

We, the Nova Scotia Society of Occupational Therapists, stand with publicly employed occupational therapists advocating for job reclassification and fair compensation.



December 2023

Background:

Occupational therapists are self-regulated health professionals who support clients to participate in the activities they want, need and are expected to do in the course of a day. They are crucial members of service delivery models, being key players in reducing hospital readmissions, supporting patients in being discharged in a timely manner, and supporting clients to remain safe in their homes. Occupational therapists work with clients through the entire life span, including on an inpatient, outpatient and community basis. Occupational therapists are involved in direct client care and indirect care through system/environmental changes. Occupational therapists are educated in universal design, to ensure that health care and communities are accessible to all.

In 2009, the Occupational Therapy programs across Canada became a Masters Program, with graduates receiving a MSc instead of a BSc. At that time, the competencies of an occupational therapist upon graduating from an occupational therapy program changed, yet their pay upon entering the workforce did not. As per our regulations, all occupational therapists are expected to hold the same level of competency, so for occupational therapists who graduated prior to that time, they have years experience, and have completed continuing competency. Unlike other Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia has yet to reclassify occupational therapists as Masters educated, creating a significant pay discrepancy between occupational therapists and other masters trained health professionals in Nova Scotia and occupational therapists in other provinces.

We asked Occupational Therapists what their biggest concern was that needed to be addressed at 2023 contract bargaining through a survey in 2022. Responses included: pay equity, occupational therapists being able to work to their full scope of practice and other.

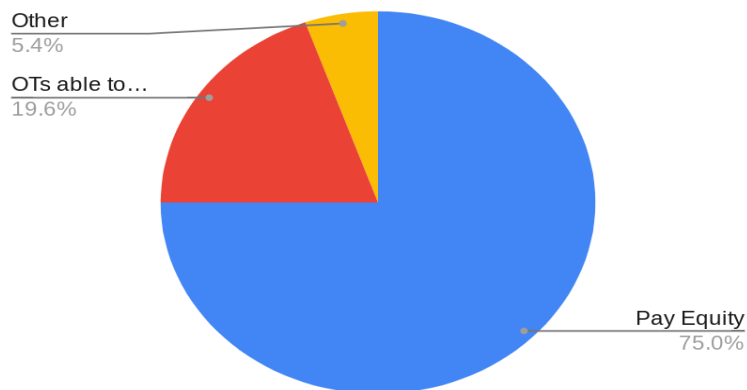


Figure 1. Responses to a survey implemented by NSSOT in 2022, in preparation for the Collective Agreement expiring in 2023. Occupational therapists were asked what they felt the biggest issue was that needed to be addressed by their union (NSGEU, Unifor, CUPE).

Being reclassified to match the salary of other Masters level trained health professionals:

Occupational therapy is a masters level program in Canada, yet occupational therapists are paid at bachelor levels classification with Nova Scotia Health and the IWK. Occupational therapists despite having a masters degree are not paid on par with other health professionals holding a masters degree. Occupational therapists are required to complete continuing competency hours, and often complete additional training and courses to become certified to provide specific services, yet they do not see an increase in compensation for these additional services either.

