

ECE Wages in Alberta

Presentation to AECEA
Portions of this presentation have been given by
Rob Buschmann to Child Care Now Alberta

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Good evening everyone, thank you so much for taking the time to be here tonight. I appreciate it, my name is miranda and I am a research assistant at the community-university partnership and I work specifically for the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care. The Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care builds on existing capacities and provides leadership in managing, planning and supporting the development of a system of high-quality early learning and care services in Edmonton, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of low-income and vulnerable families. Tonight I am going to be talking about Early Childhood Educator Wages in Alberta.

Presentation Outline

1. Background: Unpacking ECE wages in Alberta
2. Historical Wage Data from Statscan: The Good News
3. Stepping Back, Bigger Picture: The Bad News
4. 2021 Living Wages in Alberta
5. What Comes Next for Improving Retention?
6. Conclusion: Gender-Based Analysis Considerations
7. Polling for Further Focus Group Discussions with Educators
8. Audience Questions

First, I will be having a background on what prompted me to begin to research the claim that ece's in Alberta were the "highest paid in Canada".

Next, I will be discussing the Historical Wage Data from Statscan used to perform the analysis I am presenting tonight, accompanied by "The Good News".

Then, Stepping Back and contextualizing "the Bigger Picture", prior to moving on to discussing this data compared to 2021 Living Wages in Alberta,

Finally, in terms of presentation content I will be touching on What Comes Next for Improving Retention and some Gender-Based Analysis Considerations.

The presentation will conclude with some audience and Polling for Further Focus Group Discussions with Educators and any Audience Questions

Wage Data: What Have ECEs in Alberta Earned Hourly from 2000-2020?

Background

Despite increased attention being paid to early childhood educators (ECEs), workers in the field continue to be underpaid and many do not make a living wage. Earlier this year, then, Minister of Children's Services maintained that wage top-ups in Alberta constitute the "highest" in the country and there are no foreseeable plans to increase wage top-ups or to use federal funds to increase wages for ECEs.

This presentation hopes aims to demystify that comment by unpacking what wages actually look like for ECEs in Alberta by examining how base wages and wage top-ups have changed since 2000,

Wage Data:

What Have ECEs in Alberta Earned Hourly from 2000-2020?

Statistics Canada Data say ...

Change in Average Hourly Wages for Child Care Workers, 2000 – 2020 (adjusted for inflation and compared to all other occupations put together)

Place	CCW Wages in 2000 (2020 Dollars)	CCW Wages in 2020 (2020 Dollars)	CCW Increase	All Other Occupations Increase
Calgary	\$12.48	\$19.19	54%	31%
Edmonton	\$13.23	\$20.11	52%	36%
Alberta	\$12.83	\$19.12	49%	34%
Canada	\$14.91	\$20.68	39%	25%

- “CCW” here are *not* the same as “ECE”. These numbers include National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes 4214 (early childhood educators and assistants) and 4411 (home child care providers).
- Includes ECEs working with children up to age 12, in unlicensed situations, and for 4214, supervisors as well.
- Only data we have to try to look at sub-Alberta geographies
- Take-away seems to be that CCWs “gained” on income increase compared to all other occupations in the past 20 years

Okay so, just a little housekeeping quickly to explain how these numbers appeared like this.

So this is , Change in Average Hourly Wages for Child Care Workers, 2000 – 2020 (adjusted for inflation and compared to all other occupations put together). To be noted, “CCW” here are not the same as “ECE”. These numbers include National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes 4214 (early childhood educators and assistants) and 4411 (home child care providers).

Includes ECEs working with children up to age 12, in unlicensed situations, and for 4214, supervisors as well.

This was the only data available to try to look at sub-Alberta geographies.

So, by comparing 2000 and 2020 wages for CCW workers and all other occupations in 2020 constant dollars, we see that the percentage increase for CCW workers has been significantly higher, ranging between 23% and 14% higher overall. The wage increase has been the highest in Calgary at a rate of 54%. The lowest wage increase was for Canada as a whole at a rate of 38.6%. In comparison, the wage percentage increase for other occupations over the last two decades has been between 36% and 25%.

