



## Sector Call - Questions and Answers from Winter 2026 Sessions

Wednesday, January 28, 2026 from 1:00 – 2:00 pm and 6:00 – 7:00 pm

**Note:** Questions do not appear in the order they were asked but have been grouped by agenda/content theme. Questions and answers have been edited for clarity.

### **Operating Funding Model & \$10/day Average (Lead: Pamela AuCoin, Executive Director)**

**Q: Can we have an additional sector call after the provincial and federal ministers meeting to discuss CWELCCA?**

A: We recognize the importance of consistent communication and understand that the sector is looking for updates. Currently, we do not have any new information to share. We will continue to actively work with our federal partners and commit to providing sector-wide communication when additional details become available.

**Q: What changes to the Canada-Wide agreement are being considered to support the needs of the sector in Nova Scotia, and will these include funding for expansion in private centres?**

A: The 2026-2031 Canada-Wide agreement was signed in March 2026. The agreement supports maintenance of initiatives implemented to date for the existing early learning and child care system. Next steps are for the province to negotiate an action plan with our federal partners, as part of that work we will determine how the agreement will be executed. This will include exploration of how private centres will be considered for future space expansion.

**Q: When can we expect the new Canada-Wide Action Plan?**

A: We continue to work collaboratively with our federal partners on the development of an action plan related to 2026-2031 federal early learning and child care funding. The details of the action plan are contingent on the outcome of discussions with the federal government regarding funding and associated challenges, and negotiation of various initiatives. There is no set timeline for completion at this time.

**Q: With the new 2026–2031 five-year agreement, is there any concern that existing benefits or supports may not continue beyond the agreement term?**

A: The principles of CWELCCA are enshrined in federal legislation, which commits to ongoing funding.

**Q: How was the current average fee calculated, and what components were included in this calculation? For example, does it factor in subsidy payments?**

A: The current average daily fee is based on the out-of-pocket costs paid by families for regulated early learning and child care for children under age 6. The calculation considers:

- the fees charged by regulated programs for children under 6, including centre-based child care, family home child care, NS Before-and-After program, and Pre-Primary,
- how often those fees were paid throughout the year,
- any fee reductions applied,
- and subsidy payments that lower costs further for eligible families.

Though fees are frozen, they are at rates that have been set by individual operators with no standardized rate structure. The average fee presented may not reflect the actual amount a family pays in a specific program, particularly those where fees have been historically higher.

**Q: When can parents expect the next fee reduction?**

A: We are working closely with our federal partners to determine a sustainable path forward for our Early Learning and Child Care system. As part of this work, we are exploring how affordability for families could potentially be improved in the future. At this time, we are not able to commit to any additional fee reductions.



## **Funding Agreements 2026-2027 (Lead: Ryan DeCoste, Service Provider Funding & Affordability Supports)**

**Q: Can you explain what you mean by deposits? Registration or enrollment fees weren't allowed previously.**

A: Deposits are fees charged to families to secure a space and applied to the first month's fees after care begins. If a family decides not to take the space, and provides reasonable notice, they must be refunded.

Regarding registration and waitlist fees, those were prohibited in recent years as they are not consistent with affordability initiatives. They create a financial barrier to child care for some families.

## **ECE Retro Payments (Lead: Ryan DeCoste, Service Provider Funding & Affordability Supports)**

**Q: Will operators incur any costs related to retroactive pay, or will this be covered through QIG or other funding supports?**

A: We will be getting clarification on cost impact to operators and will share more information once details are finalized.

**Q: When is the retro pay expected to be disbursed?**

A: The Department is working with its government colleagues to determine how the administrative directive applies to the early childhood education sector. We will share more information, including a timeline, as soon as we have it.

**Q: Will the wage scale be addressed to reflect long term employees?**

A: The wage scale has five steps for each of the various Positions/Levels. Employees "top out" after they reach the 5th step (with further increases only possible through economic increases or changing positions that move them to a higher classification on the scale). There is no intention to add additional steps to the scale.

## ELCC Quality Framework - Sector Development & Partnerships (Lead: Hoa Truong-White, Director of Quality, Innovation and Professional Learning)

**Q: Does the Department have a definition of ‘quality’ that can be shared with the sector to ensure everyone has a consistent understanding?**

A: The department defines high-quality early learning and child care through four key areas:

1. **Leadership:** Children are cared for in positive, well-managed learning environments where educators are valued and recognized.
2. **Staffing:** Quality includes having qualified educators who are supported to engage in ongoing professional learning.
3. **Learning Environments:** Children learn through play in environments that reflect and celebrate the cultures and identities of all children and families.
4. **Relationships:** High-quality programs ensure children and families feel welcomed and build genuine, positive relationships with educators, peers, and the broader community.

Together, these elements create the foundation of a high-quality system that supports children’s development and family well-being.

The City of Toronto also provides useful guidelines for specific domains of quality for different age groups (e.g., infant, toddler, preschool, outdoor environment, etc.). The domains of quality outlined in these guidelines are used in the [Assessment for Quality Improvement \(AQI\)](#) tool and are useful for talking about quality, even if you are not participating in AQI.

