



Nova Scotia  
Physiotherapy  
Association

## **Physiotherapists advocate for fair compensation and pay grade reclassification in the Nova Scotia Health Authority**

November 2, 2023

*This position paper was created by Tara Moore, member of the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union and Nova Scotia Physiotherapy Association Board member. The Nova Scotia Physiotherapy Association stands behind its members working in the public system in their ask for fair compensation and pay reclassification. Fair compensation will improve recruitment and retention efforts and improve access to healthcare for Nova Scotians.*

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## BACKGROUND

Physiotherapists play an indispensable role within the Nova Scotia Health Authority, serving as movement specialists in various critical capacities. Our contributions include aiding in acute care bed flow through early mobilization, maximizing function and mobility for complex discharge planning in inpatient rehabilitation, and promoting physical activity in community programs. Additionally, we are instrumental in educating and empowering Nova Scotians by adhering to best practice guidelines to prevent comorbidities and secondary complications.

In 2008, the educational requirements for obtaining a practicing license for physiotherapists in Canada underwent a transformation, transitioning from a Bachelor of Science (BSc) to a Master of Science (MSc). However, the Nova Scotia Health Authority has yet to acknowledge this increase in education within the job descriptions and pay grade classifications for physiotherapists unlike a number of Canadian provinces. This discrepancy places an added financial burden on practitioners and affects recruitment efforts.

## OUR ASK

A pay grade reclassification for Physiotherapists within the Nova Scotia Health Authority needs to be included as part of the negotiations for an updated collective agreement.

## PHYSIOTHERAPISTS WORKING IN NOVA SCOTIA HEALTH AUTHORITY RECEIVE LESS THAN THEIR COLLEAGUES WITH SIMILAR EDUCATION

When comparing pay grade classifications for allied health colleagues who also require a master's degree, it becomes evident that physiotherapists in the Nova Scotia Health Authority are at a disadvantage. Figure 1 illustrates the starting salaries, highlighting that physiotherapists receive less than their counterparts with similar educational requirements in Local 100's and Local 20's collective agreements who have a 'Masters' educational recruitment in the job description.

