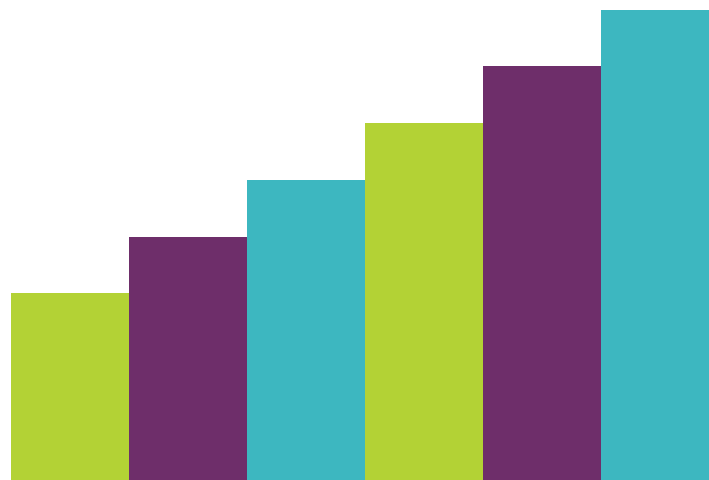


Early Childhood Educator Wages in British Columbia

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A WAGE
GRID OF AT LEAST \$30-\$40/HOUR

A Cross-Canada Scan of ECE
Wages and Wage Grids



JULY 2023

COALITION OF
**child care
advocates**
OF BC



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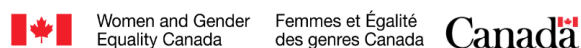
Primary analysis by Eric Swanson, Third Space Planning

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(Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔ/
Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations**

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Introduction

THE BC GOVERNMENT COMMITTED to develop and implement an early childhood educator wage grid in its 2021 Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement with the federal government, and in the recent mandate letter of BC's Minister of State for Child Care. With these commitments in mind, this briefing note:

- Builds on our 2020 Next Step report, which identified a comprehensive publicly-funded wage grid as the best option to achieve fair wages for early childhood educators (ECEs) in BC;
- Scans, analyzes and compares recent progress across Canada toward ECE wage grids and higher ECE wages;
- Scans and analyzes recent progress in BC toward higher wages for ECEs, compared to similar positions and relevant provincial salary data; and
- Provides updated recommendations to the BC government to support the immediate implementation of a fair, competitive and effective ECE wage grid.

Low ECE wages are a significant and longstanding concern across the child care sector. In May 2023 the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, Early Childhood Educators of BC and Métis Nation BC issued a joint statement pledging to continue to work and advocate for the child care system BC families want, need and deserve, including one that provides fair compensation and working conditions for educators. The joint statement acknowledges progress to date, and observes that there is much more for governments to do to realize their commitments under the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement and to uphold Indigenous rights as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **BC has fallen behind in terms of:**
 - **Canada-wide progress toward an ECE wage grid; and**
 - **Effective ECE minimum wages, both in absolute dollars and compared to average wages across the rest of the economy.**
2. **To be competitive and effective, wages in BC's promised grid now need to be at least \$30-\$40/hour, depending on qualifications, experience and years of employment.**

Background

Progress Toward \$10aDay Child Care

In recent years BC has achieved meaningful progress toward a publicly-funded \$10aDay child care system. Families in \$10aDay programs describe them as “life changing” and ECEs report they appreciate their \$4/hour wage enhancement. Yet, significant roadblocks are preventing further progress toward a system that meets the needs of BC families in all their diversities.

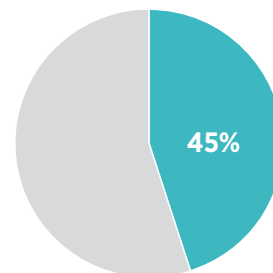
Roadblock: Recruitment and Retention Crisis

One of the biggest roadblocks is recruiting and retaining qualified early childhood educators. For example, 45 per cent of recently-surveyed child care programs say they are losing more staff than they can hire – due to inadequate wages, benefits, and working conditions.¹

This is a serious concern in the sector. Without prompt, significant action, it will be even more challenging to staff the new programs needed to expand access for families across BC.

