

# Virtually on strike <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Moase, Nick

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## EXCERPTS:

The workers at Queens Daycare waged a virtual strike on May 1, bringing awareness to what Early Childhood educators do in their communities.

Called Worthy Wage Day, it was not about the staff walking off the job. It was about getting the information out there that they are striving to receive the wages that reflect their training and experience.

"We are trying to get people to reflect on what we do," says Queens Daycare director Amber Purdy.

Daycare providers are sometimes mistakenly thought of as an organized babysitting service, however there is much more to a daycare than looking after children. Most full-time staff have gone through post-secondary education, either a four year bachelors degree in early education or a two year early education diploma from community college.

In Nova Scotia though the pay is one of the lowest in Canada, at about \$12 an hour. The Nova Scotia Child Care Association put out a salary scale they believe is more realistic to what the educators do. It starts at \$10 an hour for those without a degree, and scales up to \$21.43 an hour as the educator moves up through the five levels.

The Queens Daycare can have up to 42 children at their facility, and operates all day five days a week. A variety of programming takes place under their roof, starting for children 18 months and up to pre-school and primary preparation.

Purdy says some of the things they are trained to teach include a module on feelings and empathy, which teaches children how to treat each other, home and fire safety, and how to recognize the letters of the alphabet.

The toddler program is for children age 18 months to 3 years old, with a focus on early interaction. The children work with fine motor skills and cognitive thinking, though someone looking in might not recognize it as such.

"It's a kind of play, but it's things they need to develop," says Purdy. For fine motor skills, they might make things out of playdough for example, and cognitive skills come out of working with their imaginations.

Each child in the daycare has a portfolio that tracks their progress through the year as well, similar to a report card.

Purdy says published research has also shown the first five years of life is when children have the biggest brain development. Proper daycare services can have an important impact on the future of children in the schools when it comes to social and behavioural skills.

The daycare also works with special needs children, and with the public schools when the children transition out of the daycare system.

Governments regulate daycares both in the education they deliver and sanitation standards. Inspectors come in twice a year for both, once announced and once with a surprise visit.

Regulations implemented last year also mean untrained staff, which usually come in as substitutes, must go through a designated workshop within a year of being hired. All other staff has to have 30 hours of developmental workshops within a three-year period.

Funding from the daycare comes from a mix of fees from the parents and grants from the governments.

Queens Daycare as it is now has been open for the past six years. Before then it had shut down for six months due to a lack of trained staff. Purdy came on board after being asked to help reopen the centre. At the time they only had three staff, however the daycare grew to the point where they need 14 staff members.

-reprinted from the Queens County Advance

**Region:** Nova Scotia <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** staff <sup>[3]</sup>

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