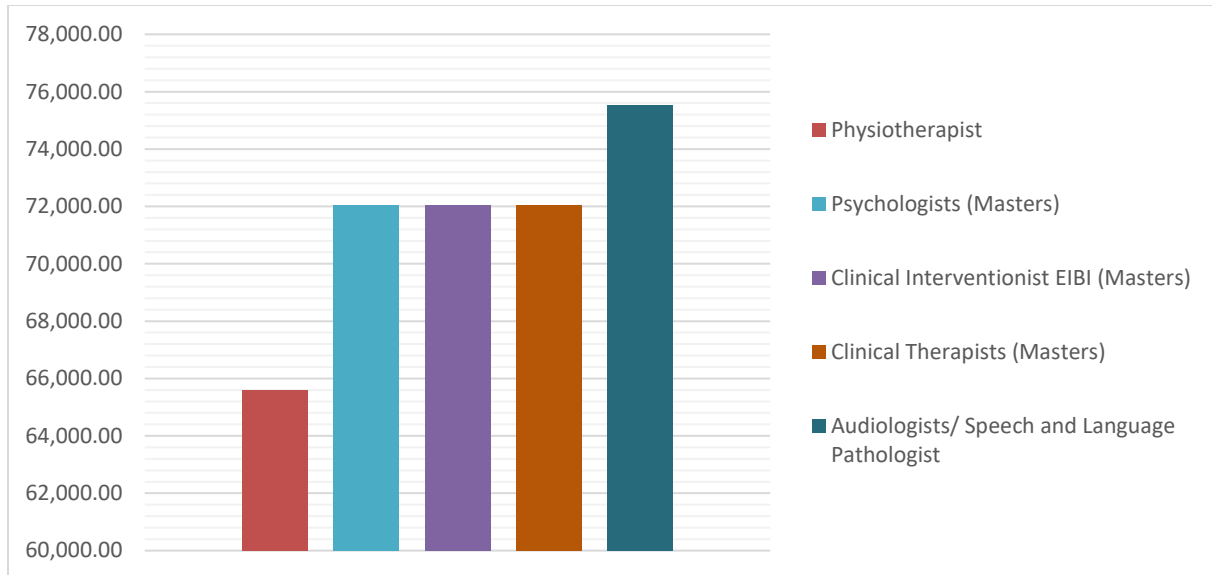


Figure 1: Starting Salaries Comparison per Job Title

Starting Salaries for Physiotherapists, Psychologists (Masters), Clinical Interventionists (Masters), Clinical Therapists (Masters) is based on the collective agreement between the NSHA (central zone) and the Nova Scotia Council of Health Care Unions (November 1, 2020- October 2023 with starting salaries as of October 2023. Audiologists & Speech language pathologists' starting salary as per the available Local 20's Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centers collective agreement which expired in March 2021.

## PHYSIOTHERAPISTS WORKING IN NOVA SCOTIA HEALTH RECEIVE LESS THAN OTHER PHYSIOTHERAPISTS WORKING IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH SECTOR ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The pay gap for physiotherapists in Nova Scotia becomes more pronounced when looking at nationwide 2023 public health sector comparisons, as shown in Figure 2. It reveals that Nova Scotia lags behind other provinces in terms of salaries for public health physiotherapists. Excluding the outlier of Quebec with a pay grade scale gap of \$25/hour, Nova Scotia's starting salary is second lowest following Prince Edward Island. Additionally, Figure 3 demonstrates that the median hourly rate for working physiotherapists in Nova Scotia is the fourth lowest, placing them below the national average based on 2022 data collected.

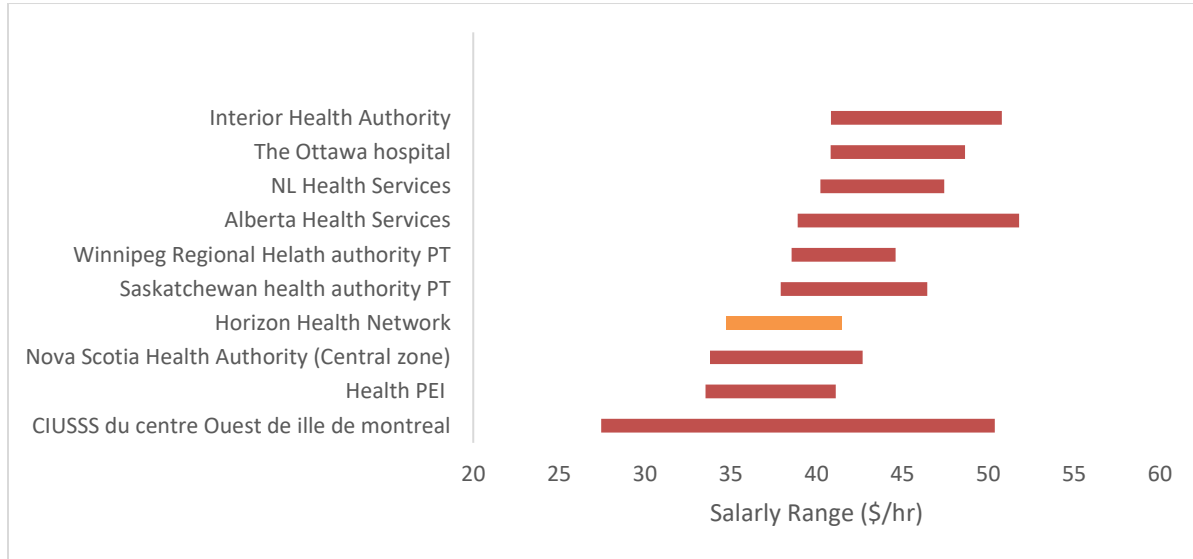


Figure 2: Canadian public health salary ranges based on 2023 job postings.