**Q: As more centers adopt the pyramid model, how will we address potential shortages in coaching capacity? Could we engage APP graduates to serve as internal coaches to support the expanded rollout?**

A: As centres reach Pyramid Model fidelity, they require less active coaching, creating room for new centres to participate. We have also shifted our approach to Pyramid Model coaching to build internal coaching capacity. This means that an educator, Inclusion Coordinator or other pedagogical leader, could be trained as an internal coach.

**Q: When can we expect progress on the working group or inclusion strategies identified in the 2023 Action Plan?**

A: Inclusion initiatives are being considered as part of the new Operational Funding Model.

**Q: In the sector call, when referencing 70% of trained ECEs, does that percentage include entry-level educators?**

A: No. Entry-level staff are not counted in the 70%. The figure covers Early Childhood Educators with Level 2 or 3 training (diploma or degree), including those in Pre-Primary.

**Q: Will there be another offering of the financial training for operators? My understanding was that the initial session could only accommodate 8–12 participants.**

A: We are exploring options for future offerings and will communicate with the sector when these sessions become available.

## **ELCC Quality Framework - Quality Assurance Specialists (Lead: Krystal Therien, Director of Operations)**

**Q: Under the revised QAS approach, will the evaluation of qualified ECEs be carried out by specialists who may not possess the early childhood training typically required to work in the field?**

A: We rely on operators, i.e., the employer, to ensure they have high quality employees who meet classification and staffing requirements. The Department ensures training standards of the post-secondary programs meet requirements, and that there are enough ECE graduates to meet workforce needs.

Most management level staff, like the Director and Assistant Director, are at least a level 2, with the training and experience needed to identify where gaps in employee practice may exist and coach/mentor for development when needed.

Our team will use tools, like AQI, to assess centre-based quality. Our team includes those with a variety of backgrounds, including Early Childhood Educators. We look forward to sharing more about our approach to quality over the coming months!

**Q: Can ECEs reach out directly to the QAS assigned to their centre?**

A: ECEs should be talking to their employer and centre based pedagogical leaders - usually the Inclusion Coordinator, Assistant Director, or Director. QA Specialists are a resource for centre-based leadership staff and available to provide guidance, offer support, and connect them with other resources as needed.

**Q: Will the Quality Growth Plan questions be aligned with the Early Learning Curriculum Framework or with the AQI? If they are based on the AQI, when can Centre Directors expect to receive additional information?**

A: They are aligned with the Early Learning Curriculum Framework. Centres that participated in the AQI pilot have the option to set their quality goals based on AQI domains.

**Spaces update & Change request process (Lead: Krystal Therien, Director of Operations)**

**Q: Are not-for-profit (NFP) transition spaces considered part of the new space-creation totals?**

A: No, NFP transition spaces are not counted as new spaces. We track them to show the distribution of not-for-profit versus for-profit spaces, but transitions do not contribute to new space-creation totals.

**Q: Are NS BAP spaces considered regulated childcare spaces, and are they included in the total number of childcare spaces reported?**

A: Yes, NS BAP spaces are considered regulated as they operate under policies of EECD although they are not licensed. They have always been included in our space-creation numbers as part of the 9,500-space target. For federal reporting, only spaces created after the agreement was signed count toward the space-creation target. Our progress is posted online at [www.childcarenovascotia.ca](http://www.childcarenovascotia.ca).

**Q: What mechanisms are in place to ensure that these spaces are filled by children aged 5 and under? Given that Pre-Primary was not included under CWELCC for space or funding purposes, how is the approach different for NS BAP?**

A: NS BAP is a very important part of the ELCC landscape for families. BAP providers are required to prioritize spaces for those in PP and Primary programs.

**Q: Is funding for NS BAP spaces limited to children who are 6 years old and under?**

A: We rely on individual operators to prioritize their enrollment to serve children in pre-primary and primary. When this isn't possible, older students enroll. NS BAP funding is almost entirely from provincial dollars.

**Q: Could you clarify why certain projects are not being approved despite the substantial work completed to develop additional childcare spaces?**

A: As a result of approved growth and ongoing fiscal commitments required to sustain spaces, federal and provincial funding is now fully allocated to support spaces that are operating or under construction. We appreciate partners who continue to bring forward expansion opportunities and will revisit requests should future funding be made available.

## Other

**Q: Given the recent changes, could we receive updated information on the current teams and projects?**

A: We are working on updates to our ELCC website. Stay tuned for more information in the coming months.

**Q: Is the working group still active, and how does its role differ from the engagement table?**

A: Yes, there are active working groups that are convened on an ad hoc basis to provide more detailed input on various initiatives, like the funding model. The broader Minister's Engagement Table provides input on many initiatives in quarterly meetings.



**Q: What strategies or incentives are being put in place to retain educators? There appears to be a strong focus on recruitment, but retention is equally important.**

A: Retention is a key priority, as reflected by investments in wages, pension, benefits, professional learning, and pathways for career advancement.