

Readers sound off on Universal Child Care Benefit ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

When Lily Ann reached kindergarten, her mom's delicate daycare calculus derailed.

With her daughter at school age, B.C. resident Megan Nielsen found herself elbowed out of eligibility for a daycare subsidy. Her cost tripled overnight.

"I'm not eligible for anything. It's absolutely unfair," Nielsen said in an interview.

"I'm a single parent and I don't want to rely on the system and go into welfare: I want to work and support my child and show her what it's like to work and be independent.

"But it's really tough to do that when I'm basically working to pay for child care."

Now Nielsen, who works for a student union, takes five-year-old Lily Ann to work two or three times a week.

Otherwise, "child care is going to be about a month's rent."

After living with family "to try and squish by," Nielsen's preparing to move to subsidized housing. For her, the extra \$60 a month in Canada's beefed-up Universal Child Care Benefit will help. But not much.

"An increase is better than nothing," she wrote in an email. "But at the same time, it's not making a dent in childcare costs."

Global News was inundated with responses to this story on the uneven beneficiaries of Canada's Universal Child Care Benefit, which increases this year to \$160 a month from \$100.

Here are some of the responses we received:

"\$60? Really? Does anyone have any idea how much child care costs?"

I honestly don't see how [\$60] is going to help me put my kids in child care. I'm a single mom of 4. \$60? Really? Does anyone have any idea how much child care costs?

Lets see: I had all three kids in daycare and pulled them out when I was 28 weeks pregnant, just to save money. It cost me \$600 after subsidy; at that point I'd be working to have my kids in daycare... I would be making more money, between child support and child tax, to stay home and not work...

\$60 is a slap in the face if they think that's what I need to go to work. Maybe they should look at the crippling costs of child care - which, without subsidy, costs more than the average person's rent, and it's still climbing...

Why would I work when I'd be collecting more money to watch my children?

Callie

"The fact that daycare fees for two kids equal our rent is mind-blowing."

As a dual-income family, we are still scrambling to pay [daycare] fees, which is equal to our monthly rent, groceries, and the never-ending need for clothes for our kids.

I don't use that money for my kids directly; I use it to pay for their activities (swimming lessons, sports, resp, Sparks, etc) which would be otherwise unattainable goals for my kids to participate in.

The fact that daycare fees for two kids equal our rent is mind-blowing. And that is the lowest price we could get for childcare!

Nathalie

"I'd work twice as hard, get three hours a day with my kids... so I can, what? Contribute \$400 a month to our household?"

I am in a common-law relationship and we have 11-month-old twins... Daycare cost for my twins will amount to [\$1,600] a month... In order for our family to manage me returning to work, [my husband] James would have to work away full-time.

I would have to get the twins up between 5:30 and 6 a.m., get them fed, dressed, packed and ready for daycare, get myself dressed, fed, and proper for work, drive them to town, pack them in, get them settled, haul ass to work, work nine hours, go pack them up, bring them home, feed them dinner, get them bathed, read a story, off to bed, then clean my house.

So I'd work twice as hard, get three hours a day with my kids ... so I can, what? Contribute \$400 a month to our household? So my kids can miss both their mom and dad? Four hundred a month is garbage when you're paying \$10 for less than 2lbs of hamburger at the grocery store and \$80 a week on formula.

Chelsea

"We're left deciding whether I should keep working or cut his daycare back."

I have a 4-year-old son. I work [at least] 44 hours a week. For my son to go to daycare three days a week is \$750 a month and I also rely on my mom and other family members to watch him one or two days during the week.

My husband works full-time and we're stuck now, because combined our income is too much to qualify for subsidy and with government aid we get about \$200 a month to help with daycare. So out of pocket, we're paying \$500+ just for daycare. It essentially negates an entire cheque for me.

So now we're left deciding whether I should keep working or cut his daycare back and I drop to part-time because we can't afford to spend that much on child care. Overall it's incredibly stressful.

Michelle

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