



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

December 2009



CANADA SOCIAL REPORT



The [Caledon Institute of Social Policy](#) regularly scans provincial and territorial government websites in order to follow policy and program developments related to our core work and interests. A partial list includes: disability, education, health, housing, income security, poverty reduction, recreation, seniors and youth. This tracking is intended to inform our analysis of policy trends. Monitors can be searched on the Canada Social Report website by date, jurisdiction and category.

Newfoundland and Labrador

BUDGET

\$443 million deficit announced, an improvement of \$307 million compared to a \$750 million deficit forecast in Budget 2009. Strengthening oil prices is the primary reason for the progress during the year. Program expenses have increased to deal with extraordinary circumstances, including response to the closure of the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor. Net debt at the end of 2009-10 is expected to be \$8.6 billion.

[Link](#)

DISABILITIES

\$7.5 million to restructure the home support financial assessment process. Subsidized home support services include personal care, home management and respite for people who have chronic health conditions and meet program criteria. Clients with income at or below \$13,000 per year for a single person and \$21,000 per year for a couple will not be required to contribute to home support.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2009/health/1209n04.htm>

HOUSING

\$929,000 to completely retrofit eight social housing dwellings in St. John's – part of Budget 2009 \$14.55 million for building, renovating and retrofitting social housing.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2009/tw/1209n05.htm>

INCOME SECURITY

January 1, 2010, minimum wage will increase by 50 cents to \$9.50 per hour (rate will reach \$10 per hour by July 2010).

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2009/hrle/1222n01.htm>

POVERTY REDUCTION

Release of Empowering People – Engaging Community – Enabling Success: First Progress Report on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Poverty Reduction Strategy. On the basis of Statistics Canada's low income cut-off, the incidence of low-income dropped from 12.2 percent in 2003 to 6.5 percent in 2007, a decrease of 30,000 people; the depth of poverty (the average amount low-income households fall below the LICO) decreased from \$5,500 in 2003 to \$4,900 in 2007 and is now the lowest in the country; the Income Support caseload has gone down substantially from 36,700 in 2003 to 31,323 in 2008. More than 4,000 Income Support clients started employment between 2006 and 2008.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2009/hrle/1214n02.htm>

Changes to the 2009-10 Home Heating Rebate Program mean that regardless of the type of energy source purchased to heat the home, individuals and families with net income of \$40,000 or less will be eligible to receive a rebate of up to \$250 and up to \$500 for those living in coastal Labrador communities. Individuals and families with net income up to \$35,000 will receive a full rebate. The rebate decreases as income



levels rise to \$40,000, with no eligible individual or family receiving less than \$100.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2009/fin/1221n03.htm>

Nova Scotia

BUDGET

Province is forecasting a 2009-10 budget deficit of \$525.2 million, \$66.9 million lower than the Budget estimate in October. Total revenues are forecast to be \$8.5 billion, \$78.8 million more than budgeted. Total expenses are forecast to be \$9 billion, \$11.9 million higher than budget. Increases in the pension valuation adjustment and program expenses were offset by lower debt-servicing costs. Capital spending is now forecast at \$781.1 million in 2009-10, a decrease of \$14.9 million from the Budget estimate.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20091214001>

New Brunswick

BUDGET

Budget forecast 2010-11 provincial Budget will focus on continuing record funding for health care and education; tax relief to individuals and businesses; and record capital investments of \$896 million for strategic infrastructure projects. These investments will boost the two-year record capital investments of \$1.2 billion announced in March to almost \$1.6 billion.

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fin/2009e1905fn.htm>

EDUCATION

The Future to Discover project is encouraging 5,400 New Brunswick and Manitoba students from lower-income and lower-education families to continue their education after high school. A final report will be released in 2011 and will confirm whether students actually pursued post-secondary education.

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/edu/2009e2026ed.htm>

EMPLOYMENT

New adult literacy strategy, *Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick*, contains 12 short-term actions. Adult literacy targets and a plan for 2010-14 will be released this winter. The plan will align with key literacy indicators currently under development by the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training. Health Extended Health Card benefit extended for up to three years for clients who are leaving social assistance for a job (up from 12 months). Benefit covers prescription drugs, vision care, dental care, ambulance fees and other medical necessities such as convalescence and rehabilitation supplies. The measure will help 2,600 people over the course of a fiscal year, at a cost of \$2.7 million.

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2009e1956sd.htm>

INCOME SECURITY

Launch of "Equality at Work" program, to involve employers and the public in reducing the wage gap between men and women. Participants agree to assess their organizational policies and practices, which may affect gender equality in the workplace. Policies may include family-friendly initiatives, employee development, and recruitment and retention strategies.

