

Quality and Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Child Care in Newfoundland and Labrador

Objective

To determine the general quality and accessibility of early childhood education and child care in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL).

Practice Points

1. Research conclusively demonstrates that good quality child care is beneficial for children while poor quality child care is detrimental.
2. Virtually all available research shows that for-profit operation is a key factor linked to poorer quality child care. Public and non-profit child care is significantly more likely to be better quality than for-profit child care, through its impact on program-related factors such as wages, working conditions, Early Childhood Educator (ECE) training, staff turnover, staff morale, staff/child ratios, and group size.
3. Evidence demonstrates that creating an adequate supply of accessible, equitable, and well-distributed early childhood education and child care services in a timely manner requires substantial public management of the process. Countries that have successfully developed accessible and equitable child care systems utilized public processes that ensure services are created where and when they are needed, similar to development of other community infrastructure, such as schools or roads.
4. A primary reason that accessibility of regulated child care is limited and inequitable in Canada is the reliance on the private market (non-profits and businesses) for decisions on creating and locating child care and early childhood education services, rather than utilizing a public process where the government takes responsibility.

Data

Data were obtained from the Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2019 report prepared by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

Results

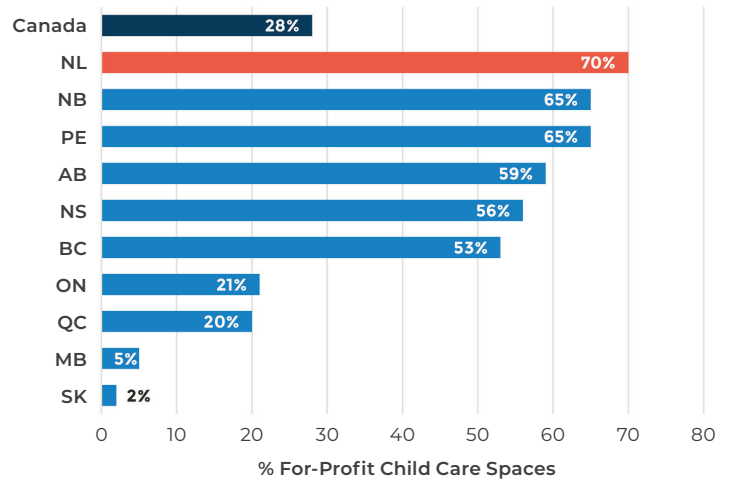


Figure 1. Percent of Total Regulated Child Care Spaces Operated for Profit, 2019

- Canadian child care overall is primarily not-for-profit but NL has the reverse pattern with the highest percentage of for-profit child care among all the provinces.

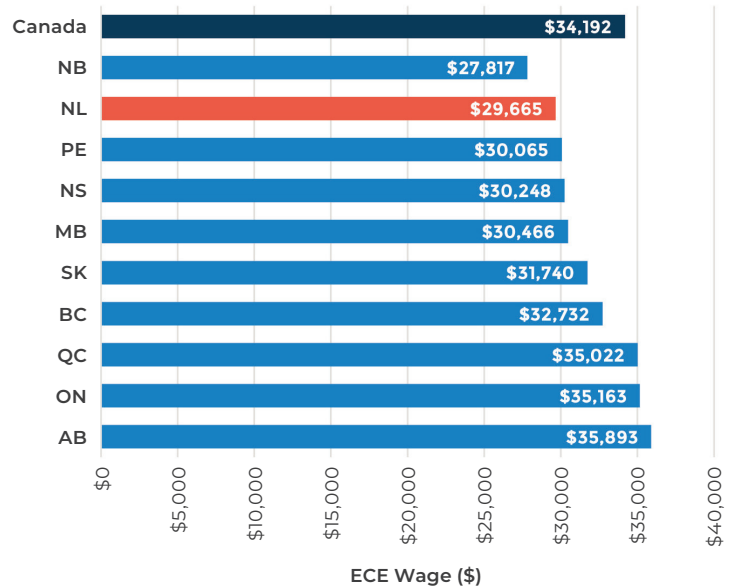


Figure 2. Median Annual Full-Time Income for Early Childhood Educators and Assistants, 2015

- Staff wages are a common indicator of child care quality. In 2015, NL had the second lowest wages for ECEs of all provinces, nearly 15% lower than the Canadian average.

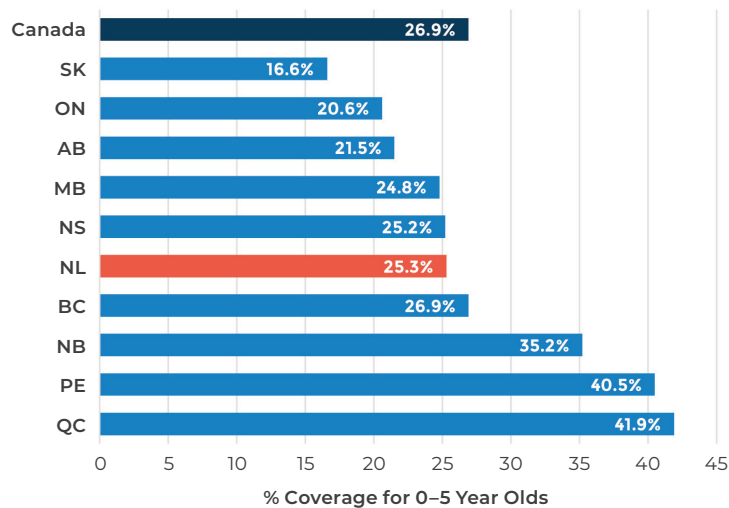


Figure 3. Percent of 0–5 Year Olds For Whom There is a Regulated Child Care Space Available, 2019

- It is a characteristic of Canadian child care that the supply of regulated child care services is too limited to meet demand and is unevenly distributed and inequitable in terms of location, further limiting access for some underserved groups and rural communities.
- This pattern is also observed in NL, where there are regulated child care spaces available for only a quarter of preschool-aged children, which is slightly below the Canadian average.

Conclusions

1. The high percentage of for-profit child care in NL and the low wages for ECEs in NL compared to other provinces indicate that child care in NL is likely lower quality than in other provinces in Canada.
2. For NL to most effectively address current problems with limited, inequitable early childhood education and child care accessibility, it should take a different approach than is the norm nationally, by systemically addressing it as a public responsibility, rather than continuing to rely on the private market to decide when and where to provide child care.