



Canada Social Report  
Provincial/Territorial  
Policy Monitor

February 2012



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

### EDUCATION

The province's budgets for school boards recognize continued declining student enrolments. Boards are expected to find savings of 1.3 percent on average, or \$13.4 million, on a \$1.1 billion budget.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20120210005>

Announcement of a \$6.7 million Kids and Learning First initiative that will:

- bring more services for children and families into schools in every county
- begin a Discovering Opportunities program for struggling Grade 9 students to introduce a manufacturing trades course linked to shipbuilding
- double the number of schools offering skilled trades courses
- triple the number of students taking courses through virtual school and double the number of its courses
- expand career development support, including more career coaching workshops for parents
- introduce a new grants program to allow more community groups to use schools for physical, cultural and education activities.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20120203002>

## New Brunswick

### HEALTH

Consultations have begun on the development of a prescription drug plan for uninsured residents (currently 30 percent of the population do not have prescription drug coverage). The initiative is being led by the Advisory Committee on Health Benefits established by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation. Input is being sought on the plan's design, eligibility and sharing of costs.

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news\\_release.2012.02.0140.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2012.02.0140.html)

### INCOME SECURITY

Minimum wage will increase by 50 cents to \$10 per hour as of Sunday, April 1. The minimum overtime wage rate will be \$15 per hour. An individual is entitled to receive this wage for any hours worked after 44 hours per week. Following consultations with stakeholders and the public, the province has decided not to proceed with a special minimum wage for servers earning tips.

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news\\_release.2012.02.0138.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2012.02.0138.html)



## Prince Edward Island

### DISABILITY

The Canadian Paraplegic Association of PEI is partnering with the PEI Council of People with Disabilities on the Discovering the Power in Me program. The project will use \$120,000 from the federal and provincial governments to help participants enhance their resumé and cover letter writing, improve time and stress management, develop self-assessment skills, as well as help them find and get jobs. Federal funding is being delivered through the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities. <http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=8241&dept=&lang=E>

## Québec

No updates this month.

## Ontario

### SENIORS

Ontario is moving ahead with a new Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit that would create thousands of jobs as it helps seniors make changes that allow them to live safely and more independently at home. Worth up to \$1,500 each year, the credit would be available to senior homeowners, tenants and people who share a home with a senior relative. It would support about \$800 million in home renovation activity and create an estimated 10,500 jobs per year. <http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2012/02/helping-seniors-live-independently.html>

## Manitoba

### EDUCATION

A new \$1.2-million Learning to Age 18 Coordinator Grant will assist school divisions with programming aimed at keeping youth in school. The grant provides further support for the Preparing Students for Success Act, passed in June 2011, which requires young people to continue pursuing their education until they graduate or turn 18. <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/02/2012-02-02-130700-13128.html>

### YOUTH

\$300,000 in funding over three years for the Respect in School program, a bilingual, online program that helps support adults working with students in a school environment to understand and respond to incidents of bullying, abuse, harassment and neglect. Participants receive a certificate upon completion of the program and users can continue for up to five years to access the course content, including curriculum updates. This is the first year of the province-wide implementation of the program. <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/02/2012-02-23-111300-13217.html>

## Saskatchewan

### HOUSING

Two funding enhancements totaling \$400,000 to the Encouraging Community Housing Options program will be made available to municipalities on a first come, first served basis. Funds will help more municipalities meet housing needs and sustain population and economic growth. The program will provide a cost-matched grant for two components:

- up to \$20,000 to complete a Housing Plan
- up to \$10,000 to implement strategies identified in a Housing Plan or other type of needs assessment.

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

Second round of funding announced by Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's Summit Action Fund. Eight projects will receive \$2,697,900 in government grants – more than double the amount provided in the first intake. The Fund is designed to increase housing supply across the province through flexible approaches and innovation in the housing sector. It provides a grant of 30 to 70 percent of eligible project costs, or to a maximum of \$500,000, to housing stakeholders who have creative housing solutions that are not covered by existing housing programs.

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

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2011/july/27/summit-action-fund--call-for-proposals>

## Alberta

### BUDGET

Bill 1, the *Results-Based Budgeting Act*, will establish a new approach to government budgeting that emphasizes successful service delivery outcomes, following a comprehensive review of all programs and services to ensure they address Albertans' priorities. [http://www.assembly.ab.ca/ISYS/LADDAR\\_files/docs/bills/bill/legisla-ture\\_27/session\\_5/20120207\\_bill-001.pdf](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/ISYS/LADDAR_files/docs/bills/bill/legisla-ture_27/session_5/20120207_bill-001.pdf)

### BUDGET

Approximately 75 percent of the province's budget is allocated to the core programs of health, education and human services. This includes new investments in health care, a strengthened child care subsidy program, and increases to monthly benefits for income supports clients and recipients of the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program.

Announced investment priorities:

- operating grants increased to school boards and post-secondary institutions
- municipalities to receive more than \$2 billion in 2012-13
- \$125 million in each of the next three years to support strategic health investments, including family care clinics, additional addictions



and mental health services, home care and enhanced rehabilitation programs.

