

Why Canada needs a universal child care program^[1]

Blog

Author: Pelley, Lauren

Source: Huffington Post

Format: Article

Publication Date: 7 Nov 2016

AVAILABILITY

Read online^[2]

EXCERPTS

Rhiannon Archer was excited about having her first baby -- until she found out about the high cost of child care in Canada. In contrast, Quebec, Manitoba, and PEI all cap child care fees and make up the difference for families through core transfers to services. The CCPA report finds Winnipeg, Manitoba, parents typically pay \$451 a month for a preschool child care space. In Charlottetown, PEI, they pay \$586, and in Quebec cities such as Montreal, Laval, and Quebec City they pay just \$174.

"The fees are high in all the provinces -- except the three that are regulated," Macdonald says.

A federal fix?

Could the federal government step in to help fix this mess? Macdonald hopes so.

"The federal role could be to set up a national system whereby fees have a maximum across the country, but then (child care) centres are subsidized so they don't go bankrupt," he says.

Some other countries already take that approach. Denmark operates a system in which municipalities are obliged to offer all children older than six months a place in publicly-subsidized childcare, according to the OECD. And in Sweden, municipalities must provide at least 15 hours of childcare every week to children over one, which rises to full-time hours in cases where both parents are employed or in education.

As the Toronto Star reported earlier this year, Ottawa is "drafting an early learning and child-care framework with the provinces to set the template for the first federal infusion of new money for daycare in a decade." But Macdonald says families will have to wait and see if the plan addresses the high costs here in Canada.

In the meantime, many parents like Archer are left coping with the costs on their own.

"The sad thing is, for a lot of parents -- well off or not -- the whole idea of child care puts a dark shadow over parenting," she says. "I know a lot of people who say they can't have a second or third child because they can't afford it."

Her son, Jude, was born in December 2015. Now, the downtown Toronto mom says she can't go back to her administrative job in the television industry because daycare is simply too pricey for her family to handle. "I made \$40,000 a year after taxes and stuff -- it was pretty minimal -- and the cheapest daycare we found was \$1800 a month," she says.

The situation is a "huge source of anxiety and stress," Archer adds. And she's just one of many Canadian parents coping with similar frustrations.

The cost of child care

Two-parent Canadian families spend nearly a quarter of their income on child care, according to a 2016 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development report. That puts Canada among the most expensive countries for child care within this group of 35 wealthy countries.

Single parents in Canada face an even tougher situation, spending nearly a third of their income on child care.

But the costs vary greatly across the country, and even between nearby cities.

"In Ottawa you pay \$987 month (for a preschool space,) but then you cross the bridge a kilometre away and pay \$174 a month in Gatineau," says David Macdonald, senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Toronto has the highest fees in Canada for infants, toddlers, or preschoolers, according to Macdonald's 2015 CCPA report. A couple in the city with a toddler and preschooler pays roughly \$28,000 in annual child care fees, or nearly half of the median family after-tax income for

Toronto families, the report notes.

And Ontario is actually home to the seven most expensive cities for preschooler care in the country -- Toronto, Markham, Ottawa, Vaughan, Mississauga, Brampton, and London -- according to the report.

-reprinted from Huffington Post

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

subsidies ^[5]

fees ^[6]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/11/why-canada-needs-universal-child-care-program>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/16/11/why-canada-needs-universal-child-care-program> [2]

https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/workopolis/canada-universal-child-care_b_12803696.html [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/subsidies> [6]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/fees>