Salary of Different Masters Educated Health Professionals

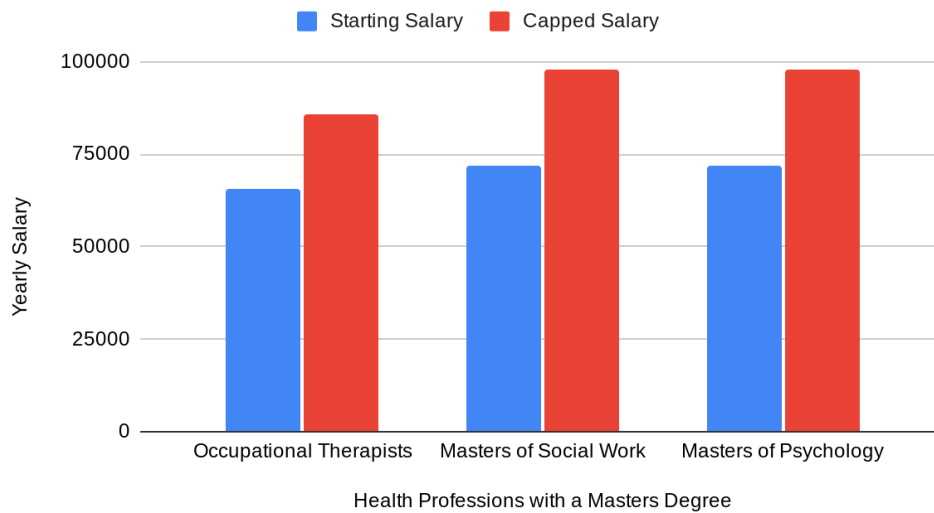


Figure 2: A comparison of salaries between different masters educated health professions within the now expired Collective Agreement between Nova Scotia Health and The Nova Scotia Council of Health Care Unions

Clinical Interventionists (EIBI), Clinical Therapists (Masters), Health Care Social Workers (Masters), Psychologist (Masters) are all classified together under the same (now expired) pay scale of \$36.95- 50.28, yet a Masters of Occupational Therapy completing the job demands in the same domain of practice (mental health and addictions), and has the same educational qualifications is paid \$34.64- 43.96.

Occupational therapists in Nova Scotia are NOT paid on par with other occupational therapists across Canada

Currently, occupational therapists in Nova Scotia are the **lowest** paid occupational therapists in Canada. Our cap out salary is significantly lower than other provinces, so by 5 years into practice, other occupational therapists are making more than our occupational therapists are making after 25+ years. Both Newfoundland and Labrador, and New Brunswick pay their occupational therapists 5-10 more dollars per hour than Nova Scotia. How do we recruit and retain occupational therapists in Nova Scotia when other provinces, including our neighbouring provinces offer such a higher pay.

Hourly Wage Per Province

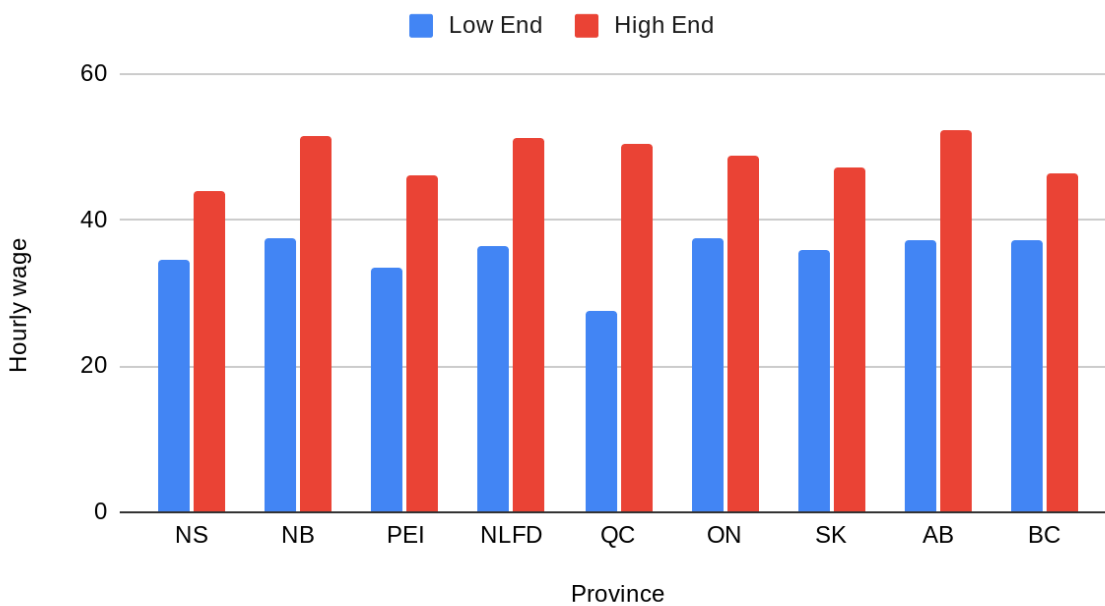


Figure 3: Occupational therapists in Nova Scotia are paid significantly less than occupational therapists in other provinces. Manitoba and the Territories were left out of this comparison as they do not have current available data. A more comprehensive breakdown of pay can be found in Appendix 1.