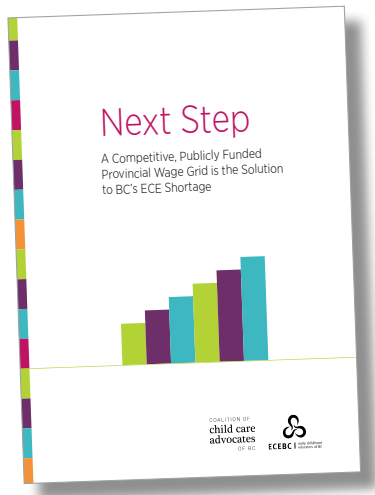
While BC needs to increase wages, provide a range of benefits including pensions, and improve working conditions for all ECEs, this briefing note focuses on wages.

In a recent survey, 45 per cent of child care programs said they are losing more staff than they can hire – due to inadequate wages, benefits, and working conditions.



¹ ECEBC, “Labour Market,” ecebc.ca/download_file/4871/242, see Infographic “BC needs more Early Care and Learning (ECL) Professionals.”

Solution: An ECE Wage Grid



In 2020, the *Next Step* report confirmed a comprehensive wage grid as the best option to achieve fair ECE wages.

It found that effective wage grids prioritize:

- Competitive wages to recruit and retain qualified educators;
- Higher wages for ECEs with more qualifications and experience;
- Wages that increase over time, keep pace with inflation, and close the gender pay gap; and
- Integrated policy that recognizes and funds child care as a system.

In 2020, our recommended wage grid provided specific starting wages. Time has passed and those starting wages are now outdated.

This briefing note summarizes the results of a 2023 cross-Canada scan, and provides updated recommendations to the BC government for wages in BC's promised ECE wage grid.

		2020 WAGE GRID		
		Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
↑ Increasing wages by qualification or position	ECE bachelor degree	TBD		
	ECE+ (diploma)	\$29.00		
	ECE (certificate)	\$26.00		
	ECE assistant	\$20.00		
		→ Increasing wages by factors such as years of service →		

In 2020, our recommended wage grid provided specific starting wages. Time has passed and those starting wages are now outdated. This briefing note summarizes the results of a 2023 cross-Canada scan, and provides updated recommendations to the BC government for wages in BC's promised ECE wage grid.

Methodology

This analysis repeats two key methods used in our 2020 Next Step report.

1. We primarily analyze “effective ECE minimum wages”, which are either:

- Each province/territory’s legal minimum wage² plus publicly funded ECE wage supports; OR
- Where applicable, the starting wage on a wage grid.

While assessing median or average ECE wages can be useful, medians and averages have drawbacks:

- They may include a range of qualifications and roles, such as supervisors and managers, which can confuse interpretation;
- They can gloss over ECEs who earn wages significantly below the median or average; and
- The data is not readily available across Canada, making comparisons difficult.

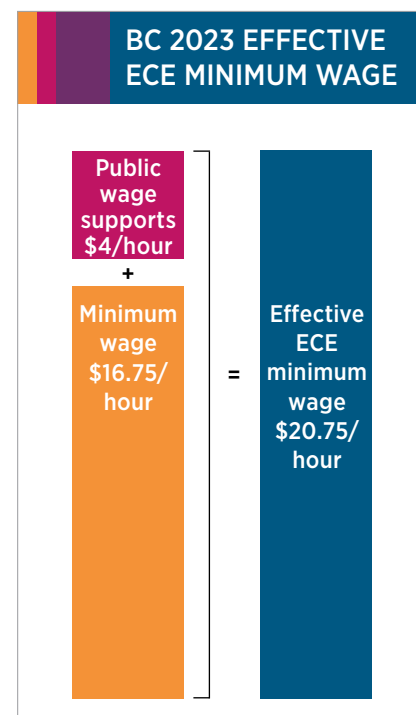
An effective ECE wage grid ensures a fair and competitive wage, which makes tracking the “effective ECE minimum wage” more useful for this kind of analysis.

