



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

November 2011



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

No updates this month.

Nova Scotia

DISABILITIES

\$1.3-million to expand the income eligibility guidelines for the Direct Family Support for Children Program for children with disabilities who live at home with their families. Effective December 1, the amount a family can make and be eligible increases from \$47,000 to \$72,000, after taxes. About 800 families currently use the program; more than 80 additional families will now have access to the funding, which pays for items such as transportation, medication and respite. The province has increased investments in programs for persons with disabilities by \$19 million since 2009, bringing the annual budget to nearly \$255 million. <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20111108002>

HEALTH

\$22 million to upgrade aging health care facilities to provide better care for patients and an improved environment for health care professionals. <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20111110001>

INCOME SECURITY

Release of a report into pensions and other retirement benefits of Members of the Legislative Assembly. Recommendations included reducing the maximum percentage of salary that can be earned from 75 to 70 percent, increasing the number of years an MLA must serve to be eligible for a full pension 15 years to 20, and raising the earliest age at which a retired MLA can begin collecting a reduced pension from 45 years of age to 50. <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20111103001>

Introduction of a new *Pension Benefits Act*, governing employer-sponsored plans. Under the proposed legislation, all plan members would have access to more information about the solvency of their pension plan, what benefits are available and any proposed changes. The previous act recognized two categories of pension plan participants, members and former members. The new act would add retirees as a third category and allow at least two retirees to sit on an advisory committee that makes recommendations to the plan administrator. The act would give employers more plan design options, which could encourage more to offer pension plans. <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20111115006>

The province now licenses payday lenders that operate outlets in Nova Scotia, but not online payday lenders. Proposed changes will require online payday lenders to be licensed and to maintain a physical location in the province. This change will help provide better information to prospective borrowers. <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20111125002>



New Brunswick

EDUCATION

Launch of the Trade School Initiative, a project to help students become tradespersons in the construction and renovation industry. A federal-provincial-territorial educational pilot, it provides relevant information about tax credits and financial resources, such as the tradesperson's deduction for tools, the apprenticeship incentive grant and the apprenticeship completion grant.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.11.1186.html

Low-income students now have access to a new \$1-million bursary fund. Students enrolled in a program of 60 weeks or longer and who are currently recipients of provincial student loans will automatically be considered for the fund. Some 450 students will qualify for the bursary, up to a maximum of \$3,000 per person.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.11.1244.html

GOVERNANCE

Announcement of a structural reorganization to improve performance and lend greater efficiency to the management of provincial government resources. Budgeting, human resources, information management and accountability functions will be integrated as a new Management Board within the Executive Council Office. The board has been established to better align existing resources, focusing provincial government efforts on core services, accountability and continuous performance improvement.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.11.1260.html

HEALTH

The government is proposing to modify the New Brunswick Prescription Drug Program by increasing the co-payment ceiling for seniors to \$500 per calendar year from the current \$250. The amount paid for each prescription would remain unchanged at \$9.05. The proposed increase would result in an estimated cost saving of \$3 million per year. The change would affect fewer than half of the 48,000 seniors currently participating in the program since only those receiving more than 28 prescriptions per year and reaching their current \$250 maximum would be affected.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.11.1170.html

HOUSING

The federal and provincial governments signed a new affordable housing agreement that will help to reduce the number of families in need of housing. Under the agreement, both governments will invest \$23.4 million for a combined amount of almost \$47 million to build new homes, renovate existing affordable housing and deliver provincially designed housing programs. The agreement comes as a result of the recently

announced Investment in Affordable Housing 2011-14 Framework Agreement among the federal, provincial and territorial governments.
http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.11.1212.html

New Brunswick Health Council and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate released *Play Matters!*, the fourth annual State of the Child report. It parallels the themes articulated in Article 31 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*; the right to rest, leisure, play, recreation, arts and culture. It also offers an overview of children's rights in general, an analysis on the application of these rights in New Brunswick and a road map to their progressive implementation. The report also contains the council's Children Rights and Wellbeing Framework.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.11.1259.html

INCOME SECURITY

Announcement of a six-week consultation process regarding the possible introduction of a special New Brunswick minimum wage for servers earning tips.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.11.1169.html

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Social policy-related announcements include:

- a new employment action plan to increase the number of persons with disabilities in the labour market
- consultations on the development of the next provincial health plan (the current plan expires at the end of 2012)
- changes to the Early Learning and Child Care Act
- a plan to address inclusion in the school system
- a new vision and dental program for children in low-income families will be implemented in the next year
- development of a prescription drug program for non-insured
- creation of a panel on seniors to develop a progressive living healthy, aging well blueprint for seniors.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.11.1277.html

YOUTH

The province is investing in the *Réseau des Complexes Jeunesse Multifonctionnels de la Péninsule acadienne*, a network of multipurpose centres for youth on the Acadian Peninsula. The Regional Development Corporation is investing \$170,000 to support the network in its outreach activities on the Acadian Peninsula. The network is helping young people, especially at-risk youth in the region, to develop the skills and confidence



to be productive members of the workforce.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.11.1262.html

Prince Edward Island

No updates this month.

