

# Flexibility, perks draw and retain employees <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

When Tara Murray was looking for a job, a flexible employer was essential to balancing the care of her three-year-old twins. So when she found a company that was just opening its new day-care centre - Calgary-based Newalta Corp. - it clinched the offer for employment.

"It was actually one of the key things when I was interviewing for this position ... that would allow me to balance my life with my work," says Murray. "It's very beneficial to me."

She spends extra time with them on the drive to work in the morning and eats lunch with them, dropping in to see them when she can throughout the day. "It's definitely a lot of work (having twins) but having them come with me to work and dropping them off at this phenomenal facility is very easy," says Murray.

Newalta, a waste and environmental services firm, is among the group of companies going on a hiring spree right now to fuel its annual growth of about 20 per cent. The job market is getting more competitive again and between growth and increasing retirements, management views work-life balance as being woven into the company's culture.

"We have a lot of programs to help employees create the balance they want to be successful in all parts of their life," says Dalene Friesen, director of human resources at Newalta.

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But for many workers, stress and lack of time to manage their responsibilities continues to have a significant impact on their lives.

A report by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) found women face more time pressures than men - 23 per cent versus 17 per cent - while single parents with young children are the most pressed for time.

"This is not just a simple case of individuals needing to better manage their time," said Roy Romanow, chair of the CIW advisory board, in the report.

"We need family-friendly policies for all workers and more community resources and supports for seniors."

He advocates public policies that support leisure and cultural activities, pointing out that 28 per cent of Canadian workers have responsibilities for both child care and elder care, according to the study.

CIW was launched to measure and track quality of life in Canada related to physical health and well-being, social, cultural and environmental indicators.

Ramping up to a 45-child capacity in coming weeks, Newalta's daycare facility will use the nearby Haultain Park - the company recently funded its restoration downtown - just as workers are encouraged to use it as an outdoor workspace.

Beyond their regular benefits package, employees enjoy family days where they go out to various activities and parties - most recently to a ranch south of Calgary.

As more employers add perks like an on-site daycare facility, Friesen predicts employees will gravitate to those companies.

Murray's primary focus is working for an employer who understands the need to balance her life and professional priorities as a new mother.

"I was upfront about saying I had two children," she says. "They are the most important things other than my career that I want to focus on."

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**Region:** Newfoundland <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** accessibility <sup>[3]</sup>

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/10/07/flexibility-perks-draw-and-retain-employees> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7851> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/family-resource-programs> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/workplace-child-care>