

N.S. early childhood educator works 2 jobs to survive while waiting for promised wage increase ^[1]

Susan Baker says government needs to be clear about plans to raise salaries while creating more spaces

Author: McLernon, Will

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 16 Jul 2022

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Susan Baker loved going to work as an early childhood educator for more than 30 years, but making \$17 an hour has her considering other professions.

"I love seeing children develop, I love their sense of humour," Baker said, who has a college diploma in early childhood education.

"But at the end of the day if you don't make enough in one paycheque to even pay your rent, it becomes very challenging to continue," she said.

"We want to do this work, but they're pushing us to the point where we aren't going to be able to afford this."

Workers in Nova Scotia's early learning and child-care sector, including Baker, want to know how an agreement signed last summer between the federal and provincial governments is going to play out. It promises to reduce the cost of child care for parents while raising the wages of employees — and increasing the number of spaces for children.

The Canada Wide Early Learning and Childcare Agreement with Nova Scotia includes \$605 million in funding over four years to create affordable daycare. The province will pitch in \$40 million, on top of what it currently spends on the sector.

Low wages across the board

Most early childhood educators in privately owned centres make between \$15 and \$19, based on their education.

The agreement promises more money for workers, but how that will be implemented is still unknown.

"Ensuring that early childhood educators are compensated fairly is an urgent priority for us, the work is incredibly overdue," Becky Druhan, provincial minister of education and early childhood development, told reporters after a cabinet meeting on Thursday. "We've committed to fall [2022] but we are doing what we can to get this done as soon as possible."

Baker and other early childhood educators are fed up with the lack of updates concerning when they'll get their raises.

"The government said that there will be an announcement in the fall, that could be September or November," Baker said. "We've also been told that the new wage rollout may not happen until the new year and that's a long way away that we have in this inflation right now."

She says the extended wait on increasing wages is making staffing shortages worse for private centres like the Tallahassee Early Learning Centre in Eastern Passage where she works.

The single mother also teaches early childhood education online at a local college in the evening.

"My son has different ailments that need medication, so I need to work every night to supplement that," Baker said.

For me to have to work from eight in the morning till 9:30 at night just to make ends meet is very difficult. Where I could go to, let's say Costco, and make more money per hour and only have to work one job."

Private sector struggles

Many early childhood educators have moved from private daycares to the pre-primary sector located in public schools because they receive similar benefits to teachers and have higher salaries.

Pre-primary programs offer free education for children the year before they start school.

"We really focus on where the children are developmentally and we provide activities to meet them where we're at," Baker said about private child-care spaces.

"To think about the push of early childhood educators leaving, we worry that [in] some centres it's not going to be quality, it will just be a place for children to go from nine to five."

"My biggest concern is that we can't staff the spaces we have now," Buckland said.

"There's classrooms closed all over the province because we don't have enough educators. I need six educators for September and I don't think I'm going to get them."

If Buckland doesn't get additional staff she'll have to close classrooms, which takes away child-care spaces.

By 2026, the province plans to open 9,500 new spaces and reduce child-care fees to \$10 a day.

Region: Nova Scotia ^[3]

Tags: child care ^[4]

wages ^[5]

workforce ^[6]

Source URL (modified on 18 Jul 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/07/ns-early-childhood-educator-works-2-jobs-survive-while-waiting>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/07/ns-early-childhood-educator-works-2-jobs-survive-while-waiting> [2]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/ns-early-childhood-educator-works-two-jobs-to-make-living-wage-1.6520992> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7853> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-care> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/wages> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/workforce>