This is the good news. This suggests that wages over the last 20 years for ECEs have been increasing at a higher level than other occupations. To be noted, given the wage discrepancy between CCW workers and other occupations, the percentage increase is not

entirely surprising and suggests that the necessity of child care workers is beginning to be realized and thus reflected in larger wage increases than other occupational groups. However, the wage gap between ECE workers and other occupations is still consequential.

Provincial Data say ...

Average Total Hourly Wages for Certified Alberta Early Childhood Educators Working in Licensed Programs, September 2019 to January 2022 (including wage top-up, unadjusted for inflation)

Certification Level	September 2019	January 2022	Increase (\$)	Increase (%)
Level 1	\$18.04	\$18.89	\$0.85	4.7%
Level 2	\$20.96	\$21.92	\$0.96	4.6%
Level 3	\$25.13	\$26.17	\$1.04	4.1%

- Inflation in Alberta, 2019 – 2021: 4.3%
- Provincial top-up hasn't increased since 2008, so *all* of this increase from 2019-2022 is due to employers raising wages.
- We only have three public data points (Sep 2019; Sep 2020; Jan 2022). No further breakdown of wages in public data.
- January 2022 includes ECEs working in preschools; previous two data points did not, because ECEs working in preschools did not receive top-up until July 2021.
- Most current wage numbers (only) are available at <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-child-care-grant-funding-program.aspx>.

Looking at the Average Total Hourly Wages for Certified Alberta Early Childhood Educators Working in Licensed Programs, September 2019 to January 2022 (including wage top-up, unadjusted for inflation)

While still considering Inflation in Alberta, from 2019 – 2021 was average 4.3%
And Provincial top-up hasn't increased since 2008, so all of this increase from 2019-2022 is due to employers raising wages.

Also to be noted, we only have three public data points (Sep 2019; Sep 2020; Jan 2022).
And January 2022 includes ECEs working in preschools; previous two data points did not, because ECEs working in preschools did not receive top-up until July 2021.

How Close are ECE's to Reaching 50% of Teacher Salaries in Alberta:

Year	ECE Salaries as a % of Teacher Salaries
2011	48%
2014	39%
2017	47%
2020	45%

- Teacher salary calculations: see page 20-21
https://ecereport.ca/media/uploads/2021-overview/overview2020_final2.pdf

Another interesting data point to consider is from The Early Childhood Education Report (ECER) produced by the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. Since 2011, ECEs in Alberta have gotten further away from reaching the 50% of teacher salaries. Notably, this is not just “less than 50%” this appears to suggest that ECEs earn around 39-48% of a teachers salary. The closest to 50%, was 48% in 2011, with the most substantial decrease in 2014 to 39%, followed by a jump back up in 2017 to 47%, only to decrease to 45% in 2020 (under 2017 levels). All in all, this suggests ECEs in Alberta are being valued approximately under half of what teachers are being valued at, if we use wage as a proxy for value. This is the bad news.

Comparisons to Average Hourly Wages

- **\$26.17 / hour** – Level 3 ECE in Alberta in January 2022, provincial data
- **\$19.12 / hour** – CCW in Alberta in 2020, StatCan data
- **\$28.67 / hour** – average hourly earnings including overtime for hourly employees in Alberta, January 2022
- **\$44.90 / hour** – average hourly earnings including overtime for salaried employees in Alberta, January 2022
- We have to be careful with these comparisons but it looks like even though child care workers might have “gained” on all other workers a little in the past 20 years, they are still behind in Alberta.

Hourly earnings for Alberta are from Statistics Canada: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1410022201-eng>.

The wage gap between ECE workers and other occupations in Alberta matters for a number of reasons. First, because it is easy to look at absolute wages of ECE workers in Alberta and claim they have the highest wages in the country, but this doesn't tell the entire story or take into account that relative to other occupations in Alberta, ECE workers are paid the least. This means that the “wage gap” between ECEs in Alberta and other occupations is the highest in Alberta, while being the lowest in Quebec. This gap matters because it says something about the relative value of ECEs in Alberta as compared to all other workers. However, this gap could be somewhat exaggerated due to the fact that Alberta's oil industry causes distortions in wage rates by dragging the average wage in some regions way above the equilibrium wage for comparable occupations in other geographic regions. Although, to be noted, this dynamic can also impact the price of goods and services, thereby increasing the cost of living in that region. This is particularly impactful in regions such as Calgary and Fort McMurray. Additionally, the Northern Allowance program ended in July 2020, which for some ECEs in Northern Alberta, resulted in a pay cut of approximately \$12,480 annually. The loss of the Northern Allowance program would be particularly impactful to Fort McMurray where the living wage is among the highest in Alberta at \$27.35 per hour.

