

Canadian parents need support: OECD [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The juggling act of working and caring for children has become so challenging that many parents are forced either to sacrifice their careers or have fewer children than they want, according to an international report released today.

Quebec gets high marks for its parental leave and universal childcare programs, but Canada is among the countries that do not provide enough support to working parents, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development concluded in a review of 30 member countries.

That should worry more than just parents in search of affordable daycare, according to the group's senior economist.

"If you reduce the barriers to either employment or to parents providing personal care to their children, you get happier parents, more babies and more employment," says Willem Adema, who edited the Babies and Bosses report.

Without palatable childcare options, parents are essentially forced to choose between career and family, he says. That's bad news for workplace productivity and for the low fertility rates many countries are fretting over, he adds.

Quebec's \$7-a-day subsidized daycare provides a Canadian model of the returns that are possible with a policy change, says Jody Dallaire, chair of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada.

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A shortage of affordable and good-quality options has forced some parents to turn to an "underground economy" of unregulated childcare providers, says Don Giesbrecht, president of the Canadian Child Care Federation. Stress over placing a child in care they're not completely comfortable with has a major impact on workers' job satisfaction and productivity, he says, so it's an issue employers have reason to invest in.

Successive Canadian governments have introduced different childcare policies with varying degrees of success, Giesbrecht says, but the country still lags badly behind others on this front.

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- reprinted from the Star Phoenix

Region: Canada ^[2]

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