

Sector Profile

Public Administration

Atlantic Region

2025

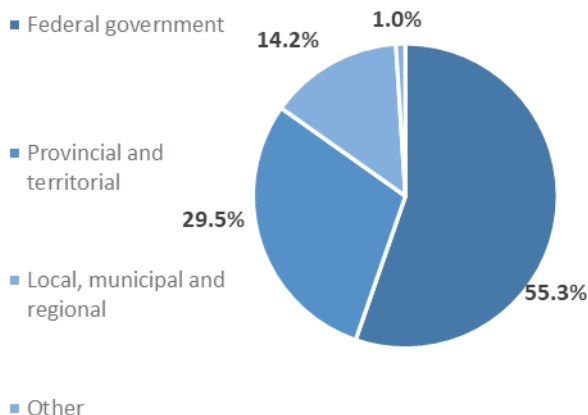


HIGHLIGHTS

- Public administration comprised 11.5% of Atlantic Canada’s total economic output in 2024, at \$13.7 billion. Employment within the federal government makes up over half (55.3%) of the public administration workforce in Atlantic Canada, with the largest occupation being employment insurance and revenue officers (9.3%).
- The workforce in the public administration sector is characterized as predominantly prime working age (74.2%) and almost half of workers have a university degree (48.2%).
- Employment in the sector hit a historical high of 106,600 workers in 2024, a 4.7% increase compared to a year prior. Gains were led by the federal government (+4,500), followed by local, municipal and regional governments (+1,600).
- In the next three years, employment in public administration is expected to decline at an average of 0.5% per year, well below projected growth across all sectors in the region (+0.6%).

ABOUT THE SECTOR

Employment Share by sub-industry



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey 2024

Composition and Importance of the Sector

Public administration is composed of government bodies whose responsibilities and activities are purely governmental in nature. There are five subsectors within public administration, which correspond to various levels of government: (1) federal, (2) provincial and territorial, (3) local, municipal and regional, (4) indigenous, and (5) international. These subsectors are further organized by activity or purpose.

Employment within the federal government comprised over half (55.3%) of the public administration workforce in Atlantic Canada in 2024, almost unchanged compared to last year. This was followed by provincial governments at 29.5% and local, municipal and regional governments at 14.2%. The public administration sector represented 11.5% of Atlantic Canada’s total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024 at \$13.7 billion.



Geographic Distribution of Employment

The public administration sector represented 8.5% of Atlantic Canada's employment in 2024, employing 106,600 people. The sector was most significant in the province of Prince Edward Island (PEI), where it made up 11.4% of employment with 10,500 workers, as there are more provincial and federal employees per capita compared to other Atlantic provinces. Even so, PEI lost 200 jobs in the sector compared to a year prior, a 1.9% decrease. Nova Scotia had the highest number of workers in the sector among Atlantic provinces with 38,500 workers, along with the highest employment gains (+4,300) in the region compared to 2023, due mostly to new hiring at the federal level. The largest federal employer in the province is the Canadian Forces Base in Halifax, with around 11,000 Canadian Armed Forces members and employees. It was followed closely by New Brunswick with 36,900 workers, around 1,000 more than a year prior, representing a 2.8% increase. There were 20,700 workers in Newfoundland and Labrador, 300 jobs less since 2023 (-1.4%), accounting for 8.4% of employment in the province.

	Employed 2024	Industry Share (%)
Atlantic Canada	106,600	8.5%
Newfoundland and Labrador	20,700	8.4%
Prince Edward Island	10,500	11.4%
Nova Scotia	38,500	7.4%
New Brunswick	36,900	9.2%

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

WORKFORCE

Workforce Characteristics

The workforce in the public administration sector in 2024 was characterized as predominantly prime working age and having a larger share of workers with post-secondary education. Employment in this sector is almost evenly split across genders where women+ have a slight majority at 52.1%, while men+ accounted for 47.9%, this was slightly higher for women+ compared to their all-sector share (49.1%). Public administration employed a 74.2% share of prime working age people (ages 25-54), this was higher than 63.8% for all sectors, moreover, workers nearing retirement (those aged 55 and older) made up 21.3% of the sector, while they represented 23.2% of total employment in the region.

