

# Childcare key to helping families afford Vancouver <sup>[1]</sup>

High housing and childcare costs keep many families in poverty: panel

**Author:** Li, Wanyee

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## AVAILABILITY

Read online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Raising children is expensive no matter where in B.C. you live but it is especially difficult in Vancouver, where the contrast between the rich and poor is especially stark, according to early learning and childcare experts.

UBC is hosting a panel Tuesday about how policymakers can improve Vancouver's reputation of being a difficult city for families.

Daycare for one child can amount to a second mortgage for B.C. families, according to researchers. Add the high cost of housing in Vancouver to the equation, and you have a near impossible situation for many families, said panelist and UBC professor Martin Guhn says.

"Vancouver magnifies this problem - the extremes are right next to each other. There is poverty right next to unbelievable wealth," he said.

"Some people have access to the best amenities in one of the most beautiful environments in the world and others don't have the right to access them."

Policymakers should work toward levelling the playing field to break the cycle of poverty for vulnerable families, he said. Affordable childcare help parents return to the workforce and give their children a better start in life.

"One thing that is probably one of the biggest barriers in this whole equation is the rate of child poverty. Poverty affects children during that developmentally important period."

In fact, poverty can result in a range of negative outcomes throughout a person's life, ranging from a higher risk for obesity and mental health disorders, to poor performance in school, he said.

One in five children in B.C. live in poverty, according to a 2016 report.

Organizations like the YWCA do what they can to help those who are most vulnerable.

YWCA Metro Vancouver offers free childcare in Mount Pleasant and the Downtown Eastside to vulnerable families, but the waitlists are long.

For instance, almost 200 families are on the waiting list for the Mount Pleasant location, which caters to infants with teenage mothers, according to Chantelle Krish, director of communications and advocacy at YWCA Metro Vancouver. She is also speaking on Tuesday's panel.

"More generally, only one in five children in B.C. are guaranteed a spot in licensed a childcare," she said.

YWCA relies on fundraising but also government subsidies to provide lower rates to families. The B.C. NDP supported the idea of \$10-a-day childcare during its election run and Krish says she is "optimistic" the party, now in power, will follow through.

Gun also supports the idea of \$10-a-day childcare but acknowledges it will take time for the province to implement that policy.

Subsidized childcare needs to be part of a bigger push for social services, he explained.

"B.C. has been lagging behind in terms of the funding channels," he said.

"The question is how much additional funding do you channel into things in order to make them universal as oppose to only accessible to a smaller percentage [of the population]."

Other panellists at the talk include childcare researcher and advocate Lynell Anderson, as well as managing director of social policy at the City of Vancouver, Mary Clare Zak.

UBC is hosting the panel and CBC journalist Stephen Quinn is moderating the session.

-reprinted from Metro

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** affordability <sup>[4]</sup>

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