2. Because ECE classification systems vary across the country, we use the following two labels for consistent comparison:

- **ECE** = the equivalent of a one-year certificate in early childhood education;³ and
- **ECE+** = the equivalent of typically a two-year diploma in early childhood education.⁴

While this analysis focuses on ECEs and ECE+, the development and implementation of BC’s wage grid must include other staff positions, such as ECE Assistants,⁵ school-age educators, and those with a Bachelor or Masters of Early Childhood Education.

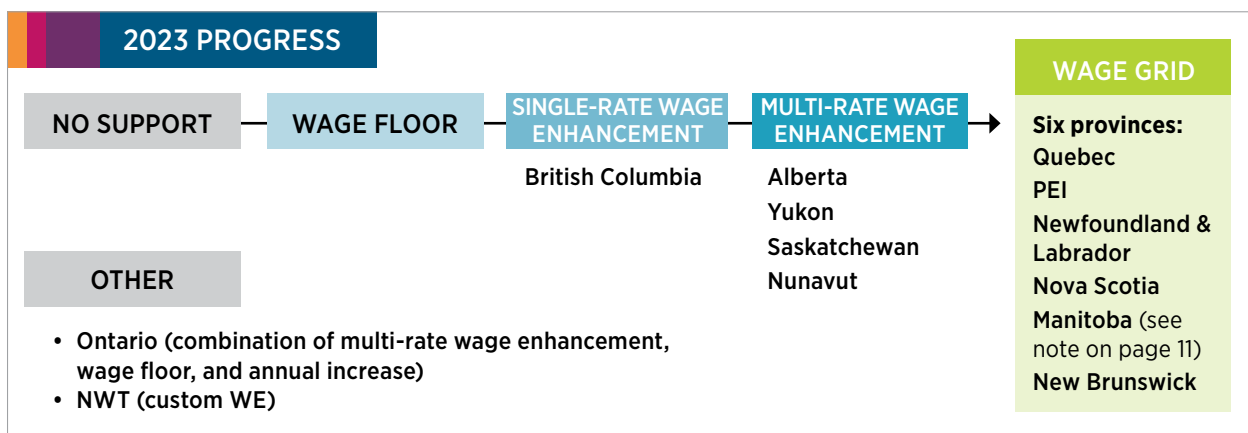
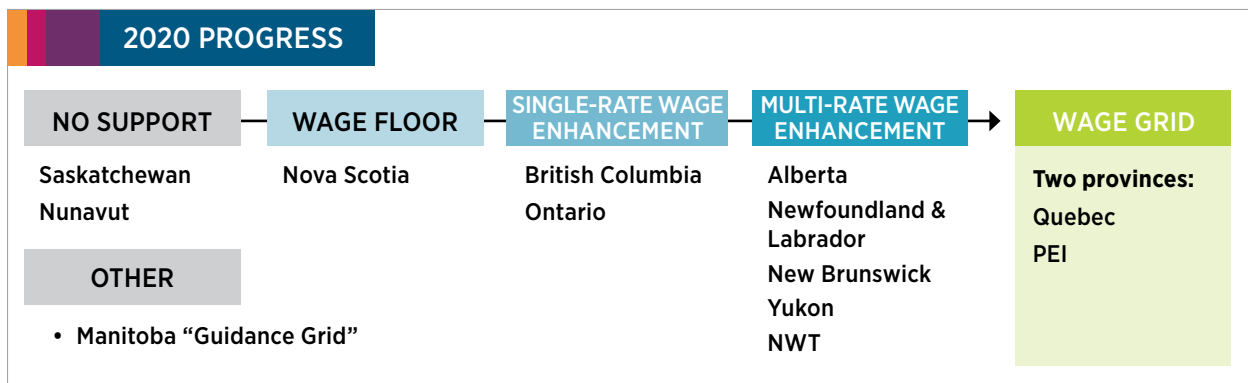
Four of the six jurisdictions with wage grids include a level with higher wages for those with a Bachelor of ECE, or four years of equivalent ECE education.



