many of these countries, most Canadian mothers with young children work full-time.

In *Comparative Family Policy: Eight Countries' Stories*, author Kathy O'Hara goes to the origin of family policy in countries chosen for their diverse social values and political histories: Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. The study found that unlike Canada, many of these countries have implemented a wide range of measures to support families, including part-time benefits, flexible hours, parental leave, family leave, child care services, allowances or other tax benefits, and income support.

According to Ms. O'Hara, a former Research Fellow with the Canadian Policy Research Networks, "In most of the countries studied, including Canada, there is a strong consensus that both spouses should contribute to household income. At the same time, a majority of men and women in all of these countries worry about the consequences of the dual-earner family model for children, particularly pre-school children. The key difference between Canada and many of these countries is that because of the consensus on the role that the state should play in supporting families, they have been able to move ahead on policies that support families while Canada has lagged behind."

"This is significant research in light of the ongoing debate on how to ensure better futures for Canadian children," says Judith Maxwell, President of Canadian Policy Research Networks. "These nations have each chosen a family policy solution to respond to a transforming workplace, an evolving family structure and a changing economic role for women, in spite of an undercurrent of ambivalence among citizens. These observations may be critical when it comes time to review family policy in Canada," she adds.

The comparative study is the first in a series of research papers attempting to discern the best policy mix to improve outcomes for Canadian children. Canadian Policy Research Networks will publish findings from subsequent studies from its Family Network throughout 1999. These findings are expected to stimulate different ways of thinking about improving the futures of Canadian children through new programs and policies.

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