

NEWS RELEASE

Independent school enrolment in Atlantic Canada lowest nationwide, but on the rise

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For Immediate Release

HALIFAX—Atlantic Canadian provinces have the lowest enrolment in independent schools—as a share of total enrolment—across Canada, but it has increased over a recent 19-year period, according to a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“For their children’s education, parents across Atlantic Canada are increasingly choosing options outside the government school system,” said Michael Zwaagstra, senior fellow with the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Where Our Students Are Educated: Measuring Student Enrolment in Canada, 2022*.

The study finds that, while the total percentage of students enrolled in independent schools is the lowest across Canada, independent school enrolment—as a share of total enrolment—is on the rise in all four Atlantic Canadian provinces.

From 2000/01 to 2019/20—the most recent year of available comparable data for all provinces—the share of independent school enrolment increased from 1.6 per cent to 3.1 per cent in Nova Scotia, 0.9 per cent to 2.2 per cent in Prince Edward Island, 0.8 per cent to 1.6 per cent in Newfoundland and Labrador, and from 0.7 per cent to 1.0 per cent in New Brunswick.

Across Canada, the share of students enrolled in independent schools in 2019/20 ranged from 13.2 per cent in B.C. to 1.0 per cent in New Brunswick.

Atlantic Canada, along with Ontario, are the only provinces not to support parents who choose independent schools. All four western provinces as well as Quebec provide partial funding to independent schools to lower the cost to parents of having their children attend independent schools.

“While education is funded and delivered differently across the provinces, the evidence is clear—parents in Atlantic Canada are increasingly looking to independent schools for more choice in how their children are educated,” Zwaagstra said.

Independent school enrolment, as a share of total enrolment, by province, 2019/20

BC	13.2%	Quebec	11.7%
Alberta	4.3%	New Brunswick	1.0%
Saskatchewan	2.8%	Nova Scotia	3.1%
Manitoba	8.0%	P.E.I.	2.2%
Ontario	6.9%	NFLD	1.6%

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