

# The BC experiment that could transform child-care work <sup>[1]</sup>

The government is testing a new, higher salary grid to attract and retain workers.

**Author:** Vescera, Zak

**Source:** The Tyee

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 11 Dec 2023

## AVAILABILITY

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

## Excerpts

In 2021, the federal government promised \$30 billion over five years to create tens of thousands of child-care spaces while dramatically reducing fees for parents, with about \$3.2 billion set for B.C.

But child-care workers and advocates say there's a big problem. There aren't nearly enough child-care workers to reach that goal.

The Tyee has learned the B.C. government is responding with a pilot program that will establish and fund higher pay rates at 53 child-care centres across the province beginning this month. The initiative could transform working conditions in the sector.

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Operators interviewed for this article said they are losing workers almost as fast as they hire them. Burnout and retention are a growing problem, along with low wages that push some child-care workers to leave the sector.

The B.C. government has tried to patch the gap by providing funding for three pay bumps for eligible child-care workers since 2018, which add up to \$6 an hour. It says that after the next increase Jan. 1, the median pay will be \$28 per hour.

But proponents of affordable child care say the province needs a wage grid that would establish far higher base salaries for early childhood educators across the province. Some provinces, including Manitoba and Newfoundland, have already introduced such systems.

The B.C. government has quietly begun testing such a program.

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Gregson and other operators said they are pleased government is exploring a new public funding model.

But she argues the government could and should move faster.

"We would have expected and hoped there would have been a bolder rollout, because there's such a crisis," Gregson said.

Lore said the pilot is needed because the government needs to test out the appropriate wage grids and other forms of financial support among operators with different funding models.

"We want to make sure that operators and providers are able to compensate their educators, that they're able to deliver quality and inclusive care," she said.

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**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** wage grid <sup>[4]</sup>

recruitment and retention <sup>[5]</sup>

child care workforce <sup>[6]</sup>

**Source URL (modified on 11 Dec 2023):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/23/12/bc-experiment-could-transform-child-care-work>

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