

New poll shows Canadians want to make family a priority

February 8 2012

Canadians want to make family a priority – 85 per cent want to spend more time with their families and 60 per cent want governments to support policy changes that make it easier to raise a family, according to a national poll by McAllister Opinion Research about research led by University of British Columbia professor Paul Kershaw.

“Despite having all the amenities of modern life, two-thirds of [Canadians](#) resist the idea that today’s families have it easier than in the past,” said Kershaw. The McAllister poll examined public attitudes about the degree to which we prioritize [family](#) time and responsibility in this country. This is the second set of data to come out of the poll; earlier data examined Canadians’ attitudes about public funding priorities.

The poll shows that 60 per cent of Canadians ‘agree’ or ‘somewhat agree’ that ‘compared to what is spent in other areas, Canadian governments do not do enough for families raising young kids today.’ Accordingly, 60 per cent indicated they would ‘vote for a politician who has publicly committed to fighting for better government policies for families with young children.’

Kershaw, an associate professor at UBC’s Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), said, “it is far more common that today both parents need to work in order to eke out a standard of living that is often lower than one salary could achieve a generation ago.”

The poll reveals that 62 per cent of Canadians think it’s a good idea to

invest in ‘New Mom and New Dad benefits,’ which would make it affordable for all parents, including the self-employed, to spend up to 18 months at home with newborns – splitting the leave between moms and dads.

Sixty-six per cent of Canadians think it’s a good idea to ‘subsidize \$10-a-day quality child care’ and 80 per cent of Canadians think it’s a good idea to invest in more flex-time, allowing parents more flexibility and time at home.

Recognizing that Canada is experiencing tough economic times, the poll shows that Canadians are willing to make hard choices to pay for these programs and services including revisiting sacred cows like medical care increases, or tax cuts.

When asked specifically about reallocating recent spending increases from medical care and investing it in family policy instead, only 37 per cent of Canadians responded that this was a ‘bad idea,’ compared to 42 per cent that thought it is a ‘good idea,’ and 21 per cent that were unsure.

More Canadians also think it is a ‘good idea’ than a ‘bad idea’ for all Canadians to contribute to new family policies through their income taxes, including a slim majority of Canadians under 45.

Kershaw noted that combined federal, provincial, and municipal revenue is down more than \$90 billion as a share of our economy today compared to 1980, while over the same period, medical care spending is up \$47 billion.

“When we choose to cut the total revenue pie by \$90 billion, but increase the slice for [medical care](#) by \$47 billion, we leave \$137 billion less for other priorities. The generation raising young kids is definitely feeling this pinch, because it now means Canada has very weak family policy by

international standards.”

Kershaw released this data on February 7 in Ottawa following an invited presentation to the Government of Canada Standing Committee on Health.

Provided by University of British Columbia

Citation: New poll shows Canadians want to make family a priority (2012, February 8) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-02-poll-canadians-family-priority.html>

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