

Generations disagree on public funding priorities: UBC poll ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

There's a new generation gap in Canada, and it's over money, a new poll shows.

Younger adults would like the government to invest in programs for seniors as well as programs for young adults, while Canadians over 55 overwhelmingly said they would prefer the money be spent on seniors, the poll found.

"I was totally blown away when the numbers came out. I had assumed that the generational tensions had emerged in Canada because older Canadians simply were not aware of the fact that the standard of living had declined for those who follow," said Paul Kershaw, a University of British Columbia professor. "But these polling data show a very different story. They show that Canadians over 55 are clearly aware of the problem, but that knowledge isn't translating into a shift in their priorities."

Kershaw released research in October that shows Canadians raising young families today are squeezed for time, income and services. Since 1976, household incomes for couples aged 25 to 34 in B.C. have dropped by six per cent after adjusting for inflation, despite more women working, Kershaw's research showed. At the same time, the cost of housing has skyrocketed across Canada, nowhere more so than in B.C., where housing costs are about seven times the average household income for young couples.

Angie Chan, 32 and the mother of two young children, is feeling the squeeze: "My husband is a lawyer, and I have a master's degree. We're both highly educated, and yet it's impossible to save anything."

Chan, a health care manager, and her husband are struggling to save for a down payment while paying for two kids in daycare.

"If we weren't spending so much on child care, we might be able to save more for a home," Chan said. Chan's three-year-old daughter's full-time daycare is \$820 a month, while her son is in care part-time with grandparents picking up the slack. She said she's fortunate to have help from her parents, but that she isn't surprised by the results of the survey.

"A lot of boomers are very willingly taking care of their own grandchildren, but I think it's a much larger challenge to convince them to take care of other people's grandchildren, or think of this as a public investment," Chan said.

The McAllister Opinion Research poll surveyed 1,325 Canadians across the country aged 18 and over.

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