

Childcare should cost \$10/day, boards urge ^[1]

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EXCERPTS: Two boards of trade in B.C.'s Lower Mainland are joining forces to pressure the provincial and federal governments to subsidize daycare costs for families, changing the system so parents pay no more than \$10 a day for full-time care.

The recommendation to provide affordable daycare initially came from the Surrey Board of Trade last year, but now Burnaby's board is joining them on the economic call.

Their three suggested affordable and flexible child care options were on the table today during the second annual Business and Families First Dialogue in Surrey, attended by members of the business community and B.C. Family Development Minister Stephanie Cadieux.

The Surrey board reiterated its calls for measures to promote family-friendly workplaces and work-life balance for employees through providing equitable and affordable options for families.

Among the recommendations is a call to subsidize childcare so it costs no more than \$10 a day. The boards say that child care currently costs around \$40 per day, around the cost of a second mortgage.

The board wants to make childcare free for families that earn less than \$40,000 per year. It's also calling for tax incentives in order to create more flexible and family-friendly workplaces.

The boards maintain the incentives are needed in order to help young families achieve a better work-life balance through features including longer parental leaves and alternative work arrangements that make it easier for parents to care for young children.

It says work-life conflicts among employees with preschool age children costs the B.C. business community upwards of \$600-million each year, in the form of employee turnover, absenteeism and health care premiums.

The boards also want the government to conduct additional research as to how parents could split 18 months at home with their newborn, and provide those new parents with more support systems.

The boards say many modern families today can't afford to take a full 12 months of parental leave, whereas a generation ago parents commonly stayed home for as long as six years.

Cadieux told CTV News her government understands that affordability is a big issue in British Columbia, but she stopped short of committing to the recommendations.

"Child care is a big pressure for young families," she said. "We're looking for all the ways we can to optimize the resources and the opportunities that we have for families."

The boards say Canada is the only developed nation in the world without a child care policy.

Rebecca Van Der Hijde pays \$620 monthly for her two-and-a-half year old son to attend daycare three times a week.

Van Der Hijde, who is doing her masters degree in education in order to get a better-paying job in the future, says every penny of the money she makes from her part-time job goes into paying for her son's care.

"We break even," she said. "We're living on one income, which is difficult."

The mother says the prospect of spending just \$10 a day for daycare would be a huge relief.

"It could mean no student loan because I might be able to pay for school instead of daycare," she

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