Most workers in public administration were employed full-time (96.1%) and in permanent positions (83.9%) during 2024, only a small share of workers (16.0%) were employed on a temporary basis. The sector had higher levels of post-secondary education compared to other sectors. Moreover, the largest difference can be seen among university degree holders, representing 48.2% of public administration employment versus 31.5% for all sectors. Workers with a postsecondary certificate or diploma represented 39.4% of employed individuals in the sector, comparable to the all-sector average (38.7%).

Main Occupations

The largest occupation in public administration was employment insurance and revenue officers, making up 9.3% of employed individuals in the sector in 2024. The occupation has seen rapid growth in the past ten years, with 8,300 jobs added since 2014, due to factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and increased seasonal employment. Police officers (except commissioned) followed as the second largest occupation, comprising 4.4% of total employment. Employment in this occupation has grown by 46.3% since 2014. Human resources professionals made up 3.3% of employment in public administration, the third largest occupation with 3,575 workers.

	Employed 2024	% Share of Industry
Top 5 largest occupations		
Employment insurance and revenue officers	9,900	9.3%
Police officers (except commissioned)	4,725	4.4%
Human resources professionals	3,575	3.3%
Other managers in public administration	3,375	3.2%
Social policy researchers, consultants and program officers	3,275	3.1%

Source: ESDC/Service Canada



RECENT HISTORY

Employment in the public administration sector in Atlantic Canada has increased since a low in 2016. Hiring in the sector has increased significantly since the pandemic, at an average of 6.6% per year. This is 4.6 p.p. higher than the pre-pandemic growth average. In 2024, employment in public administration reached a historical high of 106,600 jobs.

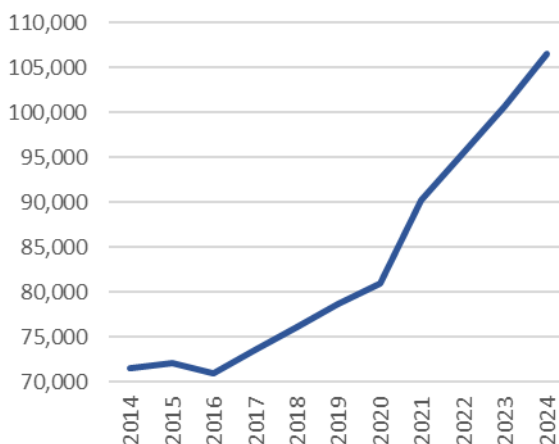
Job growth in public administration in 2024 was led by gains in the federal government, as there were 4,500 more jobs compared to the year prior, an 8.3% increase. Local, municipal and regional governments gained 1,600 jobs, an 11.9% increase compared to 2023. Growth was tempered by losses in provincial and territorial governments (-700), a 2.2% loss compared to a year prior.

The federal government has been signaling spending reductions in the past few years which could signify workforce adjustments. Current leadership has indicated they are reducing the federal workforce strictly through attrition. In June of 2025, the finance minister sent letters to multiple ministers asking them to identify cuts of 15% to program spending at their respective departments by 2028-29. A report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives estimates this could lead to the federal public service losing up to 57,000 employees by 2028. Job cuts are expected to be concentrated at the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), Employment and Social Development (ESDC), and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada.

Job cuts have already been seen in the CRA, almost 10,000 jobs nation-wide have been cut since May 2024. In November 2024, the CRA laid off roughly 126 term employees in the Atlantic region, 580 nation-wide, many of whom were debt collectors. In May 2025, the CRA announced that they would not renew the contracts of about 1,300 term workers at their contact centres, of which an estimated 125 jobs were lost in New Brunswick and 250 in Newfoundland and Labrador. Later the same month, the agency announced that up to 280 employees will lose their jobs, mainly in the capital region. Furthermore, ESDC is terminating around 800 term positions in the passport program, but so far none of them are in Atlantic Canada.

