

N.S. announces wage bump for most early childhood educators in regulated settings ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Most of the 2,600 early childhood educators working in regulated child-care settings in Nova Scotia will soon see a bump in pay, the provincial government announced Tuesday.

Wage increases will be between 14 and 43 per cent, depending on classification levels and experience.

In a news conference, Becky Druhan, minister of education and early childhood development, said most early childhood educators will see a raise in the range of 30 per cent.

Raises will be retroactive to July 4, 2022.

"This wage increase will help grow the early childhood education workforce and attract new students to the career. It will help operators attract and retain staff," said Druhan.

"It is also a tangible reflection of the importance of (early childhood educators) to children, communities and our Nova Scotian economy."

A release from the province said early childhood educators in family home child-care centres will also benefit from the higher wages.

The wage increase is part of a transformation — in partnership with the federal government — of the province's daycare sector into a publicly funded network in which fees will be lowered to \$10 a day, on average, by 2026.

Prior to the July 2021 agreement with Ottawa, many of Nova Scotia's licensed child-care centres were privately run.

Under the wage agreement, the province will pay \$65 million annually for daycare staff salaries, up from \$25 million. The federal government will cover \$35 million a year for the new pay structure.

Druhan said the news was "long awaited and long overdue" and the funding is "one of the single largest investments in early childhood education in our province's history."

"Early childhood educators are skilled, talented professionals, and they are the heartbeat and the backbone of our children's early learning journey," she said.

"Our hardworking (early childhood educators) are so very deserving of this impactful investment."

The province will provide the funds to employers by Nov. 1 to allow them to pay staff in accordance with the new wage scale. Early childhood educators will see the raise on their paychecks next month, and will receive their retroactive pay by mid-December, Druhan said.

Druhan said Tuesday the province is also working on a benefits and retirement package for early childhood educators, which is expected to be rolled out next year.

Previously, the wage floor for early childhood educators in Nova Scotia was between \$15 and \$19 per hour, depending on their training.

Under the new structure, wages for early childhood educators in their first year of work will increase to between \$19.10 and \$21.67 per hour. For early childhood educators with five years of experience or more, they will be paid between \$21.49 and \$24.39 an hour.

Increase 'not enough'

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they called inaction on their compensation package.

Nickerson noted that even with the pay adjustment, many early childhood educators will still be making below what's considered a living wage – which the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives estimates to be \$23.50 in the Halifax area.

She isn't convinced the wage increase will help with some of the recruitment and retention issues the sector is seeing.

"We have people who just can't afford to stay in the field," she said. "We're losing people, we're drastically losing people."

Region: Nova Scotia ^[3]

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

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