

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Government of Nova Scotia fails to achieve target promised to Canada, leaves ECEs disappointed again**

KJIPUKTUK/HALIFAX—When the federal and provincial governments signed the Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement in 2021, it outlined a number of objectives, targets, and benchmarks that both parties agreed were critical to achieving their vision of reducing parent fees, creating more high-quality spaces, recruiting and retaining qualified early childhood educators (ECEs), and ultimately creating a system that is inclusive and accessible to all Canadians. On October 12th, the Nova Scotia Government failed to deliver an important target.

The agreement between Canada and Nova Scotia outlines Nova Scotia's action plan as agreed upon between the parties, and the criteria for developing a wage scale for early childhood educators is clearly defined. Nova Scotia commits to developing a wage grid that, "[uses] living wage/self-sufficiency standards as a minimum." On October 12th, Nova Scotia announced a wage scale that would completely ignore this promise.

"It is indefensible that we continued to tell Early Childhood Educators that they must wait for 15 months after the signing of the agreement only to completely ignore the minimum threshold they were promised," says Nikki Jamieson, Coordinator of Child Care Now Nova Scotia. "This target was not just a broken promise to Nova Scotians, it's a broken promise to the government of Canada. It leaves us wondering, if they aren't accountable to us, they aren't accountable to the agreement, and they aren't accountable to the government of Canada - who are they accountable to?"

The Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement sets targets to reduce parent fees to \$10 a day by 2025-26, build 9500 new spaces, recruit and retain ECEs, and promises to deliver a comprehensive and affordable publicly funded, not-for-profit child care system across the region.

"How can we be confident that any of these goals will be met if we cannot rely on the action plan or targets we've been promised?" Jamieson continues. "Could \$10 a day become \$14? Maybe 9500 spaces only means 5000. We didn't realize that these targets were just suggestions."

Early Childhood Educators in Atlantic Canada are among the lowest paid in the country so an average 30% increase still fails to bring them above the living wage threshold in most economic regions. A living wage is not the benchmark - it should be the bare minimum, as outlined in the agreement.

“ECEs continue to leave the sector at an alarming rate. We know that centres are facing closures due to a lack of trained Early Childhood Educators,” says Margot Nickerson, Early Childhood Educator. “Without ECEs there will be no spaces, we cannot continue to allow government to neglect the workforce and carry the burden of the system transformation on our backs.”

Child Care Now Nova Scotia recently surveyed over 200 ECEs and Directors and learned that even those at the highest end of the previous wage floor reported struggling to afford basic necessities. The highest end of the wage floor - is now the entry level wage for hopeful graduates entering the workforce. We cannot expect to build a quality system when the workforce is continuously forced to focus on their economic security and the uncertainty of what’s coming next.

“We were told we were the core of the system, we were told that we would be valued for our work, we were told to wait for the changes that were coming - only to be completely disappointed that salaries did not significantly increase for all Early Childhood Educators, and that government failed to meet the promised target,” Elizabeth Conrad, Early Childhood Educator adds. “Early Childhood Educators are being forced to choose between food and shelter, and are working multiple jobs to stay afloat. The contempt for our profession that we feel from government is alarming and must be addressed.”

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