Québec

POVERTY REDUCTION

Release of \$4.4 million to the Gaspé region for poverty reduction-related work. These funds are part of the \$100 million made available through the province's current poverty reduction and social inclusion plan (2010-2015).

The internet link to this item is no longer operational.

Auditor General's report on the provincial poverty reduction plan reports a lack of specificity of reporting, achievement of objectives, follow-up measures and reporting of results.

The internet link to this item is no longer operational.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Human rights and youth rights commission sets up a research chair to counter homophobia.

The original internet link to this item is no longer operational.

<http://www.uqam.ca/entrevues/entrevue.php?id=992?hebd0>

Ontario

EDUCATION

Announcement of a 30 percent cut in average college and university tuition, starting in 2012. The new grant will save families \$1,600 per student in university and \$730 per student in college each year. It will apply to families with incomes under \$160,000 and be available for up to four years of a full-time undergraduate program.

<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2011/11/ontario-committed-to-building-the-best-educated-workforce.html>

SENIORS

A proposed Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit would enable Ontario seniors to stay in their homes longer, benefit taxpayers by relieving pressures on long-term care home costs and help create jobs and grow the economy. Effective October 1, 2011, and worth up to \$1,500 per year, the tax credit would support about \$800 million in home renovation activity and create 10,500 jobs in Ontario each year. The cost of the proposed tax credit would be offset by savings in other areas.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2011/11/ontario-focused-on-jobs-and-the-economy.html>

THRONE SPEECH

Social policy-related highlights include:

- reducing college and university tuition by 30 percent for families earning less than \$160,000 per year and selecting three new sites for undergraduate campuses to build a more competitive workforce
- introducing the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit to help seniors live independently longer and create thousands of jobs in the home renovation sector
- increasing home care services for seniors to take pressure off hospitals and long-term care homes.

<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2011/11/ontarios-speech-from-the-throne-focuses-on-jobs-economy.html>

Manitoba

CHILD CARE

The first Early Childhood Education Index issued by the Margaret & Wallace McCain Family Foundation reports that Manitoba has one of the best child care systems in the country. Manitoba is in the middle of an aggressive five-year expansion strategy called Family Choices. Since 1999, the province has funded 11,000 new spaces, half since April 2008 when it launched Family Choices. In total, 54 new child care centres are now in development. According to the report, Manitoba, Quebec and PEI are leaders in the field of early learning and child care.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?archive=2011-11-01&item=12647>

HOUSING

The province is renewing its commitment to create more affordable housing and more choices for renters. During the past two years, the province's long-term housing strategy, HOMEWorks!, and financial assistance from the federal government have contributed \$378 million for housing initiatives across the province. HOMEWorks! supports ALL Aboard, Manitoba's poverty reduction strategy, by increasing the supply of quality, affordable housing for low-income residents. By 2014, the province will develop 1,000 new affordable housing units – two-thirds of its five-year goal of 1,500 affordable housing units.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?archive=2011-11-01&item=12643>

Saskatchewan

INCOME SECURITY

The Provincial Sales Tax exemption on children's clothing is expanded on November 15 to include children 17 and under. It currently applies to clothing purchased for children 14 and under.

The original internet link to this item is no longer operational.