Living Wages in Alberta: How do ECEs Wages Compare?

The living wage is a methodological tool used to calculate a “living wage” by considering the cost of living, the rate of inflation and the cost of a “commodity basket” in a particular region to determine an hourly wage that would enable a “living wage”. However, living wages are calculated based on full-time hours (40-hours) based on 50-weeks per-year. This is important to note because ECEs don’t tend to work full-time and some may work seasonally, so hourly wages can be a deceptive measure. ECE hours can be part-time or include split shifts which can significantly lower the annual income earned by ECEs. Which in turn may result in the appearance of earning a “living” hourly wage, while workers are still earning “working poverty” annual incomes, especially if they live in a region where the cost of living is above average and they are not actually working full-time hours all year round.

CCW Wages vs. Living Wage (3 Cities)

Average Hourly Wages for Child Care Workers Compared to Living Wage in 2021

Place	CCW Wages in 2020 (2020 Dollars)	Living Wage (2021)	Difference
Calgary	\$19.19	\$18.60	+\$0.59
Edmonton	\$20.11	\$18.10	+\$2.01
Lethbridge	\$17.48	\$19.00	-\$1.52

- Have to use CCWs data from Statistics Canada; don't have data from the province for ECE wages in cities in Alberta.
- We don't have data other than for these three cities from Statistics Canada (and that was a special order).
- It's possible CCW wages went up in these cities in 2021 so this might be out of date (probably would require another special order).
- Uses 2021 living wage calculations from Alberta Living Wage Network: <https://livingwagealberta.ca/living-wage/>.

So this slide represents, CCW Wages vs. Living Wage in Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge,

This is Average Hourly Wages for Child Care Workers Compared to Living Wage in 2021.

Notable this chart is using CCWs data from Statistics Canada; as there is not data from the province for ECE wages in cities in Alberta.

We don't have data other than for these three cities from Statistics Canada (and this data was a special order).

It's possible CCW wages went up in these cities in 2021 and these may be out of date,

And finally this comparison is using 2021 living wage calculations from Alberta Living Wage Network: <https://livingwagealberta.ca/living-wage/>.

ECE Wages vs. Living Wage (Lots of Places)

Would ECEs make a 2021 living wage if they made the January 2022 provincial average for their certification level?			
Place	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Calgary	No	Yes	Yes
Canmore	No	No	No
Chestermere	No	Yes	Yes
Cochrane	No	No	Yes
Drumheller	No	Yes	Yes
Edmonton	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grande Prairie	No	Yes	Yes
Fort McMurray	No	No	No
Lethbridge	No	Yes	Yes
Red Deer	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rock Mountain House	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stony Plain	Yes	Yes	Yes
Strathcona County	Yes	Yes	Yes

- Assumes ECEs are making the average (from provincial stats) everywhere in Alberta.
- Uses 2021 living wage calculations from Alberta Living Wage Network: <https://livingwagealberta.ca/living-wage/>.

Here we have ECE wages vs the living wage, and assuming ECEs are making the average (from provincial stats) everywhere in Alberta, we can immediately see here that most level 1s are not making a living wage throughout Alberta.

Other Things to Consider: GBA and maybe a new retention philosophy?

What does a GBA suggest?

- Gender-based analysis
- What are the historical and intersectional variables at play?
- Gendered aspects of child care: majority female workers
- Tend to be younger than average Canadian worker
- Increased presence of immigrant and non-PR status workers
- Time poverty for female workers: systemic undervaluing of female-dominated professions including early childhood educators.

A gender-based-analysis framework asks us to probe some of these findings further to consider the historical and intersectional variables at play when examining wages in the early learning and care sector. So, who are the people we are talking about here and what does it mean that we undervalue them to this extent? What does this mean for staff retention, as the federal and provincial governments continue to prioritize 'affordability' through demand-side subsidies by funding \$10-a-day programs?

