



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

December 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

POVERTY REDUCTION

Fifth annual donation (\$400,000) by the province to the Salvation Army's Good Neighbour Energy Fund. The program helps with all forms of home heating. The benefit is paid as a credit that is applied to an energy supplier's account on behalf of the person receiving it. In 2011, some 2,000 low-income residents requested home-heating help from the fund.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20111220005>

New Brunswick

BUDGET

Launch of the Taxpayers FIRST website to educate the public and provide them with a direct channel to suggest ideas on how to address the fiscal challenges facing the province. The website includes the locations and dates for the 2012-13 Pre-Budget Consultation.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.12.1361.html

GOVERNANCE

The province released an action plan to establish a new local governance system. It will:

- establish 12 regional service commissions by January 2013
- provide support to help communities restructure
- remove barriers that discourage communities from restructuring. Specific actions include establishing a roads policy and arriving at more equitable cost sharing for RCMP services
- provide new options for property tax payments, coming into effect in 2013
- redesign property tax bills to provide more information to property owners
- develop a provincial policy to guide regional investments for sport, recreation and cultural facilities.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.12.1324.html

HEALTH

In partnership with the Healthy Eating Physical Activity Coalition of New Brunswick, up to 16 grants of \$1,000 each will be given to groups, clubs, non-profit programs, day cares or other childcare providers, to build after



school programs for children and youth.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.12.1359.html

EDUCATION

A series of 24 public dialogue sessions on learning will be held in 19 New Brunswick communities beginning in January. The sessions are part of the second phase of public dialogues for the citizen engagement initiative on learning and innovation entitled Learning: Everybody's Project. Launched in November 2010, its goal is to connect and engage citizens in a discussion on the value of lifelong learning.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.12.1326.html

SENIORS

Seniors can defer future property tax increases so they can stay in their homes longer under amendments introduced to the Real Property Tax Act. Seniors 65 or older who own a principal residence and receive the Residential Property Tax Credit could be eligible for the program. It would allow seniors who are experiencing financial difficulty to defer their annual increase in property taxes. Seniors would be able to take advantage of this relief through a one-time application process.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.12.1340.html

YOUTH

The province is providing financial support to the Saint John Youth House, a planned housing facility for homeless and at-risk youth. The facility will become part of a coordinated effort to provide housing and support services to the nearly 200 homeless youth in the Greater Saint John area. The project is an initiative of the Greater Saint John Homelessness Steering Committee, an inter-agency group that works on collaborative solutions to homelessness. It includes representatives from the federal and provincial governments, youth-serving organizations and area churches.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2011.12.1307.html

Prince Edward Island

EDUCATION

A new tool kit created by the Prince Edward Island Home and School Federation is now available to support parents who want to become more involved in their children's learning and school community. An online version is posted at www.edu.pe.ca/peihsf.

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

http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/eecd_AnRpt11-12.pdf

Québec

POVERTY REDUCTION

\$9.5 million from the Ministry of employment and social solidarity (MESS) to continue poverty reduction/social inclusion efforts in the City of Montreal in 2012-13. Funds will help pay the costs associated with the creation of a partnership table (Alliance pour la solidarité) that will combine the expertise and experience of regional partners. A further \$500,000 from the Ministry of municipal affairs and regional funding will fund revitalization projects.

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

http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/GD_plan_de_lutte_rapport_activites_2011-2012.pdf

HEALTH

The province's annual review of health revealed Nunavik stands lowest with respect to its poor health and social indicators of Quebec's 17 health regions.

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

Ontario

CAREGIVING

Introduction of legislation that would provide up to eight weeks of unpaid job leave for employees to provide care and support to a sick or injured family member. Ontario is also calling on its federal partners to extend Employment Insurance to those who take advantage of Family Caregiver Leave, just as they do when Ontarians take Family Medical Leave.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2011/12/helping-families-care-for-sick-loved-ones.html>

DISABILITIES

Starting January 1, 2012, the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service will come into effect for all businesses and organizations in Ontario with one or more employees. It will help Ontario's businesses meet the needs of this growing community and attract their spending power.

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

<http://www.slaw.ca/2012/12/20/ontario-accessibility-standards-what-comes-after-the-december-31-2012-reporting-deadline/>

EDUCATION

The province introduced the *Accepting Schools Act*, which, if passed, will require all school boards to take preventative measures against bullying, issue tougher consequences for bullying, and support students who want to promote understanding and respect for all.

<http://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2011/12/more-support-for-bullied-students.html>

INCOME SECURITY

The province is implementing changes in the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund (PBGF) announced in 2010 and in the 2011. Beginning January 1,



2012, the government will:

- establish a minimum assessment level of \$250 for each covered plan
- raise the base fee per plan member from \$1 to \$5
- increase the maximum fee per plan member in underfunded plans from \$100 to \$300
- eliminate the overall assessment cap, currently \$4 million, for underfunded plans
- extend the initial waiting period for PBGF coverage of new plans and benefit improvements from three to five years.

The changes will help to make the PBGF more sustainable by reducing the size of claims and ensuring it has sufficient funds to cover them. PBGF assessments are paid by the company or organization that sponsors the pension plan, not employees.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2011/12/securing-our-retirement-future.html>

THRONE SPEECH

Passage of the Speech includes:

- providing a grant to reduce undergraduate college and university tuition by an average of 30 percent for families earning less than \$160,000 per year
- selecting three new sites for undergraduate campuses
- introducing the proposed Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit to help seniors live independently longer and create jobs in the home renovation sector
- increasing home care services.

