

Stay, Mommy, stay! [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Just how far will companies go to keep parents torn between the competing demands of home and work? How about paying for child care while Mom and Dad go shopping downtown? Or running in-house workshops on managing the daily juggle?

Weary of watching their highly skilled professionals, particularly women, leave the workforce in frustration, the corporate world is turning to incentives aimed at appeasing time-strapped parents.

When a new 24/7 childcare centre opens in the heart of Toronto's financial district next week, its main clientele will not be the shift workers from hospitals or emergency services who might be expected to use such a service, but will more likely be accountants, lawyers, bankers and other professionals desperate for a break or stuck for babysitting help to cover last-minute work demands.

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Health Canada estimates that work-life conflict -- the inevitable stress that comes when work and family demands collide -- costs Canadian businesses \$4.5- to \$10-billion a year in direct costs to cover absent workers and indirect costs to train replacements for those who leave.

The conflict hits women hardest, and it is beginning to show up in statistics like those from Canadian researchers that suggest professional women are opting to have fewer children or none at all if they pursue their careers, and American findings that women's participation in the labour force has stalled.

Between 1965 and 1995, the amount of time mothers spent in paid labour soared from nine hours to 26 hours a week, while time spent on housework plummeted; in the next decade, however, U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that while the amount of time spent on housework remained the same, time spent on work outside the home dropped by almost four hours a week.

Part of what's behind the crunch is the delay in childbirth, which means women are becoming mothers at mid-career, so that work demands are at a peak at the same time as home demands have never been higher.

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Victoria Sopik, whose Kids & Company specializes in emergency backup child care, says her business was founded because offering this last-minute haven has been a corporate boon in keeping employees.

She says the industry regards these kinds of initiatives as "productivity insurance:" In the short term, they reduce sick days often used to tend to children; in the longer term, they can boost morale and make it easier for people to continue working.

"What if I need to go to the office and plow through a pile of paperwork on my desk and I need someone to watch my child? Say I'm a busy, hard-working accountant and I want to go shopping ... If it means I'm happier at work and less distracted, it's worth it to the company," she explains.

Her company has 250 corporate clients nationwide, all of whom draw into a pool of emergency child-care centres.

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- reprinted from the National Post

Region: Canada ^[2]

Tags: privatization ^[3]

workplace child care ^[4]

work/life balance ^[5]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/06/07/stay-mommy-stay-ca> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/privatization> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/workplace-child-care> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/5668>