



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

April 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

BUDGET

Budget 2012: People and Prosperity – Responsible Investments for a Secure Future reports cumulative surpluses of \$5.5 billion in six of the last seven years, with a corresponding reduction in net debt of \$4.1 billion to March 31, 2012. The projected surplus for 2011-12 is \$776.4 million. Consistent with the government's Blue Book commitment, the equivalent of a third of the surplus will be invested to fund public service pension plans. The Budget reflects the end of offset payments under the Atlantic Accord, amounting to a reduction in revenue of \$536.1 million in 2012-13. Both the Terra Nova and White Rose projects are scheduled for maintenance shutdowns during the year, further constraining provincial revenue. As a result, the province is expecting a deficit of \$258.4 million for 2012-13. A return to surplus is anticipated by 2014-15.

Social policy-related Budget measures include:

- \$3 billion to enhance access to health care in areas such as long-term care and community support, breast cancer screening and shorter wait times
- \$150.8 million in the Poverty Reduction Strategy, an increase of approximately \$11.3 million from last year
- \$9 million in new funding to increase apprenticeship training, support post-secondary institutions and students, and enhance workforce development
- an additional \$8.8 million for the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, bringing the total new investment to \$41.8 million in three years
- \$3.7 million to provide a 35 percent reduction to seniors ages 65 and older on driver's license and vehicle registration fees, and other licenses and other activity fees (e.g., hunting, fishing, cutting wood, camping)
- continuing tax initiatives such as the Residential Energy Rebate, supplementary Child Care Tax Credit, Personal Income Tax reductions and Low Income Seniors' Benefit.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2012/exec/0424n02.htm>

DISABILITY

Launch of Access. Inclusion. Equality., the provincial strategy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. \$6.5 million in Budget 2012 will support action in five strategic directions:

- Creating a Positive Image of Disability – promoting positive attitudes and helping communities understand barriers
- Moving Forward Together: Nothing About Us Without Us – ensuring individuals have the opportunity to identify their own needs and are engaged in finding solutions



- Accessibility for All in the Built Environment – supporting the removal of barriers to accessing community activities, employment, transportation and education
- Strengthening Disability-Related Supports – ensuring people can participate in education, employment, recreational and community opportunities
- Delivering Services with Dignity, Fairness and Respect – ensuring everyone has equal access to services.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2012/aes/0419n03.htm>

HEALTH

\$180,000, the provincial government will provide grant funding to 10 mental health and addictions grass roots groups to support early interventions through community-based initiatives.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2012/health/0418n05.htm>

SENIORS

Budget 2012 announces that \$101 million is being invested to strengthen the long-term care and community support system. This includes:

- \$18.3 million will respond to the significant growth in the Home Support Program over the past number of years and further build upon improvements recently made to the program
- \$1.9 million for assessment tools (\$1.3 million will continue the implementation of the interRAI assessment instrument; \$612,000 to add 100 new portable subsidies to the Personal Care Home Program to increase individuals' ability to choose their preferred personal care home)
- \$81.1 million for the ongoing development of five long-term care infrastructure projects

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2012/health/0424n10.htm>

Nova Scotia

BUDGET

The 2012-13 Budget projects a deficit of \$211.2 million (down from \$215.8 million deficit anticipated in the province's four-year fiscal plan). Revenues are estimated at \$9.3 billion, an increase of \$391.7 million over 2011-12 estimates. Total expenses for the year are budgeted at \$9.5 billion. Departmental expenses are budgeted at \$8.5 billion, up \$189.9 million from 2011-12.

Social policy-related Budget announcements include:

- increases to the Income Assistance Personal Allowance, Nova Scotia Child Benefit, Affordable Living Tax Credit and Poverty Reduction Credit
- as introduced in 2011-12, the province will continue to refund the

provincial portion of income tax paid by seniors who receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement

- investments in the new Kids and Learning First plan and increasing the per-student funding to its highest level ever
- provision of Better Care Sooner through investments in Collaborative Emergency Centres, hospitals and treatment options, and mental health and addictions
- reductions to personal income tax levels: dependent amount and spouse amount will increase to \$8,481 to match the basic personal amount. Additionally, the disability amount will increase to \$7,341.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20120403002>

HOUSING

The province is doubling the First-Time Home Buyers Rebate to a maximum of \$3,000.

