



Nova Scotia

■ OVERVIEW

In Nova Scotia, child care and kindergarten are both the responsibility of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The Nova Scotia Before and After Program (NS-BAP) is administered by the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage, and funded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Nova Scotia provides full school-day kindergarten for all five-year-olds (termed Grade Primary) and all four-year-olds (termed Pre-primary).

Licensed child care includes full- and part-day centres, school-age child care, and family child care. NS-BAP is delivered in schools by approved child care, recognized non-profit recreation, or municipal recreation providers. NS-BAPs are regulated but not required to be licensed. They primarily serve kindergarten-age children.

Non-profit and for-profit operators provide all centre-based child care, with for-profit programs providing 56% of full-day spaces. There is no publicly operated licensed child care in Nova Scotia.

Family child care is delivered through an agency model in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia parent fees are not set by the provincial government. In April 2022, fees were reduced in centres by \$10.50/day for infants, \$9/day for toddlers, and \$8.75/day for preschool-age children. In December 2022, the fees were reduced by an additional amount, making the average fee reduction \$23/day for infants and \$18.25/day for toddlers and preschool-age children.

On October 11, 2022, Nova Scotia announced the implementation of a [wage grid](#) retroactive to July 4, 2022. The wage grid was increased on April 1, 2024.

Nova Scotia signed the Canada-Nova Scotia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (Multilateral Framework Agreement) on January 10, 2018. It provided \$35.4 million over three years. It was extended on December 11, 2020 with an additional \$11.6 million for the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year, and renewed on July 7, 2021 to provide \$58.3 million over four years.

The Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Agreement was signed by Nova Scotia on July 13, 2021. This agreement provides nearly \$605 million over five years. Nova Scotia's second Action Plan was agreed to in February 2024. The Canada-wide agreement does not replace but runs parallel to the Multilateral Framework Agreement.

**Net growth in full-day centre spaces for children
0 – 5 years since CWELCC**

	2021	2023	Increase (decrease) 2021 – 2023
For-profit	6,373	7,153	+780
Non-profit	4,711	5,620	+909
Total full-day spaces	1,084	12,773	1,689

Percentage of full-day spaces that were for-profit	57%	56%	-1.5%
Percentage of growth of full-day spaces that was for-profit			46%

Family child care spaces (2021, 2023)

	2021	2023
Family child care spaces (enrolment of children not yet in school)	765	720

PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Some of the following figures are rounded, while totals are based on exact figures and may therefore not equal the sum of the rounded figures.

Number of children 0 – 12 years (2023 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children (2023)
0	6,900
1	8,500
2	8,300
3	8,600
4	8,100
5	8,500
6	10,300
7	9,200
8	10,200
9	10,500
10	10,000
11	9,400
12	11,100
Total	119,700

Number of children 0 – 12 years (aggregated) (2023 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children (2023)
0 - 2	23,700
3 - 5	25,200
6 - 12	70,700
Total	119,700

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0	4,500
1	5,500
2	6,200
3	5,300
4	4,900
5	6,200
6	6,600
7	5,900
8	7,500
9	7,900
10	7,300
11	6,400
12	7,700
Total	81,700

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (aggregated) (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0 – 2	16,200
3 – 5	16,400
6 – 12	49,300
Total	81,700

Number of children 0 – 14 identifying with an Indigenous group (2021)

<i>Age</i>	<i>First Nations</i>	<i>Métis</i>	<i>Inuk (Inuit)</i>	<i>Multiple</i>	<i>Other</i>
0 – 4	2,020	875	85	75	60
5 – 9	2,385	1,125	85	70	100
10 – 14	2,445	1,365	110	80	60
Total	6,850	3,365	280	225	220

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age of youngest child</i>	<i>Number of mothers</i>	<i>Participation rate (%)</i>
0 – 3	18,600	80.2
4 – 5	7,000	77.8
0 – 5	25,700	79.8
6 – 12	28,400	85.0

Living arrangements by age of child by number of parents (2021)

Age	Living with two parents	Living with one parent	Lone mother	Lone father
0 – 4	31,010	8,710	7,520	1,185
5 – 9	33,900	12,330	10,150	2,175
10 – 14	33,870	14,305	11,500	2,805

Languages spoken most often at home (2021)

Age	English	French	Non-official	Multiple
0 – 4	36,885	415	2,065	965
5 – 9	43,475	510	1,990	1,085
10 – 14	45,980	525	1,795	965
Total	126,340	1,445	5,840	3,010