The cost of living in Nova Scotia is among the highest in Canada

It is difficult to keep up with inflation. It is exceptionally difficult, when occupational therapists in Nova Scotia are paid the least in Canada and are trying to keep up with the rising cost of living. Publicly employed occupational therapists are considering and taking on private practice work in order to make ends meet.

Cost of Living in Canadian Capitals

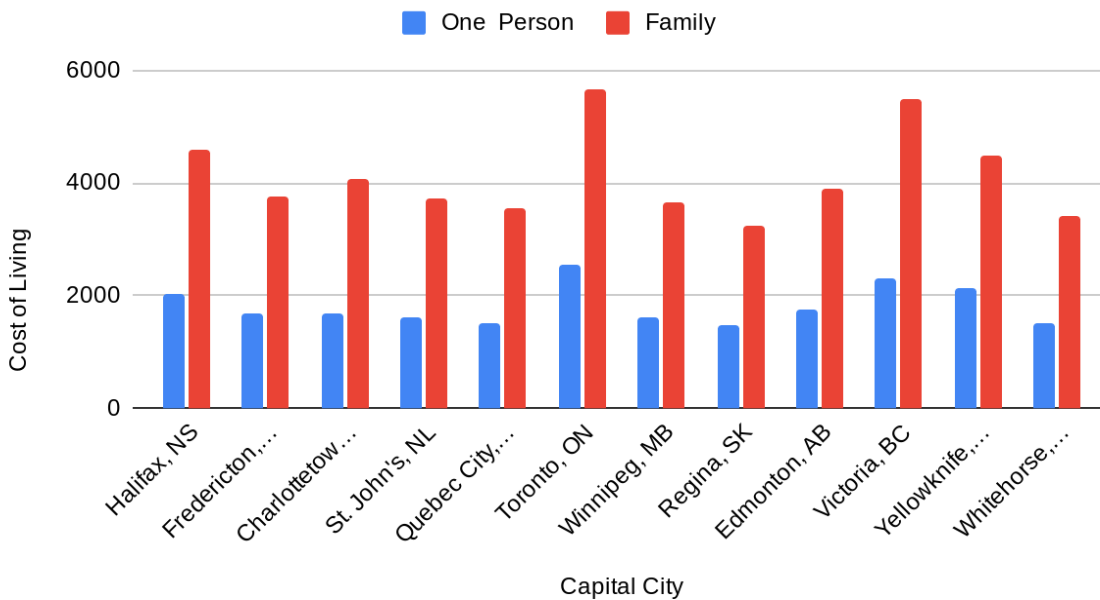


Figure 4: The cost of living between Canadian Capitals were identified using <https://livingcost.org/cost>. Nunavut was left out of this comparison as data was not available on this site.

Where do we need occupational therapists in Healthcare:

- Many patients MUST have an occupational therapist discharge signature prior to be released from hospital
- Occupational therapists are involved in determining needs for long term care and providing services related to equipment, dementia care, client and staff safety and would care
- Occupational therapists are involved in ensuring home safety for folks who want to age in place, including fall risks assessments
- The demands for occupational therapists with students is increasing as we see a higher prevalence of ADHD, learning disabilities and the needs for school supports
- Occupational therapists are a crucial members of all mental health programs

Due to lack of fair pay for occupational therapists in Nova Scotia, there is:

- Increasing amount of occupational therapists transitioning to private practice
- Occupational therapists leaving the province
- Occupational therapists taking on non- occupational therapy roles in order to receive fair compensation
- Occupational therapists are retiring early to lack of job satisfaction
- An increasing number of vacant occupational therapy positions
- Long wait lists for occupational therapy services

