

Our home and infertile land [CA] ^[1]

Author: Mason Singer, Sharon & Varga-Toth, Judi

Source: The Tyee

Format: Article

Publication Date: 3 Oct 2006

AVAILABILITY

- Full article from The Tyee ^[2]

EXCERPTS

People in industrialized countries are not having as many children as they used to. It's a fact of life.

...

Most countries recognize that a mix of policies needs to be implemented to secure a sustainable population level optimal for economic and environmental stability.

In Canada, the public and political debate has been limited or non-existent. We have come to believe immigration will solve most of our labour supply problems. Any remaining problems can then be addressed by tinkering with the retirement age and encouraging older workers to continue to work well beyond their sixth decade. Yet these strategies become less than ideal when examined more closely. Recent cohorts of immigrants are not being successfully integrated into our economy; stories of over-qualified taxi drivers and doctors working for minimum wage in service jobs abound.

...

Given the evidence that immigration may not solve our problems, some propose that a later retirement age is the solution. Currently the average retirement age is 61 years. Do we want to rely on an increasingly older work force to lead us into the 21st century? Do Canadians want a society where there are few children and many, many seniors? And will this be a vicious cycle? The more seniors we have, the fewer schools we need, the more health care resources we must have, the fewer daycares we can afford: and this all further reduces the support for Canadians who want to have children.

...

Do Canadians want to have more children? According to the World Values Survey, an ongoing multi-country survey, Canadian men and women, when asked, say that between two and four children is the ideal number. That's a far cry from the actual rate of 1.5.

Ah, you say, but Quebec tried offering cash incentives to have more children, and it didn't work. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the Quebec experiment with the Allowance for Newborn Children did have an impact; however, the results may have been too modest compared to the cost.

Yet, no one has asked: what is the cost of the alternative? The cost of fewer and fewer babies being born? The cost to society and younger generations of paying taxes to support a growing retired population? The cost to our economy and competitiveness of insufficient numbers of young workers? Furthermore, Quebec has now instituted a universal, affordable childcare system that provides support to working parents. While availability is still a problem in Quebec, this approach to family-friendly policies has been proven, in countless studies, to be more effective than cash incentives.

...

Upon closer examination, nations such as Denmark and Sweden have adopted a mix of policies to support families with reasonable parental leaves, affordable, reliable child care and tax incentives. They have also ensured that employers provide meaningful opportunities for part-time work to parents of both genders, while they have children in the home. So, clearly women can and do want to have careers and children too.

So, if Canadians would like to have more children and evidence has shown it is feasible and possibly desirable to support this outcome, why has there been no national debate in Canada to examine these matters? The stunning silence around the issue of birth rates in Canada stands in stark contrast to the forward-thinking approaches of most other industrialized nations with low birth rates. Isn't it time to look at this issue?

- reprinted from the Tyee

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: demographics ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/10/our-home-and-infertile-land-ca>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/10/our-home-and-infertile-land-ca> [2] <https://thetyee.ca/Views/2006/10/03/Babies/> [3]
<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/demographics>