

# NEWS RELEASE



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

August 29, 2023

For immediate release

**HALIFAX**—Per-student spending (inflation-adjusted) on public schools has increased in every Atlantic province between 2012-13 and 2020-21, with the biggest increases in the country occurring in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island after Quebec, finds a new study published 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 0.1 per cent in New Brunswick, the smallest increase of any of the provinces, 0.7 per cent in Newfoundland and Labrador, 19.0 per cent in Prince Edward Island, and the largest in the region in Nova Scotia at 26.9 per cent.

“Contrary to what we often hear, spending is on the rise in public schools across Atlantic Canada after adjusting for changes in the number of students and inflation,” said Michael Zwaagstra, senior fellow the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada, 2023 Edition*.

The study finds that all Atlantic Canada but Prince Edward Island, experienced declines in public school enrolment between 2012/13 to 2019/20, the most recent year of available data from Statistics Canada. Changes in enrolment necessarily affect per student spending levels.

Newfoundland and Labrador experienced the largest decline in enrolment among the provinces at 6.7 per cent, while enrolment in New Brunswick fell by 3.8 per cent and in Nova Scotia by 0.9 per cent. Prince Edward Island was the only Atlantic Province to see a slight increase in enrolment by 1.2 per cent.

Meanwhile, nationally, student enrolment in public schools grew by 2.7 per cent between 2012/13 and 2020/21.

Nova Scotia went from the seventh highest per-student spender to the highest over the nine-year period; P.E.I. moved up from the second lowest per-student spender to fifth highest. In contrast, New Brunswick declined modestly from the second highest per-student spender in 2012/13 to fourth highest in 2020/21, while Newfoundland and Labrador dropped from fifth highest per-student spender to eighth highest among the provinces.

After adjusting for inflation and enrolment changes, Nova Scotia saw the highest increase in per-student (inflation-adjusted) spending among provinces, second only to Quebec, over this period, from \$13,292 to \$16,873. Prince Edward Island saw the next-highest increase in per-student spending, rising from \$12,683 to \$15,096.

Nationally, inflation adjusted per student spending on public schools increased from \$14,057 to \$15,221 (8.3 per cent) over that same time period.

“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, associate director of the Fraser Institute’s Atlantic Canada Prosperity Initiative.

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Michael Zwaagstra, Senior Fellow  
Fraser Institute

*To arrange media interviews or for more information, please contact:*

Drue MacPherson  
Fraser Institute  
Office: (604) 688-0221 ext. 721  
[drue.macpherson@fraserinstitute.org](mailto:drue.macpherson@fraserinstitute.org)

Follow the Fraser Institute on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

The Fraser Institute is an independent Canadian public policy research and educational organization with offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal and ties to a global network of think-tanks in 87 countries. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for Canadians, their families and future generations by studying, measuring and broadly communicating the effects of government policies, entrepreneurship and choice on their well-being. To protect the Institute's independence, it does not accept grants from governments or contracts for research. Visit [www.fraserinstitute.org](http://www.fraserinstitute.org)