- 2 Some ECEs may be earning just the province/territory’s minimum wage because, for example, they are not eligible for or participating in broadly-available publicly funded ECE wage support programs. Our analysis focuses on “effective ECE minimum wages” for those who are receiving public funding support.
- 3 In some jurisdictions, equivalency may be granted to two-year diplomas or four-year degrees in non-ECE but related disciplines.
- 4 The ECE+ label also captures Quebec’s three-year diploma, their closest comparison. In some jurisdictions equivalency may be granted to degrees in non-ECE but related disciplines.
- 5 Support must be available for ECE Assistants to obtain their ECE credential.

Progress Toward ECE Wage Grids

THE FOLLOWING TWO CHARTS track cross-Canada progress toward ECE wage grids from 2020 to spring 2023 – arranged from least progress on the left with no public funding dedicated to wage support, to most progress on the right.



These charts show BC falling near the back of the pack. Specifically:

- There are now six provinces that have started or fully implemented ECE wage grids;
- Saskatchewan and Nunavut now have “multi-rate wage enhancements,” with higher rates for educators with higher qualifications and/or years of service. BC still only has a “single rate wage enhancement” of \$4/hour; and
- Alberta and Yukon have similar systems to 2020 but with higher rates.

Current ECE Wages Across Canada

Absolute Wages

The following two charts show effective ECE+ and ECE minimum wages across Canada as of July 2023. They reflect increases to BC’s minimum wage and Manitoba’s ECE wage grid.⁶

ECE+ effective minimum wage (\$)		
Jurisdiction	\$ per hour	Highest step
NWT	\$15.20	n/a
Saskatchewan	\$18.00	n/a
Ontario	\$19.00	n/a
Nunavut	\$20.50	\$25.36 ⁷
Manitoba	\$20.73	\$22.29
British Columbia	\$20.75	n/a
Nova Scotia	\$21.43	\$24.13
Quebec	\$21.60	\$30.03
New Brunswick	\$22.00	\$24.47
Alberta	\$23.62	n/a
Nfld. and Labrador	\$25.00	\$26.53
PEI	\$27.11	\$29.06
Yukon (Whitehorse)	\$32.08	n/a

ECE effective minimum wage (\$)		
Jurisdiction	\$ per hour	Highest step
NWT	\$15.20	n/a
Saskatchewan	\$17.00	n/a
Nova Scotia	\$19.67	\$22.13
Alberta	\$20.05	n/a
Nunavut	\$20.50	\$25.36
PEI	\$20.55	\$22.28
British Columbia	\$20.75	n/a
Nfld. and Labrador	\$21.25	\$22.55
New Brunswick	\$22.00	\$24.47
Yukon (Whitehorse)	\$24.21	n/a
Manitoba	n/a	n/a
Ontario	n/a	n/a
Quebec	n/a	n/a

These tables show that the effective minimum wage for an ECE+ in BC is less than in most other parts of the country, in some cases significantly less. For example \$3/hour less than in Alberta, \$6/hour less than PEI and more than \$11/hour less than the Yukon. The gaps are even wider when considering the

6 While an imperfect comparison, the “target” wage in Manitoba’s grid is used as their “highest step” for the purposes of this analysis.

7 This reflects Nunavut’s annual retention bonus, which applies after six months, translated into an increased hourly rate.

