

## Young British Columbians increasingly in debt

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A new survey of consumer debt among young people in B.C. shows that our high cost of living is driving young adults into debt, and possibly away from the province.

The survey was conducted by Sands and Associates, the largest firm of bankruptcy trustees and consumer proposal administrators in the province.

The survey found that almost half of B.C. youth under 30 are between \$10,000 and \$24,000 in debt, not including mortgages and car loans.

The debts are mostly made up of credit card debt, student loans and owed income taxes.

Blair Mantin, Vice President of Sands and Associates, says he was surprised at the level of debt among young people.

“To think that you’re less than 30 years old and you’re owing over \$40,000, early in life, it was higher than I anticipated.”

Mantin says many young people are coming to his company for help with their debt, from doing a consumer proposal to freeze the interest, to filing for bankruptcy.

He says credit cards were the number one thing that young people say got them into financial trouble.

“The number one thing cited was over extension of credit. They got too much credit early in life. For a lot of people they can carry it for a long time but once something happens, they don’t have any slack built into the budget or any emergency savings,” says Mantin.

30-year-old Vancouver-based youth worker and server Doreen Chin knows how hard it is to not go into debt as a young adult.

Apart from working two jobs, one of them full-time, Chin says she keeps a constant eye on her finances and often has to take a pass on expensive trips out of town.

“I am very aware, I have to budget and I have to look out when someone wants to go away for the weekend. I do have to take a look at my balances, and I have be very conscious of what I am doing all the time and I am constantly checking my bank accounts to make sure. “

Chin says sometimes she thinks about going back to Calgary where she grew up, mostly because of Vancouver’s high cost of living.

“I do think about should I go back to Calgary where the cost of living is lower, and my family is all there — it’s always in the back of my mind. If I had to leave Vancouver, I would. At this point, I think I might have to. I don’t think I could afford to raise a family here without moving to Langley.”

Mantin says that if someone is having trouble managing their debt, they should give themselves a sort of “financial reality check.”

“You need to start with taking stock. Understand how bad is the situation, how much you owe and what your monthly income is.”