

Education Sector Profile

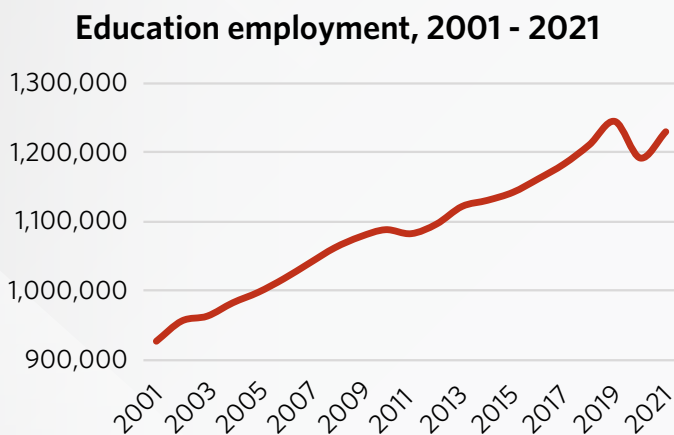
Sector Facts and Figures

Total GDP <i>Share of Canadian GDP</i>	\$100.4 billion 5.08%
Total Employment (2021) <i>Change since 2011</i>	1,229,700 +13.6%
Real wage growth (2011-2019)	+3.4%
Labour Productivity (2019)	\$21.5/hr
Average Work Hours/Week (2019)	28.5
Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2019) <i>Change since 2009</i> <i>Share of Canadian industry total</i>	5,027kt 14.2% 0.80%
Union Coverage Rate	78%
Unifor Members in the Industry	8,450
Share of Total Unifor Membership	2.7%
Number of Unifor Bargaining Units	35
Average Bargaining Unit Size	241

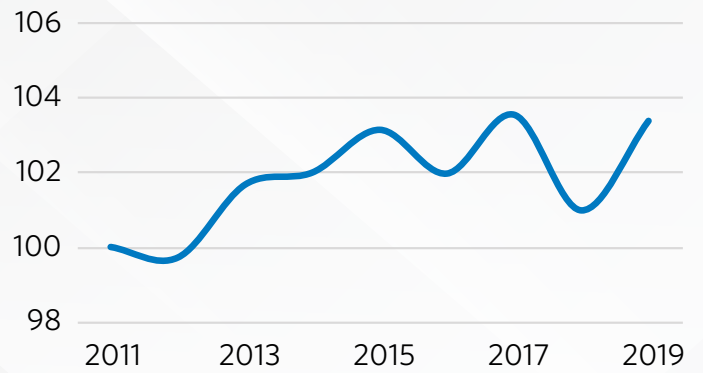
Current Conditions

The education sector is comprised of a few different types of workplaces. This group includes members who work for school boards, universities, and colleges that are government-owned operations or partially government-funded bodies. Unifor does not have a large membership base in any specific area, but the overall size of this broad category is approximately 8,450 members.

Collectively, this growing sector employs some 1.2 million people and adds \$100 billion to Canadian GDP. Employment growth in this sector has been strong and steady, and is up by more than a 13% over the past decade. However, because this sector is entirely public (e.g. school boards) or partially public (e.g. universities, colleges), the fiscal position and political orientation of governments shape compensation trends.



Education: Real wages (2011=100)



During the 2008-09 recession, provincial governments began to impose austerity measures and dial back on public spending, including and especially around labour compensation. Wages began modestly recovering in the subsequent years and real wage growth was 3.4% between 2011 and 2019. Most employers are public entities and, if not, they receive the bulk of their funding from government sources. Thus, the financial position of employers is highly dependent on government policies and the political priorities of those in power.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, school boards and post-secondary institutions were forced to close due to lockdowns. Workers in the sector were impacted differently depending on their function within the institutions. Classes in schools and post-secondary institutions transitioned to virtual platforms and continue to do so, to varying degrees. Some support staff were temporarily laid off early in the pandemic. However, as jurisdictions opened up, staff have worked both on site or from home.

Unifor in the Education Sector

Select Unifor Employers	Approx. # Members
McMaster University	2,500
Calgary Catholic School District	1,550
Edmonton Catholic School District	1,100
University of Windsor	450
Windsor Essex CDSB	405

Unifor’s education members make up nearly three percent of overall membership and are geographically

concentrated in Alberta (school boards) and Ontario (school boards, universities and contracted out services in colleges).

Approximately 60% of the members in this sector work for the three largest employers. McMaster University is the largest single employer, accounting for roughly 30% of sectoral membership, while another 40% work in various Alberta school boards, 9% in Ontario school boards, 7% in other Ontario universities, 8% in Ontario colleges, and 5% in Atlantic region universities.

Moving Forward: Developing the Education Sector

The education sector is significantly affected by government policy, both fiscal and social, at the federal and provincial levels of government. Education is one of the fastest growing sectors by employment. Unfortunately, this strong growth in employment has not been mirrored by compensation.

Governments across Canada began a program of retrenchment in the aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008-09.

Deteriorating labour compensation was one of the negative consequences of these austerity measures. While the average Canadian wage increased by 4% (after adjusting for inflation) between 2009 and 2016, in the Education and Public Services sector the average worker took a 4% wage cut over the same period. Compensation increases since that period have not made up this gap.

Provincially, government support for social programs is highly dependent on the party in power. In most provinces, governments have not provided adequate funding in order for schools and boards to deal with rising costs, growing enrolment and required pandemic measures.

In Alberta, the government projected that schools in the province would have 860 fewer teachers and 1,400 fewer support workers in 2022 compared to three years earlier.

In Ontario, the government passed legislation in 2019 that limited compensation increases for many public sector workers. The Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019, covers all education workers in the province, which limits compensation increases to one per cent annually over a three year period.

Major Sector Development Issues

- Wage retrenchment/stagnation across the education and public sector must be reversed.
- Free collective bargaining rights must be respected by public sector employers, including governments.
- After years of operating budget freezes or cuts, education and public services must be made a public policy priority.
- Health and safety measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic – including in-person workplace safety and decisions related to virtual teaching – should be implemented in consultation with unions and workers.