

Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for New Brunswick

New Brunswick At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 28.9% of children aged 0-5 (2016)¹⁷ Kindergarten is compulsory for 5-year-olds
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated daily fee of full-time care, province-wide (2015-2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants - \$33.35 Toddlers - NA Preschool - \$28.11 Median full-time monthly fees in Saint John (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$868 Toddlers: \$716 Preschool: \$694
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An estimated 62% of regulated child care for children 0-12 years is delivered by for-profit organizations (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$13.50 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$15 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$42,212,600	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$15,554,000 One-time funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital and start-up funding provided through the Early Learning and Child Care Trust Fund, including for the creation of new spaces, wage reimbursements, professional development, minority language training, and training assistance - total of \$13,917,176 Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Improvement Funding Support \$23,591,900 Enhanced Support Worker Program \$2,376,700 Developmental Child Care \$700,000

¹⁷ All provinces and territories also provide regulated home child care. However, an age breakdown (0-5, 6-12) is not available. In 2016, there were enough regulated spaces (including centres and home child care) in New Brunswick to cover 29.2% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in New Brunswick

ELCC initiatives in New Brunswick have gained momentum recently. In January 2018, the province announced an investment of \$41 million in their ELCC Action Plan, to go along with the federal contribution of almost \$30 million.

New Brunswick's ELCC plans arose out of study, consultation, and change in recent years. In 2010, responsibility for early childhood and K-12 education were combined in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This department has overseen changes in ELCC in the past several years, and emerged from the *Greater Opportunities for New Brunswick Children: An Early Childhood Development Agenda* (2000-2005) (Government of New Brunswick, 2001) and the *10-Year Early Childhood Strategy: Be Ready for Success* (2008-2018) (Government of New Brunswick, 2008). In the past decade the number of regulated spaces and educational attainment of staff increased. In 2012, the province released *Putting Children First: Positioning Early Childhood for the Future* (Government of New Brunswick, 2012).

In May 2015, the province appointed a Task Force to study the ongoing challenges in accessing quality and affordable child care services. After extensive consultations, the Task Force released its report in August 2016, *Valuing Children, Families and Childcare* (New Brunswick Child Care Review Task Force, 2016). The report's 30 recommendations position ELCC services as an integral element of the province's social infrastructure, in that ELCC provides long-term sustainability to the population, economy, and labour force. ELCC services also create jobs and reduce dependence on social assistance. As such, the Task Force notes that it requires increased public investment to address the ongoing concerns with affordability, availability, and the child care workforce.

The recommendations of the Task Force fall into five overarching categories:

1. Governance: a strengthened system with greater public funding and public management.
2. Educational practices: enhanced professional development and support for educators; respectful of the two provincial curricula (English and French).
3. ECE as a field of practice: greater access to post-secondary opportunities and attention to qualifications and wages of workers.
4. Public investments: increased public investments as a "first priority" towards a "coherent, publicly managed ELCC system."
5. Children's rights: a new system that protects the rights and interests of every child.

NEW BRUNSWICK'S ACTION PLAN

These five overarching recommendations form the basis of *Everyone at their best...from the start: Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan*- (Government of New Brunswick, 2018) the same Action Plan included in New Brunswick's BA:

By 2030, New Brunswick's early learning and child care system will be transformed to offer higher quality services that are universally available and affordable to all families and children through a robust public policy framework, making New Brunswick an ideal place in which to raise a family.

New Brunswick's Action Plan details provincial as well as federal investments over the three years of BA:

Initiatives	Federal funding	Provincial funding
NB Early Learning Centre Designation and parent advisory boards	\$20,479,856	\$33,525,000
Centres of Excellence in Early Learning	\$2,100,000	Nil
Early Learning and Child Care Improvement Grant	\$3,290,989	Nil
Quality Assessment and Inclusion Policy	\$1,067,624	\$1,275,000
Guidelines for language acquisition and cultural identity learning environments	\$201,000	Nil
Child Care Registry	\$ 100,000	\$900,000
Professional Learning and Development	Nil	\$5,545,800
Administrative Costs	\$1,945,914	Nil
TOTAL	\$29,185,283	\$41,245,800

The foundation of the Action Plan is the creation of a New Brunswick Early Learning Centre designation for ELCC facilities across the province. A minimum of 300 centres will have this designation by 2020, and the the availability of infant spaces, rural services, and support for children of various backgrounds will increase. Licensed facilities that receive designation as an Early Learning Centre will receive increased financial support, and are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Establish a low-fee policy through a subsidized fee grid.
- Provide more infant and toddler spaces, with the option of providing those spaces through a network of affiliated family day care homes.
- Improve their capacity for inclusion.
- Establish a parental advisory board.
- Actively work to strengthen the skills and competences of their ECEs, including a new 90-hour course.
- Develop guidelines to ensure strong language acquisition and cultural identity for Acadian and Francophone communities.