<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2011/12/ontarios-speech-from-the-throne-passes.html>

Manitoba

EMPLOYMENT

\$2.9 million for the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers – ten federally and provincially funded projects that will help unemployed older workers in small communities develop their skills and get back into the labour market.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2011/12/2011-12-09-131700-12766.html>

HEALTH

The province will help mothers living with HIV access free baby formula to help prevent mother-to-child transmission of the virus.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2011/12/2011-12-01-151900-12705.html>

INCOME SECURITY

Two of the new regulations under the *Pension Benefits Act* take effect January 1 and will focus on:

- new penalties for the late filing of information used by the province to monitor pension plans. Timely filing of documentation with the province is important for monitoring pension plan compliance to ensure plans can deliver the promised benefits.
- allowing the use of letters of credit to guarantee funds to cover promised benefits to employees. During an economic downturn, the letters of credit would allow employers to meet pension plan funding requirements without using scarce operating funds.
- introduction of a new Special Payments Relief Regulation. The regulation, similar to one introduced in 2008, allows employers to extend the solvency amortization period to 10 years from five.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2011/12/2011-12-12-124500-12771.html>

Saskatchewan

DISABILITIES

Announcement of enhancements to the Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) program. Beginning in January 2012, a \$50 per month benefit increase will be paid to more than 3,000 SAID recipients who live in residential care settings. The inheritance exemption under SAID will be broadened to include the proceeds of a life insurance policy. Over the next several months, an impact-based assessment will be used to evaluate the disability severity of people with disabilities who are living independently with the goal of expanding enrolment in the SAID program. Expanded enrolment will be followed by additional benefit increases. Over the next four years, benefits will increase by \$350 per month for people with disabilities who are living independently, by \$400 a month for couples with disabilities who are living independently and by \$100 per month for people with disabilities in residential care settings.

<http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=71ac42fe-174b-49f2-8e71-1f63eb3cdb4e>

HOUSING

The First-Time Home Buyers Tax Credit will provide a provincial non-refundable income tax credit of up to \$1,100 to eligible taxpayers, determined by applying a provincial tax credit rate of 11 percent to the first \$10,000 of an eligible home purchase. There will also be provisions to allow persons with a disability to qualify for the purchase of more accessible homes. The details of the program will be formally introduced as part of the 2012-13 Budget.

<http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=6438307e-7045-4653-806a-02941d19b4c3>



Alberta

DISABILITIES

Seniors and persons with disabilities will benefit from more than 500 new affordable supportive living and long-term care spaces. These projects will help build 511 new affordable supportive living and 30 long-term care spaces in Calgary, Okotoks, Strathmore, Edmonton, Villeneuve and Olds – all identified by Alberta Health Services as having the greatest need for additional spaces and services. Following a request for grant submissions, eight organizations will share \$48.2 million in funding for nine projects under the province's Affordable Supportive Living Initiative. <http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=317125707C17B-E333-B8B0-17B1EC881A4D77FF>

British Columbia

EDUCATION

Vulnerable students, small school districts, and remote and rural schools will benefit from increased funding consistency and support as a result of changes to the allocation of school district operating grants. http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2011EDUC0099-001605.htm

Overall school district operating grants and average per-pupil funding have increased again this year as BC continues to provide higher funding for K-12 education.

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

<http://education.library.ubc.ca/blog/more-funding-for-b-c-k-12-students/>

EMPLOYMENT

As part of Canada Starts Here: The BC Jobs Plan, more than 50 skills training programs are being delivered by 20 post-secondary institutions throughout the province under the government's Employment Skills Access Initiative. Eligible participants are provided with tuition-free, group-based training at public, post-secondary institutions to prepare them for entry or re-entry into the labour force. Programs are primarily focused on industries, sectors or occupations that are currently experiencing or are projected to experience labour or skills shortages. Participants must be unemployed and not have established an Employment Insurance claim in the past three years, or five years in the case of maternity/parental leave.

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

<http://commons.bcit.ca/update/2011/12/the-government-of-bc-invests-in-training-programs/>

SENIORS

About a quarter of seniors in residential care in will receive up to an additional \$600 a year. The change is the result of the province increasing the minimum monthly disposable income amount for residential care clients to accommodate a federal government supplement top-up of \$50. Under a revised residential care rate structure, the monthly minimum disposable income will rise to \$325, up from \$275. Raising the

minimum amount will allow low-income seniors to keep the new federal Guaranteed Income Supplement increase, announced in July 2011.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/new-residential-care-rates-benefit-low-income-seniors>

Yukon Territory

No updates this month.

Northwest Territories

CHILDREN

Creation of the Office of the Children's Lawyer. Under the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, ratified by Canada in 1991, children have a right to be heard in proceedings affecting them.

The internet link to this item is no longer operational.

\$615,000 in government funding to support physical activity programs offered in the after-school time period. The programs, delivered by schools throughout the territory, are supported by the department through the Active After School program.

<http://www.gov.nt.ca/newsroom/active-after-school-funding-announced-0>

HEALTH

Launch of the My Voice, My Choice campaign to help young people and those who support them to speak up about addictions. The campaign empowers young people to talk about how addictions in their homes or communities affect them and provides them with safe choices and information about where to go for help. My Voice, My Choice is part of the Healthy Choices Framework and the government's Choose brand, and builds on the community-based Not Us campaign. Where Not Us funds community-led projects, this new campaign facilitates discussion and messages at a personal level.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/my-voice-my-choice/>

Nunavut

No updates this month.