

Local families weigh in on child benefit increase, and whether it will be enough ^[1]

The Canada Child Benefit, which is indexed, increased for the 2022-2023 year.

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EXCERPTS

Kristine Steeves said she saw a \$65 increase on her Canada Child Benefit (CCB), which she said is hardly enough to compensate for the increased price of everything.

“(With) the price of groceries and daycare and all that — it's nearly impossible. You can't use it for living. It's almost like you need to save it for the future and that's about it,” she said as she pushed her two-year-old on the swing at Lions Park last Friday.

On July 20, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Karina Gould announced the CCB had increased for the 2022-2023 year.

The maximum yearly amount a family can receive is \$6,997 per child under the age of six and \$5,903 for children aged six through 17.

For the 2021-2022 year the maximum amount a parent could receive for a child under the age of six was \$6,833, while the maximum for a child aged six to 17 was \$5,765.

CCB has been indexed since 2018 to ensure benefits keep up with the price of inflation, said a press statement announcing the increase.

Steeves has both a two-year-old and a four-year-old. She said it's hard to say whether the government is giving enough financial support to families right now.

“We're self-employed. It's kind of easier for us to manipulate a budget, but probably for people that are on a fixed budget it's not enough,” she said.

Steeves said her family rarely goes anywhere because of gas prices, and they have changed their grocery shopping habits due to inflation.

“We can't buy meat like we used to,” she said.

The biggest hardship for Steeves and her family is finding child care, as they live in the Boyle area and their options — if they can find them — are expensive.

“I wish it more universal — like everyone has to charge this much, and then that there's more child care available,” she said.

Candace Searcy lives in Spruce Grove, but was visiting the Woodlands Water Play Park in St. Albert with her children aged three and seven on Friday.

Searcy said she received exactly the amount of CCB she was expecting but did not receive a higher amount this year as one of her children “aged out.”

“It was actually less,” Searcy explained. “But it was more for one of them.”

Searcy said she is grateful for any amount of money she receives from the federal government, but it's been difficult for her and her family.

“During the pandemic, and inflation and the cost of raising kids in a responsible way, it's very expensive. So more (money) would be appreciated,” she said.

All the costs of running a home have increased, Searcy continued, including groceries, gas, and clothes for her kids.

“If inflation has risen so much, and interest rates on houses have risen so much, then we need to match that somehow. I'd hope the federal government would look for an opportunity for that,” she said.

When asked if her family is managing, Searcy was upbeat.

“I think we are, but it is more of a challenge during these times than not,” she said.

Stephanie York was also at the Woodlands Water Play Park on Friday, and has a two-year-old and is expecting another. York did not notice whether the payment on CCB had gone up for her family.

"I'm gonna be honest, I haven't noticed at all, but I did hear that some people were going to get an increase," said York.

York said she doesn't have any complaints about the CCB, and is happy families get anything at all.

"I think a little bit does help, especially with a growing family, and especially now, prices are just out of control. I think it's great, and I do think everyone should have an increase because I think everyone is impacted by what's going on," she said.

When asked if she thinks the CCB is enough money for families right now, she said for some families it is not; she knows a lot of moms who are staying at home with their kids because it is better for them to stay rather than work.

York acknowledges the other options parents have to make life more affordable when it comes to small children, including the affordability grant for kids in daycare — something she said her family has been fortunate to receive.

"I probably should look at my statement, but I get nervous looking at them just because groceries are so high, bills are high. It's hard, I kind of get a bit of anxiety looking at that stuff ... but I know that whatever I was receiving before, it just helped in some way for sure ... if it's increased, perfect. If it isn't, I guess that's okay.

"But I do think that there's other families who probably need it more than me," she said.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

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