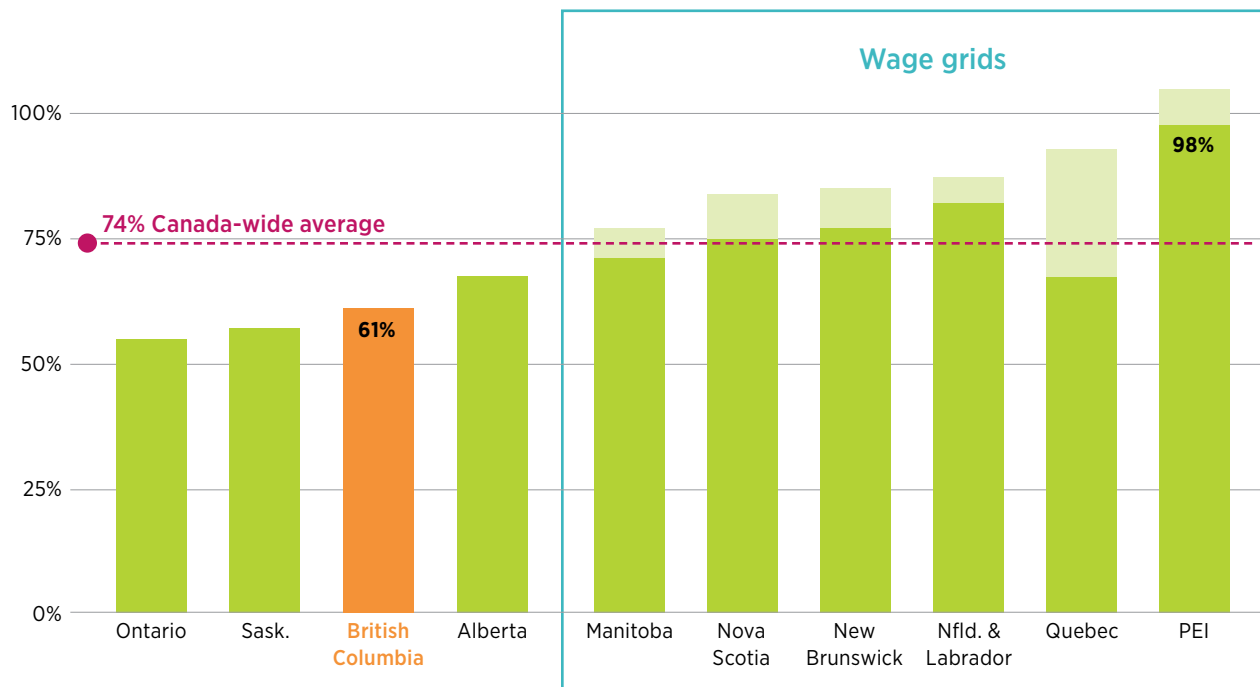
“highest step”, which incorporates the highest step in provinces or territories where there’s a wage grid.

For ECEs, the range of effective minimum wages is smaller across the country, clustering around an average of \$20–\$21, as in BC. This analysis indicates more work is still required to raise ECE wage rates, even with wage grids.

ECE Wages as a Percentage of Each Province’s “All-Sector Average” Wage

Comparing absolute wages (as above) is useful, but can miss important differences in the economic context of each jurisdiction. For example, some provinces and territories have higher or lower wages across their entire economy. To address this issue, we can also compare the effective ECE minimum wage to each province’s “all-sector average wage”, which is the average hourly rate of pay for all workers in the economy.⁸