In the fiscal year 2024-25, the federal government is expected to have a \$43.2 billion deficit, compared to a deficit of \$61.9 billion the year before and \$35.3 billion in 2022-2023. This reflects the ongoing robust population growth which increases tax revenues but also raises the demand for public services.

Historical Employment Trend
Atlantic Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

According to the Atlantic Economic Council (AEC), total expenses from the Atlantic region's provincial government have risen by over \$14 billion since 2019-20, due to population gains and higher per capita spending. Spending has grown faster than own-source revenues, despite relatively high tax brackets, and they would have led to larger deficits if federal transfers had not increased by almost \$3 billion. All provinces but New Brunswick are estimated to have a lower net debt to GDP ratio this year compared to five years prior.

In Nova Scotia's public accounts, the province forecasted an \$82.4 million surplus for the 2024-25 fiscal year, which is a large improvement on the estimated \$467.3 million deficit in the original budget. This was achieved by higher-than-expected tax revenues. New Brunswick is projecting a deficit of \$398.9 million in the 2024-25 fiscal year, much larger than the budgeted surplus of \$40.9 million, putting an end to a long streak of larger than anticipated surpluses, due to higher-than-expected program spending.

Newfoundland and Labrador's public accounts show the province ran a \$252 million deficit in the 2024-25 fiscal year, \$100 million more than was anticipated in last year's budget. The higher deficit was due to slightly lower revenues and higher than expected expenses. Prince Edward Island's public accounts project that the provincial government ran a \$166.3 million deficit in the 2024-25 fiscal year, higher than the budgeted \$85.0 million deficit, as the province had increased spending paired with tax cuts.



OUTLOOK

Based on analysis conducted by Service Canada, employment in public administration in Atlantic Canada is expected to decrease slightly over 2025 to 2027, with growth averaging -0.5% per year. The sector's employment is contracting while all sectors are projecting an average growth rate of 0.6% per year.

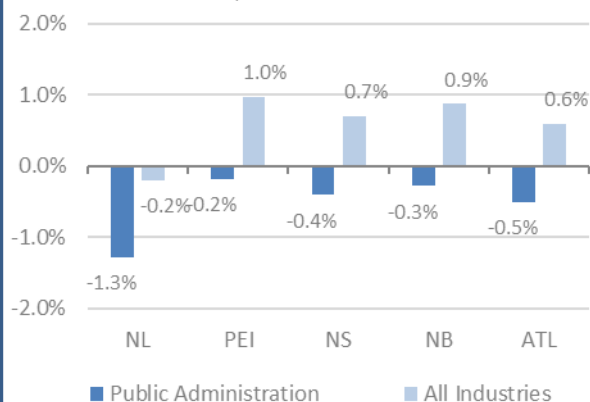
The steepest employment losses are forecasted in Newfoundland and Labrador, where employment could decrease at an average of -1.3% per year. Due to the federal government's pressure to curb spending, the forecast suggests losses in 2025 and throughout 2027. The province's government is forecasting a \$372 million deficit for 2025-26, steeper than the deficit in the previous year, which will limit the government's capability to expand.

Employment is expected to decline by 0.4% on average per year in Nova Scotia. The number of federal government workers is expected to experience decline due to the government's commitment to find reductions in spending. Full-time jobs dropped in 2025 for the first time since 2017, exceeding the government's stated attrition goals. However, strong signals about recruitment in the forces could disproportionately affect Nova Scotia and balance out employment losses. Employment in the provincial government is forecasted to slowly decline, as the budget specifies a 200 person decrease in full time employees. The budget estimated a \$697.5 million deficit in 2025-26, but the first economic update shows the province is on track for a record high \$1.2 billion deficit. The premier has indicated there are no plans to cut spending or bring austerity measures, despite the debt and the slowing population growth that will likely stop the pattern of extra revenue windfall in the past few years.