Salaries in Canadian dollars for public sector physiotherapists per province based on available job postings in 2023. Posting health authorities or hospitals are located on the left of the graph. The observed bar represents the minimum and maximum pay scales for physiotherapists. Interior Health authority (British Columbia), The Ottawa Hospital (Ontario), NL Health services (Newfoundland), Alberta Health Services (Alberta), Saskatchewan Health Authority (Saskatchewan), Horizon Health Network (New Brunswick), Health PEI (Prince Edward Island), Winnipeg Regional Health authority (Manitoba), CIUSSS du center Ouest de ille de Montreal (Quebec), Nova Scotia Health Authority (Central Zone) (Nova Scotia). Post postings details for hourly pay rates under references.

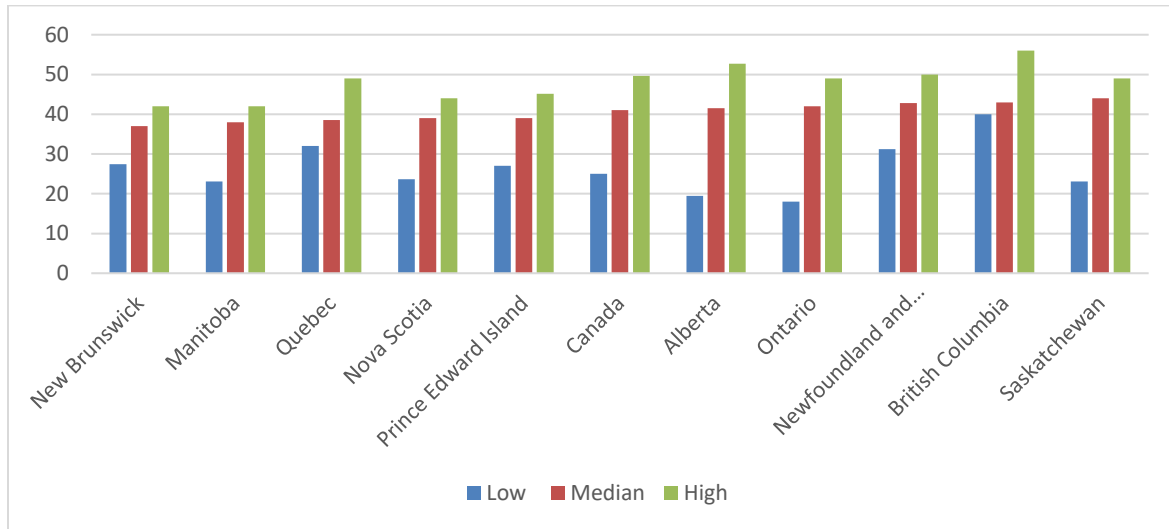


Figure 3: Average low, median and high hourly rates of physiotherapists working in Canadian Provinces.

Data was collected from the Government of Canada Job Bank based on the 2016 version of the National Occupational Classification (NOC) and updated on November 16, 2022. Data was not included for the Nunavut, Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories.



## WHILE SALARIES ARE LOWER, COST OF LIVING IS NOT

When comparing the cost of living for Nova Scotia to the rest of Canadian Provinces in Figure 4, it can be seen that Nova Scotia has the third highest cost of living at \$2727 for a single person following Ontario at \$2900 and British Columbia at \$2872. Figure 2 and 3 showcase a higher hourly rate of pay in Ontario and British Columbia compared to Nova Scotia. Prince Edward Island however has the same median hourly rate as Nova Scotia, at \$39/hour seen in Figure 3, and comparable public sector physiotherapy pay scale, seen in Figure 2, while cost of living average for a single person household in Prince Edward Island is \$2291, much less than the cost of living in Nova Scotia.