Appendix A: Occupational Therapy Pay Scales

Table One: Atlantic Provinces Pay Scales

Province	Low End*	High End**	Scaling***
Nova Scotia	<p>Current: \$32.81, as of Nov 1st 2022 this will change to \$33.30 The baseline will see another slight increase in Oct 31st 2023 to \$34.64</p> <p>Team Lead: Current: \$36.77 (Capped at 25+) As of Nov 1st 2022 \$37.32 As of Oct 31st, 2023- \$37.70</p>	<p>Current: \$42.88 (capped out at 25+ years) as of Nov 1st 2022 this will change to \$43.53 (the cap) Again, another slight increase is projected for Oct 31st 2023 at \$43.96 (cap)</p> <p>Team Lead: Current: \$46.35 (capped out at 25+) As of Nov 1st, 2022- \$47.05 (Capped out) As of Oct 31st, 2023- \$47.52 (capped out)</p>	No scaling system is utilized in the province
New Brunswick	<p>OT 1- \$37.5 OT 2- \$41.05 OT 3- \$43.12</p>	<p>OT 1 \$44.7 OT 2 \$48.97 OT 3 \$51.38</p>	Yes, based on experience
Prince Edward Island	<p>OT 1- \$33.54 OT 2- \$35.36 OT 3- \$? Casual OT- \$37.56</p>	<p>OT 1- \$42.30 OT 2- \$43.38 OT 3- \$46.06 Casual OT- \$46.06</p>	<p>Yes, based on experience OT 1 - work within a team of OT's, ie: acute care OT 2 - self supervised/work alone, ie: hand therapy, LTC, school OT 3 - supervisory component</p>

Newfoundland	OT 1- \$36.32 OT 2- \$38.67 OT 3- \$43.25	OT 1 \$42.83 OT 2 \$45.59 OT 3 \$51.12	Yes OT 1 - min 1-2 years OT 2 - 2-3 years OT 3 - 4-5 years and may have specialized knowledge in a program area
--------------	---	--	--

*Low end, indicating the lowest rate for an Occupational Therapist to be paid

**High end, indicating the highest rate for an Occupational Therapist to be paid.

***Scaling, a system utilized by some provinces that often is an indication of years of experience, which also is directly related to the pay scale an Occupational Therapist then falls within. Often identified as OT1, OT2, OT3 OR OTI, OTII, OTIII

Table Two: Other Canadian Provinces Pay Scales

Province	Pay Scale				
Quebec (There are multiple regions within the province that may all have variations in pay)	CIUSSS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal Occupational therapist-Sainte Anne's Hospital Salary: \$27.46-\$50.39	CISSS de Laval Occupational therapist- Hôpital juif de réadaptation Salary: \$25.63-\$47.48	CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest Occupational therapist Salary: \$27.46-\$50.39		
Ontario (Health authorities were unable to be determined; five examples are	Occupational therapist- Greater Toronto Area Hospitals	Occupational therapist- West Lincoln Memorial Hospital	Occupational therapist- Remote Ontario	Occupational therapist- Peterborough Regional Health Center	Occupational therapist- Ontario Area Hospitals Salary: \$35.12-\$48.68

provided in the preceding columns)	Salary: \$37.38-\$48.65	Salary: \$36.64-\$46.97	Salary: \$48.35-\$57.69	Salary: \$35.12-\$48.68	
Manitoba	Not currently available as a new contract was signed in July 2023 and not yet available on the website. However, Occupational Therapists received a wage increase.				
Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan Health Authority: Occupational Therapist Salary: \$35.79-\$43.76 Senior Occupational therapist Salary: \$38.65-\$47.26				

Alberta *Note that not all pay scales for each zone is listed, as OTI, II, and III is utilized	Occupational Therapist I: South Zone Salary: \$37.30-49.65	Occupational Therapist II: Northern Zone Salary: \$39.42-\$52.36	Occupational Therapist I: Calgary Zone /Edmonton Zone Salary: \$37.67-\$50.15		
British Columbia	<u>Fraser Health:</u> Occupational Therapist: Salary: \$35.98-\$44.79 per hour MHSU Clinician, Masters - Community Mental Health & Substance Use Services: Salary: \$35.65-\$44.56	<u>Interior Health:</u> Same pay scale	<u>Island Health:</u> Same payscale for hospital Occupational Therapist Campbell River Mental Health & Addiction Services Salary: \$37.24-\$46.39	<u>Northern Health:</u> Same pay scale	<u>Vancouver Coastal Health:</u> Occupational therapist 2 Home Health, Pacific Spirit Community Health Centre Salary: \$37.24-\$46.39 Occupational therapist 1 Raven Song Mental Health & Addictions Salary: \$35.98-\$44.79 per hour

* To note about Table Two, not all pay scales could be accessed and therefore some pay scales are provided based on current job postings.