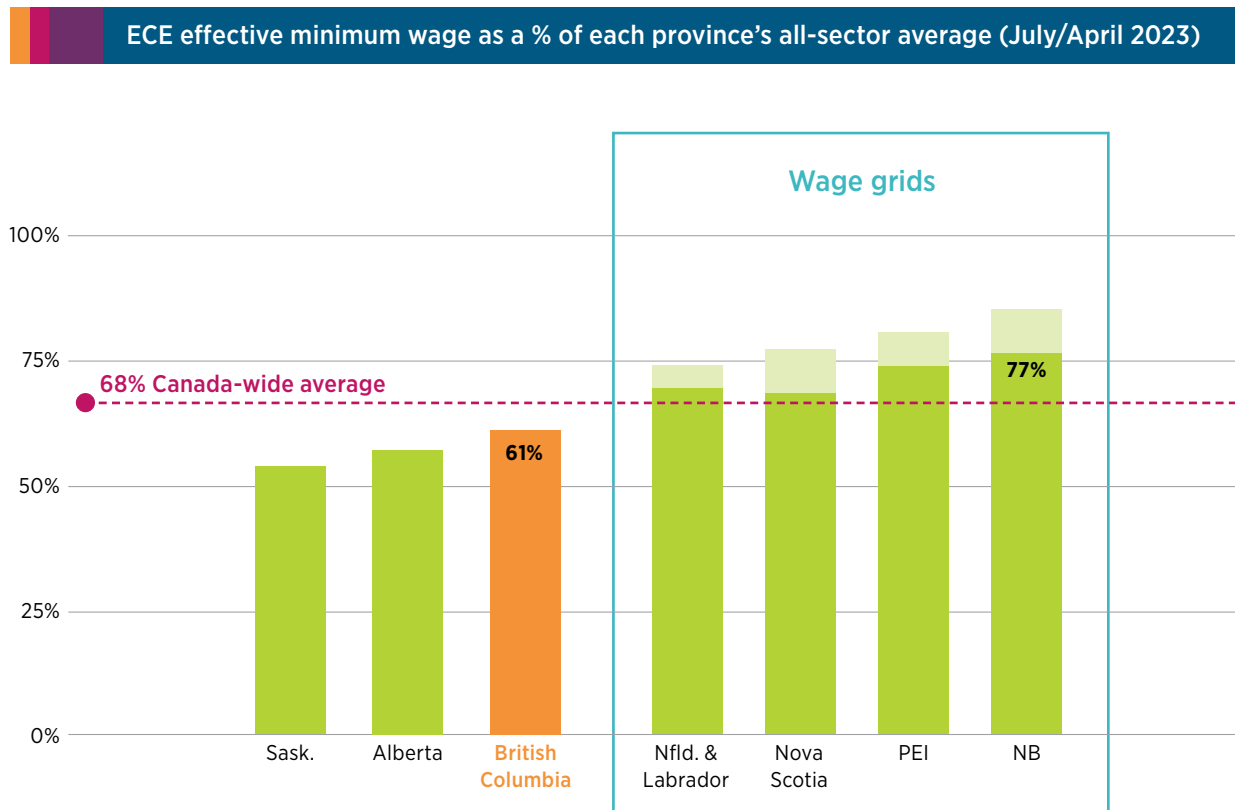
ECE+ effective minimum wage as a % of each province’s all-sector average (July/April 2023)⁹



8 Comparisons of minimum or average ECE wages to all-sector average wages build on previous analyses, including the 2020 Next Step report and *You Bet We Still Care!* (2013). All-sector averages used in this analysis are sourced from Statistics Canada Table 14-10-0065-01 using data filters “both sexes,” “15 years and over,” for April 2023, and results for “Total employees, permanent and temporary — covered and not covered by union.” The territories are not covered in the source data table and these jurisdictions are therefore excluded from this component of the analysis.

9 Using most recent-available data at time of publication (ECE wages projected to July 2023 and all-sector average wages as of April 2023).

The provinces with the highest effective ECE minimum wages (as a percentage of their province’s all-sector average wage) all have wage grids.



Compared to the average of all other jobs in the economy, the effective minimum ECE+ wage in BC is less than most other jurisdictions across Canada. Saskatchewan and Alberta are even lower and the territories do not have similar data available. For ECEs, the story is similar, even though the wage ranges are smaller.

The provinces with the highest effective ECE minimum wages (as a percentage of their province’s all-sector average wage) all have wage grids. In other words, ECE wage grids are associated with higher ECE wages.

