

# Parents pay thousands to hold unused daycare spots <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

In a city where daycare spots can be difficult to find, some Vancouver parents are paying thousands of dollars to hold unused spots for their children.

Mother of two Ingrid Irani is on maternity leave from her job as a registered nurse, and is already paying for daycare for her son Alexander though the six-month-old still spends his days at home.

"I'm not making use of it because he's still too young and I want him around me as much as possible," she said.

Irani and her husband had saved some emergency money before she went on maternity leave and decided to use the funds to ensure her son has a daycare spot when she goes back to work.

"This is considered an emergency because it's either we stress out later in January and try to scramble to find a full-time spot, or we just pay for it now, get it done and over with," she said.

The family will end up paying about \$6,000 for unused child care on top of the \$900 they pay every month for their older son who is going to the daycare centre.

"I wish I could use the money for RESP or something more worthwhile but I don't think my husband and I really have a choice," Irani said. "It's so hard to find infant daycares. It's extremely hard."

In May the B.C. government unveiled a website to help parents find child care spaces around the province.

"While one provider in a community might be full and have a waiting list, another provider might have space available," said Minister of Children and Families Stephanie Cadieux.

When CTV News called to randomly check the availability of daycares showing open spaces, a number of facilities said they were actually full.

Sharon Gregson, coordinator for the Coalition of Childcare Advocates of BC, said that the map also inaccurately categorizes child care spaces.

"What we need is a system that looks at where we need spaces built, how we're going to lower fees for families and how we're going to improve the training and the wages of early childhood educators. A map, at this point, is not the kind of investment that British Columbian families need," Gregson said.

Gregson said a better solution would be subsidizing a \$10-a-day daycare plan which could allow mothers to return to work.

"Not only would families have an affordable fee of just \$10 a day, but there would also be more spaces so that more mothers would be able to enter and re-enter the workforce, not worrying about child care, and employers would be able to count on their employees being able to come to work. So it's a win-win situation," she said.

So far, 15,000 people have signed the petition for the program. Irani pays an average of \$60 per day on child care and said the proposed program could have a "tremendous" impact on her family.

"The money could definitely help our children's education for the future, possibly for our RRSP, that would be great," Irani said. "So if the government is able to do that, and should be able to do that, that would definitely help a lot of families."

Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba all have improved child care programs that B.C. could look to as models, Gregson said.

"We know parents are going into a massive amount of debt. Not only are they struggling with affordability because of housing, but the double-whammy: affordability because of the child care crisis," she said.

Gregson said 46 local governments support the \$10-a-day plan across B.C. which would solve a systemic issue in the province.

“There’s nowhere near the magnitude of investment that we need to solve the child care chaos,” she said. “It’s beyond a crisis.”

-reprinted from CTV News

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** spaces <sup>[4]</sup>

access <sup>[5]</sup>

parent fees <sup>[6]</sup>

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