



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

February 2014



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.

New Brunswick

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The Budget reduces the provincial deficit, freezes taxes and provides strategic investments in programs, infrastructure and innovation. It presents a multi-year plan to return to balanced budgets by 2017-18. Social policy-related expenditures include:

- \$16 million as part of a five-year, \$80-million investment in innovation
- social assistance rates will be increased a further three percent this April after being increased by four percent last fall
- \$27 million for the New Brunswick Drug Plan which will provide affordable drug insurance to 70,000 families currently without drug coverage
- \$7.2 million for the new Home First Strategy, designed to help improve seniors' health and keep them in their own homes longer than before
- improving the Small Business Investor Tax Credit, which will give increased access to capital for small businesses and allow for the creation of community economic development corporations
- funding for those living with and supporting adult children with disabilities
- \$1.09 billion will be invested in public education and early childhood development.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2014.02.0116.html

DISABILITY

Announcement of \$225,000 to create and implement the Portable Rent Supplement for Persons with Disabilities Program. The monthly supplement will be assigned to a person rather than to a landlord. The objective is to provide eligible individuals the freedom to choose housing that meets their specific needs. To be eligible, participants must be in one of the following circumstances:

- they occupy a crowded or inadequate dwelling
- they pay 30 percent or more of their income for shelter
- they have a need for special purpose accommodation
- the total household income is at or below the Housing Income Limit, which varies by household size and area of the province.



The program allows qualifying individuals to have their rents reduced to 30 percent of the adjusted household income.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2014.02.0180.html

EDUCATION

\$1 million over three years to expand the New Brunswick Teen Apprenticeship Program, which gives high school students early training and employment in the skilled trades. The program allows students starting in Grade 10 to experience a trade, gain three years of summer employment, earn credits toward graduation and complete the first level of a formal apprenticeship.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2014.02.0185.html

Nova Scotia

No updates this month.

Prince Edward Island

HEALTH

The province released the results of its *2012-13 School Health Action Planning and Evaluation System (SHAPES-PEI) Provincial Student Health Profile*. Highlights include:

- 70 percent of students report high levels of mental fitness (up from 66 percent in 2008)
- 26 percent of students reported being bullied (verbal, cyber or physical) in the 30 days prior to the survey
- 70 percent of students are considered to be in a healthy weight category for their age, however 27 percent are still considered overweight or obese (unchanged from 2010)
- 36 percent of students reported eating fruit or vegetables more than six times the day before the survey (down from 42 percent in 2008)
- 18 percent of students reported eating high fat/sugary/salty snacks or drinks more than seven times the day before the survey (down from 30 percent in 2008).

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=9458&dept=&lang=E>

Increased investments in the Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program have helped decrease readmissions to inpatient detox programs, contributing to the shorter wait times for inpatient detox services and methadone treatment. In addition, a new standardized intake process that is more organized and consistent has been established to better prioritize care and ensure those in most urgent need of care are admitted immediately.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=9488&dept=&lang=E>

Québec

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The government projected a \$1.75-billion shortfall in 2014-15 on revenue of \$71.6 billion and a balanced budget in 2015-16. Public infrastructure spending over the next ten years will total \$91 billion. Social policy-related highlights include:

- \$270 million for the construction of 3,250 new affordable housing through the AccèsLogis program; 500 units will be reserved for people experiencing homelessness
- \$6 million for local services for people experiencing homelessness with an emphasis on providing health, social services and community support
- \$2.5 million to the social economy's Trust Construction (The Trust Construction's mission is to promote the expansion and development of collective enterprises by improving access to finance for businesses in the social economy.)
- three health priorities were announced:
 - access to surgical services through an expanded and integrated program
 - enhancement of the quality of care by financing best practices
 - management of patients with chronic disease
- rate hikes were announced for the province's \$7-a-day public child care program. In September, parents will pay \$8 per day, \$9 per day in 2015 and the rate will be indexed in subsequent years.

[Link](#)

EMPLOYMENT

\$3.8 million in funding to organizations that enhance employability. This investment will also increase core funding to 110 youth employment centers in Quebec.

[Link](#)

HOMELESSNESS

Launch of the province's first policy on homelessness – Ensemble, pour éviter la rue et en sortir. The policy identifies five priority areas for action:

- housing
- health services and social services
- income
- education, social inclusion, and social and professional integration
- co-habitation and social issues related to legalization.

A 2014-19 action plan will be developed in the coming months.