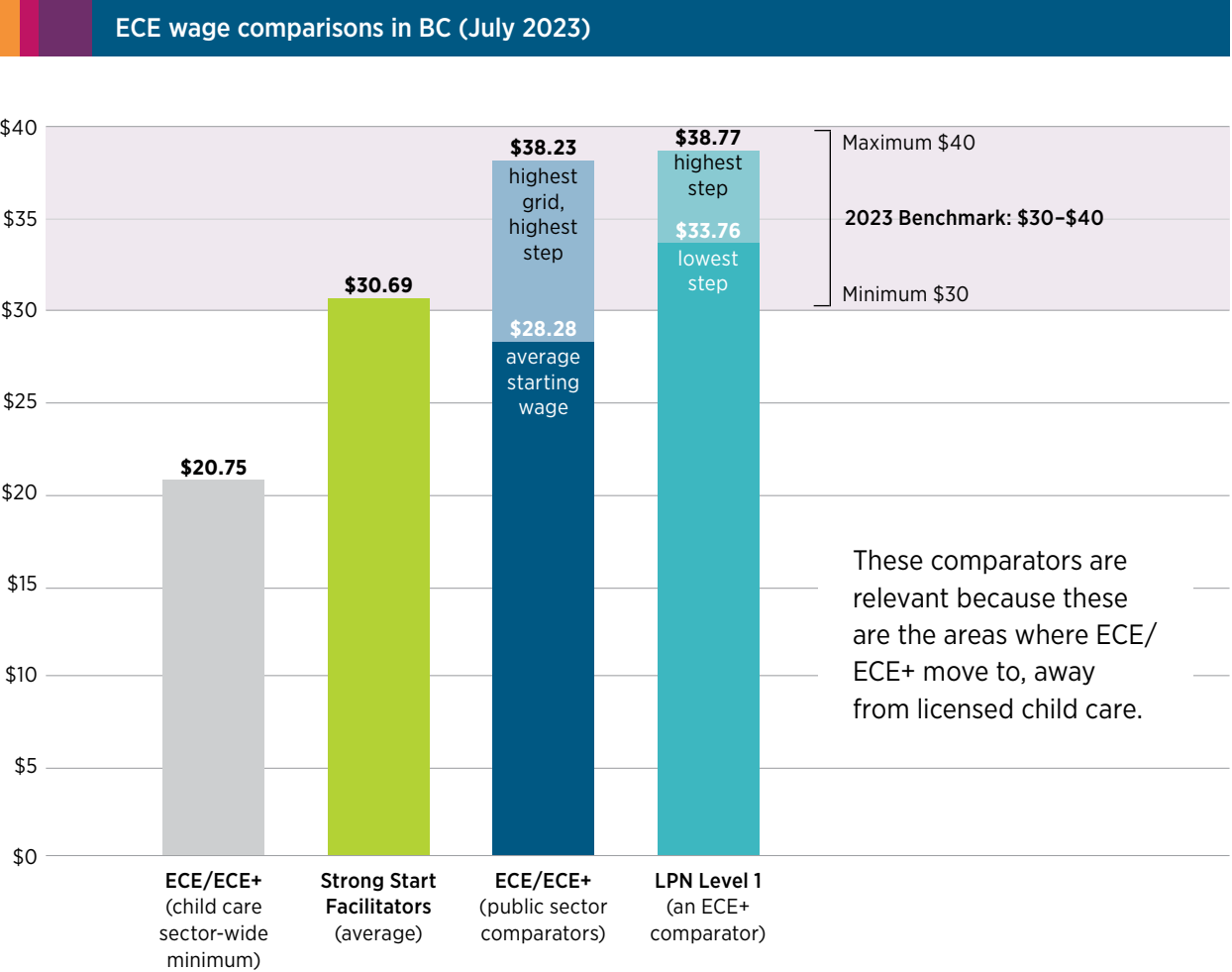
If the ECE+ starting wage was equal to BC’s all-sector average, it would be \$34/hour.

A NOTE ABOUT MANITOBA: Manitoba’s information is somewhat ambiguous about whether the wage grid provides guidance to child care programs, or establishes firm requirements. On the one hand, the grid is described as a “guide to assist boards in determining staff wage ranges,” with boards “encouraged to pay hourly rates more than those outlined in the starting point grid as the facility’s budget allows.” However, the province also indicates that the wage rates in the grid are fully publicly funded (p. 12) and has communicated reporting requirements that set expectations for immediate implementation of the “starting point” wage and achievement of the “target” wages by July 2024).

Current ECE Wages in BC

THE PREVIOUS TABLES AND GRAPHS SHOW that ECE wages have fallen behind in BC compared to the rest of Canada. However, solving BC’s ECE recruitment and retention crisis isn’t about matching wages in other provinces or territories, it’s about identifying the ECE wages that are needed in order to be fair and competitive right here in BC.

To do that we can look at current wages in a range of BC positions with comparable qualifications. The graph below shows BC’s current effective ECE minimum wage and wages of comparable public sector positions.