To achieve these long-term goals, the Action Plan outlines a number of key objectives, including establishing New Brunswick Early Learning Centres and Parent Advisory Boards; developing online resources for parents; creating Innovative Centres of Excellence in Preschool Education; implementing professional learning and development opportunities for ECEs; (6) developing an inclusion policy, particularly guidelines for language acquisition and cultural identity learning environments; and introducing requirements for Annual Quality Improvement Plans for all ELCC facilities.

The Action Plan includes several specific plans that will set them on the path to achieving these objectives:

- Document and outline criteria for the Early Learning Centre Designation; develop a “change management plan” to engage operators in the transition to the new designation; establish guidelines for Parent Advisory Boards.
- Work with post-secondary institutions to develop standards of best practice for the Centres of Excellence (demonstration sites for innovative practices in quality, pedagogy, and inclusion/diversity).
- Develop agreements with school districts to establish the Centres of Excellence, and use the Centres of Excellence to promote public awareness of high quality ELCC programs.

In January 2018, the Liberal government announced that families earning less than \$37,500 annually would be provided with free childcare.

With respect to the criteria being assessed by this report, the Action Plan promises to enhance quality indicators in the following ways:

Availability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase infant/toddler spaces by 10% (200 new spaces), 60% within the Anglophone sector and 40% within the Francophone sector.• Develop an online Child Care Registry, an interactive resource that provides information on vacancies and wait lists to allow parents to identify spaces and assess quality.
Affordability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a low-fee policy with greater focus on low-income and middle-income families with an income below \$80,000. This will be achieved through sustainable operational funding to Early Learning Centres. It is anticipated that by 2019-2020, 75% of children will be registered in an Early Learning Centre, all of which will benefit from lower fees (65% of those children will be from low-income and middle-income families).• An Infant Operator Grant will be available to offset the operational costs of infant child care; will provide \$10/occupied infant space/day.
Working Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In each of the seven Centres of Excellence across the province:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional learning opportunities will be offered in alignment with the English and Francophone ELCC curriculum frameworks.• Mentoring and workshop programs for educators will be developed.• The 90-hour course “Introduction to Early Childhood Education” will be made available to every ECE working in a licensed ELCC facility and will be the minimum training requirement for every educator working in an Early Learning Centre. To achieve this:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early Learning Specialists and Consultants will be hired; they will act as mentors and coaches and promote professional development opportunities.• A professional development fund will be established through an RFP process.
Auspice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not mentioned
Inclusion, Equity, Diversity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All Early Learning Centres will be required to implement an inclusion policy. The province will partner with the Association for Community Living to develop inclusion practices. It is anticipated that 80% of all facilities in the Anglophone and Francophone sectors will have an inclusion policy in place by 2020.• Guidelines for language acquisition and cultural identity learning environments will be developed for Francophone and Acadian services, in cooperation with the Association francophone des parents du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Other

- Requirements will be introduced for Annual Quality Improvement Plans for all ELCC facilities. These plans are required for facilities applying for a Quality Improvement Grant.

It should also be noted that the Action Plan extends beyond 2019/2020. By 2030, the province has promised \$4.7 million for one-time Quality Improvement Grants, \$7.5 million in annual Quality Grants, support for wage increases for ECEs, and free child care for families with an annual gross income under \$37,500.

What is innovative about the New Brunswick Action Plan?

The Action Plan goes much further than most other provinces and territories. The province has committed to implementing a system, including long-term provincial funding, to increase quality, affordability, accessibility, and inclusion.



Following the signing of the Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care in 2017, the federal government reached a bilateral agreement with each province and territory, and an asymmetrical agreement with Quebec. For more information about these agreements, go to

timeforchildcare.ca