Median after-tax income among families with children 0 – 5 years (2020)

Two-parent families	Male lone parent	Female lone parent
\$91,000	\$44,400	\$42,800

KINDERGARTEN

Full school-day kindergarten enrolment (2023)

<i>Enrolment in public schools</i>	
Kindergarten for 5-year-olds (Grade Primary)	8,474
Kindergarten for 4-year-olds (Pre-primary)	6,635
<i>Enrolment in independent/private schools</i>	
Kindergarten for 5-year-olds (Grade Primary)	278
Kindergarten for 4-year-olds (Pre-primary)	222
Total kindergarten enrolment	15,609

FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT CHILD CARE

First Nations child care on reserves

Child care in each Nova Scotia First Nations community on reserve operates individually, outside the mandate of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Neither full-day child care centres nor Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR) programs are licensed.

In March 2023, there were 13 unlicensed AHSOR programs on reserve.

The total number of unlicensed child care centres on reserve is not available.

Indigenous child care other than on reserves

There was one licensed full-day Indigenous-focused and led child care centre not on a reserve operated by the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, which provided 26 licensed child care spaces.

Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) programs are not licensed by the province. There were six unlicensed AHSUNC programs in Nova Scotia.

■ CHILD CARE SPACE STATISTICS

Number of regulated spaces (March 31, 2023)

Centre spaces

Total centre spaces (children 0 – 5 years) 12,773

Note: In 2023, Nova Scotia did not report on licensed spaces for children 0 – 5 by age group, or by full-day and part-day. As a result, further breakdowns are not available.

Before- and after-school care centre spaces (licensed or regulated)

Children in kindergarten (Grade Primary and Pre-primary) and Grades 1–6 4,510
Nova Scotia Before and After Program (NS-BAP) 1,608

Note: NS-BAPs are regulated but not required to be licensed. They primarily serve kindergarten-age children.

Total before- and after-school care centre spaces 6,118

Total centre spaces (children 0 – 12 years) 18,891

Regulated family child care (enrolment)

Full-day (children not yet in school) 720
Part-day (children attending school) 380

Total regulated family child care spaces 1,100

TOTAL REGULATED SPACES

(centre spaces and family child care enrolment) 19,991

Number of child care centres, family child care homes, and agencies (March 31, 2023)

Centre-based child care

Total number of centres 337

Centre-based programs

Number of centres providing a full-day program 263
Number of centres providing a part-day (nursery school or preschool) program 63
Number of centres providing a part-day program for children attending school (approximately 4 – 12 years) 200
Number of centres providing infant care (<18 months) 104
Number of centres providing toddler care (18 – <36 months) 261
Number of centres providing preschool-age care (36 months – 5 years) 298
Number of centres providing non-standard hours care (non-standard hours as defined by the province) 3
Number of centres in publicly delivered and funded schools (K – 12) *Not available*

Regulated family child care

Number of approved family child care homes (active) 176
Number of family child care agencies 14

Participation in CWELCC

Number of child care centres 330
Number of family child care homes 176

Note: Provision for children older than 0 – 5 years in school-age centres is not eligible for CWELCC funding.

Municipal delivery

Number of municipalities or municipal entities operating child care centres (i.e. are the licence holder)

Not applicable

Auspice

Full- and part-day programs by auspice (2023)

	<i>Number of centres</i>
For-profit	160
Non-profit	177

Centre spaces by auspice

	<i>Full-day</i>	<i>BASC¹</i>	<i>Total</i>
For-profit	7,153	2,428	9,581
Non-profit	5,620	3,656	9,276

1 Before- and after-school care.

Note: Part-day nursery school spaces are included with full-day spaces as a breakdown was not available.

Family child care agencies

For-profit	5
Non-profit	9

Fee subsidies

Number of children receiving fee subsidies (March 31, 2023)

Full subsidy	3,708
Partial subsidy	1,691

Total children receiving fee subsidies 5,399

Disability support

Special needs/disability support (March 31, 2023)

Children in licensed child care receiving special needs/disability support funding	3,460
Number of centres receiving the Inclusion Support Grant	300

Note: Approximately 90% of licensed child care centres receive the Inclusion Support Grant to support inclusive programming and resources for all children including children with disabilities.

