



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

December 2013



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

CAREGIVING

The province announced the 18-month trial of a new Paid Family Caregiving Option to increase a client's flexibility and choice. Those assessed as eligible for home support will be able to hire a family member – parent, child, grandparent, grandchildren, sibling or relative residing in the same home. (Spouses and common-law partners are excluded as they are considered natural caregivers.) In January 2014, training will be provided to regional health authority staff members who oversee the Home Support programming. By March 2014, the option will be made available to 250 new home support clients. An evaluation will be carried out after an initial 18-month period to determine interest, uptake and satisfaction.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2013/health/1209n02.htm>

CHILDREN

Introduction of a new *Adoption Act*. The proposed legislation contains updates to streamline and expedite the adoption process, ensure the adoption program is progressive, clarify and modernize the law respecting adoptions, and align principles with the *Children and Youth Care and Protection Act*.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2013/cyfs/1203n08.htm>

The province launches a revised Safe and Caring Schools Policy. It will guide new school-based protocols and practices to combat all forms of bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour, and is designed to provide students with the ability to recognize and avoid activities which can place them in harm's way.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2013/edu/1202n02.htm>

FAMILIES

The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services began a new fly in-fly out model to provide more supports and consistency for the children, youth and families of the Innu community of Natuashish.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2013/cyfs/1223n06.htm>

HEALTH

The Atlantic Student Drug Use Survey is a self-reported, anonymous survey of junior and high school students in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Survey results indicate that alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use, such as LSD, among youth in NL is at its lowest since 1996. While cannabis usage remained the same, the age of first use was 14.2, up from 13.5 in 2007. Students also reported reductions in driving after alcohol and cannabis use.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2013/health/1218n05.htm>

New Brunswick

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Announcement of \$45,000 to help First Nations Education Initiative Inc. develop an interactive web-based support system for First Nation



students. The PSE Helper website links students with the information and resources they need to make informed post-secondary education decisions.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2013.12.1245.html

HEALTH

Through the New Brunswick Health Research Foundation, a \$2.4-million provincial investment will help the province's bioscience sector leverage and build new partnerships with federal granting councils, health charities and the pharmaceutical sector with a focus on patient-oriented research.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2013.12.1244.html

Introduction of the New Brunswick Drug Plan that will cover drugs listed on the provincial Prescription Drug Program formulary. There will be no deductible and coverage will not be denied because of age, gender or pre-existing medical conditions. Some 70,000 families previously not covered by a drug program will be able to obtain the medications they require.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2013.12.1269.html

The province is creating a network of excellence that will provide a range of services for children and youth with complex mental health and behavioural needs. The goal is to enable these children and youth to get the "step-up" services they need and then enable them to "step-down" to the services available in the community where their families and support networks are located. This continuum will provide primary, secondary and tertiary levels of services that increase in intensity as required and decreases when those services are no longer needed.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2013.12.1280.html

Nova Scotia

HEALTH

An independent review of Halifax region's youth mental health and addictions services found 14 areas for improvement including recruitment and retention of doctors, silos among those delivering services, and gaps in the delivery of physical services for 17- to 19-year-olds. Steps to redress the issues are under way, including the establishment of an urgent care clinic and the expansion of the Strongest Families program and the mental health crisis line to the entire province.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20131211003>

Prince Edward Island

No updates this month.

Québec

INCOME SECURITY

Adoption of Bill 39, *An Act Respecting Voluntary Retirement Savings Plans (VRSP)*. Plans will be introduced beginning July 1, 2014, giving all Quebec workers access to a retirement savings plan. VRSPs allow workers, particularly employees of small- to medium-sized enterprises and self-employed workers, to save for retirement in a structured framework, through payroll deductions or periodic contributions, while enjoying benefits unique to group plans.

<http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=5&file=2013C26A.PDF>

Ontario

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Ontario is creating a special advisory group to examine important issues affecting Aboriginal Peoples in the justice system. Members will consider ways to improve how the Ontario justice system impacts Aboriginal Peoples and provide advice to the Attorney General.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mag/en/2013/12/building-a-better-justice-system-for-aboriginal-peoples.html>

CHILD CARE

Ontario introduces Bill 43, *The Child Care Modernization Act*. The Bill would enact the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013*, repeal the *Day Nurseries Act (1946)* and amend the *Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007* and the *Education Act*, and make consequential amendments to other Acts.

<http://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2013/12/child-care-modernization-act.html>

EDUCATION

The province introduced new rules that will make it easier for students to pay their tuition and help ensure postsecondary education continues to be affordable. Beginning in fall 2015, university students will be charged on a per-credit basis if they take less than a 70 percent course load; in 2016, that number will rise to 80 percent. By 2016, university students taking a 70 percent course load could save as much as \$1,700 per year compared to the flat rate they may currently be paying. Students with a disability will be charged tuition only on a per-credit basis, regardless of their course load.