<http://gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20120404005>

INCOME SECURITY

The minimum wage in Nova Scotia increased to \$10.15 on April 1. The minimum wage for workers with less than three months' experience in the work for which they were hired rose to \$9.65.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20120330006>

Announcement of a one percentage point reduction in the HST in 2014 and another in 2015. The *Income Tax Act* is amended to reduce the rate of corporate income tax for small business to 3.5 percent, effective January 1, 2013. The *2012 Public Service Superannuation Act* is the next step in the move to joint trusteeship that began in 2010. It will create the Public Service Superannuation Plan Trustee Inc., which will have directors representing employers, employees and retirees, and will assume responsibility for the Public Service Superannuation Plan. The *Nova Scotia Pension Service Corporation Act* will devolve the Nova Scotia Pension Agency from the government. The new non-profit corporation will provide pension and investment administration services for all plans currently served by the pension agency.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20120412007>

SENIORS

The provincial Age Friendly Grant Program (introduced in 2008 to improve infrastructure accessibility for seniors) is being further adapted to support municipalities planning for services and structures that are more accessible and inclusive of seniors.

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20120420001>

SOCIAL ECONOMY

Social enterprises now have access to small business loans through the provincially funded Credit Union Small Business Loan Program. The province is providing a \$2-million loan guarantee for the program which



is available to any qualified social enterprise. The two-year pilot program will provide a loan guarantee of up to \$150,000 for social enterprises. The program will be offered through the network of Nova Scotia Credit Unions and will be administered by the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council. <http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/details.asp?id=20120411001>

New Brunswick

EDUCATION

Wage Gap scholarships (introduced in 2006) are open to students entering their first year at the province's colleges to explore careers in sectors in which women and men have traditionally been underrepresented. Occupations in which women or men make up less than 25 percent of the total workforce are considered non-traditional. Each scholarship has a maximum value of \$2,600, with up to \$150,000 being awarded per year. http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2012.04.0347.html

HEALTH

A new Office of Health System Renewal is being established to provide focused leadership and accelerate efforts to build a sustainable health care system. http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2012.04.03550.html

Prince Edward Island

EMPLOYMENT

The Graduate Mentorship Program will provide graduates with a work experience in the private sector related to their skills and education. The program will be open to Islanders who have completed their degree or diploma on- or off-Island within the last five years. Private sector employers that are willing to provide a mentorship and employment opportunity to a recent graduate will receive a 70 percent wage subsidy for a period of one year. <http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&dept=&newsnumber=8320&lang=E>

HEALTH

The province will invest \$1.7 billion in health care over three years while holding annual growth in expenditures to 4.1 percent this year and 3.5 percent in the following two years. Expenditures have increased by an average 6.4 percent each year since 2007, much higher than provincial revenue or economic growth. The province will add 76 long-term care beds, undertake a complete review of Mental Health and Addictions services, implement a province-wide Wellness Strategy and develop fair generic drug pricing legislation. The province is moving to a public model

for children's dental health services. Coverage will be income-based and will be limited to families that do not have private health insurance. *The internet link to this item is no longer operational.*

POVERTY REDUCTION

Announcement of Women Moving On, a 24-month federal/provincial initiative aimed at giving low-income women in the Summerside area an opportunity to gain better knowledge, apply new skills and overcome barriers to the challenges of accessing employment and strengthening their economic security. The project includes training sessions for women ages 30 to 54, and will also create a support network for participants. <http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=8322&dept=&lang=E>

THRONE SPEECH

The Speech outlines four priority areas:

- economic growth – a strengthened economic development strategy will focus on private sector job creation, export development and return on government investments; the province expects to see employment levels increase from 72,000 to 75,000 jobs and a rise in the provincial GDP from \$5.3 billion to \$6 billion
- fiscal balance – a multi-year plan will return the province to fiscal balance and economic stability. The provincial government is seeking a removal of the ceiling on equalization
- education – priorities will include student achievement, post-secondary education and skills development
- health – focus on accessibility and affordability through the realignment of health services and improved use of existing health resources.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=8308&dept=&lang=E>

Québec

HEALTH

The province introduced Bill 60, an *Act to modernize health and safety in the workplace*. The bill has four main components: broadening the scope of application of preventive mechanisms, enhanced service to injured, governance of the province's occupational health and safety commission (*Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, CSST*) and protection of domestic workers.