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/sw/2009e1952sw.htm>

Tax brackets and non-refundable amounts for personal income tax will be indexed by two percent, beginning January 1, 2010. The four-year "Plan for Lower Taxes" will deliver \$258 million in tax savings in 2010-11 and a total of \$380 million in savings over four years.

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fin/2009e2036fn.htm>

SENIORS

\$400 million over five years to create 700 new nursing home beds over the next 10 years, 11 nursing homes will be replaced with new facilities and two new nursing homes will be built in Neguac and Dieppe.

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2009e1914sd.htm>

\$21.9 million to replace a nursing home in Saint-Louis-de-Kent.

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2009e1987sd.htm>

\$9 million to expand a nursing home in Bathurst.

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2009e1988sd.htm>

Pilot project in five sites over the next year to provide 3.5 hours of care in nursing homes (up from 3.1 hours).

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2009e2014sd.htm>

Prince Edward Island

DISABILITIES

19-member Disability Action Council created as a result of the two-phase Disability Services Review. Members are from advocacy groups, service organizations, government departments, businesses and community groups.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/news/index.php3?number=news&dept=&newsnumber=6741&lang=E>

EDUCATION

A report on the Primary Literacy Intervention Program found that 88 percent of struggling readers who participated in a new literacy intervention in the 2008-09 school year were reading at or above grade level by the end of June.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/news/index.php3?number=news&dept=&newsnumber=6759&lang=E>



Québec

EMPLOYMENT

Publication of the 2009 edition of the yearbook on employment. This second edition presents principal indicators of working conditions of the labour market (pay scales, length of employment, workforce movement, work stoppages and on-the-job safety and security).

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/17/c4084.html>

HOUSING

Publication of a statistical report that describes users of the AccèsLogie (affordable housing) program in 2005.

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/08/c9307.html>

Publication of a CHMC study in which means test results showed that urgent housing need diminished in Québec by 5.7 percent between 1996 and 2006 (percentages for specific municipalities is available).

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/08/c9300.html>

Since January 2006, 2,611 rent supplements have been given to low-income households. Housing projects, including improvements to social housing, will receive \$1.3 billion between 2009 and 2013.

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/08/c9270.html>

\$1.3 million in public and private funds for 14 seniors units in Magog.

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/11/c2438.html>

\$12.3 million for 92 affordable housing units in Québec City for families, singles and aging seniors.

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/15/c3288.html>

INCOME SECURITY

Minimum wage will be raised from \$9 to \$9.50 in May 2010.

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/15/c3304.html>

Social security benefits (for retired people, survivor benefits, persons with disabilities or those raising children with disabilities) will increase 0.4 percent in January 2010. The increase reflects Statistics Canada's Consumer Price Index for 2008-09. Taxation rates (fixed in 2003) will remain at 9.9 percent, but the maximum contribution for salaried employees and employers is raised to \$2,163.15.

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/18/c4650.html>

Support for families with children will be increased by 0.48 percent in January 2010. Some 868,000 families will receive \$2.04 billion in payments.

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/17/c4156.html>

Social assistance rates will be indexed by 0.48 percent in January 2010 (percentage corresponds with the consumer price index for the previous year).

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/22/c5222.html>

SENIORS

\$2.2 million for 16 affordable housing units for seniors in need of assisted care living in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region (part of the province's funding of 270 affordable rental, community and single dwellings built in the region since 2003 at a cost of \$27 million).

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/11/c2452.html>

\$22.6 million for a long-term care facility on Ile-de-la-Madeleine.

<http://communiqués.gouv.qc.ca/gouvqc/communiqués/GPQF/Decembre2009/11/c2409.html>

Ontario

HEALTH

Bill 179 was passed, giving nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists and other health professionals the freedom to provide a wider range of health care services.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2009/12/new-law-increases-access-to-health-care.html>

HOUSING

\$7.68 million for 64 new affordable housing rental units for seniors and persons with disabilities living on low income in Sudbury.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2009/12/governments-of-canada-and-ontario-celebrate-new-affordable-housing-in-sudbury.html>

\$2.4 million for 20 new affordable housing rental units for seniors living on low income in Quinte West.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2009/11/governments-of-canada-and-ontario-celebrate-new-affordable-housing-in-quinte-west.html>

\$2.16 million for 18 new affordable housing rental units for seniors and persons with disabilities living on low income in Port Hope.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2009/11/governments-of-canada-and-ontario-celebrate-new-affordable-housing-in-northumberland-county.html>



\$6.6 million for 132 new affordable housing rental units for seniors living on low income was announced today in Thunder Bay.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2009/12/governments-of-canada-and-ontario-celebrate-new-affordable-housing-in-thunder-bay.html>

INCOME SECURITY

Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2009 introduced. If passed it will: clarify the benefits of plan members affected by lay-offs and eliminate partial wind-ups (a partial wind-up occurs when only part of a pension plan is closed), facilitate the restructuring of pension plans affected by corporate reorganizations while protecting benefit security for plan members and pensioners, increase transparency and access to information for plan members and pensioners, enhance regulatory oversight, and improve plan administration and reduce compliance costs.

