

# NEWS RELEASE

## Spending on public schools in Atlantic provinces on the rise; Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island see highest per-student spending increases in Canada

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For immediate release

**HALIFAX**— Per-student spending (inflation-adjusted) on public schools has increased in every Atlantic province between 2012-13 and 2019-20, before COVID-related spending began, with the biggest increases in the country occurring in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, finds a new study by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

Specifically, the study found that per student spending (inflation-adjusted) in public schools in Atlantic Canada increased by 1.5 per cent in New Brunswick, the smallest increase of any of the provinces, 17.5 per cent in neighbouring Nova Scotia, 17.2 per cent in Prince Edward Island, and 7.6 per cent in Newfoundland and Labrador.

“Contrary to what we often hear, public school spending is on the rise across the Atlantic provinces, even though there are fewer students to educate in some provinces,” said Jake Fuss, associate director of fiscal studies for the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada, 2022 Edition*.

The study finds that Newfoundland & Labrador and New Brunswick were the only two provinces in Canada that experienced declines in public school enrolment between 2012/13 to 2019/20, the most recent year of available Statistics Canada data. Changes in enrolment necessarily affect per student spending levels.

Newfoundland and Labrador experienced the largest decline in enrolment among the provinces at 5.8 per cent, while enrolment in New Brunswick fell by 2.1 per cent. Nova Scotia had the smallest increase in enrolment among provinces with growth of only 0.5 per cent, while Prince Edward Island’s enrolment grew by 1.6 per cent.

Meanwhile, nationally, student enrolment in public schools grew by 4.1 per cent between 2012/13 and 2019/20.

Newfoundland and Labrador went from having the fifth highest per-student spending level in the country to the highest over the eight-year period; New Brunswick maintained its spot as the second highest per-student spender in 2019/20, while P.E.I. moved up from the ninth highest per-student spender to fifth highest and Nova Scotia climbed from the seventh highest per-student spender in 2012/13 to fourth highest in 2019/20.

After adjusting for inflation and enrolment changes, Nova Scotia saw the highest increase in per-student spending among all provinces over this period, from \$12,773 to \$15,014—an increase of 17.5 per cent. Prince Edward Island saw the next-highest increase in per-student spending, rising from \$12,070 to \$14,141, or 17.2 per cent.

The national average for per-student spending in 2019/20 was \$13,794, an increase of 1.4 per cent from 2012/13.

“In critical policy discussions, especially those that affect our children’s education, it’s important to understand exactly what’s happening with spending on public schools, where the majority of kids are educated,” said Alex Whalen, a senior economist with the Fraser Institute’s Atlantic Canada Prosperity Initiative.

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