In New Brunswick, employment is expected to fall by 0.3% per year on average. The federal government is forecasted to have a slight loss in employment as there is a trend

Projected Average Annual Employment Growth Rate (%),

Atlantic Provinces, 2025-2027



Source: ESDC/Service Canada

towards more fiscal constraint. The decline may be tempered by gains in defence spending which may create jobs in the province, particularly in Canadian Forces Base Gagetown. Employment in the provincial government is expected to remain stable, as slowing population and revenue growth will constrain job creation. The 2025-26 budget for New Brunswick forecasts a deficit of \$549.0 million, with much higher spending than the previous year, mostly on healthcare and education.

In Prince Edward Island, employment is expected to decrease by an average of 0.2% per year. Jobs in the federal government are projected to slightly contract because of decreased program spending. Flat employment growth is projected for the provincial government given a large fiscal deficit of \$183.9 million in 2025-26, significantly higher than the previous year. The province is expecting to carry large deficits over the 2026 and 2027 forecast years.

Note: In preparing this document, the authors have taken care to provide clients with labour market information that is timely and accurate at the time of publication. Since labour market conditions are dynamic, some of the information presented here may have changed since this document was published. Users are encouraged to also refer to other sources for additional information on the local economy and labour market. Information contained in this document does not necessarily reflect official policies of Employment and Social Development Canada.

The analysis in this report was finalized as of **September 2025**.

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APPENDIX

Real GDP (2024) and Employment (2024) for Atlantic Canada

	Public Administration			All Industries		
	Number	Share of		Number	Share of	
		Total	AAGR*		Total	AAGR*
Real GDP (M\$)	\$13,668.9	100.0%	1.5%	\$118,731.2	100.0%	1.2%
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$2,578.7	18.9%	1.4%	\$29,645.2	25.0%	-0.3%
Prince Edward Island	\$938.1	6.9%	2.6%	\$7,604.7	6.4%	2.9%
Nova Scotia	\$5,853.8	42.8%	1.6%	\$45,644.6	38.4%	1.9%
New Brunswick	\$4,298.3	31.4%	1.3%	\$35,836.7	30.2%	1.4%
Employment (000s)	106.6	100.0%	4.1%	1258.7	100.0%	1.2%
Men+	51.0	47.9%	3.8%	640.8	50.9%	1.2%
Women+	55.6	52.1%	4.3%	618.0	49.1%	1.2%
15-24 years old	4.8	4.5%	2.9%	163.8	13.0%	0.9%
25-54 years old	79.0	74.2%	4.3%	803.1	63.8%	1.0%
55 years and older	22.7	21.3%	3.7%	291.9	23.2%	2.0%
Worked full-time	102.4	96.1%	4.2%	1057.5	84.0%	1.3%
Worked part-time	4.2	3.9%	1.4%	201.2	16.0%	0.5%
Self-employed	0.0	0.0%	n/a	119.1	9.5%	-1.1%
Employees	106.5	100.0%	4.1%	1139.7	90.5%	1.5%
Permanent job	89.5	83.9%	4.4%	967.1	76.8%	1.9%
Temporary job	17.1	16.0%	2.7%	172.6	13.7%	-0.5%
Less than high school	1.3	1.2%	-3.9%	87.9	7.0%	-3.1%
High school graduate	11.9	11.2%	0.1%	286.9	22.8%	-0.3%
Postsecondary cert. or diploma	42.0	39.4%	3.7%	487.2	38.7%	1.1%
University degree	51.3	48.2%	6.1%	396.8	31.5%	4.1%
Newfoundland and Labrador	20.7	19.4%	1.8%	245.0	19.5%	0.2%
Prince Edward Island	10.4	9.8%	4.4%	92.5	7.3%	2.3%
Nova Scotia	38.5	36.2%	4.4%	521.4	41.4%	1.6%
New Brunswick	36.9	34.6%	5.1%	400.0	31.8%	1.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey - Custom Table; Table 36-10-0402-01

*Average annual growth rate for last ten years of available data (GDP 2015-24 and Employment 2015-24)