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

<http://www.assnat.qc.ca/fr/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projets-loi-39-2.html>

An additional \$50 million was allocated to the Fund for the Development of Sport and Physical Activity for infrastructure projects, sports and rec-



reation. \$374 million and \$54 million had been invested in two previous phases of funding.

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

http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/PSG/politiques_orientations/rapportAnnuelGestionMels2011-2012.pdf

SENIORS

A report by the Québec Ombudsman on home care details increased wait times, addition of exclusion criteria and reduced service hours (through the imposition of ceilings hours).

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

https://protecteurducitoyen.qc.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/rapports_annuels/2012-2013/rapport-gestion-2012-2013.pdf

Ontario

BUDGET

In order for the Budget to pass, a Liberal-NDP agreement will see those who make more than \$500,000 a year pay a two-percentage point surtax on their incomes. All of the new revenue generated (\$470 million in 2012-13) will go toward deficit reduction. The surtax will be eliminated when the Budget is balanced in five years. The Budget also includes a \$20-million transition fund to benefit Northern and rural hospitals. Ontario Works rates will increase by one percent in the fall of 2012. Funding for these measures would come from savings realized elsewhere in the Budget.

<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2012/04/accelerating-ontarios-balanced-budget-plan.html>

Amendments to Budget 2012-13 propose that high-income seniors pay a greater share of their drug costs starting August 2014:

- for single seniors with income of more than \$100,000 the deductible will be \$100 plus three percent of net income over \$100,000
- for senior couples with a combined income of more than \$160,000, the deductible will be \$200 plus three percent of their family net income over \$160,000
- drug costs for seniors below these net income levels would remain the same.

This measure would save \$30 million in 2014-15 and help the government support a new Seniors Strategy, which calls for expanding house calls, increasing access to home care and improving coordination among hospitals, primary and community care.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2012/04/a-fairer-drug-system-for-seniors.html>

The government will make several improvements to health care in the coming months including: adding hundreds of new nurses to community and long-term care, expanding home care services, increasing support

for mental health and addiction and increasing access to telemedicine in Northern and rural communities.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2012/04/statement-from-ontarios-health-minister.html>

INCOME SECURITY

As announced in Budget 2012, the government is proposing reforms to the framework that governs public sector pension plans.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2012/04/consultations-on-public-sector-pension-plans-begin.html>

SENIORS

The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority (created in 2010) now requires that all retirement homes apply for a license in order to operate in Ontario. Greater protections for seniors will include:

- a Residents' Bill of Rights, which must be posted in every licensed retirement home
- retirement home operators' duty to protect residents from abuse and neglect
- staff training on abuse, fire prevention and safety and whistle blowing protections.

<http://news.ontario.ca/oss/en/2012/04/ontario-protecting-vulnerable-seniors.html>

Manitoba

BUDGET

Core government spending is decreasing by 3.9 percent. Cost reduction measures include:

- reducing the number of regional health authorities to 11 to five
- cutting the number of Crown corporations by merging the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission and Manitoba Lotteries Corporation
- reducing the number of government-appointed agencies, boards and commissions by 20 percent
- continuing a 20 percent rollback on salaries for ministers and freezing wage increases for MLAs.

Social policy-related measures include:

- strengthening health care by ensuring cancer drugs are free for all Manitobans and taking new steps forward to give every resident access to a family doctor by 2015
- making it easier to become an apprentice in rural and Northern communities, and ensuring that universities have predictable funding
- introducing legislation to guarantee Manitoba families will pay the



lowest combined bills in the country for electricity, home heating and auto insurance

- meeting the commitment to fund 6,500 child care spaces this year
- ncreasing funding for affordable and social housing.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/04/2012-04-17-144700-13733.html>

CHILD CARE

Province announces \$9.1 million in funding to child care centres for 900 spaces in 2012; \$17 million (2 percent increase) over two years for new capital and operational funding for child care centres and homes; and improved subsidies for those most in need. Now in its fourth year, Family Choices, Manitoba's five-year early learning and child care initiative, is providing new funding for 6,500 child care spaces by the end of 2013.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/04/2012-04-05-113400-13612.html>

