

# New report calls for systemic change in NS early childhood education <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** McSheffrey, Elizabeth

**Source:** Global News

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 29 Jan 2019

## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

A new report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is calling on the Nova Scotia government to intervene in the province's early childhood education sector, where roughly 67 per cent of workers say they feel chronically underpaid for their work.

The think tank's Nova Scotia chapter conducted a survey of more than 300 early childhood educators (ECEs) and program directors, and found that 82 per cent of sector employers had trouble retaining and recruiting educators.

Forty per cent of ECEs who responded said they wouldn't choose their profession again if they could start over, and 62 per cent reported having resigned from a job in the sector in the past.

Low wages and a lack of respect for the profession are major contributors to the dissatisfaction, said CCPA-NS director Christine Saulnier, as the public sometimes thinks of ECEs as "glorified babysitters."

"It's very concerning to see what we've heard," she said at the report launch in Halifax on Wednesday. "On the one hand I would say...our government really needs to address recruitment and retention, but in order to do that you need to listen to why so many of our ECEs have resigned positions, are moving around in the sector and indeed have left the sector."

When it comes to the sector's instability, the CCPA points some blame at the province's universal pre-primary program, which is in its second year of a four-year rollout. Offering better wages and benefit packages, it has drawn workers away from non-profit and private sector programs, said Kelly Ann Hamsaw, executive director of the Kingstec Campus Learning Centre in Kentville, N.S..

"With the pre-primary rollout, we had the most significant staff turnover in the history of our organization," she told Global News. "The impact was dramatic and it was swift."

The CCPA-NS report makes several recommendations to fix the problem, including a minimum wage increase for all ECEs, better data collection on the sector at large, and the development of a well-resourced, systemic approach that would close the gap between pre-primary and regulated programs.

Education Minister Zach Churchill said he agrees with the report's vision of a stronger early childhood education sector with more youngsters enrolled, but disagreed that the sector is unstable.

"I don't think that's the right way to characterize it because we've actually seen stable growth in the regulated child care sector in the course of the last year," he told reporters after the launch.

"When you bring in a new social program like pre-primary, of course that's going to create new market conditions for the regulated sector and that's why we invest so heavily in the regulated sector, we have a stake in their interest. We give them close to \$70 million a year."

According to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, a \$22-million grant helps program operators supplement wages for ECEs, while it supports the education and training of new ECEs through tuition supports and bursaries.

Since 2014, the government has added 2,245 new regulated childcare spaces, and increased its investment in regulated child care from \$41.7 million to \$67 million annually.

**Related link:** "Unappreciated and underpaid": Early childhood educators in Nova Scotia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** Nova Scotia <sup>[4]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/02/new-report-calls-systemic-change-ns-early-childhood-education>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/02/new-report-calls-systemic-change-ns-early-childhood-education> [2] <https://globalnews.ca/news/4907609/ns-early-childhood-education-report/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy->