[Link](#)



YOUTH

Release of a White Paper on youth (Le livre blanc Une génération aux multiples aspirations). Building on the province's Youth Action Strategy 2009-2014, the White Paper was developed in response to youth input and presents four phases of activity:

- the government will develop a sport, leisure and physical activity policy as well as a policy aimed at encouraging healthy habits
- the province will renovate schools and develop a policy aimed at lowering the dropout rate
- to help young people manage the transition from school to work, the government will collaborate with community partners to undertake a feasibility study of the opportunities presented in a report by the Cité des métiers du Québec. Cité is a nonprofit organization created in 2013 to create a space for exploring and understanding trades and professions. This phase of the work aims to: promote future business and professional, technical and scientific occupations; disseminate information; build bridges; and adapt school curricula.
- to encourage the development of atypical educational workplaces that support young people's work-family-school aspirations.

[Link](#)

Ontario

INCOME SECURITY

The province will transition to a cost-sharing model for retiree benefits for employees retiring on or after January 1, 2017. This shift will bring Ontario Public Service retiree benefits in line with other public sector organizations where retirees are often asked to contribute up to 100 percent of their benefits premium. Current retirees from the Ontario Public Service will not be affected by these changes. Key features of the new model will:

- require employees retiring on or after January 1, 2017 to pay 50 percent of their benefits premiums (e.g., life, health, dental and vision). Currently, the government pays 100 percent.
- change the eligibility period for retiree benefits from 10 to 20 years for employees hired on or after January 1, 2017.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mgs/en/2014/02/ontario-updates-public-sector-retiree-benefit-plans.html>

SENIORS

The Seniors Community Grant Program, the first grant program in Ontario dedicated solely to seniors, was introduced to give them more opportunities to participate in their communities by offering funding to not-for-profit community groups for projects that encourage greater social inclusion, volunteerism and community engagement. The program focuses on encouraging initiatives and projects in the non-profit sector

that foster social inclusion, volunteerism, education and community engagement for seniors across the province. Grants range from \$500-\$10,000.

<http://news.ontario.ca/oss/en/2014/02/helping-seniors-stay-engaged-and-connected-to-their-communities.html>

YOUTH

The province announced the first four recipients of the Youth Investment Accelerator Fund Program (Youth IAF). Launched in 2013 as part of Ontario's Youth Jobs strategy, the program invests in technology-based start-ups founded by entrepreneurs under the age of 30. The Youth IAF is designed to accelerate the commercialization of innovative technologies in Ontario by investing up to \$250,000 per eligible company. The program is one of two entrepreneurship programs launched under the Youth Jobs Strategy; the other is the Youth Business Acceleration Program.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mri/en/2014/02/helping-youth-launch-new-high-tech-companies-1.html>

The province announced the creation of 50 Youth-in-Care Transition worker positions who will help young people leaving the care of Children's Aid Societies find the supports and services. The Youth-in-Transition workers will assist youth ages 16 to 24 by:

- securing local affordable housing
- finding education and employment resources to help cover the cost of postsecondary education and training, or to find a job
- identifying skills training, such as financial literacy courses and meal planning
- accessing health and mental health services like being connected with a family doctor and counselling
- locating legal services, including advice for youth in the justice system.

The province is also investing in a new Aftercare Benefits Initiative. Starting this summer, eligible young people ages 21 to 24, who were previously in the care of a Children's Aid Society, can access:

- health and dental services, including prescription drugs, vision care and hearing aids
- extended health services, such as physiotherapy, psychotherapy, acupuncture and chiropractic treatment
- additional benefits, including therapy and counselling.

Both the Youth-in-Transition Worker program and the Aftercare Benefits Initiative were developed in response to recommendations made in the 2013 Youth Leaving Care Working Group report, A Blueprint for Fundamental Change to Ontario's Child Welfare System.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en/2014/02/new-supports-for-youth-leaving-care.html>



Manitoba

CHILD CARE

\$9 million for 250 new child care spaces at four new centres and one existing site. Manitoba has nearly 32,500 licensed child-care spaces for infant, preschool and school-age children including those with additional support needs. Since 1999, the Manitoba government has increased the number of funded spaces by more than 80 percent, providing care for children in centres, homes and nursery schools. The overall budget for child care in Manitoba is more than \$147 million.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2014/02/2014-02-19-114400-20490.html>

GOVERNANCE

The municipal amalgamation process is nearing completion with the mergers of 39 municipalities into 19. A total of 85 of the province's municipalities have fewer than 1,000 residents and are required to submit an amalgamation plan by this spring. Plans are expected to result in a 30 percent reduction in the number of municipalities outside Winnipeg.

