

Bilateral Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care for Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia At-a-Glance	
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulated centre-based spaces are available for 26.7% of children aged 0-5 (2016)¹⁵ Kindergarten (called Grade Primary) is compulsory for 5-year-olds
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median daily fees, province-wide (2016): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants – \$40 in centres; \$21-40 in family child care Toddlers - \$34.68 Preschool - \$34 Median monthly full-time fees in Halifax (2017): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant: \$910 Toddlers: \$825 Preschool: \$823
Auspice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 55% of regulated child care for children aged 0-12 is for-profit (2016)
Wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Median gross hourly wages of program staff: \$12.84 (2012) Median gross hourly wages of program directors: \$17.56 (2012)
Provincial Allocations (2015-2016) Total spending on regulated child care: \$42,891,901	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fee subsidies: \$16,941,101 One time funding: none Recurring funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Enhancement Grant \$19,022,119 Child Development Centre Grant \$260,000 Family Home Day Care \$1,409,939 Supported Child Care \$5,258,742 Other funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Childhood Education Training Initiative \$807,714 ECE Assistance Program \$264,207 Continuing Education \$234,297 Early Years Centres \$949,876 NS Child Care Association \$39,237

¹⁵ 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 Nova Scotia to cover 17% of children aged 0-12.

Recent Initiatives in Nova Scotia

In 2015, the province launched an in-depth review of regulated child care.¹⁶ In June 2016, the province released *Affordable, Quality Child Care: A Great Place to Grow!* The report includes recommendations for 27 strategic actions on ELCC in the province, in five priority areas: (1) affordability, (2) quality, (3) support and development of the workforce, (4) accessibility, and (5) structure and governance of the system (Government of Nova Scotia, 2016).

In response to the review, the province has undertaken a number of actions:

- In the summer and fall of 2016, the province invested \$6,000,000 in two new initiatives:
 - o New per diem rates for the child care subsidy program increased from an annual family income of \$20,880 to \$25,000. As result, 700 more families currently receive the maximum per diem rate. In addition, those families now pay approximately \$10/day (down from approximately \$17/day) due to a cap on parent fees.
 - o In October 2016, a wage floor was introduced for trained ECEs, guaranteeing an hourly rate of \$15-\$19 depending on their level of training.
- The province also launched the Quality Matters Program, which requires all funded child care centres to engage in a Continuous Quality Improvement process. This program emerged from a funding consultation that took place in the fall of 2016. In this province-wide review, stakeholders overwhelmingly agreed that provincial funding for regulated child care should be directly linked to program quality. The Quality Matters Program ensures all regulated centres are required to develop and implement quality improvement plans to qualify for ongoing funding from the province.

Using funds from the BA, the province will invest in three key priority areas: (1) affordability and accessibility, (2) quality through workplace development, and (3) inclusion in ELCC environments.

The BA should also be considered in light of the Commission on Inclusive Education's final report in March 2018. After a year of consultations, focus groups, and surveys on the public education system in Nova Scotia, the report recommends a new model of inclusive education for the province. This model is based on a three-tiered system of academic, behavioural, and social-emotional-health supports at the level of individuals, small groups, and classrooms (Njie et al., 2018). The report also emphasizes the importance of early identification and intervention for specialized learning needs.

¹⁶ The review included consultation with more than 7,000 Nova Scotians.

Although the report does not specifically mention ELCC services, presumably there is a link between inclusion-focused ELCC and the proposed changes to the public education system. It remains to be seen, however, whether these recommendations are taken up by the province.

NOVA SCOTIA'S ACTION PLAN

	Year 1:	Year 2:	Year 3:	Total:
Federal transfers	\$11,818,026	\$11,809,566	\$11,809,566	\$35,437,158

Availability

- **\$5,355,000** to increase accessibility of regulated child care in the province. This investment will target underserved communities, with a focus on infant care and services for Acadian/Francophone, African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, and newcomer families. It is estimated that over 500 new child care spaces will be created in communities for families in need (15 new child care centres, 90 new family home day care sites, and 45 new infant family home day care sites).

Affordability

- **\$13,150,000** in enhancements to the Child Care Subsidy Program:
 - Eligibility for the maximum subsidy will increase to \$35,000. This increase will benefit over 500 children, and families in the subsidy program will save approximately \$4.88/day.
 - The province will also adjust the Assessed Daily Parent Fee sliding scale so that the break-even point is \$70,080/year, enabling 675 children to receive higher subsidy rates.
 - For the first time, subsidies will be provided to families who require part-time or flexible care. Approximately 375 spaces in part-time care, as a result, will be made available to low-income and middle-income families.

Working Conditions

- **\$2,895,000** over three years towards workforce development. By 2021, it is anticipated that all staff “required for ratio” will have, or be engaged in, training towards a minimum of a two-year diploma in ECE. This investment in workforce development includes:
 - **\$1,045,000** to implement a Workplace Training Model. The province will partner with a provincial learning institution to allow staff to engage in a diploma program while continuing to work. These funds will be provided to employers to support substitute costs, allowing staff to be released from work to attend courses without losing wages. It is anticipated that by 2021, 200 additional staff will complete a diploma through this program.

- **\$200,000** for a Recognition of Prior Learning Initiative, which will assess those with previous experience and education in ECE (but do not have a recognized diploma) and allow them to be recognized as trained. This initiative is anticipated to benefit 140 individuals in the system over three years, including those who hold international credentials.
- **\$1,050,000** for Leadership Development. Training will be provided to centre directors (250 individuals, or 70% of directors in the province), leading to enhanced quality in the centre.
- **\$600,000** for Professional Development. Training opportunities, both in-person and online, will be provided to family home care providers, ECEs, and centre directors, to create standardized professional development opportunities across the province.

Auspice

- Nothing specified.

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity

- **\$11,580,000 over 3 years** to “imbed inclusion” in early learning and care environments:
 - **\$1,000,000** for the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. This funding will be used to provide bursaries to approximately 100 individuals from Indigenous, Francophone/Acadian, African Nova Scotian, immigrant, and newcomer communities.
 - **\$9,000,000** to introduce an Inclusion Incentive for regulated child care centres. Funding will allow centres to provide inclusive programming for children with complex needs and from diverse backgrounds. Funding is tied to the Quality Matters assessment tool, and it is anticipated that an additional 40% of regulated centres will have access to these supports.
 - **\$540,000** for enhancing early intervention. This funding will be channelled through the Nova Scotia Early Child Development Intervention Services, and specifically through the hiring of three developmental interventionists from Francophone, African Nova Scotian, and Indigenous communities.
 - **\$1,040,000** to launch a pilot project to introduce the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children. This funding will be used to develop a team of trainers and inclusion coaches. Approximately 40 child care centres will be identified as Pyramid Model demonstration sites, and will work with Master Trainers (approximately 8 individuals) to implement the Model. It is anticipated that up to 800 children will benefit from the Pyramid Model over three years. There will be an intentional focus on participation from Francophone child care centres.

Other

- Though an amount is not specified, the Action Plan indicates that the province will use funding from the BA to update its grant management and data tracking system.

What is innovative about the Nova Scotia Action Plan?

The province, which asserts that innovation is at the heart of its Action Plan, commits a significant percentage of federal funding to inclusion. The province also ties inclusion to a high-quality workforce and programming.

Of note is the province's commitment to phasing in free (pre-primary) full-day kindergarten for children four years and older, delivered in public schools and staffed by ECEs.



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

