

# Business and family position paper: Surrey Board of Trade & Children's Partnership of Surrey – White Rock<sup>[1]</sup>

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AVAILABILITY

Warren Beach - A Canada that works for all generations<sup>[2]</sup> [video 4:47]

Full report in pdf<sup>[3]</sup>

Excerpts from the press release:

The Surrey Board of Trade released, yesterday, the Business and Families Position Paper, asking provincial and federal governments for a New Deal for Families. A New Deal is necessary because UNICEF ranks Canada among the worst industrialized countries for adapting policy to the declining standard of living for the generations raising young children. These generations are squeezed for time at home, because it now takes two adults to earn what one income often did a generation ago. They are squeezed for income, because housing prices increased 149 per cent in BC since 1976. And they are squeezed for services like child care, which often cost the equivalent of a second mortgage,

"Parents are an integral part of the labour market. The business community pays a price when employees with young kids bring their time and service squeeze to their jobs. The work-life conflict experienced by parents raising young children today is costly for employers. The result is higher absenteeism rates for this group of employees, greater turnover, and increased use of extended health benefits - all of which employers pay for", says Anita Huberman, CEO of the Surrey Board of Trade.

In the absence of policy that responds to the declining standard of living for generations raising young children, costs are now displaced on to business. Work-life conflict among employees with preschool age children costs the BC business community in excess of \$600 million per year, and the Canadian business community in excess of \$4 billion. These costs include employee turnover, absenteeism and health care premiums. It's a costly issue: Health Canada estimates that when work and family demands collide, it costs Canadian businesses up to \$10 billion a year to cover the cost of absent workers or hire/re-train new employees for those who leave. Given this economic impact, a New Deal for Families is important to the Surrey Board of Trade.

Several lower mainland business leaders, including Warren Beach, CFO at Sierra Systems, Debi Hewson, CEO of Odlum Brown, and Yuri Fulmer, CEO of FDC Capital share the Surrey Board of Trade's concern about the price the business community pays for the squeeze on the generation raising young kids.

Surrey is a young city that is growing at a phenomenal pace of 900 new families per month. Population projections depict that the overall population will increase from 483,260 in 2011 to 578,830 by 2021 - an increase of 95,570 people over a 10 year period. The increasing stress on families is captured by the most recent Early Development Instrument results, which show that one in three Surrey- White Rock children are vulnerable when the start kindergarten. Since the entire generation raising young children is squeezed, most vulnerable children reside in middle- and upper-income homes and neighbourhoods. Based on the 2011 Child Care Gap Assessment by the Children's Partnership of Surrey-White Rock, Surrey has only nine licensed child care spaces for every 100 children aged 0 - 6. Surrey and Langley have the lowest ratio of spaces to children (compared to West Vancouver with 25 spaces for every 100 children and Vancouver with 18 spaces for every 100 children. More than 41% of all refugees to BC reside in Surrey.

The Surrey Board of Trade is asking provincial and federal governments to address the time, income and service squeeze facing the generation raising young children. This requires:

1. INCREASE CHILD CARE SUPPORTS: Reform the child care subsidy system so that parents pay no more than \$10/day (full-time) and \$7/day (part-time) making it free for families earning less than \$40,000/year. Ensure quality services by providing funding for ample caregivers on site so that children spend their time in developmentally stimulating activities and play, including children with extra support needs. Caregivers will have appropriate training in child development and will be paid pay equity wages. \$10/day child care services must supplement, but never replace, what parents do at home.
2. CREATE INCENTIVES FOR FLEXIBLE & FAMILY FRIENDLY WORKPLACES: Create and implement tax incentives to support employers to develop family friendly workplaces that include features such as Family Responsibility Leave, a culture that supports work-life balance, alternative work arrangements, and recognition of child and elder care issues.
3. HEALTHY CHILD CHECK IN: Introduce a healthy child check-in and parenting support program during a child's first 18 months.
4. PARENTAL LEAVE: Conduct additional research and explore how to extend parental leave beyond 12 months to make it affordable for dads and moms alike, including the self-employed, to split 18 months at home with a newborn.

The Surrey Board of Trade knows that this is the first time that any Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce has taken this approach in Canada. It does so to promote a strong economy, and a healthy, safe society that ensures Canada remains a great place to raise a family.

Related Links:

**More affordable child care = more productive parents at work: Surrey Board of Trade taking its plan to other business groups**<sup>[4]</sup>

**Does Canada work for all generations?**<sup>[5]</sup>

Region: British Columbia<sup>[6]</sup>

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work/life balance<sup>[8]</sup>

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