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/press/top/2014/02/2014-02-06-103400-20332.html>

Saskatchewan

EDUCATION

The province launched the Student First online engagement tool to assist in collecting input and feedback on the education sector in Saskatchewan. The tool, which is available to the public, includes the opportunity to provide written submissions and take part in surveys.

<http://www.skcaucus.com/index.php?pageid=NewsDetail&newsid=566>

Alberta

HEALTH

\$5 million to give vulnerable children and families more mental health supports and ensure children in care have better access to mental health specialists. Funds will:

- introduce three best practice sites in Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer to provide increased mental health services to children and youth
- provide children and youth in care who have experienced physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or neglect with better access to mental health specialists
- provide child intervention staff with instant access to expert clinical/medical consultation that will help them better understand available psychiatric treatment plans and appropriate medications
- provide crisis mental health supports for high-needs children and offer effective strategies to help foster parents and other caregivers
- develop a cross-ministry mental health action plan that will enhance and sustain a high-level of supports for children involved with child

intervention and expand the reach to support all children and families with mental health needs in Alberta.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=35791B900DF55-DBF1-52EF-ABB-082F81B9D5FC3>

British Columbia

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The government introduced Balanced Budget 2014, which includes forecast surpluses in all three years of the fiscal plan and modest investments in priority areas. \$415 million was announced to support family-focused initiatives, including:

- Community Living BC to receive incremental funding of \$243 million to maintain existing services for adults with developmental disabilities and their families
- an additional \$15 million over three years for Ministry of Children and Family Development for children and youth with special needs
- an additional \$15 million over three years for increased RCMP policing costs and \$6 million for legal aid-related services.

The government has also introduced legislation to implement the new BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit. Starting in April 2015, the benefit will provide \$146 million annually to an estimated 180,000 families with children under the age 6 (up to \$55 a month per eligible child). About 90 percent of BC families with young children will be eligible.

The province is increasing the threshold for the first-time homebuyers program to \$475,000 from \$425,000, an exemption that can save the purchaser up to \$7,500 when buying their first home.

Ministry of Health budget will increase \$2.5 billion over three years. Total health spending by function will reach \$19.6 billion, or more than 42 percent of all government expenses by 2016-17.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/02/balanced-budget-maintains-discipline-supports-economic-growth-and-job-creation.html>

HEALTH

Residents up to age 25 who require an insulin pump to manage their Type 1 diabetes will now be covered by BC PharmaCare beginning April 1, 2014. Currently, BC PharmaCare's insulin pump program covers anyone 18 years and younger who meet specific criteria for the reimbursement of insulin pumps and supplies. This announcement extends that coverage to include those who are transitioning to early adulthood, and may not have access to third-party insurance coverage, or who cannot afford to buy an insulin pump. The average cost of an insulin pump is about \$6,500. PharmaCare will cover the cost of a pump up to \$6,600.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/02/bc-announces-more-support-for-diabetes-management.html>

INCOME SECURITY



The BC government has worked with the federal and other provincial governments to develop the framework for Pooled Registered Pension Plans (PRPPs) for the two-thirds of workers without a registered pension plan. Removing the administrative burden of pension plans makes offering a pension plan more attractive and affordable for employers. Bill 9 re-introduces legislation that enables employees of small- and medium-sized businesses as well as the self-employed, to join pension plans administered by regulated financial institutions.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/02/more-options-for-pension-coverage-pooled-registered-pension-plans-introduced.html>

WOMEN

Creation of the Premier's Women's Economic Council (PWEC) to offer advice on how to expand women's business opportunities in key sectors. PWEC will advise the Premier, the Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, the Minister Responsible for Labour, and the Minister of State for Tourism and Small Business on issues, strategies, policy changes and potential actions to tap into economic opportunities for women that will help strengthen BC's economy. PWEC and its chair will be appointed by the Premier and will consist of 11 members from various regions and industries, including business leaders representing the key sectors identified in the BC Jobs Plan.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/02/premiers-womens-economic-council-established-to-tap-into-new-opportunities.html>

