

2019 Child Care Snapshot

ECONOMIC IMPACT - FOCUS ON WOMEN

“Women are doing much of the organization of care and also trying to be employed. There’s a lack of policy support for families, and sacrificing maternal employment may be the tradeoff. Women reduce their workload, or don’t take a promotion, or take jobs rather than careers, to address child care gaps.”

Breitkreuz, R., Colen, K., & Horne, R. (2019). Producing the patchwork: The hidden work of mothers in organizing child care. *Journal of Family Studies*, 1-24.

SQUAMISH WOMEN & EDUCATION

Squamish has a higher than provincial average education rate, and this is particularly true for women. **In Squamish, 71% of women aged 25-64 have a post-secondary certificate, degree, or diploma** (this compares to a provincial average of 66% for BC women and 64% for both men and women across BC).



71%

Post-secondary certificate, degree, or diploma, 7% higher than BC average

Source: Statistics Canada. 2017. *Squamish [Census agglomeration], British Columbia and British Columbia [Province] (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001.*

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|--|---|--|
| Continued labour shortage | Continued Rise in Cost of Living | REALIZING SQUAMISH’S ECONOMIC POTENTIAL The District of Squamish’s Economic Development Action Plan 2017-2019 identifies “Continued labour shortage” and “Continued rise in cost of living” as significant risks to achieving desired economic development outcomes. There is unrealized economic potential when women in Squamish are unable to work due to lack of child care. The community may reduce the risk of labour shortage and help families be able to afford to live here by working together to increase access to high quality, affordable child care. |
| Given the high cost of living, workers are moving away from or not locating to Squamish, limiting the ability of businesses to sustain themselves or grow. | The cost of doing business results in an inability to be competitive, stagnating or impeding on growth. | |
| Analyze demand & support policy and programs addressing labour/skills | Encourage productivity of firms & policy, programs that sustain/lower cost of living. | |

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Labour force participation rates in BC are lower for women than men – overall 69% of men participate in the labour force, compared to 60% of women - and **part of the gender gap in labour force participation can be explained by the price and availability of child care**¹. Statistics Canada has found that **regions with high child care costs and limited availability of regulated spaces have a higher gender employment gap** because mothers’ participation in the labour force is inhibited².

In BC, labour force participation for women aged 20-49 has plateaued since the 1990s at around 80%². Quebec has had a different trajectory for female labour force participation - following the introduction of family-friendly policies such as their universal, low fee child care program beginning in 1997, women’s labour force participation has increased (especially for mothers), and has diverged from the rest of Canada³. It’s difficult to compare Quebec’s unique culture to elsewhere in Canada, but it is clear that **when mothers have access to child care, they are more likely to participate in paid work.**

¹ Business Council of British Columbia (2018) *Women and Work: An Analysis of the Changing British Columbia Labour Market.*

² Moyser, M. (2017) *Women and paid work.* Statistics Canada.

³ Moyser, M. & Milan, A. (2018) *Fertility rates and labour force participation among women in Quebec and Ontario.* Statistics Canada.

THE CHILD CARE CONUNDRUM



Child care is often a prerequisite for parents to work, but if you’re lucky enough to have child care, sometimes a significant proportion of your income goes to paying for it. With new provincial subsidies, child care is more affordable for more people, but if you can’t access child care, you can’t work.

“There is clear evidence of a critical link between women’s roles in the economy and economic prosperity at the local, national and global levels.”

World Economic Forum, Gender Gap 2014, p. 4 (2014)

Community Feedback

ECONOMIC IMPACT - FOCUS ON WOMEN

“Not knowing about waitlist status is frustrating. It has professional consequences for me and it impacts my employer.”

“When people can’t go back to their jobs after maternity leave, critical staff are lost, and it’s hard for employers to recruit qualified people here.”

“It’s negatively affecting my livelihood and career, and my husband’s as well, because of all the time he has to take off work.”

“If I can’t find care, I can’t work – this is unthinkable.”

“When you have to rely on one income, Squamish is not affordable. We’re thinking about leaving.”

“I work with kids – and there’s a 2-3 month waitlist for my work; I would love to be helping more Squamish kids with my work, but we don’t have child care.”

“If this was a dad problem, it wouldn’t be a problem anymore. Because it disproportionately affects women, it’s invisible. It’s just expected in our culture that women will stay home and take care of the kids.”

“It’s such a tragedy to have all these highly educated, motivated women unable to contribute to the economy.”

“After losing our nanny and still having no daycare despite being on waitlists for 5 years, I decided to stop working.”

“Children need to experience women both in the workforce, or choosing to stay home. The problem is that this situation means that choice doesn’t come without a big cost.”

“I’ve had employees who have had to leave because they’ve been unable to find child care and have had general affordability challenges. It causes a lot of stress in the workplace.”

