



Back to Young parents squeezed for time and money, report finds

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Canadian parents are raising children with far less money and time than their baby boomer predecessors, despite the doubling of the Canadian economy since 1976, says a report from the [University of British Columbia](#).

At the same time, Canadians approaching retirement are wealthier than ever before, setting up an intergenerational tension that threatens young families, according to the study, released Tuesday.

"What we're seeing is something I call 'Generation Squeeze,'" said lead researcher Paul Kershaw.

Average household income has flatlined since the mid-1970s, the report noted, while housing prices have increased 76 per cent across the country, leaving parents of young children facing a higher cost of living. That same phenomenon has boosted the wealth of retiring boomers. Numbers are adjusted for inflation.

In Ontario, housing prices jumped eight times faster than household incomes for young couples, even though women have increased their participation in the labour force by almost 40 per cent since 1976.



A University of British Columbia study found that it's much more expensive to raise a family than it was a generation ago.

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"The generation raising young kids today is squeezed for time at home, squeezed for income because of the high cost of housing, and squeezed for services like child care that would help them balance earning a living with raising a family," said Kershaw, associate professor with UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership.

Kershaw said in an interview that since the '70s, social policy has not kept up with the realities faced by young families and called on parents of young kids to get politically active.

"They need to care less about who is being voted off some island on TV, and more about who is being voted into our legislatures," he urged in the study.

Kershaw and his colleagues are calling for a \$22 billion "New Deal" for Canadian families to support young children and restore the standard of living for the next generation.

They propose three policy changes: parental benefits, including for self-employed moms and dads that would allow one parent to stay at home for the first 18 months of a child's life, up from the current 12 months; \$10-a-day child care; and mandatory flextime for employees and employers.

The researchers say the costs would amount to the equivalent of \$1.67 a day, or a Tim Horton's coffee, for each Canadian adult.

The report comes as the Occupy Wall Street protests against the growing gap between rich and poor have swept North America, including Toronto. Kershaw says Canada's gap is best illustrated by the different economic circumstances between generations.

It also follows a series of provincial elections, including in Ontario, where less than half of eligible voters cast a ballot.

The UBC study paints an important picture of how life has improved for seniors and become tougher for young families, says Martha Friendly of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit in Toronto.

"What we've been doing is socializing the costs of being old and privatizing the costs of being young," she said.

Kershaw noted during the economic downturn between 2007 and 2010 Canada invested \$22 billion in health care because it was deemed a priority.

"The question this study poses is, is the generation raising kids a priority?"