<http://news.ontario.ca/tcu/en/2013/12/fairer-fees-for-university-and-college-students.html>

EMPLOYMENT

The province is introducing legislation to provide more protection to the province's vulnerable workforce while increasing fairness for both employees and businesses.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2013/12/protecting-ontarios-vulnerable-workers.html>



GOVERNANCE

With more than half of all government spending going to salaries and benefits, the government is taking two new measures to manage public sector compensation costs. In early 2014, Ontario will introduce new legislation to directly control the compensation of senior executives across the broader public sector, including hard caps (maximum amounts that may not be exceeded for any reason).

<http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2013/12/new-measures-to-manage-public-sector-compensation-costs.html>

The *Strengthening and Improving Government Act* was introduced to amend legislation in a number of areas, including *The Pensions Benefit Act*. This Act would be amended to clarify spousal entitlements to pre- and post-retirement death benefits. Additional amendments would clarify individuals' eligibility to consolidate their pension benefits.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mgs/en/2013/12/strengthening-and-improving-government.html>

HEALTH

Ontario is joining Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Quebec by taking steps to address gaps in health coverage for refugee claimants. Through the new Ontario Temporary Health Program, refugee claimants who are not eligible for health care under the new federal rules or through other government programs will be able to access most primary care and urgent hospital services as well as medication coverage. Effective January 1, 2014, the program will help reduce unnecessary emergency room visits and stress on health providers by providing vulnerable refugee claimants with basic health care services as soon as a health issue surfaces.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2013/12/reinstating-access-to-health-care-for-refugee-claimants.html>

As part of the rollout of the province's five-year poverty reduction strategy, Ontario is expanding eligibility for free dental care to 70,000 more children and youth in low-income families. Starting April 2014, the province will increase access to oral health services such as cleanings, diagnostic services and basic treatment by expanding eligibility for the Healthy Smiles Ontario program.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2013/12/ontario-providing-free-dental-care-to-more-kids.html>

The province and counsel for the plaintiffs in the Rideau Regional Centre and Southwestern Regional Centre class action lawsuits have reached tentative settlements totalling \$32.7 million.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mag/en/2013/12/tentative-settlements-reached-in-rideau-regional-centre-and-southwestern-regional-centre-class-action.html>

RECREATION

A new program, Pan Am/Parapan Am Kids, will build excitement for the Games and inspire young people to lead healthy and active lives.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mtc/en/2013/12/bringing-the-2015-pan-ampara-pan-am-games-to-ontarios-kids.html>

Manitoba

EDUCATION

Announcement of a new 57,000 square foot campus expansion and skills training for students from northern Manitoba who study and train at Frontier Collegiate. The Institute has been offering educational opportunities for students in more than 30 communities for almost 50 years. The expanded campus will include a power mechanic facility that will provide enhanced skill-based training for students, and skill development and training opportunities relevant to northern rural communities.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2013/12/2013-12-02-151700-19794.html>

HOUSING

Post-secondary students who live in provincial subsidized housing, have achieved high marks and have shown a commitment to their communities receive BUILDINGFoundations Bursaries to help them pay for their schooling. Since 2008, the Bursary fund has been managed through a partnership with the Winnipeg Foundation.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2013/12/2013-12-06-112400-19855.html>

The province's new rental housing construction tax credit is expected to encourage private and nonprofit housing developers to build more affordable rental housing, including nonprofit cooperatives. Developers can offset their investments through a tax credit of up to eight percent, to a maximum of \$12,000 per unit.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2013/12/2013-12-11-105400-19910.html>

WOMEN

Winnipeg has been selected as the first city in Canada to join the UN Global Safe Cities Initiative to reduce sexual violence against women and girls. Manitoba Status of Women is partnering with UN Women, representatives from the Winnipeg Police Board, Winnipeg Police Service and community groups on this initiative. This steering committee will identify which locations in Winnipeg require targeted efforts to address this serious crime.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2013/12/2013-12-10-111800-19890.html>



Saskatchewan

COMMUNITY

Nine communities across the province will receive \$13.6 million to continue targeted policing initiatives. This funding is part of a total commitment of more than \$14.7 million that supports targeted policing initiatives, aboriginal policing and recruitment, police and community boards, and the Saskatchewan and Canadian Associations of Chiefs of Police.

The internet link to this item is no longer operational.

HEALTH

The province introduced *The Mental Health Services Amendment Act*, updating the 27-year-old *Mental Health Services Act*. The amendments are meant to improve timely access to mental health services for vulnerable people, support integration of mental health and addiction services and information sharing, and resolve governance and administration issues affecting the ministry and health regions.