<http://finance.gov.sk.ca/revenue/pst/bulletins/PST-1%20Children's%20Clothing%20and%20Footwear.pdf>



Alberta

EDUCATION

Students, parents, teachers and others interested in education are invited to participate in public consultations on the *Education Act*. To be held in seven locations, the sessions will focus on the act's four components: 1. making schools safe and welcoming, 2. making learning relevant for all students, 3. keeping students engaged in learning and 4. setting up students for success in life.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=31526A849AA44-COF8-290F-10B3924E310E1FB9>

\$1.3 million to help school boards across the province increase SuperNet capacity. This improved capacity will help support the government's commitment to a more inclusive education system – e.g. rural schools will be able to connect students to specialized service providers via videoconfer-ence.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=31582D66F-DC40-A771-A4C8-9F38ED8ACD9B852A>

HEALTH

\$150,000 from Alberta's Civil Forfeiture Office will be used to develop and implement the Taking a Stand project. It will bring together a variety of community-based organizations to increase knowledge of gender-based discrimination and violence, and will work to break down the attitudes that contribute to violence against women.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=31523A2D9F941-0A5A-54C3-C5DAE13454A3775F>

HOUSING

Announcement a federal-provincial, cost-shared investment of \$121 million over three years to reduce the number of residents in housing need. The agreement is the result of the Investment in Affordable Housing 2011-2014 Framework Agreement between the federal and provincial/territorial governments. Alberta Municipal Affairs will use the funds to provide affordable housing options to seniors, people with special needs and victims of family violence. First-year funding of \$40.6 million will contribute to the development of nine new affordable housing projects, adding 408 units supported under the 2011-2012 Housing Capital Initiatives program.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=31544B7583EAA-0F87-6855-4115B667E9861237>

GOVERNANCE

Premier mandate letters that were sent to the Cabinet outlined actions for the new government mandate. These included measures such as designing a plan for family care clinics, establishing a minimum of three-year funding cycles for education and municipalities, consulting with Albertans on legislation and taking national leadership on energy efficiency and sustainability. The letters form a blueprint for a new way of working across the Government of Alberta with an emphasis on cooperation,

innovation and integrated solutions.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=314796F2E7C47-FEA7-B637-B7B2E8B1DFAAA944>

British Columbia

DISABILITIES

A Client Support Team was created in October 2011 in response to concerns raised by individuals with developmental disabilities and their families about the services being offered to them by Community Living BC. The team reviews the supports people are receiving and, within 15 business days, ensures that clients are accessing services appropriate to their needs. Of the 63 cases brought to the team to date, reviews have been completed for one-third of those cases. In 13 instances, a change was made to the level of services offered by government agencies in order to better serve client needs. In eight cases, the level of services and supports was considered to be appropriate. Nine cases have been referred beyond the regional support teams and another 33 cases are being reviewed at the regional level.

The original internet link to this item is no longer operational.

http://www.sd.gov.bc.ca/pwd/docs/Improving_Services_to_People_with_Developmental_Disabilities_Report_FINAL.pdf

HEALTH

\$475,000 to a Canadian Diabetes Association healthy cooking program to help families gain knowledge of basic nutrition and confidence in the kitchen. The association works in partnership with community agencies to deliver this six-week program to Aboriginal, new immigrant, South Asian and low-income families because many are at risk for chronic diseases, including diabetes. The initiative is part of the Healthy Families BC strategy, which encourages citizens to manage their own health and reduce chronic disease. It targets the province's most vulnerable families and will focus on healthy eating, including an awareness campaign around sodium and a restaurant nutrition information program.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/funding-food-skills-for-families>

INNOVATION

To drive social innovation, the province is partnering with the Advisory Council for Social Entrepreneurship, Ashoka Changemakers, LIFT Philanthropy Partners, Telus and the UBC Sauder School of Business to launch a "collaberation" in 2012. This collaborative competition will invite residents to submit their solutions to current social problems, rewarding community-led innovations that show the most promise of improving the lives of everyone in the province.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/province-committed-to-nurturing-social-innovation-in-bc>

Yukon Territory

No updates this month.



Northwest Territories

RECREATION

Get Active NWT grants have been awarded to 78 community groups to provide support to organize events that will help residents get active. Applications were received from groups in all 33 communities.

The original internet link to this item is no longer operational.

<http://www.maca.gov.nt.ca/home/for-residents/sport-recreation/get-active-nwt/>

Nunavut

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In anticipation of ten mines moving into production within the next ten years, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) and Nunavut's regional Inuit organizations are negotiating revenue-sharing deals with mineral and mining companies that want to operate on Inuit-owned lands. Policies adopted at NTI's Annual General Meeting say that companies must pay \$12 in every \$100 as a royalty on their profits. That revenue will go into a new NTI-managed trust fund whose operations are spelled out in the policy.

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674new_trust_will_manage_resource_revenues_for_nunavut_inuit1

HEALTH

Release of *Nunavut Report on Comparable Health Indicators 2011* reveals a worsening state of health over the past 10 years. That poor state of health affects the young more than the old.

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut_health_indicators_report_plays_down_territorys_grim_health_sta/