

Families face barriers to Vancouver childcare ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A report calling Vancouver one of the most "family-friendly" cities in Canada is leading some mothers to ask what's so friendly about a city where childcare is often expensive and difficult to find.

The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, the research arm of the faith-based organization Focus on the Family Canada, released a report on the country's top family-friendly cities on June 17.

Co-authors Rebecca Walberg and Andrea Mrozek ranked 33 cities according to categories of community feel, education choice, cost of living, economic strength and family independence.

Although Vancouver received an A as its overall grade, some local mothers lament the high costs and long waitlists for childcare in the city.

"To have two kids and afford to live here is almost impossible," Kim Schick told ctvbc.ca.

Schick's lived in Vancouver for seven years. She and her husband Richard raise a two-year-old and a one-month-old.

Currently on maternity leave, Schick struggles with the idea of putting her kids in childcare.

"Daycare expenses are outrageous," she said. "You have to be earning probably \$60,000 to make sense to put two kids in daycare, because two kids in daycare is \$2,000 a month."

"It's a toss-up to even go back to work, but how do you not work when our mortgages are so astronomical here?" she asked.

Schick told ctvbc.ca that she finds Quebec's government-subsidized childcare at \$7 a day enviable.

None of Quebec's cities made it into the group's top five family-friendly cities. Vancouver topped the list along with Calgary, Alta., Edmonton, Alta., Guelph, Ont., and Kitchener, Ont.

The report's co-author Rebecca Walberg believes the taxes involved in creating low-cost daycare are an issue.

"What we found is that, yes, in Quebec, it's the cheapest place in Canada by far, and that does make a very big difference, but the flipside of that is there's much higher taxation in Quebec than there is certainly in the rest of Canada, but also in British Columbia specifically," she told ctvbc.ca.

"Our feeling is that ideally that would be a decision that individual households could make. Would they rather direct more of their income to paying for childcare or would they rather be home themselves?" Walberg asked.

Under the category of family independence, Vancouver received a low mark because parents spend less of their own time caring for children or elderly family members.

"With that category what we were trying to do is say that not everything of value has money attached to it," co-author Andrea Mrozek told ctvbc.ca.

Having one parent stay home with the kids isn't always an option in an expensive city.

Annemarie Tempelman-Kluit is the founder of yoyomama, a daily mailing list for mothers in Vancouver and Toronto.

"It's really stressful when you're trying to figure out whether you can go back to work, and are you going to have childcare, and if not, what are you going to do," she said.

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- reprinted from CTV News

Region: British Columbia ^[2]

Tags: affordability ^[3]

public opinion ^[4]

accessibility ^[5]

spaces [6]

work/life balance [7]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/10/06/families-face-barriers-vancouver-childcare> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/public-opinion> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility> [6]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/spaces> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/5668>