



“Catholic Education in Canada is free, isn’t it?”

Domestic relocation between provinces within Canada can be an adventure for a family with school aged children, but it can also present unexpected surprises or challenges for both the family as well as the employer.

The answer to the question of religious school funding is: “maybe” depending on where you live. In Canada, the provinces and territories are responsible for setting the standards, curricula, and how to fund elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education. That is, Canada has no national or federal department of education. Although there are many similarities in the delivery of education across the country, one significant difference is in the area of public funding of schools which offer a specific religious focus. In Canada, Catholic schools represent the single largest school system offering religious education. Five provincial governments fully subsidize Catholic education while others do not. That is, there are important regional differences in Canada in how schooling is funded which can have a remarkable impact on the success of a family relocation.

Parents choose a Catholic education for their children for a variety of reasons, not all of which are religious. The lack of public funding for Catholic education can have a significant impact on a family, and on their finances as illustrated in the following example.

Last year the Batchelor family (not their real name) were relocated from Ontario to British Columbia. For this family of athletic teenagers that loved outdoor activities, the move seemed ideal. Until the family’s relocation, the three children had been enrolled in a local school, governed by the Catholic school board and funded by the provincial government. The family wanted their children to continue their Catholic education in British Columbia. Their older children had taken courses which would not transfer to the public system. However, it came as a great shock when they learned that Catholic education in British Columbia is not publicly funded. When they investigated the availability of private Catholic schools, they learned that the annual tuition would be approximately \$9,000 CAD per child. Faced with the whopping and unbudgeted cost of \$27,000 CAD per year after taxes for their three children, the Batchelors realized they could not afford this option. Their ‘problem’ was understandably also a surprise to their Relocation Counsellor.

The accompanying chart indicates which provinces support publicly funded Catholic education.

Is Catholic Education Publicly Funded?

Provinces	Yes / No
Alberta	Yes
British Columbia	No
Manitoba	No
New Brunswick	No
Newfoundland	Yes
Nova Scotia	No
Ontario	Yes
Prince Edward Island	No
Quebec	Yes
Saskatchewan	Yes

If parents want their children to have a Catholic education in the provinces that do not have Catholic school boards, they can enrol their children in a private Catholic school. Tuition for private Catholic schools across the country ranges from approximately \$8,000 to \$15,000 CAD. For many families, this may not be feasible and may be considered in the cost of relocation.

Relocation is a potentially disruptive time for the whole family, but it can also be an exciting opportunity. When families are presented with unexpected and major surprises, stress is increased and the overall success of the relocation can be challenged. Consequently, before relocating a valued employee with school aged children within Canada, and particularly across an international border, it is important to determine whether there are educational issues, in this case school funding, which require special attention. The key to a successful family relocation is to be aware of available options and educational solutions.

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