

Penticton family may have to move back to Ontario due to lack of affordable child care ^[1]

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Source: Global News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 30 Jun 2019

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCEPTS

A Penticton, B.C., family says they may be forced to move back to Ontario due to the lack of affordable, quality child care options in the South Okanagan.

Kelly Catherwood said she moved to the Okanagan with her husband four years ago. They do not have family in the area so they need consistent, reliable care that a centre provides.

"Pretty much immediately when I became pregnant I started narrowing down all of the facilities that were licensed and group-based," she told Global News on Monday.

But the family's future in the Okanagan is up in the air. Catherwood wants to return to her job in public health come March, but there is no word yet if a child care space will become available.

"Our options would be either we move back to Ontario or I have to put my child in an unlicensed home of a stranger, if I can find them," she said.

Catherwood said the lack of affordable, quality child care in Penticton could drive more young families out of town.

"In a city like Penticton where the emphasis is on tourism and it's a retirement town we are the tax base, so you lose us, you start losing families, what are we going to do?" she said.

Speaking in Penticton last week, B.C.'s minister of state for child care, Katrina Chen, said the \$10-a-day child care program is being tested in a pilot project but it could take four to seven years to roll out province-wide.

"We need a change now. This is not a four- to seven-year plan," Catherwood said.

Chen said 20,000 families in B.C. are already paying about \$10 per day or less through a myriad of government programs.

"We have a fee reduction program that is not income tested," she told Global News. "Everybody gets up to \$350 off per month to be able to get affordability relief.

"The other plan is called [the] affordable child care benefit that is income tested all the way up to \$111,000."

But Catherwood said she and her husband don't qualify for subsidies because they just surpass the household income threshold.

That means they'll be forced to pay the highest rate — comparable to the cost of their mortgage.

Last week another Penticton mother, Amanda Burnett, said she launched the Waitlist Project BC to gather stories from parents about their struggles finding child care.

Child care operators said there is a shortage of early childhood educators largely because of low compensation and the inability to take sick leave or vacation time.

Both mothers are advocating for an immediate overhaul of the child care system.

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Region: British Columbia ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/07/penticton-family-may-have-move-back-ontario-due-lack-affordable>

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