“Sometimes there isn’t anyone to cover for me when I have to leave work unexpectedly, so I have to leave my staff short and I feel terrible about that.”

“It’s frustrating to know of talented, capable, and influential women who want to return to the workforce and are not able to find stable childcare; who as women and mothers bring important perspectives and skills to their work.”

“I now have seen and felt the discrimination that women face in the work force, and how this impacts career goals.”

“If I could find full-time child care, I would go back to work. If I could find part-time child care, I would start a business.”

“If I had child care, I would have taken shorter leave and returned to work much earlier. Being in a tenuous situation now impacts my ability to pick up other work opportunities.”

“I have had to scale back to part-time work. Now I’m not getting assigned the project management roles and interesting projects I get excited about, and I’m worried about the impact on my career. My peers who aren’t in this situation are moving ahead of me.”

“My employer has had difficulty filling my position while I’ve been on leave – I’m very well-qualified and I want to work, but I don’t know if I’ll be able to.”

“I moved to Squamish recently and had my pick of jobs – frankly, my employer needs me more than I need them.”

“If both parents had access to flexible work arrangements and part time options, more women would be able to remain in the workforce.”

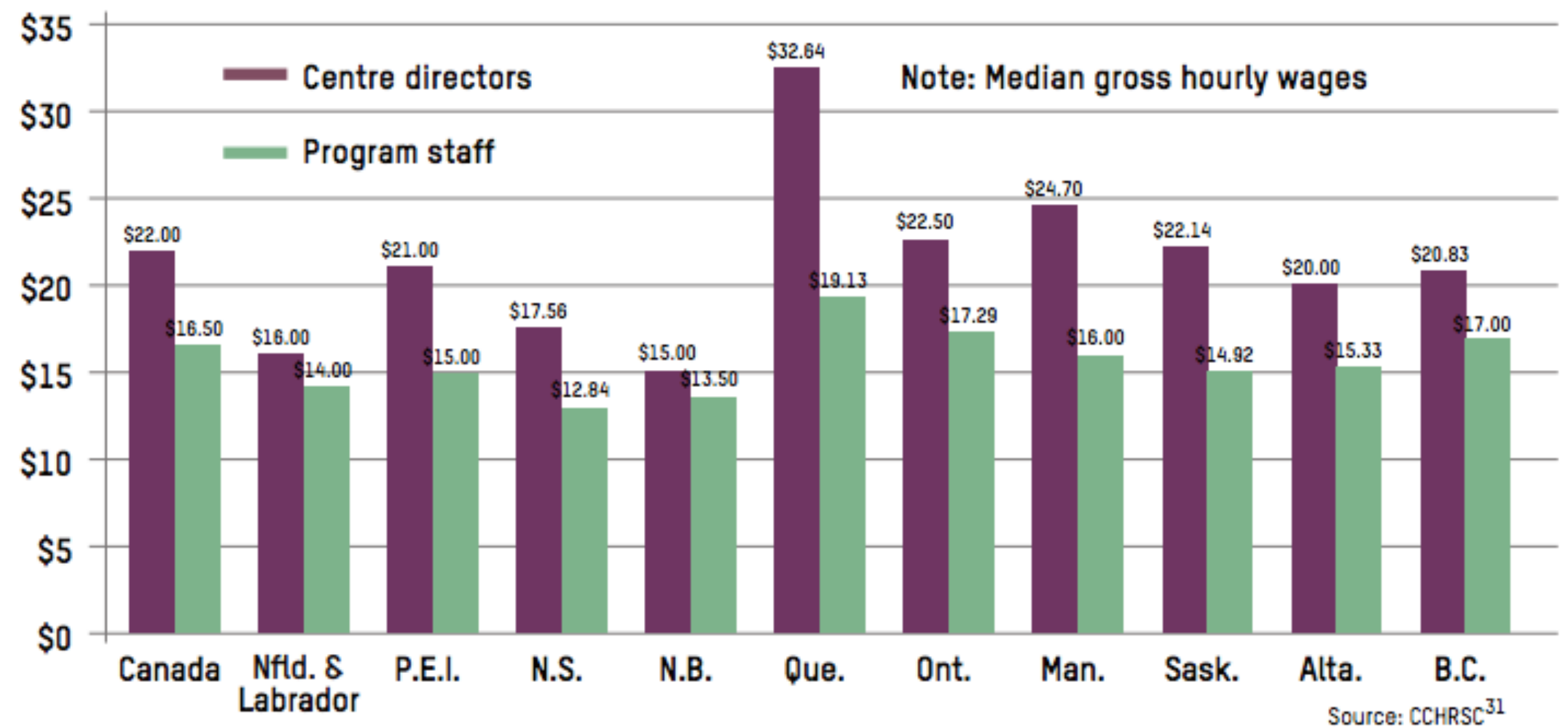
2019 Child Care Snapshot

CHILD CARE STAFFING

WHO CAN AFFORD TO CARE?

