



ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

2024-25

Education and Early
Childhood Development

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Accountability Report 2024–2025

ISBN: 978-1-77448-804-1

Education and Early Childhood Development 2024-25 Priority Results in Support of Government’s Accountability Report

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ("EECD", "the Department") for the year ended March 31, 2025, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the EECD outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by the EECD management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the EECD management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the EECD 2024-25 Business Plan.

Originally Signed by

Hon. Brendan Maguire
Minister

Originally Signed by

Tracey Barbrick
Deputy Minister

Education and Early Childhood Development

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Introduction

This document reports on the departmental activities as outlined in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ([EECD's 2024-25 Business Plan](#)).

Measuring our Performance

EECD's 2024-25 Business Plan identified several priority initiatives to advance improvements to the early years and public education systems in Nova Scotia.

Inclusive Education

Government of Nova Scotia is committed to helping all students reach their full potential by continuing to invest in the Nova Scotia public education system and prioritizing educational outcomes related to well-being and achievement. EECD continues to work with Regional Centres for Education (RCEs), the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), school administrators, teachers, specialists, education support workers, parents, community, government, and other key partners to put students first and ensure all students are supported to develop healthy relationships, make good choices, and achieve success in their learning.

In 2024-25, EECD supported the ongoing implementation of inclusive education through:

- Initiating the review of the Special Education Policy.
- Continuing to invest in Assistive Technology Supports in classrooms by providing over \$600,000 to RCEs/CSAP.
- Continuing to work with the Accessibility Directorate to advance work related to the *Accessibility Act* and Education Standards.
- Finalizing updated guidelines for Mi'kmaw/Indigenous Student Support Workers (SSWs) and African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers (SSWs). The guidelines provide a clear framework for the education system, students, families and communities to understand the role and responsibilities of the SSWs program.

Student Well-Being and Achievement

In 2024-25, EECD improved school programs, services, and policies to support student well-being and academic achievement through:

- Implementing the Education Leadership Growth and Assessment Standards for completing performance appraisals of all school-based leaders.
- Strengthening the voices of families, students and School Advisory Councils (SACs) within our education system by:
 - Launching the first offering of the [Innovation Fund](#), a program that provided 26 application-based grants of up to \$10,000 to SACs to implement innovative projects supporting student well-being and achievement;

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- Hosting the first SAC provincial conference in September 2024, offering all SAC chairs an opportunity to receive training and advise on common school challenges and opportunities;
- Initiating work with partners, including regions, Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU), Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS), and universities, to support teachers entering our school system for the first time. This is a response to feedback gathered through the Substitute Survey, Ideas for Education, and practicum committee.
- Implementing Phase 1 of the new Nova Scotia School Lunch Program in 2024–25. In its first year, the program was delivered in 258 schools that included elementary grades (including Pre-Primary) and provided over 4.7 million lunches. EECD invested \$34.2 million to support school lunch and breakfast programs in 2024-25.
- Releasing and implementing the updated School Food and Nutrition Policy in September 2024.
- Releasing the updated School Code of Conduct in April 2025.
- Completing an evaluation of the Tuition Support Program, which provides funding for eligible students to access specialized programming and services outside the framework of the Nova Scotia public school system. The review confirmed the importance of the program and identified opportunities to making the application process more efficient for families.
- Initiating the planning for the 'Network Schools' initiative, which supports research related to implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy and encourages the sharing of best practices and ideas among educators, teachers, administrators, and support staff.
- Initiating the accreditation monitoring of revised Nova Scotia Bachelor of Education programs.

Public School Program

In 2024-25, EECD focused on renewing and updating curriculum through:

- Expanding Netukulimk 12, a course that engages learners in environmental science from a Mi'kmaw perspective, through the teachings inherent in the guiding principle of Netukulimk, which has been expanded to 13 classes in 10 schools.
- Developing a new pilot course, Local Industries 11, focusing on marine industries.
- Introducing updated Literacy and Mathematics Strategies in all grade levels.
- Continuing to provide ongoing support for the implementation of Treaty Education in all RCEs/CSAP and further supported this work by developing grade-specific resources and professional learning opportunities.
- Expanding access to Mi'kmaw and Gaelic languages for students by fully implementing Mi'kmaw Language 11 and launching Gaelic Language 10 through Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS).
- Expanding the High Skills Major Program to engage students in career exploration and community-based learning with a focus on sector-related knowledge and skills.

Early Years

In 2024–25, Nova Scotia advanced its transformation of early learning and child care (ELCC) through targeted initiatives that delivered measurable results in accessibility, workforce development, quality, affordability, and long-term system sustainability.

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Expanded Access and Creation of New Spaces

- 2,398 new spaces opened in 2024-2025 fiscal year; on track to meeting our commitment of creating 9,500 spaces by March 31, 2026.
- Launched the new Major Infrastructure Program and committed \$42.7 million in funding to 24 organizations projected to generate around 1,200 additional spaces.
- Launched a broad media campaign to recruit new Family Home Child Care, "[Open the Door to a New Opportunity](#)" and provided \$750K in start-up grants to new providers and opened 660 new spaces.
- Supported a Flexible Hours Pilot program in Cape Breton which offers child care during non-traditional hours.
- Continued collaboration with the Department of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia Health, and the IWK to explore and develop options for increased child care services to support health care workforce needs. One new centre in Halifax was approved in 2024.

