

Nova Scotia Review of Regulated Child Care

Consultation Report and Recommendations



March 2016



The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a teacher-completed questionnaire that assesses children's developmental health at school entry. It provides us information on how well children's development is supported in their communities in the early years. It is also a determinant of health and well-being of a group of children later in life.

In Nova Scotia over 25% of children arrive at school vulnerable in at least one developmental domain. (EDI) We also know that when children start school behind their peers they often do not catch up.

Even with extra supports and remediation programs in school, it is often too late to change the learning trajectories for many children, leading to high school drop-out rates and impacting meaningful engagement in the workforce and community (McCain et al. 2011). For this reason, providing quality early learning environments prior to school entry is key in reducing vulnerabilities and giving children a strong start.

Economic benefits

There is an exceptionally high return to society from investments in early years programming (Heckman 2000, 2008). Although it has been generally expected that the average time to realize such a return is 10–15 years, recent economic studies suggest that returns on early childhood education and development programs can begin to be realized in as little

as a few years (McCain et al., 2011). Investment in early years programming not only has a high rate of economic return but the social fabric is also strengthened when resources and supports are available to all children and at affordable cost.

“Early childhood education is economic development, and the research shows it is economic development with a very high public return.”
(McCain et al., 2011, p. 63).

Canadian economic modeling demonstrates that ECD investments both pay for themselves and act as an important stimulus to the economy.

Moreover, the availability of child care increases parental workforce participation, and high quality early childhood development programming will be an important expectation when parents with young families are making the decision whether to live and work in Nova Scotia. We know that to be successful and engaged in the workforce parents must live and work in communities that support them (Hertzman, 2008).

Access to affordable regulated child care helps parents (particularly mothers) participate in the workforce. (McCain et al., 2011). Econ-

including reduced health and social costs, for children who attend high quality preschool -
pendence and productivity of working mothers.

Readiness for school, higher graduation rates and future earnings all have a long range economic impact.

Consultation

One of the most important components of the review was the feedback received through the

- ▶ Over 7000 Nova Scotians took the time to respond to a detailed on-line survey;
 - ▶ Focus groups were held in 23 communities and drew more than 400 participants;
 - ▶ Written submissions were also received;
- and
- ▶ One-on-one interviews with key partners were held.

Together, the voices of child care organizations, family home day care owners, family resource centres, early intervention groups, training institutions, parents, early childhood educators, directors and providers/operators

heard. Their messages, along with expertise within the Early Years Branch of the EECD formed the basis of this report.

Current Status in Nova Scotia

Currently in Nova Scotia, regulated child care is provided through licensed child care facilities, and licensed family home day care agencies. Over 16,000 licensed child care spaces are available in 391 licensed child care facilities throughout the province. There are 207 family homes approved through 15 family home day

care agencies that include over 1200 spaces for young children.

As of September 2015, there are 8 Early Years Centres in Nova Scotia with the capacity to provide early learning programming for 180 children. There is one Early Years Centre in each of the 8 School Boards. In addition, there are 22 early learning programs for 4 year olds, with an enrolment of 455 children across 4 School Boards, with CSAP having 15 of the programs in their schools across the province.

The research tells us that all children ben-

especially in the year prior to school entry. Currently, we know that there are fewer child care spaces, early learning programs and early years centres than there are children. Accordingly, moving forward it will be important to ensure that growth in the early learning and child care sector is strategic and focused on enabling access for as many children and families as possible.

Previously, Early Years, which includes child care, has been the responsibility of the Department of Community Services. However in 2013, the Early Years Branch was formed and staff were transferred to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, to reinforce the importance of learning in the early years, and to strengthen programming and partnerships that support successful transitions for young children into school.



**Consultation Findings:
Challenges and Recommendations**

The review found that Nova Scotian parents

III. Quality of programming

CHALLENGES

- ▶ Nova Scotia is the only province without an early learning curriculum
- ▶ The quality of programming is inconsistent across the province and there is no systematic approach provincially to evaluate the quality of the learning environments
- ▶ Improved processes and incentives regarding minimum standards of health and safety would ensure high quality
- ▶ A greater emphasis needs to be placed on supporting infant and toddler social and emotional learning
- ▶ Approved family home day cares need

IV. Support and development of the workforce

CHALLENGES

- ▶ Wages for early childhood educators are
- ▶ Recruiting and retaining staff at child care centres is a challenge due to low wages
- ▶ necessary to take unpaid time off to pursue

V. Structure and governance of the system

CHALLENGES

- ▶ Structural, system-wide changes are long overdue
- ▶ The current model of funding child care is not effective or sustainable
- ▶ The current model of funding has not been effective in ensuring fair wages and

- ▶ The current model of funding does not respond to the accessibility and affordability needs of families, children and communities
- ▶ There are considerable differences in fees across the province
- ▶ There are considerable differences in how centres allocate their revenue and grant funding, which leads to inconsistencies in wages for staff and services for families
- ▶ An increase in funding to support the child a priority
- ▶ Reporting requirements need to be updated
- ▶ The public does not have a full understanding of the importance of quality early learning and the growth and development of children in the early years

"We see children with autism in centres as well as children with behavioural challenges and with mild intellectual challenges. We seldom see children with moderate to severe medical issues, children with severe intellectual challenges. Centre directors often say that they would be willing to include these children, but cannot afford to do so under the current resource support formula."

"The Province does not fund private schools in the educational system, so why do they fund for-profit daycare where a private company profits from the province?This conversation needs to happen, but always gets pushed to the side."

"Nova Scotia's limited public policy around ECE and increasing reliance on commercial operators short changes young children of development opportunities, makes it far harder for parents, especially women, to participate in the work force and places significant financial barriers on young families."

"Provide more structured, systematic ways for ECEs and primary teachers to collaborate. We are a resource that schools could benefit from using. /

Appendix 1

Parent subsidy per diem

Below is a history of Nova Scotia's parent subsidy daily rates.

1987	\$13.30	\$13.30	\$13.30	\$13.30
1998-2002	\$14.95	\$14.95	\$14.95	\$14.95
2003	\$15.45	\$15.45	\$15.45	\$15.45
2005-2009	\$19.75	\$17.75	\$16.75	\$15.45
2010-2016	\$22.00	\$20.00	\$19.00	\$17.70

In the last 10 years, the daily rate for parent subsidies for low income families has increased by \$2.25.

Appendix 2

Wages for early childhood educators

Wages for early childhood educators in Nova Scotia are some of the lowest in Canada as reported in the You Bet I Care (1991, 1998) and You Bet We Still Care (2013) reports.

Data was collected from surveys of Early Childhood Educators and was widely distributed through public reports.

Mean Gross Hourly Wage for Early Childhood Educators (Level 2/3)

Jurisdiction	1991	1998	2012
Québec	\$10.25	\$11.04	\$19.13
Ontario	11.51	13.48	17.29
British Columbia	8.94	12.07	17.00
Manitoba	9.29	9.49	16.00
Alberta	6.76	8.36	15.33
Prince Edward Island	7.25	7.54	15.00
Saskatchewan	7.52	10.47	14.92
Newfoundland/Labrador	6.03	6.76	14.00
New Brunswick	6.19	7.12	13.50
Nova Scotia	7.64	8.51	12.84
Yukon	9.58	11.71	N/A
CANADA	\$9.71	\$11.48	\$16.50

Appendix 3

Details of the Consultation

