

# Nova Scotia child care funding review [NS] <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Format:** Report

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## AVAILABILITY

- Full report in pdf <sup>[2]</sup>

- News release <sup>[3]</sup>

Excerpts from executive summary:

The review was launched in April 2000 to address funding and delivery issues. The review:

- provides direction to the development of a comprehensive delivery system of accessible, community-based high quality early childhood programs;
- recommends changes to the way the Nova Scotia government funds regulated child care; and
- raises questions that need answers before embarking on the direction.

The key findings included:

- The provision of child care is reactive and not guided by a policy framework. Two major policy initiatives of the current government have an impact on child care. First is The Course Ahead (2000), which outlines a corporate goal of increased self-sufficiency. It puts the emphasis on child care as a support to parental labour force attachment, but does not address the needs of the child. Second is the Federal/provincial/territorial Early Childhood Development Agreement of the National Children's Agenda. It puts the emphasis on healthy child development and outcomes, but does not address the fact that most parents of young children are in the paid labour force.
- Wages of child care staff are generally at or below poverty level. The average hourly wage of a teacher in a child care centre is \$8.51
- There is a serious shortage of trained staff; turnover is high.
- Wages, in relation to the cost of early childhood training, are a barrier to training, and equivalency provisions in the regulations are a disincentive to training.
- Nova Scotia spends about 1/2 the Canadian average per child in regulated care.
- In general, the quality of child care in Nova Scotia is mediocre.
- There are funding inconsistencies and inequities within the child care system (particularly in the methods of providing grants and subsidies) and between child care and related programs.
- Grant and subsidy programs (with the exception of the 95 portable spaces) are limited to non-profit child care operations. Therefore, non-profit centres are able to pay higher wages than commercial centres.
- There have been no financial incentives for communities to develop new non-profit programs.
- There has been no planning to develop neither child care nor any target levels of service, resulting in uneven geographical distribution of services.
- 50% of licensed child care spaces in Nova Scotia are commercial
- Average size commercial centres generate little or no profit.
- Nova Scotia is the only province to have the same subsidy rate for all ages of children. It also has the lowest subsidy rate for infants in the country. Low rates result in centres having to surcharge low-income parents, while at the same time keeping fees as low possible so that subsidized parents can afford to use them. The low subsidy rates also affect the ability of the centres to pay reasonable wages.
- Subsidized parents have fewer choices of child care centres than fee-paying parents, sometimes resulting in ghettoising and stigmatising their children.
- Financial administration of the subsidy system is cumbersome and inefficient.
- There are insufficient staff in the Department of Community Services to support and develop the child care system.

- Information on child care programs is not reviewed or analysed systematically.
- There is inadequate monitoring of public funds spent on child care.
- Little known about the effectiveness of the management of child care centres.

Short- and long-term recommendations were made in response to these findings.

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

**Tags:** economics <sup>[5]</sup>

quality <sup>[6]</sup>

funding <sup>[7]</sup>

staff <sup>[8]</sup>

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[9] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/accessibility> [10] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/availability>