

# Province criticized for unequal pay among early childhood educators <sup>[1]</sup>

CUPE union leader says she can't understand why compensation differs greatly between daycares and pre-primary

**Author:** Laroche, Jean

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## AVAILABILITY

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

## EXCERPTS

Nova Scotia's Early Childhood Development minister says a program launched last year to increase the number of daycare spaces is helping create jobs for early childhood educators, but a union leader says the province needs to pay the workers more to match their provincial counterparts.

On Wednesday, Early Childhood Development Minister Zach Churchill visited the St. Joseph's Children's Centre in Clayton Park to talk about the latest \$4.4 million withdrawal from the three-year, \$35 million fund launched last year that was intended to create 1,000 daycare spaces.

"There's never been a better time to get an early childhood education," he said. "We've created probably 500 jobs to date in this field and that number will continue [to grow]."

The program has created 1,100 new daycare spaces and \$23.5 million of the fund has been spent, with the remainder expected to be spent next year.

Although the creation and continued expansion of the province's pre-primary program has made it difficult for some daycare operators to find or keep trained staff, Churchill said the centres should be able to find the early childhood educators to accommodate this latest expansion.

The province provides the funding that is used by for profit and non-profit daycare centres to pay their staff. Individual centres set their own pay rates subject to a provincial floor.

## A call for equal pay

The union that represents early childhood educators, most of whom work for the province, called on the minister to level the playing field.

Nan McFadgen told reporters CUPE members who work in daycare centres are not getting the wages their counterparts who work in the pre-primary system are getting.

"I'm confused about why when it [pre-primary] got brought into schools, it's felt that the people teaching it in the schools should have a pension and a wage, but the people teaching it in child-care centres shouldn't," said McFadgen.

"I think that those in the schools should 100 per cent be able to retire in dignity, but that's equally so for early childhood educators in child-care centres."

According to CUPE, the salaries for its members working in child-care centres range from \$27,000 to \$38,000. However, the salaries for its members working in the pre-primary classrooms range from \$27,000 to \$46,000 annually.

Further, the union said most early childhood educators working in child-care centres do not have pensions and benefits, unlike their counterparts in the pre-primary program.

## \$4.4M in funding

The \$4.4 million in funding announced Wednesday will go toward three programs and help create create 403 new spaces:

- Strategy growth initiative — \$350,000 to three new child-care centres and an existing facility to create 127 new spaces.
- Space conversion grant — \$1.4 million to be shared by 21 centres to create 276 new spaces.
- Program enhancement grant — \$2.7 million to be shared by 81 centres to make minor repairs, replace equipment or purchase new materials.

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