CHILD CARE ENROLMENT STATISTICS

Number of children enrolled in regulated centre-based programs (March 31, 2023)

Full-day centres	
Infants (0 – <18 months)	1,041
Toddlers (18 – <36 months)	4,494
Preschool-age (36 months – 5 years)	4,995

Part-day centres	
30 months – 5 years, not yet in school	245

Total centre enrolment (children 0 – 5 years) 10,775

Before- and after-school care (licensed or regulated)

Children enrolled in before- and after-school care	<i>Not available</i>
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PARENT FEES

Nova Scotia does not have set parent fees.

In April 2022, fees were reduced in centres by \$10.50/day for infants, \$9/day for toddlers, and \$8.75/day for preschool-age children. In December 2022, the fees were reduced by an additional amount, making the average fee reduction \$23/day for infants and \$18.25/day for toddlers and preschool-age children.

The reductions are smaller for licensed family child care. Effective December 2022, fees for family child care were reduced by a flat rate of \$17/day for infants and \$16.50/day for toddlers and preschool-age children.

Full-time median monthly fees for centres and family child care homes in Halifax participating in CWELCC (2021, 2023)

<i>Centres</i>	<i>Full-time median monthly fee (2021)</i>	<i>Full-time median monthly fee (2023)</i>
Infant	\$1,007	\$499
Toddler	\$911	\$447
Preschool-age	\$887	\$442

	Full-time median monthly fee (2021)	Full-time median monthly fee (2023)
Family child care homes		
Infant	\$868	\$543
Toddler	\$825	\$586
Preschool-age	\$760	\$586

Sources: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2023). *Measuring Matters: Assessing Canada's progress toward \$10-a-day child care for all*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2022). *Game Changer: Will provinces and territories meet the new federal child care fee targets? Canadian child care fees 2021*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

■ WORKFORCE

On October 11, 2022, Nova Scotia announced the implementation of a [wage grid](#) retroactive to July 4, 2022. The wage grid was increased on April 1, 2024.

■ FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (Fiscal year 2022 – 2023)

The funding figures in each category represent provincial spending, which may include both provincial funds and federal funds transferred under bilateral agreements, Canada-wide ELCC agreements, or other federal programs used for early learning and child care.

Fee subsidies	
Total fee subsidies	\$22,387,274

Note: These are fee subsidies in licensed, regulated, or approved child care. The subsidies are associated with an individual child and family. There are provincial eligibility criteria. Fee subsidies are sent to service providers, not to parents.

Operational funding	
Program	Amount
50% Fee Reductions	\$38,531,755
Quality Investment Grant (QIG) and Program Support Grant (PSF)	\$46,703,626
Family Home Child Care Operating Support	\$3,744,818
Inclusion Support Grant (ISG)	\$7,726,586
Infant Quality Care Grant	\$1,064,268
Developmental Intervention Services	\$3,077,241
Before and After Program (BAP)	\$608,937
Total operational funding	\$101,457,231

Note: Operational funding includes regularly paid public funding that contributes to the ongoing operation of the child care service. It may include: operating grants or formula-based funding, family child care agency operating funds, wage grants/enhancement, special needs funding, and other grants/funding that is paid on a recurring basis.

One-time funding – capital (major and minor)

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Space Expansion	\$18,884,874
Operational Support Grant	\$4,875,000

One-time funding – other

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Not-For-Profit Transitions	\$466,389
Operational Support Fund	\$144,000
Total one-time funding	\$24,370,263

Note: One-time funding is paid occasionally or just once to a child care service and is not part of the regular operating budget. It may include: major capital, minor capital, start up, one time equipment, or repair funding.

**TOTAL SPENDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE
(fee subsidies, operational funding,
and one-time funding) \$148,214,768**

Other ELCC funding

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
ECE Training Initiatives Support	\$3,205,053
Professional Development	\$347,924
Association of Early Childhood Educators	\$25,000
Bursaries for ECE Diploma Programs	\$1,744,251
Total other funding	\$5,322,228

Federal transfers to Nova Scotia

<i>Federal transfer</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework – Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements	\$15,054,000
Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care	\$103,938,000

Note: The federal transfers above represent the funds allocated to Nova Scotia for fiscal year 2022 – 2023. These funds may be slightly different from those included in the original agreements as they are updated in line with population estimates on an annual basis. They do not represent funds carried over from the previous fiscal year or carried into the next fiscal year.

Source: Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat, Employment and Social Development Canada (2024).