<http://www.qp.gov.sk.ca/documents/English/Statutes/Statutes/M13-1.pdf>

Alberta

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

The province is appointing two Aboriginal women's councils to help the economic and social aspirations of Aboriginal women in Alberta.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=3552471A4D81A-C496-0D97-C0C881353154D3F4>

GOVERNANCE

Compensation, including salary, benefit and severance amounts for government employees with base salaries above \$100,000 will now be publicly disclosed. Where applicable, an employee's contract and termination agreement will also be posted.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=355997DD-BE612-C820-A5DB-7725CE0BD6A68E6B>

HEALTH

The province is offering the human papillomavirus vaccine to male students in schools next fall.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=35503A3262125-A345-59F9-BCA57FD3EEF7375B>

Appointment of the province's first Health Advocate, who will be charged with setting up an office to help Albertans navigate the health care system.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=35596512239E7-E47D-B106-36DEBCCE4F97774F>

YOUTH

\$750,000 from the province's Community Facility Enhancement Program grant to assist with the purchase of an Edmonton facility for iHuman, an organization that provides crisis intervention and art therapy programming for youth that are victims of neglect and abuse, homelessness,

addiction, mental and physical illness and those involved in high-risk lifestyles including gang activity.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=356007E-D4828A-BFDD-4B8A-247258C8FBA511FB>

British Columbia

DISABILITY

A regulation change will benefit people who are initially found ineligible for assistance on their original application and have to go through what is called a reconsideration process. Starting December 2013, all payments for successful reconsiderations will begin no later than the date the decision was required by legislated time limits. Payments will be backdated for anyone who has to wait longer than the legislated time limits before receiving approval. Reconsiderations are available so that applicants have a formal process to question ministry decisions. The legislated time limits for the ministry to respond are within 10 business days for most cases and up to 20 business days for more complex cases. The province will be reviewing its disability assistance application process to determine ways to improve the decision-making process from the time a person first applies for assistance.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2013/12/improvements-to-income-assistance-reconsiderations.html>

\$450,000 for projects aimed at increasing community inclusion and accessibility. Distributed through the Disability Without Poverty Network, the funding will support community groups to create projects that offer participation in volunteering, organized community activities, employment, learning new skills and building personal supports.

http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2013-2017/2013sd-si0007-001929.htm

HOUSING

In 2013, the province invested \$400 million to provide a range of social housing programs for families, seniors, people with disabilities and those who are homeless. Highlights include:

- finalizing the contract on a \$143-million project to renovate and restore 13 provincially owned Single Room Occupancy Hotels in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside
- providing rental assistance for 27,000 low-income seniors and working families to help them keep the cost of private market rentals more affordable
- opening 20 new buildings, adding nearly 1,000 new units of affordable housing and beginning construction on another 14 buildings in communities throughout BC
- transferring all remaining Aboriginal Housing to Aboriginal housing providers, 4,200 units in total. This Aboriginal self-management model for social housing is the first of its kind in Canada



- breaking ground on the first building under a partnership between the province, Government of Canada and Columbia Basin Trust to support affordable housing projects for Columbia Basin residents in need. The Salmo project will provide 20 apartments for seniors and eight town-homes for families.

Launched in 2006, Housing Matters BC has invested more than \$2.5 billion in housing programs. This investment has helped create in excess of 21,000 new units of affordable housing, renovate and upgrade existing housing stock, and expand services to reach more people in need, increasing the number of households served by 20 percent.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2013/12/looking-back-on-affordable-housing.html>

Yukon Territory

CHILDREN

Passage of the *Child Support Administrative Recalculation Act*. When enacted in June 2014, the Act will create a recalculation service for child support payments when the income of a parent changes. The service will save court costs and time when parents want to update child support payments.

http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/13-318.html#.Uq8X6_RDuoE

Northwest Territories

GOVERNANCE

Introduction of Bill C-15 which includes legislative amendments needed to implement devolution. Bill C-15 amends federal legislation and creates a new *Northwest Territories Act* – legislative changes needed to implement the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement. The Devolution Agreement will transfer federal authorities for public land, water and resource management to the Government of the Northwest Territories on April 1, 2014.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/gnwt-welcomes-introduction-of-federal-devolution-legislation/>

POVERTY REDUCTION

Twenty-four delegates at the NWT Anti-Poverty Roundtable signed an Anti-Poverty Charter and committed to plans of action. The charter confirms participants' commitments to work together at all levels to develop a territorial action plan. Over the coming months, the GNWT will continue to invite stakeholders to sign the charter and propose actions to eliminate poverty in the NWT.

Charter link: http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/anti-poverty_agcord.pdf

Strategy link: http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/13-06-06td_97-174.pdf

Nunavut

No updates this month.