Child care is one of the most feminized job sectors in Canada: 97% of child care providers are women. Despite having years of post-secondary education, Canadian child care providers working in regulated settings earn some of the lowest wages in Canada – nearly 40% lower on average than women with similar levels of education working full-time in other sectors. Across Canada, the undervaluation of these jobs results in low retention rates, low levels of job satisfaction, and labour shortages.

Figure 3: Child care centre staff wages across Canada



97% of child care providers are women,
1/4 of child care workers need a second job to make ends meet,
ECEs earn **40%** less than women with similar education.

Source: Oxfam Canada (2019), *Who Cares? Why Canada needs a public child care system.*

SQUAMISH LIVING

Living wage:
\$19.50

A living wage estimate for Squamish has not been calculated, but the minimum hourly amount a family of four in Metro Vancouver needs in order to cover basic expenses is a good proxy: \$19.50/hour, which assumes two parents, both working full-time.

Ivanova, I. (2019). *Working for a living wage 2019: Making paid work meet basic family needs in Metro Vancouver.* Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

In Squamish, the **median hourly wage for Early Childhood Educators and Assistants is \$18.12** (EMSI 2019.3).

The need for fair wages and systemic improvement across the child care sector is enormous. The Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy 2018-2023 recommends advocating to provincial and federal governments on child care and affordability issues including wage initiatives for ECEs. Until these bigger issues are addressed, there are few things that can be done locally to begin to address the situation in the short term.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The mismatch between the level of education required of early childhood educators (ECEs) and other child care workers and their wages is compounded in Squamish by high cost of living, especially lack of affordable housing. Policies and programs to support affordable housing, especially those targeted at ECEs, would help to address child care staffing challenges. The Squamish Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy 2018-2023 recommends the following on this topic:

- Advance the Community Amenity Contribution framework wherein developers build ECE worker affordable housing units held for the purpose in perpetuity (2.4).
- Consider a “Housing Authority” for ECE workers to access affordable local housing (2.5).

} District of Squamish workforce housing strategy is in early development stages

ECEs WITH KIDS

There are qualified ECEs in Squamish who want to work, but because they have children, are faced with additional challenges:

- Low wages mean that the cost of having their children in care is too close to what they would earn to make working worthwhile, and
- There is such a shortage of child care spaces available that there may not be space available for their children.

Working to increase access rates and the number of child care spaces available, especially for infants and toddlers, would help to address this second challenge.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO EDUCATION



In September 2019, Capilano University launched an ECE program based in Squamish. One-time funding for this program was provided by the province.

Community Feedback

CHILD CARE STAFFING



"I have a preference for a licensed, group setting with well-educated teachers and the opportunity to benefit from socialization with other kids – it's important developmentally and everyone should have access to that."

"Early childhood education is connected to school readiness – I want really great teachers to help my child be ready."

"Child care providers need to be compensated fairly – it's so much work!"

"A client once asked me about wages and childcare because I have been in it for a long time. I explained that childcare is a labour of love and a great supplementary income in a two income family. As an employee in a group centre, especially in Squamish where cost of living has skyrocketed, unless you are very frugal it is almost impossible to support yourself on a daycare income."

"I'm not a child educator – my child would learn more with trained teachers in a social setting. It's a missed educational opportunity when moms stay home because they can't find care or it costs too much."

"Our kids are valuable, and the people taking care of them are too. I'm concerned about the low wages of ECEs given the importance of their work".

"Consistency of care is so important. It's hard on the kids when there's a lot of staff turnover."

"After some life changes, I could not support my family on the income I earned working at a group child care centre, despite the fact that I was on the high end of the income scale. As a result I chose to open a licensed program from my home. The income from this program, in addition to the tax benefits, made this a much more financially viable option for me."

"We would like to expand our child care centre, and we've explored various ways it might be possible, but staffing is the limit."

"We've been days away from closing because of staff shortage".

