

# Childcare shortage defies easy solutions <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Chow, Wanda

**Source:** BC Local News

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 26 May 2011

EXCERPTS

When Carrie Campbell was five months pregnant, she was thinking strollers, cribs and everything else she'd need as a new mom.

She was also thinking daycare.

So in November 2009, despite not needing a spot until March 2011, the UniverCity resident put her unborn child on the waitlist at the Simon Fraser University Childcare.

Campbell's daughter, Sienna, is now 14 months old. She's still on the waitlist.

By November 2010, Campbell was starting to get concerned she wouldn't get a spot in time for her return to work in March after her year-long maternity leave. And Sienna's grandparents live too far away to be a permanent solution.

Campbell had decided she wanted her daughter to attend a group childcare facility, as opposed to a licenced family daycare located in someone's home, and set about putting her name on every other waiting list she could find that was on transit routes to and from her job in downtown Vancouver.

She even called a centre downtown near her office.

"I laughed and said, 'Let me guess, I'm 700th on your list.' She said, 'Pretty close, you're 712.'"

Like Campbell, many proactive moms get on waitlists while pregnant or even before conceiving. In response, some centres are starting to require applicants show birth certificates, she said.

By mid-January, she started calling her top five centres weekly for updates. In February, she reluctantly agreed to register Sienna at a centre 40 minutes off her regular commute. Later that day, she got a call offering her a spot at Madison Children's Centre in the Brentwood neighbourhood.

And it all happened with one week to spare before she returned to work.

This is not an uncommon scenario in the Lower Mainland and across Canada, as new parents scramble to find childcare for their kids so they can continue to work to make ends meet. And while it's a common problem, there appear to be few easy solutions.

'A matter of money'

At Burnaby Children's Centres Society, which operates Hanna Court and Taylor Park Children's Centres in two spaces owned by the City of Burnaby, waitlists are 80 to 100 names long for each of its age groups, said its administrator, Dean Tkatschow.

Infant spaces are in particularly short supply because there are fewer of them to start with, due to stricter caregiver-to-child ratios, he said.

He advised people should still put their names on waitlists since their lengths are not an accurate indicator of whether a child will get a spot or not. He recently made his way down 60 per cent of a waitlist before he found a family still in need of the space he had available.

(The complete changeover to full-day kindergarten in September will also intensify the shortage of before and after-school care, he said. Under the half-day kindergarten system, regular childcare facilities often offered kindercare, with staff walking their charges to the nearby school and back, and providing care before and afterwards.)

As for why the shortage exists, Tkatschow said it's all a matter of money. There's little in the way of government funding, apart from subsidies for low-income families, and "no one's going to get rich on daycare."

Sharon Gregson, spokeswoman for the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C., agrees.

"If you're doing it well, there's no profit in it."

The only way to make a profit is with high fees, low wages or poor quality, said Gregson, a Vancouver school trustee who works for a non-profit that delivers childcare in East Vancouver.

She noted Australia had a negative experience in recent years when a corporate childcare provider, ABC Learning, achieved a monopoly in some areas of that country before eventually going into receivership.

...

According to Gregson, when there is federal government funding, it's through transfer payments to the provinces which are not required to show how many daycare spaces they create. With group childcares typically charging fees of about \$1,200 a month, it costs more than post-secondary education. And the standards of education and training required of staff are often not high enough despite the early childhood years being identified as the most crucial ones for learning and development.

"Why go into a field where wages are \$16 to \$17 an hour, even after years in the field, with no pension?"

And through it all, no level of government is responsible for planning childcare to ensure there is an adequate supply.

...

Stressful waiting

Parents wait and continue to do what they have to to score a coveted daycare spot.

In Zorana Danilovic's case, that meant cutting her mat leave short.

When the Burnaby resident was four months pregnant, she had put her name on a waitlist for the childcare centres at the University of B.C. where she works. But the staff told her not to expect a spot until her child was two years old.

Like Campbell, Danilovic, 36, takes transit to her job as a research chemist, which somewhat limited her search after her daughter, Nora, was born.

At one family childcare in a converted basement, "I was appalled by how things were run," she said, recalling kids were expected to sleep on the carpet, there was little light and easily-accessible stairs. And for that, the fee was \$1,400 a month.

For months, she stressed about finding Nora a daycare spot. In the short term, she might have brought her mother over from Bosnia for an extended visit, but that couldn't have lasted forever.

As much as she'd like to stay home with her daughter, financially, it wouldn't work for her family.

Danilovic also went on several waitlists and checked in regularly, eventually building a rapport with daycare staff. She then learned that priority is given to parents who ask for an earlier start date. By changing her start date to two months earlier than planned, she managed to grab a spot in March. Even then, she had to wait an agonizing week while daycare staff tried to contact those before her on the list.

Resolving the situation was a huge relief. "I probably couldn't have slept until May."

...

- reprinted from BC Local News

**Region:** British Columbia [2]

**Tags:** subsidy [3]

affordability [4]

public opinion [5]

accessibility [6]

spaces [7]

Edleun [8]

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/11/06/childcare-shortage-defies-easy-solutions>  
**Links**

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/11/06/childcare-shortage-defies-easy-solutions> [2]

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

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

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/spaces> [8]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/edleun>