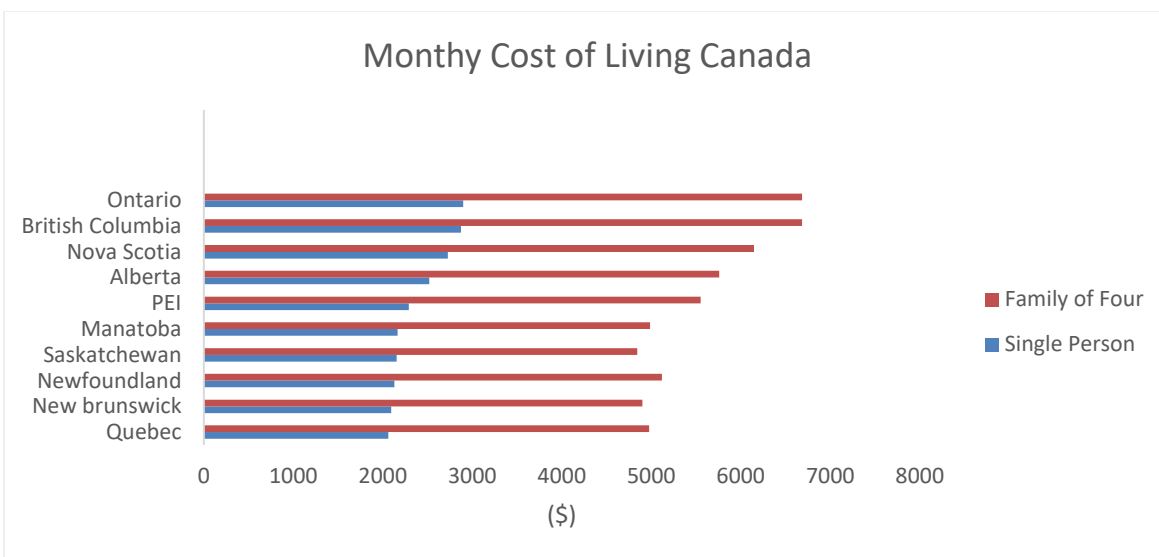


Figure 4: Average cost of living in Canadian Provinces 2023.

Average cost of living in CAN dollars for provinces of Canada collected via <https://livingcost.org/>. Blue line represents average cost of living per single person households, while the orange demonstrates cost of living averages for a four people family household. Living Cost is a crowdsourced database comparing the cost of living for 9294 cities and 197 countries globally.

## THERE HAS BEEN A DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS PER CAPITA IN NOVA SCOTIA, AND AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS WORKING IN THE PRIVATE HEALTH SECTOR

The lower salaries, combined with high taxes and overall cost of living make it unsurprising that physiotherapists may choose to relocate. This is reflected in Figure 5, which displays Nova Scotia has the lowest number of physiotherapists per 100000 population in 2021. As well, it is important to highlight that Nova Scotia is the only province with available data with a declining trend in the number of physiotherapists per population from 2012 to 2021, further exacerbating the healthcare system's strain.