Passage of Bill 218 (*Ontario Tax Plan for More Jobs and Growth Act, 2009*), with \$15 billion in tax cuts over three years. It introduces the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST), gives 93 percent of income taxpayers a permanent personal income tax cut and ensures that 90,000 low-income Ontarians will no longer pay any provincial personal income tax. Tax cuts for business include reductions in Corporate Income Tax rates for large and small business. Government anticipates these and HST will attract more business and create 600,000 new jobs. The bill offers further assistance to low- and moderate-income Ontarians by almost doubling property tax and sales tax credits.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2009/12/fall-bill-cuts-taxes-and-creates-jobs-for-ontario.html>

Cap for payday loans – individuals getting payday loans may not be charged more than \$21 for each \$100 borrowed.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mcs/en/2009/12/cost-of-payday-loans-capped.html>

POVERTY REDUCTION

Release of first annual report on the Breaking the Cycle strategy highlights three pillars that the government has delivered on: 1) accelerating the Ontario Child Benefit, 2) phase-in of full-day learning for 4- and 5-year olds, 3) tax fairness for low-income families: as part of the package that includes a move to the Harmonized Sales Tax. Approximately 2.9 million low- to middle-income individuals and families will get a new sales tax credit of up to \$260 per adult and child per year.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mcys/en/2009/12/ontario-making-progress-on-poverty-reduction.html>

SENIORS

\$6.6 million for 132 new affordable housing rental units for seniors living on low income in Thunder Bay.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2009/12/governments-of-canada-and-ontario-celebrate-new-affordable-housing-in-thunder-bay.html>

\$7.68 million for 64 new affordable housing rental units for seniors and persons with disabilities living on low income in Sudbury.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2009/12/governments-of-canada-and-ontario-celebrate-new-affordable-housing-in-sudbury.html>

Manitoba

COMMUNITY

Proposed legislation would enhance the City of Winnipeg's ability to deal with problem vacant and derelict buildings. The legislation would streamline the process and reduce overall timelines to redevelop and revitalize properties. Credit unions and banks that might have an interest in problem properties would continue to have the opportunity to take action to protect their investments. The Association of Manitoba Municipalities also asked for this same power to deal with vacant and derelict buildings.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?archive=2009-12-01&item=7270>

DISABILITIES

(UN Day of Persons with Disabilities) New website announced for the Office of the Vulnerable Persons' Commissioner, new training video released to address the needs of people with disabilities in emergency situations and announcement of continued funding support for the Canadian Paraplegic Association (\$5 million over three years).

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?archive=2009-12-01&item=7271>

HOUSING

\$4.3 million for the Manitoba Métis Federation to renew up to 645 public housing units in rural, northern, and remote Manitoba communities under an historic new agreement reached with the Manitoba government, the first of its kind in western Canada.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?archive=2009-12-01&item=7321>

POVERTY REDUCTION

Introduction of ServiceLink – an interactive online tool that allows individuals and families to determine what programs are available, lets them know whether they are eligible, gives a rough estimate of how much money for which they could be eligible, tells them who they can contact for more information and provides a Google map link to give directions to the services outlets.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?archive=2009-12-01&item=7305>

Saskatchewan

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

North Battleford's Sakewew High School, provincial and community officials signed a formal commitment to the economic prosperity of Aboriginal people. The City of North Battleford was Saskatchewan's first urban



municipality to sign an Aboriginal Employment Development Partnership with the province in 2005 to identify and address barriers to training, hiring and retaining First Nations and Métis people.

<http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=155efdbb-b628-4294-b5f5-79b281f281cd>

EDUCATION

Ministry of Education released the *2009 Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report*.

<http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=5eaf1f9a-639f-459f-bd8e-7a233a433aee>

15 community partnerships are receiving \$535,000 from the SaskSmart Innovations Fund to address local literacy needs. Seven community partnerships are receiving funding to implement Community Literacy Plans; six organizations are receiving \$10,000 each to support the development of a viable Community Literacy Plan in 2010-11. (The Fund was established in 2006 to provide financial assistance to organizations and communities seeking ways to address family and workplace literacy.)

<http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=3ad4b14b-8512-4be7-aecf-6930f2796285>

New scholarship announced to encourage high school graduates to enter the skilled trades. 40 scholarships worth \$1,000 each will be awarded annually to high school graduates who have completed the Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program.