The first thing to consider is the gendered aspects of the child care sector. Roughly 96% of early childhood educators and assistants are female and tend to be younger than the average Canadian worker. Data from the 2019 Labour Force Survey suggests 33% of child care workers are immigrant-born or non-permanent residents compared to 25% in all other occupational sectors. These figures together highlight concerns about equity and the systemic undervaluing of care work. Care work is not only underpaid vis-a-vie wages, women are also more likely to face significant time restrictions because of unpaid care work. Some economists refer to this as "time poverty" or the systemic undervaluing of women's contributions to the labor market (Giurge et al, year). Regardless of how it's conceptualized, it suggests that this "built-in" undervaluing places women in a double bind, where they have less time because of more unpaid care work and earn less relative to their male counterparts due to the systemic undervaluing of female-dominated professions including early childhood educators.

What does a GBA suggest about the current retention strategy?

- Alberta has the lowest ratio of child-care workers to total-working-population, while Quebec has the highest.
- Child care workers represent 1.3% of the total working population in Alberta (Savage & Uppal 2021).
- Staff shortages and retention issues in Alberta can be seen and felt in centres across the province
- Retention issues are an inhibiting factor to developing an integrated, high-quality and affordable system of child care for Alberta.
- What is the Government of Alberta's current retention strategy anyways?

As Covid-19 indicated, the child care sector is crucial to keeping society functioning and the retention of high-quality staff is a significant concern for the realization of an integrated system of early learning and child care. Furthermore, it appears like a waste of professional development subsidies for seemingly low staff retention among Level 1s and Level 2 ECEs in Alberta. Evidence of staff shortages and retention issues in Alberta can be reflected in the ratio of child care workers to total working population. For example, Quebec has the highest ratio of child care workers to the total working population. In contrast, Alberta has among the lowest with child care workers representing 1.3% of the total working population in Alberta (See Savage & Uppal 2021). Perhaps the current strategy of relying on the stereotype of women as benevolent caregivers to recruit underpaid workers to the child care sector is not a sustainable policy solution or a coherent labor retention strategy.

Should Alberta Consider a Wage-Grid for ECE Wages?

What Comes Next

So, what can be done to address the wage gap for ECE workers in Alberta? First, although briefly touched on above, there should be a more comprehensive examination of ECE wages in Alberta to gauge what is actually going on in the sector. The Road Map to a Quality Early Learning and Child Care System in Alberta suggests a salary scale could help address the significant wage gap outlined above. British Columbia has introduced a competitive and publicly funded provincial wage grid for the ECE sector. This could also be a viable solution for Alberta to consider for addressing both the wage gap and the staff retention issues currently present in the sector. Finally, as demand for space creation increases, with some estimates at 42,500 in the next few years, as outlined in the bilateral target of the recently released provincial-federal child care agreement, Alberta must focus more on staff retention rates. Essentially, we need to make sure to keep who we have and also draw people to the profession; without increasing wages we risk continuing the problems we've had for a while, which seems to be high turnover and problems finding staff. A wage grid could be something to consider,

Wage Grid

- Basically, a wage grid is a value statement using dollars
- Some things (values) that might be reflected in a wage grid ...
 - Experience
 - Level of “pre-service” education (diploma, degree, etc.)
 - Continuing education (but more often continuing education seems to be a requirement to keep certification rather than accounted for in a wage grid)
 - Supervisory responsibilities
 - Local adjustments
 - Other comparable jobs

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Other comparable jobs

Some Questions to Discuss

*to be used for developing future focus group questions with educators for later this summer

- Are there any factors not mentioned, that you believe contribute to retention issues in the sector? What is the data missing?
- What specific incentives should be included in a wage grid, if Alberta decided to take that direction?
- What kind of research or analysis on ECE wages, and/or policy options for increasing ECE pay, do YOU think would be useful for AECEA?

Some Questions to Poll and Discuss

*to be used for developing future focus group questions with educators for later this summer

Are there any factors not mentioned, that you believe contribute to retention issues in the sector? What is the data missing?

What specific incentives should be included in a wage grid, if Alberta decided to take that direction?

What kind of research or analysis on ECE wages, and/or policy options for increasing ECE pay, do YOU think would be useful for AECEA?

Audience Questions

Thank you!