Strengthened Program Quality, Inclusion, and Early Childhood Educator Workforce

- Group Benefits and Pension Plan implemented for 3,500+ eligible employees in licensed and funded centres and family home child care agencies. Early Childhood Educator (ECE) wage scale increased by 3% to support recruitment and retention.
- Investment of \$3.3 million in ECE training initiatives, including:
 - 283 new ECE graduates, 62 from programs designated to improve the diversity of the ECE workforce (15 Mi'kmaw ECE Diploma Program, 15 Africentric ECE Diploma Program, 10 Francophone ECE Diploma Program, and 22 Newcomer ECE Pathway Program).
 - Worked with the Nova Scotia Community College and Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Educators to fully fund the development and enrollment of 60 students in a virtual ECE program (hard-to-recruit geographical areas) and 131 child care staff in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Diplomas.
 - New learning resources released, including culturally responsive leadership, infant/toddler quality modules, and revised child abuse protocol training.
- Piloting the Assessment for Quality Improvement (AQI) tool in 104 centres to assess child interactions, learning environments, and curriculum.
- Provided \$5.5 million to 301 child care centres to enhance staffing and purchase program materials that support more inclusive practices.
- With an investment of \$8.7 million, supported 3,990 children access early intervention services at no cost (971 from underrepresented communities).
- Invested \$2.7 million to support 164 child care programs in using the Pyramid Model (Pre-Primary and Centres), a program that supports the social-emotional development of young children and promotes positive behavior.

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Improved Affordability and Removed Financial Barriers for Families

- \$60 million in parent fees distributed, saving families thousands of dollars a year in child care fees.
- Modernized the Child Care Subsidy Program, including moving to a fully online application process and no longer requiring families to include their assets when determining eligibility. An investment of \$21 million supported over 5,000 families, including 3,000 who paid \$0 for care.
- Implemented a new family-centered policy banning all waitlist and registration fees for any provider receiving government funding to eliminate upfront costs and barriers for families.

Advanced System Sustainability and Federal Funding Agreements

- To sustain child care service availability, EECD processed over 10,000 grant payments to child care operators and distributed more than \$222 million in payments to providers.
- Continued to develop a new funding model focused on equity, sustainability, and system stability. A sector working group made up of operators from across the province was formed to support the development and met four times to provide advice and feedback.

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Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

Departmental Expenses Summary				
(\$ thousands)				
		2024-2025	2024-2025	2024-2025
Programs and Services		Estimate	Actuals	Variance
	Senior Management	1,170	1,364	194
	Strategic Policy, RCE Liaison and Research	5,851	5,990	139
	Early Learning	333,067	279,247	(53,820)
	Centre for Equity in Achievement and Well-Being	4,030	3,684	(346)
	Education Innovation Programs and Services	85,775	87,870	2,095
	Student Services and Equity	2,430	2,214	(216)
	African Canadian Services	6,524	6,580	56
	Mi'kmaq Services	1,441	1,373	(68)
	French Programs and Services	17,080	17,454	374
	Corporate Services	3,485	3,375	(110)
	Public Education Funding	1,337,765	1,389,979	52,214
	Teachers' Pension	103,403	108,581	5,178
	School Capital - Amortization	97,159	90,362	(6,797)
	Total - Departmental Expenses	1,999,180	1,998,073	(1,107)
	Additional Information:			
	Ordinary Revenues	2,156	8,463	6,307
	Fees and Other Charges	2,323	2,066	(257)
	Ordinary Recoveries	226,175	175,487	(50,688)
	Total – Revenues, Fees, and Recoveries	230,654	186,016	(44,638)
	TCA Purchase Requirements	214,440	210,261	(4,179)
	Funded Staff (# of FTEs)			
	Department Funded Staff	212.8	198.2	(14.6)

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Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development expenses were \$1.1 million less than estimate primarily due to \$50 million in Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCCA) spending deferred to next fiscal based on current action plan, \$6.8 million in amortization from opening delays for new school builds; and \$3.7 million for under-utilization of subsidy program. These decreases are partially offset by increases of \$13.9 million for the school lunch program; \$24.0 million in enrolment and operational pressures at RCEs and CSAP; \$12.3 million for NSTU medical/dental premiums due to rate increases, number of teachers and increased usage; \$5.2 million for teachers' pension plan matching contributions; \$2.1 million in teachers salary accrual; and \$2.1 million for the pre-primary program.

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Education and Early Childhood Development revenue, fees and recoveries were \$44.6 million lower than estimate primarily due to cash flow changes in federal funding received from the (CWELCCA), funding to be carried forward into 2025/2026, and a reduction in Mi'kmaw recoveries based on reduced rates. These decreases are partially offset by increased funding received through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), relating to projects that were carried into this fiscal from the prior year, and increased funding received under the Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on Minority Language Education and Second Official Language Instruction.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

Education and Early Childhood Development TCA purchases were \$4.2 million lower than estimate primarily related to cashflow changes on new school projects, sourcing delays for modular projects, project delays on capital facility upgrades, and a cancelled IT project being written off. These decreases were partially offset by an increase related to the final year of carry-over of ICIP projects that had not been budgeted.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

FTE variance is caused by factors such as temporary vacancies and positions eliminated through efficiency gains.

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Appendix: Disclosures of Wrongdoing received by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for the fiscal year 2024-25

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development under section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2024-25
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	n/a
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing.	n/a