<http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=5e0a68f8-8854-4538-b42a-5c2387549721>

INCOME SECURITY

The province will be regulating the business of payday lending by capping the interest rate on borrowing. Payday lenders will be held to a maximum of 23 percent of the principal, the same as legislated in BC and Alberta.

<http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=c2d93ebd-7d00-427a-a822-284c05f8bb90>

Alberta

HOUSING

\$6.2 million to the Calgary Homeless Foundation (CHF) for the purchase or development of 52 permanent homes for the homeless in Calgary (part of the province's 10-year homelessness plan, announced in March 2009). To take advantage of current housing market conditions and make homes available more quickly, CHF will use the funding to purchase or develop existing housing situated throughout Calgary.

<http://www.alberta.ca/acn/200912/275248EE55589-C2D9-98F1-B33894F77DCB5F5E.html>

INCOME SUPPORT

Child Support Recalculation Program will annually recalculate court-ordered child support based on current income tax information and information in the Child Support Guidelines. The program will help parents with child support orders maintain a fair standard of support for their children. It allows parents to keep child support levels in line with income and avoid the time and expense of going to court to review their child support orders.

http://justice.alberta.ca/programs_services/families/recalculation/Pages/default.aspx

SENIORS

\$50 million to help build 618 new affordable supportive living and lodge spaces across the province and upgrade another 86 spaces. 17 projects in 10 communities are receiving funding through Alberta's Affordable Supportive Living Initiative.

<http://alberta.ca/news.cfm>

Funds generated through Alberta Capital Bonds will help build accommodations for seniors who require some assistance in daily tasks and decision-making, and will include long-term care and supportive living facilities, lodges or group homes. Funds will become operational in 2012.

<http://www.alberta.ca/acn/200912/275309828DE4A-07EF-DOFE-8354B971D1CCAC47.html>

British Columbia

CHILDREN

New parents are now able to use a single application form to apply for a number of child benefits and services including Medical Services Plan, the Canada Child Tax Benefit, Social Insurance Number and birth certificate.

http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2009HSE RV0034-000717.htm

EDUCATION

StrongStart BC programs for Quesnel, Squamish, Chilliwack. School districts will receive an \$84-million increase to operating funding for 2009-10, while enrolment continues to decline.

[Link](#)

HOUSING

\$32-million apartment building, providing a combination of 120 affordable homeownership and rental units, will be constructed as part of the redevelopment of the former Hudson's Bay site in downtown Victoria.

http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2009HSD0079-000737.htm

\$11.7-million funds from federal, provincial and community partners to build a 72-unit housing development for seniors and persons with disabilities in Kelowna.

[Link](#)



\$1.7 million from province, City and local partners to build nine new units of affordable and supportive housing for mental health clients in North Vancouver.

http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2009HSD0082-000750.htm

Opening of \$8.47-million development in Duncan, providing 15 emergency shelter beds and 24 transitional housing units for adults at risk of homelessness with mental health issues.

http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2009HSD0084-000764.htm

Groundbreaking of a \$28.8-million supportive housing development in Vancouver which will provide 129 new apartments for people who are homeless.

http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2009HSD0087-000770.htm

SENIORS

A new campus of care with 40 assisted-living units and 116 residential-care beds is providing Surrey seniors with improved access to affordable housing with integrated support services. The province is providing an annual subsidy of \$676,080 for 36 of the assisted living units, through the Independent Living BC program. The campus of care model offers a range of housing and care options in one location, from independent housing to assisted living and complex care.

http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2009HSD0085-000768.htm

Yukon Territory

DISABILITIES

Yukon government supports the federal government's December 3 move to ratify the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/2009/09-276.html>

EDUCATION

Territory receives Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery award. Reading recovery's goal is to identify students in Grade 1 who may have reading difficulties and help them achieve average literacy within approximately 12 to 20 weeks of daily one-on-one instruction. In 2010, 200 students will participate in Reading Recovery in 19 Yukon schools.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/2009/09-281.html>

Northwest Territories

POVERTY REDUCTION

A group of 14 social organizations have called on the territorial government to create an anti-poverty strategy for the NWT.

[Source: Slave River Journal, on-line story]

[Link](#)

Nunavut

INCOME SECURITY

Appointment of eight Nunavummiut to the Social Assistance (Income Support) Appeal Board. Each year more than 6,000 Nunavut households, representing more than 15,000 citizens benefit from programs such as social assistance, senior's fuel subsidy, territorial senior's subsidy, day care user subsidy, transition to work assistance and training initiatives.

<http://www.gov.nu.ca/news/2009/dec/dec16.pdf>