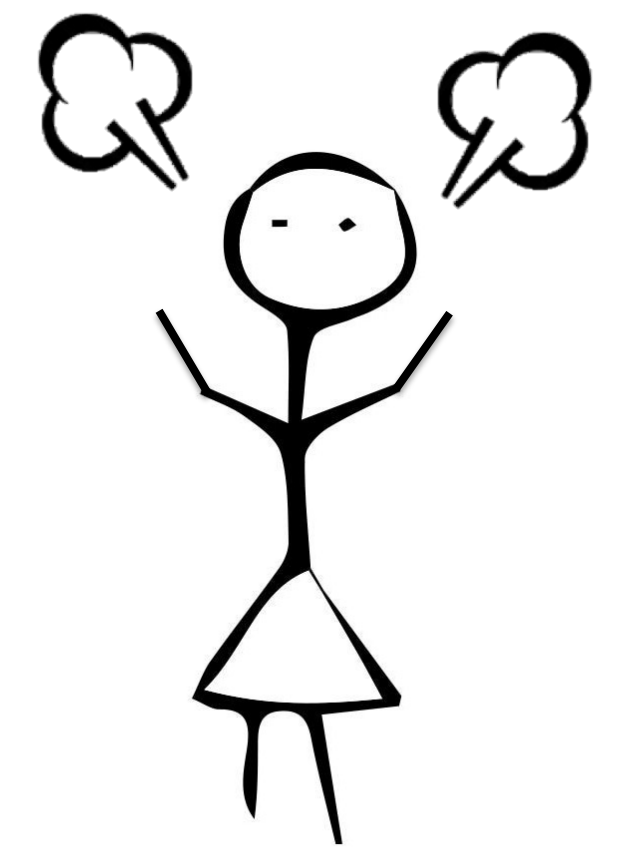
"Staff shortages impact programming and quality of care. You have to maintain higher staff to children ratios than the minimum required by licensing in order to offer high quality programming and to keep staff from burning out."

"Staff shortage is sooo connected to housing."

"It's frustrating that people and businesses are being encouraged to move here when there aren't necessities like child care available. It's also challenging for care workers to live in Squamish because it's so expensive; they need to earn a living wage."

Finding Child Care

WAITLISTS, ETC.



“I’m told that you need to follow up in order to find child care, but when do I have time to do this? It’s actually a part-time job looking for child care.”

Being on waitlists offers no certainty, sometimes costs money, and it’s time-consuming for parents and child care providers to be in constant communication. **Is there a better way?**

NOTE - NOT ALL PROVIDERS USE WAITLISTS

Child care programs manage waitlists in various ways. Some facilities have their own waitlist policies and others, as private businesses, don’t manage waitlists on a first-come, first-serve basis. For example, some providers interview families to determine if the arrangement would be a good fit for the child and program and some implement a ‘trial period’ to test things out. Others determine if the parent’s schedules would work for them and may make decisions based on scheduling needs.

CENTRALIZED WAITLIST?

Some Canadian cities, regions, and provinces offer a centralized waitlist. They can be expensive and results are mixed.

Pros:

The right centralized waitlist system has the potential to:

- Save time,
- Increase certainty,
- Increase equity,
- Increase transparency.

Cons:

- A large percentage of child care operators have to participate for it to be useful;
- When availability is low, spaces often don’t open up until after they are needed;
- In places with centralized waitlists, some child care providers keep their own waitlists, which increases confusion rather than reducing it;
- It is expensive to set up and manage.



We’ve heard how challenging the current waitlist situation is Squamish is. **Please share your ideas for improving ways of finding child care:**



Community Feedback



FINDING CHILD CARE

“When my child was two months old I put her on every available daycare waitlist (the ones that replied to my emails) thinking that a year on a wait list would be long enough to get at least one place in one facility...how naive I was!”

“The only reason I have daycare is because I’ve been in Squamish for eight years and I have some connections. You have to pull all the strings you can.”

“It takes a lot of work to find child care. You’re told to be the squeaky wheel but I don’t want to have to do that. I don’t want to be the annoying mother, but I do want him to get in. I know that operators are doing their best, and I don’t want to be constantly bothering them.”

“I made an elaborate spreadsheet to show all the providers I’ve contacted, and their status, and each time I’ve contacted them.”

“Having twins, I’ve had care providers actually laugh when asking about availability and waitlists.”

“There is zero transparency or standard regulation on daycare waitlists. We continue to have no idea where our son is on any lists, and still, after almost a year, we have not heard back at all from a few of the daycares...one of which is on our street!”

“I’m aware of the child care crisis in Squamish, so I started contacting daycares while I was pregnant. I had a few replies, but many told me that it was too early to contact them and to try again when my child was a few months old, which doesn’t make sense to me – I’m trying to plan in advance to make sure I have a space. I contacted everyone again after my child was born; some said I was on the list, others said it was still too early, and some places had closed. I’m not going back to work until Sept 2020, but I’m already stressed out thinking about what we’re going to do.”

“I was told when I was pregnant that it was too early to start looking for daycares. Now it turns out it’s too late – wait times are more than 18 months long.”

“There has to be a better way to figure out which daycares are accepting kids. Calling every daycare constantly and having to track each one is overwhelming.”

“Waitlists are so frustrating – they seem to be about three years long.”

“Having an older sibling enrolled doesn’t guarantee you a space anymore.”

“I started looking for daycares while pregnant. So far, I’ve found one day per week. The daycare I found wasn’t through waitlists, it was word of mouth and a connection through friends.”

“Looking for daycare is all-consuming. Contacting daycares takes a lot of time, and there’s often no response.”