

Prof. says generation raising kids squeezed for time and money ^[1]

Author: Ferguson, Eva

Source: Calgary Herald

Format: Article

Publication Date: 16 Jan 2012

EXCERPTS:

With two young kids and a mortgage on a home in Applewood, Beth and Matt Ackroyd are working harder than ever to make ends meet.

The costs of a new baby, groceries, credit card debt and the price of gas just keep piling up for the young family, making even just a swim at the community pool too pricey.

"Things are getting so much harder. Everything is really expensive," says Beth, who is now on maternity leave with her six-month-old son and finds it too expensive to take her five-year-old daughter swimming.

The Ackroyds are one of a growing number of young families facing tough financial struggles, in many cases with less money and less time to raise young children than the boomer generation ahead of them, according to new research looking at Alberta's rising costs.

"What we're seeing in Alberta, and across the country, is something I call 'Generation Squeeze,'" says Paul Kershaw, a professor at the University of British Columbia.

"The generation raising young kids is squeezed for time at home, squeezed for income because of the high cost of housing, and squeezed for services like child care that would help them balance earning a living with raising a family."

Kershaw, with the UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership, led a family policy report called "A Canada That Works for All Generations?" comparing the cost of living, household incomes and services available to families today with the 1970s.

They found the average household income for young Alberta couples has increased by only 12 per cent since the mid-1970s (after adjusting for inflation) even though the share of young women contributing to household incomes today is up 42 per cent and the proportion of men age 25-44 who work long hours in Alberta is higher than any other province.

While household incomes increase slightly, young families simultaneously struggle with the costs of living because housing prices increased 58 per cent. Alberta is now second only to B.C. in terms of the high average cost of housing.

Ackroyd agrees that costs in Alberta feel higher than ever for her family. While her husband works in drywall and construction, Beth is struggling with the decision over whether to put both her kids in daycare once she returns to work as a warehouse worker for a local grocer.

"I don't know if it will even be worthwhile," she says. "I might just work part-time or nights, so we don't have to pay for daycare."

But making ends meet is also making it tougher to spend quality time as a family, either with her husband or her daughter. "There's not a lot of time for each other. Your schedule just gets so busy."

Kershaw, who was in Calgary last week outlining Alberta figures specific to his report, said that while Albertans enjoy a higher level of income, they are still feeling the squeeze.

Kershaw is asking for a policy change around those such issues, demanding the government restore the standard of living for the generation raising young kids.

At a cost of \$22 billion annually or 2.8 per cent of the economic prosperity enjoyed today in Canada compared to 1976, Kershaw proposes policy changes to enable mothers and fathers to stay at home with newborns until they reach at least 18 months of age, provide child care services that cost no more than \$10 per day, and allow employees and employers to use flextime to better balance time spent at work with time spent at home.

-reprinted from the Calgary Herald

Region: Alberta ^[2]

Tags: demographics ^[3]

maternity and parental leave ^[4]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/12/01/prof-says-generation-raising-kids-squeezed-time-and-money> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7859> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/demographics> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/maternity-and-parental-leave>