

Workforce in crisis: Early childhood education in Nova Scotia 2022 sector snapshot ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpted from snapshot

We continue to hear that child care spaces are closing, directors are unable to find educators, and that ECEs are leaving the field due to the inaction by the government on the workforce strategy and compensation framework. As a part of our The Time is Now campaign; we asked Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and Directors to help us define the state in the sector. We received 227 responses from directors and educators in Nova Scotia and the data tells a clear story.

Early Childhood Educators in Atlantic Canada make less than any other ECE across Canada, despite higher than average costs across most categories in Nova Scotia. Directors referenced the impacts of the skyrocketing cost of living citing that, “educators are taking on second jobs to make ends meet,” with some indicating that they are losing staff to other untrained minimum wage jobs such as the cleaning and serving industry. These educators earn a median wage of \$17 an hour, which we know is well below the Living Wage in any region.

Multiple ECEs cite working while hungry and their inability to afford necessities such as groceries, housing and fuel. One respondent tells us that, “sometimes all (they) eat is the tiny bowl of lunch at lunchtime with the kids,” due to their inability to afford food. This reality is not unique, more than 10% of respondents cited an inability to afford groceries, and affordability was noted in 17.4% of the narrative replies. Directors also made note of the impacts of this inaffordability by telling us that, “educators could not afford the gas to get to work,” and mentioned saving lunch leftovers for staff to take home for those who cannot afford groceries.

When asked how likely they were to consider leaving the profession, a concerning 91.7% of ECE respondents indicated that they were either “Highly Likely” or “Likely” to consider this in the current climate. Notably, 43.5% of those responses fell in the “Highly Likely” category.

Of those who indicated they will leave the field:

- 97.6% of those responses attributed this to “Inadequate Wages;”
- 67.9% indicated a “Lack of Pension;” and,
- 58.8% noted a “Lack of Benefits (Health & Dental, Sick Days, Paid Time Off)

67.9% also clearly indicated a “Lack of Respect” for the profession, with 66.7% revealing their mistrust and “Uncertainty Related to Government Inaction” as a consideration for their decision. Multiple respondents indicated they were suffering from “burn out” with multiple others referencing the “lack of support” particularly when it comes to children with diverse needs.

To further exemplify the crisis in the workforce, when asked if they were having trouble finding and retaining qualified staff, an alarming 94.7% of the responses from directors indicated “Yes.” Directors shared with us the impacts that the announcements have had on staff indicating that, “it is hard on staff morale knowing that they are not a priority.”

71.9% of directors revealed that the staffing crisis would have a direct impact on the spaces they are able to offer this Fall; with another 16.2% indicating uncertainty and concern. One director cited that, “(they) already have locations that are not able to fill rooms” due to a lack of qualified staff; with another acknowledging they also have “6 empty seats” due to the inability to find an educator.

We must remind government that affordability does not reflect availability. Many communities in Nova Scotia have little to no access to spaces, and while persistent inaction continues to exacerbate the crisis in the work force – child care spaces will continue to be affected and expansion strategies and affordability targets will not have the intended impact.

Region: Nova Scotia ^[3]

Tags: early childhood education and care workforce ^[4]

workforce shortage ^[5]

child care shortage ^[6]

nova-scotia-2022

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/22/10/workforce-crisis-early-childhood-education-nova-scotia-2022> [2]

<https://novascotia.childcarenow.ca/2022/10/06/workforce-in-crisis/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7853> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9012> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9161> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-care-shortage>