

NEWS RELEASE

Education spending on public schools rises in the Maritimes; Nova Scotia sees highest per-student spending increase in the country

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For immediate release

HALIFAX—Despite common misperceptions, education spending on public schools in Maritime Canada has increased over the most recent five-year period of available data, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Contrary to the popular narrative that education spending in public schools has been cut in the Maritime provinces, spending increases exceed what was required to account for enrolment changes and inflation in all three provinces,” said Paige MacPherson, associate director of education policy at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada, Fall 2021*.

After accounting for enrolment and inflation, the study finds that from 2014/15 to 2018/19, Nova Scotia saw Canada’s highest increase in per-student spending at 9.2 per cent.

Prince Edward Island saw Canada’s third-highest increase in per-student spending at 5.1 per cent, and New Brunswick’s was fourth-highest in Canada at 3 per cent.

All three Maritime provinces exceeded the national average increase of 2.6 per cent over the same period. Newfoundland & Labrador, however, saw a 9.9 per cent decrease in per student inflation-adjusted education spending in public schools.

In terms of per-student spending in public schools as of 2018-19, New Brunswick had the highest level at \$15,486, followed by Nova Scotia at \$14,910, PEI at \$14,008, then Newfoundland & Labrador at \$12,828. The national average was \$14,070.

Student enrolment in public schools fell in half of the Atlantic provinces, with Newfoundland & Labrador experiencing the largest decrease at 4.4 per cent and New Brunswick’s enrolment decreasing by 1 per cent. PEI’s enrolment grew by 2.1 per cent, while Nova Scotia’s grew by 1 per cent.

The study also finds that compensation (salaries, wages, fringe benefits, and pensions) contributed the most to the total growth in spending in the Maritime provinces.

“Before parents and taxpayers can begin to assess value for money in education, it’s crucial that they understand how much is being spent, and exactly where these dollars are going.”

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