Introduction of the *Missing Persons Act*, consistent with recommendations of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry. The new legislation was introduced to focus on cases where a missing person hasn't been seen or in touch with people who are normally involved in their lives. It also focuses on vulnerable or at-risk persons whose safety and welfare are of concern because of their age, physical or mental capabilities, or the circumstances surrounding their absence. The proposed legislation ties to strike a balance between access to key information and privacy rights.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/02/missing-persons-act-protects-vulnerable-persons.html>

YOUTH

A \$250,000 18-month pilot program is being launched to help youth in Vancouver who are transitioning out of government care to gain the life and work skills they need to become independent. Up to 10 youth per cycle will receive hands-on guidance in life skills such as financial literacy, time management, decision-making and problem solving. The Strive pilot will operate six times, each session lasting 12 weeks.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/02/strive-will-help-former-and-current-youth-in-care-achieve-success.html>

Yukon Territory

No updates this month.

Northwest Territories

CHILDREN

Two departments – Education, Culture & Employment; and Health & Social Services – have written a renewed Early Childhood Development Action Plan, a companion document to the Early Childhood Development Framework tabled in May 2013. An area of particular focus is on families suffering from addictions issues.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/glen-abernethy-early-childhood-development-action-plan/>

EDUCATION

Announcement of \$3.5 million in three-year block funding to support regional Aboriginal governments' five-year language plans with the goal of strengthening Aboriginal languages.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/jackson-lafferty-a-new-approach-preserving-and-revitalizing-aboriginal-languages-and-culture/>

HEALTH

Release of *Pathways to Wellness: An Updated Action Plan for Addictions and Mental Health* which realigns the 2012 action plan along four areas of activity:

- promoting understanding, awareness and acceptance
- focusing on the client
- improving the availability of and access to services
- improving service effectiveness.

A key element in the updated action plan is more addictions programs based in Aboriginal culture and spirituality. The government has partnered with Aboriginal governments for three different on-the-land pilot programs, and the lessons learned will be used to expand these programs to other regions of the NWT, at an estimated cost of \$900,000.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/glen-abernethy-pathways-to-wellness-an-updated-action-plan-for-addictions-and-mental-health/>

All communities in the Territory are on track to complete Community Wellness Plans by March 31, 2015. \$5 million will be directly allocated to Aboriginal communities on a multi-year, block funding basis to support this work. Funding can be used to support projects in three areas: healthy children and families, mental health and addictions, and healthy living and prevention. Communities will determine their own priorities, based on their wellness plans. The remaining \$3 million of \$8 million allocated by Health Canada will be used to support the ongoing work of the new Division of Aboriginal Health and Community Wellness in the programs and services they provide to community and Aboriginal organizations in their implementation of their plans. This work will also include the development of territory-wide events.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/glen-abernethy-community-wellness-plans/>



\$700,000 in 2014-15 to enhance the Healthy Family Program. The program is designed to support parents and children from birth to age 5, and promotes nurturing parent-child relationships. It is a key component of the territory's renewed Early Childhood Development Framework.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/glen-abernethy-improvements-in-the-delivery-of-child-and-family-services/>

INCOME SECURITY

Announcement of legislation to establish the Northern Employee Benefits Services Pension Plan in law. This defined-benefit pension plan is open public sector and non-profit employees working throughout the Northwest Territories and Nunavut; 38 NWT employers are now active in the plan. This legislation is the result of a collaboration among officials from NWT government, the Government of Nunavut and the Northern Employees Benefits Services Pension Plan. It represents the latest development in pension plan design and administration, and sets the standard for other jurisdictions. The Nunavut Government intends to pass mirror legislation.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/j-michael-miltenberger-northern-employee-benefits-services-pension-plan-legislation/>

POVERTY REDUCTION

The Territory released its *Anti-Poverty Action Plan*. It will invest \$2.6 million to support day shelter programs in Yellowknife and Inuvik, and build new housing units in four small communities for residents who may need additional support. The plan commits \$1 million in new spending every year to provide nutritious food directly to children and youth through established programs. A further \$500,000 will help communities, Aboriginal governments and non-government organizations to initiate community-based projects.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/anti-poverty-roundtable-and-next-steps/>

Nunavut

HOMELESSNESS

A point-in-time homeless count is being conducted by the Government of Nunavut's Department of Family Services in Rankin Inlet, Iqaluit and Cambridge Bay. Results are expected in April 2014.

<http://www.gov.nu.ca/news/nunavut-conduct-point-time-homeless-count>