



Relocation: The Kindergarten Factor

Domestic relocation between provinces within Canada can be an exciting opportunity for a young family, but it can also present unexpected surprises or challenges for both the family as well as the employer. Relocation specialists often assume that pre-school and nursery aged children are more “portable” and therefore adjust more readily to a family move. However, there are regional differences in Canada which can potentially be quite disruptive as illustrated in the following example.

The Bouchards (not their real name) were really looking forward to their relocation to Nova Scotia, Canada. They had holidayed in the Maritimes the year previously and images of picture postcard fishing villages, Celtic ceildhs, and lobster dinners danced in their heads. What a terrific place to bring up children, they thought. Their son, Jonathan, aged four, had just finished his first year of Junior Kindergarten in Ontario, and Claire, their three year old daughter, who was bright as a brand new penny, was ready and eager to start Junior Kindergarten this coming year. What a great move for the whole family! Or so they thought.

The Bouchards’ enthusiasm for the move diminished abruptly when they discovered neither of their children would be eligible to attend school during the family’s first year in Nova Scotia. Claire wouldn’t be able to enter Junior Kindergarten because it is not offered in Nova Scotia. Jonathan couldn’t enter Senior Kindergarten until the following year since the cut-off enrolment birth date is October 1st and his birth date is November 1st. If the Bouchards decided to stay in Ontario, their daughter would be eligible to enroll in Junior Kindergarten and their son would proceed directly into Senior Kindergarten since Ontario’s cut off enrolment birth date is December 31st. The Bouchards were now forced to reflect upon the impact that this move would have on their family’s life style (i.e., Mrs. Bouchard had intended to return to school) and their children’s educational experience.

As illustrated by this family’s experience, Kindergarten programs vary across Canada. Although the actual curriculum in most provinces is generally the same, there are two key differences: the length of the program and the birth date required for enrolment. As you can see from the following chart, only three provinces begin public education in Junior Kindergarten. The birth date used to determine eligibility for enrolment also varies widely between provinces. In six provinces a child must be five years of age before December 31st to register in Senior Kindergarten. In the remaining four provinces the enrolment birth date ranges from September 30th to February 28th.

Province	Junior Kindergarten		Senior Kindergarten	
	Offered	Cut Off Enrollment Birth Date	Offered	Cut Off Enrollment Birth Date
Alberta	No	N/A	Yes	Feb 28th
British Columbia	No	N/A	Yes	Dec 31st
Manitoba	Yes	Dec 31st	Yes	Dec 31st
New Brunswick	No	N/A	Yes	Dec 31st
Newfoundland	No	N/A	Yes	Dec 31st
Nova Scotia	No	N/A	Yes	Oct 1st
Ontario	Yes	Dec 31st	Yes	Dec 31st
Prince Edward Island	No	N/A	Yes	Jan 31st
Quebec	Yes	Sept 30th	Yes	Sept 30th
Saskatchewan	No	N/A	Yes	Dec 31st

Relocation can be a stressful period for the whole family. When children also have to cope with educational disruption, the stress is increased and can even threaten the success of the overall relocation. Before you consider relocating a valued employee with school aged children within Canada, and particularly across an international border, it is important to determine whether there are real differences between educational systems; and, what options and alternative educational solutions are available.

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