As in our 2020 Next Step report we start with positions in the public sector; Strong Start Facilitators in schools,¹⁰ as well as ECEs employed in the community social services¹¹ and health sectors.¹² We include ECE+s in community social services and health, as well as Licenced Practical Nurses¹³ who also have a two-year diploma.

For BC's promised ECE wage grid to be competitive, it needs to match or exceed these comparable positions, meaning it needs to include a range of at least \$30-\$40/hour reflecting qualifications, experience, and years of employment.

Effective wage grids need to increase over time, keep pace with inflation and close the gender wage gap. There needs to be integrated policy that recognizes and funds child care as a system.

These findings are consistent with the most recent (2021) Evaluation of BC's Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy,¹⁴ which reported an average wage of \$31/hour for all BC workers with credentials equivalent to ECEs (including both public and private sector workers). Given that this data is almost two years old, a wage range of at least \$30-\$40/hour is reasonable, aligned with federal and provincial child care priorities, and reflects the significant role and responsibilities of ECE professionals.

These findings are consistent with the most recent evaluation, which reported an average wage of \$31/hour for all BC workers with credentials equivalent to ECEs. Given that this data is almost two years old, a wage range of at least \$30-\$40/hour is reasonable, aligned with federal and provincial child care priorities, and reflects the significant role and responsibilities of ECE professionals.

10 In this analysis, a random sample of six school districts was used to generate an average Strong Start wage.

11 As set out in the CSSBA – CSSEA – General Services Collective Agreement and wage schedules.

12 As set out in the HEABC – HSP Collective Agreement and wage schedules.

13 As set out in the HEABC – NBA Collective Agreement and wage schedules.

14 Evaluation of the ECL R&R Strategy in British Columbia: Final Evaluation Report 2021 (Nov 2022), p. 116.

Conclusion

THROUGH INTENTIONAL PEDAGOGICAL WORK, early childhood educators enrich the lives of children, provide vital support to families, and enable parents to participate in the workforce and/or studies. To solve the ECE recruitment and retention crisis in BC, educators must be provided with fair, competitive wages, pensions, and other benefits, and improved working conditions.

The BC government has promised to make ECE a well-supported profession and has committed to implement a wage grid. To meet that goal, our updated analysis makes it clear that the BC government should immediately begin to implement a publicly-funded ECE wage grid of at least \$30-\$40/hour. ■

To solve the ECE recruitment and retention crisis in BC, educators must be provided with fair, competitive wages, pensions, and other benefits, and improved working conditions.





Watch and share a 30-minute video
of the full analysis at youtu.be/imR56vxFDSk

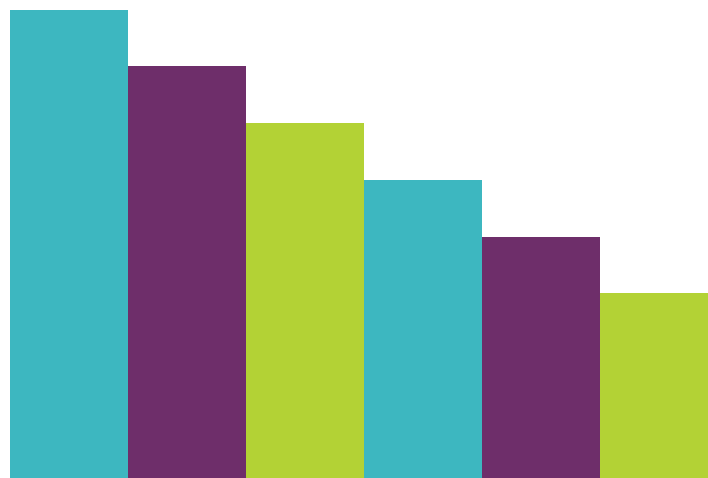


The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and Early Childhood Educators of BC welcome and value ongoing opportunities to share and learn from Indigenous colleagues, and call on governments to ensure that their ongoing implementation of child care system-building, including ECE compensation, is grounded in rights and reconciliation.

Please join us in the important work of advocating for a province-wide publicly funded equitable ECE wage grid, that includes benefits and good working conditions

www.10aday.ca www.cccabc.bc.ca www.ecebc.ca

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