

'It's very discouraging': Childcare in London scarce and expensive, report says ^[1]

A report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives sheds light on childcare issues facing many parents

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Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 6 Feb 2019

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

For London mom Trish Earhart, navigating the high costs and long wait lists for childcare in the city means thinking carefully about every part of her life.

She and her partner go without expensive vacations and new things, and have deliberately spaced their children so that she could watch her oldest at home while she was on maternity leave with her youngest. Still, she said, budgets can be tight.

"If we had to pay two daycare bills, we wouldn't make it," said Earhart. "So we have to be very cautious with everything we do."

Earhart's experience offers a glimpse into the childcare problems that many Canadian parents grapple with. A new report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) offers striking numbers about the costs and waitlists associated with childcare in many parts of the country—including London.

In fact, monthly median fees for preschool-age kids in London (\$1,044) are second only to those in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), with London coming just behind Toronto (\$1,150), Brampton (\$1,146), Mississauga (\$1,127), Vaughan (\$1,085) and Markham (\$1,078).

Fees for younger kids are even higher, with London parents paying a median of \$1,131 per month for toddler care and \$1,229 per month for infant care.

"It's very discouraging," said Earhart, who recalls paying about \$950 for her oldest child in preschool, \$1,200 for toddler care and \$1,400 for infant care.

"You really have to think about the big picture of things, because one of us is working to pay the daycare bill."

Earhart said she and her partner have considered having one of them stay home, but have so far decided the possible repercussions of taking a years-long break from the workforce outweigh the money they'd save on childcare.

"It would be lovely to be home with the kids, but you can't just walk away from a job for that long and not have any consequences."

The waiting is the hardest part

Costs aside, trying to find a childcare centre with spots available can present its own set of issues. In London, 97 per cent of childcare centres were maintaining a waitlist in 2018, the CCPA report found.

Weronika King, who has three children and is on maternity leave with her youngest, said she's been on a wait list for her eight-month-old since she was pregnant.

"It's a supply and demand," said King. "There's a demand for it, and there's not a lot of centres that have even just the infant room."

King said a family member has stepped in to care for her younger children during the transition period between her going back to work and finding a childcare opening. Still, she said she wonders about the cost.

"It's a lot of money," she said. "It's a whole cycle of issues and difficulties in finding childcare, in this city anyways."

For Earhart, the 'cycle of issues' around finding and paying for childcare has factored into another important decision: she and her partner have decided to cap their family at two children.

"Daycare costs are so high that you're living paycheck-to-paycheck for as long as you want to have kids in childcare, and it does get exhausting over time," she said.

"You want to do exciting things like take trips and buy new items and just have a little bit more financial freedom. So, it definitely was a contribution to that choice overall."

Related link: Developmental milestones: Child care fees in Canada's big cities 2018 [3]

Region: Ontario [4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/02/its-very-discouraging-childcare-london-scarce-and-expensive-report>

Links

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