

# Low wages, lack of benefits continue to plague Alberta's child-care system, critics say <sup>[1]</sup>

Provincial government looking at wage grid, but makes no commitment

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## AVAILABILITY

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

## Excerpts

As Alberta continues to build out its spaces under the Canada-wide child-care system, there are increasing calls to improve compensation for educators who staff child-care centres.

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Since then, the number of child-care spaces has expanded, but it has proven difficult for operators to find qualified staff to keep up with the demand.

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Level 1 ECEs, who make up 45 per cent of Alberta's child-care workforce, earn \$19.43 an hour after the government's top-up of \$2.64. Many ECE positions do not include benefits, paid sick days or a pension plan.

The low pay, and lack of opportunity for advancement, have either kept people from entering the field, or encouraged ECEs to leave. Experts say that needs to change to have the system work as intended where child-care centres are staffed by people trained in early childhood education.

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## No wage grid for Alberta ECEs

A recent report from Child Care Now, a national advocacy group, says Alberta and Ontario are the only two provinces that haven't enacted or committed to a wage grid. A grid lays out pay for each level of ECE which increase with each additional year of service.

The report also says that to help with retention, ECEs should receive non-salaried compensation such as benefits and pension plans.

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A spokesperson for Sudds confirmed the talks are underway. Implementation of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement between the federal and Alberta governments includes an increase in wages for child-care workers in addition to a reduction in parent fees, so it is up to the province to make that happen, she said.

## Nova Scotia benefits and pension

How wages can go up while fees go down is a question daycares and the government are grappling with.

Last year, the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta proposed a wage grid to the province. The grid started an entry level 1 ECE at a wage of \$20.20 an hour, increasing to \$24.85 over seven years.

The salary ranges started at \$42,016 and topped out at \$51,688. The report said proposed wages would need to be updated as they were based on Alberta Labour information from 2019.

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Many ECEs don't have access to benefits and pension plans. Some daycares are able to offer them to their employees. Others don't.

Nova Scotia has introduced a pension and defined benefits plan for early childhood educators. ECEs can take the plans with them if they move to other child care centres in the province.

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**Related link:** The National ELCC Workforce Policy Table convened in-person to discuss wages, benefits, and pensions <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** Alberta <sup>[4]</sup>

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<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/low-wages-lack-of-benefits-continue-to-plague-alberta-s-child-care-system-critics-say-1.7216409> [3]

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