HEALTH

Celebration of the province's first Caregiver Recognition Day to recognize the social and economic contributions that informal and unpaid caregivers make to society. Roughly one-quarter of residents 65 and over require unpaid help from another person with at least one daily activity such as preparing meals, doing housework, getting to appointments or with providing personal care such as bathing, dressing or eating. In 2010, more than 20 percent of Manitobans 45 and over reported helping a family member or friend who needed assistance due to a long-term health condition or physical limitation.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/04/2012-04-03-112100-13593.html>

All Manitoba regional health authority boards have approved the government's proposal to reduce the number of authorities from 11 to five, enabling the province to take the next steps in the merger process.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/04/2012-04-24-144300-13836.html>

YOUTH

\$225,000 more from Budget 2012 to increase the number of mentoring opportunities for students. Manitoba Mentors connects youth with mentors from businesses, labour and not-for-profit organizations to help them explore career options. 1,500 students will be involved by the end of June 2013 and 2,500 students by 2014. The Artists in Schools program will also receive an additional \$200,000. This program brings together artists with students and teachers through special residencies in schools around the province. In 2010-11, more than 200 Artists in the Schools and ArtsSmarts took place in Winnipeg, rural and northern schools, reaching more than 30,000 students.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2012/04/2012-04-20-114700-13794.html>

Saskatchewan

EDUCATION

\$4.3 million for the First Nations and Métis Achievement Fund and Individual Achievement accounts. Now in their second year, these programs provide funding to school divisions and community-based organizations for initiatives to improve educational outcomes for First Nations and Métis students.

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

<http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/newsreleases-2012>

HOUSING

The Saskatchewan Home Repair Program and the Conversion Initiative have been redesigned. The Saskatchewan Home Repair Program was formerly a suite of 10 different repair and adaptation programs. The Home Repair Program will assist moderate-income homeowners and rental property owners housing low-income tenants to repair and/or adapt their dwellings so they are not lost from the market. The Conversion Initiative will focus on encouraging development of new rental housing by private and non-profit groups by converting non-residential space to residential use. The total cost of these redesigned programs will be \$6.7 million in 2012-13.

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

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/live/housing-municipal-planning-and-public-works/home-repairs-and-renovations>

Alberta

No updates this month.

British Columbia

COMMUNITY

\$5.5 million from civil forfeiture proceeds will help 185 community groups, local governments and policing agencies reduce youth involvement in gangs, prevent violence against women and children, and further crime prevention.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/55-million-helps-local-safety-efforts-go-like-gangbusters.html>

EDUCATION

As part of its Education Plan, the Ministry of Education has established the BC Rural Education Partner's Council to create an overarching rural education strategy. Challenges include declining enrollment, difficulty attracting specialty teachers, aging facilities and Aboriginal student achievement.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/a-new-dialogue-on-rural-education.html>

Announcement of a \$20-million, one-time contribution toward capital costs of the Pacific Autism Family Centre. The facility aims to be a centre



of excellence and a resource for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/province-invests-20-million-toward-autism-centre.html>

EMPLOYMENT

85 new WorkBC Employment Services Centres and 114 satellite offices opened across the province on April 2, offering a suite of employment programs with access through a single door. Job seekers meet with an employment advisor to identify the supports and services they need to find and keep a job. Depending on eligibility, clients get help building their résumé, taking additional training or building other skills for a successful job search. Efforts have been made to accommodate people with disabilities, language issues and other barriers.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/new-employment-program-helps-people-find-and-keep-jobs.html>

\$10 million in one-time funding to 16 public post-secondary institutions to prepare workers for jobs in their regions. Funds will go toward short-term training determined on an institution-to-institution basis to ensure it meets local training needs.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/10-million-helps-students-get-skills-for-todays-jobs.html>

Up to 300 young families and youth in government care will benefit from a Family and Youth Partnership pilot project aimed at helping them find employment and build healthier futures. The project will focus on eligible young families on income assistance, and youth transitioning from care or involved with the child welfare system who appear at risk of transferring onto income assistance. Using a “key worker” model to create individual case plans, this project connects individuals and families to available services and supports.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/pilot-aims-to-brighten-futures-for-families-youth.html>

HEALTH

Residents with terminal illnesses, their loved ones and caregivers now have access to after-hours support in their homes with the expansion of the After-Hours Palliative Nursing Service. Fraser Health created the service in 2005 and it is now available province-wide.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/families-to-benefit-from-expanded-end-of-life-services.html>

The province’s Autism Outreach Program is beginning a second phase, focusing on rural and remote areas. It includes two-day workshops, resources and e-training for families.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/autism-outreach-program-reaches-out-to-rural-bc.html>

