

Breaking down the numbers: Can parents afford summertime care costs?^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Young kids may be anxiously awaiting the end of the school year but for their parents, their anxiety stems from whether they can afford two months of activities and child care for their children.

If the past year hasn't already shown the high cost of living in the Lower Mainland - whether it relates to real estate or affordability - then trying to find reasonably priced summer camps for kids will definitely hammer the point home.

After looking at a range of options, summer camps in Vancouver can cost anywhere between \$80 to more than \$750 per week/per child. Most summer holidays in B.C. range between eight to 10 weeks and while the assumption is there's one parent at home to act as a caregiver, a Statistics Canada study paints a different picture.

Between 1976 and 2014, the number of families in Canada with a stay-at-home parent has declined almost by two-thirds, going from 1.5 million to 500,000. And while the number of stay-at-home parents is decreasing, the amount of money Canadian families are spending in the summer months versus non-summer months is increasing.

According to a 2015 BMO Summer Spending Survey, typical monthly expenses cost Canadian families an average total of \$2,735 during one summer month, compared to \$1,296 per month during the rest of the year. The survey found spending on summer-focused activities like social outings, vacations and children's camps hit an average cost of \$904 per month (between June and September).

Not only are parents battling financial pressures but also external pressures to provide good opportunities for their kids, which can lead to increased spending. The BMO report found 45 per cent of families say they want their kids to have the best summer possible but more than one-third are not setting a summer budget.

The summer months can often be a harsh reality for parents when it comes to summer day care or camps for their young children. Options become limited when parents need to work full-time or don't have friends or family who can help bridge the gap.

Global News broke down some of the average costs associated with summer camps and other activities in Vancouver for children aged six to 12 based on eight weeks of activities, including day-only camps, overnight camps, sports and academic activities.

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