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Top five family items for December 2011

Christmas. A time to relax, sip a cup of egg nog...and get right into the issues. These are the top five news items from the month of December we think families will be talking about.

By Andrea Mrozek, Manager of Research and Communications, Institute of Marriage and Family Canada

There's no business like the daycare business

5. December brought news that a private child care company, Edleun Group Inc., based in Alberta, would be coming to Ontario. It's a brave company that comes to Ontario with an entrepreneurial effort on this file, since Premier Dalton McGuinty's vision is to expand the Ministry of Education to include daycare in public schools (using our tax dollars). Behold Quebec, childcare activists repeat, like a star in the east, tis Canada's only province to have a provincial daycare system! But when we look there, we see low quality, rising costs and wait lists.

Parents are best able to discern what kind of care they want for their kids. And the question shouldn't be around public or private, but rather, whether extensive time in a non-home environment is the right choice.

For more information on this subject, [click here](#). (Just this one time, we'll defer to *The Globe and Mail* for their opinion on private daycare.)

Same song, second verse

4. A large British review of women's mental health after abortion was released on Friday, December 9, 2011. The review's conclusions are reminiscent of the American Psychological Association's in 2008. Abortion, they report, does not increase the risk of mental health problems any more than carrying a child to term.

A closer look at the review reveals a subjective effort to decide what constitutes an appropriate study for consideration. Take this, for example: the review eliminated all studies without long term (more than 90 day) follow up. However, the review also goes on to say that "women who show a negative emotional reaction immediately following an abortion are likely to have a poorer mental health outcome." And just how do they know that, having removed all the studies focusing on the immediate time period following an abortion, Dr. Priscilla Coleman, professor at Bowling Green State University rightly asks, [alongside a host of other important questions](#).

The IMFC covered the [American Psychological Association's review on the same topic extensively](#). They used a similarly subjective process to cherry pick just one study on which to base a biased conclusion that is then trumpeted around the world by a pro-choice media, much to the delight of pro-choice activists.

The losers, however, are women experiencing suicide ideation, depression, excessive drinking, broken relationships, guilt and sadness after abortion, because these pseudo-scientific "reviews" take the blame away from abortion and place it squarely on a woman's shoulders.

3. If you're happy and you know it...clap your hands

The Institute for American Values released a report on December 8, 2011 called [When Baby Makes Three—How Parenthood Makes Life Meaningful and How Marriage Makes Parenthood Bearable](#).

"Making parenthood bearable!"—not exactly slogan material for the New York-based family values research group. Yet, the honesty and depth of researchers Dr. Brad W. Wilcox and Elizabeth Marquardt is admirable. The arrival of kids is a stressful time for even the happiest of couples, and this new research, which surveyed 2,870 married men and women and references a myriad additional studies, helps couples navigate that stress through heightened knowledge of what makes a happy marriage tick.

As Wilcox himself has been heard to admit, some of the conclusions are things his grandmother knew without polls, research and surveys. For example, parenting is a happier affair when you are married, as opposed to going it alone. Happiness is heightened when spouses are committed and generous to one another, when they "prioritize their mutual identity as a couple," and when they have a satisfying sexual relationship. Shared housework and social supports also increase happiness. Getting into more detail, couples with four kids are just as happy as couples with no kids, and faith has a role to play; couples with "above-average marital spirituality" are less divorce prone and more likely to say they are "very happy" in their marriage.

In short, married couples do not fall off the happiness track when they have kids. It's a tougher slog, but married folks are more likely to report that they find life meaningful. And perhaps meaning brings a happiness of its own.

2. An unlikely jail bird

On December 14, 2011 Linda Gibbons got her day at the Supreme

Court of Canada. The quiet grandmother has spent nine years in jail over the past 17 years. She refuses to abide by a temporary injunction, which says she cannot do sidewalk counseling within the so-called bubble zone of a Toronto abortion clinic. She goes to jail, and when she is let out, she goes straight back to doing the counseling she is called to do. A case in point: Right after her day at the Supreme Court, she was promptly arrested, again.

Gibbons, who has had an abortion herself, says God calls her to be a witness on this topic, and to do otherwise would be to betray her conscience. "She believes she has a Charter and God-given right to counsel against abortion, to stand in front of an abortion clinic and offer advice and to do otherwise is no different than watching Nazis dragging Jews out of their home in 1938 and saying nothing," journalist Charles Lewis reported in the [*National Post*](#).

While the extreme pro-abortion fringe finds her intimidating ("What people like her do is creepy," according to Celia Posyniak, an abortion clinic director in Calgary") this is actually one area where the pro-life actions of one elderly woman enjoy widespread support. On December 15, female callers to a news talk radio station in Ottawa were largely in favour of abortion and yet, thought the action taken against Linda Gibbons was criminal. This battle is both for the unborn lives being lost and for freedom of speech, at the same time.

There's more than one inspiring lesson here. One person can make changes in our world, and that one person doesn't need to be below 40. Thank you, Linda Gibbons, for choosing this struggle over and above time spent relaxing, with your grandkids, or simply doing something easier.

1. What would you do with 30 million dollars a day?

30 million dollars a day is a lot of money and yet, that's the sum the Ontario government uses to pay down merely the interest on

Ontario's debt. This is Ontario's third largest expense after healthcare and education.

On December 15 Moody's Investors Service, an agency that provides credit ratings and risk analysis, put Ontario on watch, revising the province's credit outlook from "stable" to "negative." Gregory Thomas, the federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, comments on the significance of this news: "In the bond markets around the world, that is an alarm bell. That's not a small thing, that's a big thing." Ontario continues to spend in spite of this, on things like all-day kindergarten, and fruitless—and controversial—anti-bullying strategies.

IMFC research shows [finances are the top stress for families today](#). So it's bad news when investors are scared away, which a negative outlook from Moody's has the potential to do. Ontario, once an economic engine for the country is now a have-not province, and that's not good news for families.

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