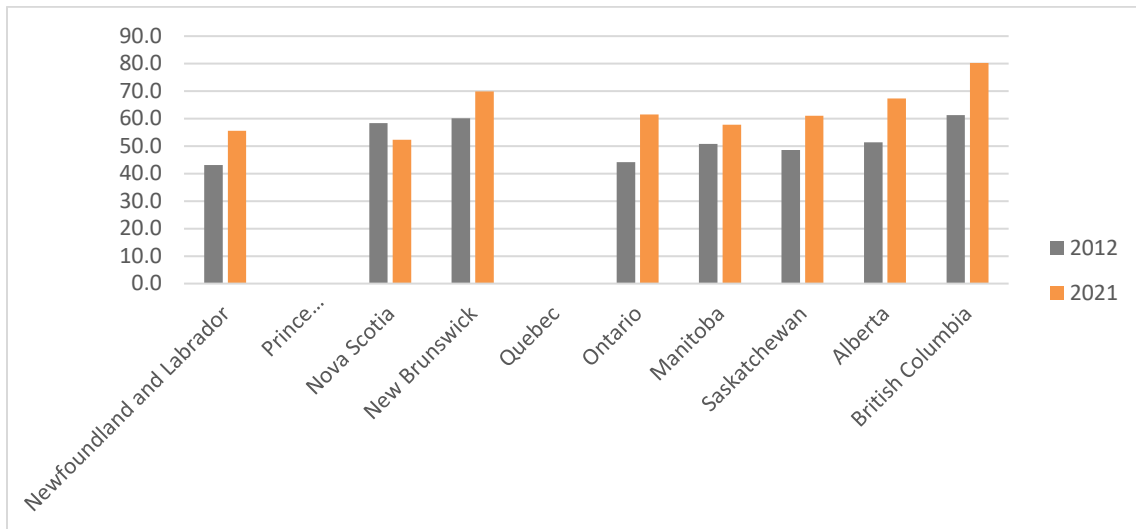


Figure 5: Physiotherapists in direct care per 100,000 population, by jurisdiction, provinces with available data 2012 to 2021.

Canadian Institute for Health Information. *Physiotherapists in Canada, 2021 — Data Tables*. Ottawa, ON: CIHI; 2022.

It was reported by the Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists in their 2022 Annual report that there are more physiotherapists in Nova Scotia that work in a private practice setting over public practice. Between 2018 and 2020, there was a 5.9% increase in physiotherapists working in private practice, but in the past 2 years that has increased again by a further 29%. Fair compensation needs to be considered as a key recruitment and retention factor for physiotherapists working in the public sector.



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## SUMMARY

Physiotherapists are invaluable members of the healthcare system, providing direct patient access and playing a crucial role in patient care. We are often the first point of contact for Nova Scotians seeking healthcare assistance. In acute care settings, we contribute significantly to early mobilization, education, and discharge planning, impacting bed flow and overall healthcare efficiency. We are advocating for the reclassification of physiotherapists to a Masters level education within the Nova Scotia Health Authority, accompanied by a pay grade reclassification to align with our interprofessional allied health team members. This adjustment would establish a competitive hourly rate that matches other Canadian provinces and accounts for the cost of living in Nova Scotia. Fair compensation would ultimately improve recruitment and retention within the profession and ease the burden on the healthcare system.

Sincerely,

Tara Moore, PT  
NSPA Board Member  
NSGEU Member

Monica MacDonald, PT  
President  
Nova Scotia Physiotherapy Association

Patricia Connors  
Executive Director  
Nova Scotia Physiotherapy Association



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## REFERENCES

*About data, rankings and US.* Livingcost.org. (2023, August 8). <https://livingcost.org/about>

Canadian Institute for Health Information. *Physiotherapists in Canada, 2021 — Data Tables.* Ottawa, ON: CIHI; 2022.

Canada, E. and S. D. (2023, September 19). *Physiotherapist in Canada: Wages - job bank.* Physiotherapist in Canada | Wages - Job Bank. <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/wages-occupation/18214/ca>

### Job Postings:

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority: Requisition ID 346818.

Nova Scotia Health Authority: Req ID: 167411

CIUSSS du centre Ouest de ille de Montreal: Reference Number CAT4-23-0206

Health PEI: Posting ID 155738

Saskatchewan Health Authority: Rq-00014260

Alberta Health Services: Posting ID ALB00386323

NL Health Services: 55336RP2

The Ottawa Hospital: Job ID 96541

Inferior Health Authority: Competition 01936140

Registrar's Report - Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists Annual Report 2022.

[https://nsphysio.com/images/Annual\\_Reports/ANNUAL\\_REPORT\\_2022.pdf](https://nsphysio.com/images/Annual_Reports/ANNUAL_REPORT_2022.pdf)