- new funding for family care clinics, mental health and addictions services, home care and rehabilitation programs
- additional \$400 per month for Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) clients, effective April 1
- environmental monitoring enhanced
- over three years, \$16.5 billion investment in public infrastructure

#### Income security

- maximum monthly income benefit rises by \$400, effective April 1, for clients of the AISH program, and monthly income exemptions will double
- income support rates increase by an average of 5 percent, the first rate increase since November 2008
- child care subsidy program enhanced to include full subsidy for families with a household income of \$50,000 or less
- 6.6 percent funding increase for Alberta Seniors Benefit to \$351 million
- wage increases for contracted agency employees providing services to Albertans with developmental disabilities as well as vulnerable children, youth and families
- 12.3 percent funding increase for child intervention to a total of \$682 million to provide for higher caseloads and increased case complexity, wages for agency staff and foster care support.

#### Community

- \$14 million for the Safe Communities Innovation Fund to support crime prevention pilot projects and development of municipal, regional and Aboriginal community crime reduction and prevention plans
- \$110 million to provide outreach support services as well as housing for another 1,800 homeless Albertans, and more than 3,100 spaces in emergency and transitional shelters

<http://finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/budget2012/index.html>

#### EDUCATION

Changes to the province's postsecondary student aid program include the introduction of a flat-rate contribution of \$1,500 (reduced to zero for single parents); elimination of savings, RRSP, part-time earnings or parental contributions in determining loan eligibility; and new grants designed to encourage students to graduate and remain in Alberta. The new completion grants replace the previous remission program designed to ease a student's debt load on graduation. They will provide students who have loans with grants of between \$1,000 and \$2,000 upon graduation. A

new retention grant will provide graduates who work in Alberta for three years in essential occupations with an additional \$1,000. Professions included in the program will be announced later.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=3193477A1F572-CDA7-A9F2-43A508352EF97023>

Development of an interactive, online tool that provides parents information about what their child is learning and how they might be assessed for every subject and grade level. Replacing printed curriculum materials, it allows parents to create an individualized learning profile for children based on grade and subject level.

<http://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/news/84934/Online-Curriculum-Tool-for-Parents.htm>

#### HEALTH

Effective July 1, residents will be able to renew their prescriptions at their local pharmacies, adding 1,000 new locations. Pharmacists will be paid to provide the new service. Also on July 1, the province will reduce the price it pays for generic prescription drugs; the government will save about \$85 million in 2012-13. To help pharmacies in Alberta's remote communities expand their services and adjust to the lower generic drug prices, \$5.3 million dollars will be available in 2012-13 as part of a new three-year, \$15.9-million Remote Pharmacy Access Grant. This follows a \$5 million grant for rural pharmacies and more than \$55 million in transition support for all pharmacies provided since 2010. These initiatives are the first step towards full implementation of a new professional services compensation framework which recognizes pharmacists as full partners in delivering team-based care.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=3193577D3F312-EBAE-3E34-4AA1D8513857D09F>

#### THRONE SPEECH

The Speech commits to a program of building the province's competitiveness in a global economy. Social policy-related highlights include:

- three-year funding cycles for education, advanced education and municipalities
- Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce Strategy to increase the supply of highly skilled and innovative people, and high-performance work environments that make maximum use of innovation and technology
- a research agenda that will position the province on the international stage as a leader in helping to solve many of the world's challenges in energy, water, food, health and quality of life
- the introduction of family care clinics staffed by multidisciplinary teams of health care professionals; three pilot project clinic will be established in Spring 2012



- empowerment of the Alberta Health Quality Council to run an independent inquiry into various aspects of the health care system to make sure it delivers effective outcomes

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

## British Columbia

### BUDGET

The government will contain spending growth to an annual average of two percent while continuing to protect health and education funding. The Ministry of Health budget will increase \$1.5 billion over the three-year fiscal plan to nearly \$17.3 billion in 2014-15. The province will work to reduce the rate of growth in health spending through best practices and administrative savings. In education, districts will receive \$4.7 billion a year for the next three years and an additional \$165 million to establish a fund to deal directly with issues of class composition. The annual facilities grant for maintenance totals \$110 million in 2012-13.

New tax measures that benefit seniors and families including:

- BC First-Time New Home Buyers' Bonus of up to \$10,000
- BC Seniors' Home Renovation Tax Credit of up to \$1,000
- Children's Fitness Credit and the Children's Arts Credit.

[http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2012/newsrelease/2012\\_News\\_Release.pdf](http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2012/newsrelease/2012_News_Release.pdf)

### EDUCATION

\$3.4 million to continue funding Success By 6®, a multi-partner initiative that provides early childhood development opportunities for young children throughout the province. Funded programs include literacy, nutrition, children's play, parenting skills development and cultural programs. [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early\\_childhood/pdf/EarlyYearsAnnualReport2012.pdf](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/pdf/EarlyYearsAnnualReport2012.pdf)

## Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories

*No updates this month.*

## Nunavut

### POVERTY REDUCTION

The territory released *The Makimaniq Plan: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction*, setting out goals the government and its partners hope to meet over the next 18 months. Makimaniq, the Inuktitut term for "empowerment" calls on all residents to play a role in reducing poverty across the territory. One of the major goals of the plan is the government's pledge to draft poverty reduction legislation, which would develop policies and ensure long-term progress on the plan.

[http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674gn\\_releases\\_action\\_plan\\_to\\_tackle\\_poverty/](http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674gn_releases_action_plan_to_tackle_poverty/)