\$1 million to further support school children’s access to fresh BC-grown fruit and vegetable snacks in the classroom. This funding is in addition to a \$3-million expansion announced in May 2011, and will support the expansion of the BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program to include more public and First Nations schools across the province.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/1m-boost-for-school-fruit-and-veggie-program.html>

Introduction of the *Pharmaceutical Services Act* that will shift the \$1-billion PharmaCare program from one which relies on government policy to a program protected by legislation. PharmaCare helps residents with the cost of eligible prescription drugs and designated medical supplies, and provides reasonable access to drug therapy through seven drug plans. As of April 2, 2012, generic drugs cost 35 percent of the brand name price. Through legislation, the province plans to lower generic drug prices to be in line with other jurisdictions.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/bc-moves-to-protect-pharmicare-lower-drug-prices.html>

HOUSING

Effective April 1, 2012:

- BC’s new housing HST rebate threshold increases to \$850,000. Residents buying a new home as a primary residence may be eligible for a rebate of the provincial portion of HST up to \$42,500, based on this higher threshold. More than 90 percent of newly-built homes are below this threshold. The HST does not apply to resale housing
- purchasers of new secondary vacation or recreational homes outside the Greater Vancouver and Capital regional districts may be eligible to claim a provincial grant of up to \$42,500 based on a threshold price of \$850,000
- a new BC Seniors’ Home Renovation Tax Credit of up to \$1,000 annually will be available to help with the cost of permanent home renovations
- first-time buyers of newly-built homes may also be eligible to receive the temporary BC First-Time New Home Buyers’ Bonus of up to \$10,000.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/03/new-housing-relief-measures-take-effect-april-1.html>

The province has transferred ownership and management of 75 properties for Aboriginal families on Vancouver Island to M’akola Housing Society. This action completes the first phase in transferring more than 500 Rural Native Housing properties in 112 rural communities throughout BC to Aboriginal non-profit housing providers. The 75 Vancouver Island properties have an assessed value of almost \$17 million.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/housing-transferred-to-aboriginal-provider.html>



INCOME SECURITY

Introduction of legislation to modernize the *Pension Benefits Standards Act* and allow the private sector to offer a wider choice of pension plan options.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/government-encouraging-wider-private-sector-pension-coverage.html>

SOCIAL ECONOMY

BC Social Innovation Council presented its action plan which charts a course for government, businesses, non-profits and communities. Its recommendations focus on five key areas:

- supporting social enterprise
- legislative and regulatory environment
- social innovation labs and design processes
- engaging everyone
- learning and research.

The province has also established a Social Innovation Assistant Deputy Minister's Committee, with the goal of maximizing social innovation within government and acting on the recommendations of the new Council and previous committee recommendations.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/recommendations-chart-the-course-for-social-innovation.html>

POVERTY REDUCTION

The province and the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) have identified seven communities to participate in a pilot project in which poverty reduction strategies will target the unique needs of families living in poverty in those communities. Prince George, Cranbrook, Port Hardy, Surrey, New Westminster, Stewart and Kamloops were recommended by the UBCM to reflect a mix of metro, urban, rural and remote communities across BC. The Ministry of Children and Family Development is appointing seven community poverty strategy consultants to forge partnerships with local governments, community organizations and local businesses. The consultants will lead community teams in formulating action plans that address the needs of families living in poverty. Action plans with measurable targets will be developed over the summer with implementation scheduled for September 2012.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2012/04/seven-communities-to-pilot-poverty-reduction-strategies.html>

Yukon Territory, Nunavut

No updates this month.

Northwest Territories

HOUSING

In response to a recently-completed Shelter Policy Review, the Northwest Territory Housing Corporation released *Building for the Future – Northern Solutions for Northern Housing*, a strategic framework for housing delivery. A new, predictable rent scale will be introduced in July 2012 and will apply to approximately 2,400 public housing units. Other priority areas include:

- strengthening public housing
- improving homeownership supports
- increasing housing options in non-market communities
- improving housing services
- strengthening the approach to homelessness and transition housing
- addressing housing challenges for the working poor
- developing infrastructure solutions based on individual and community needs
- addressing declining federal funding.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/building-for-the-future-northern-solutions-for-northern-housing-and-new-public-housing-rent-scale/>