



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

April 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

GOVERNANCE

The province is conducting a census of voluntary organizations – the first of its kind in Canada – in order to capture the number, location, mandate and labour market information of volunteer and non-profit organizations in the province. With the first phase of the census nearing completion, community and non-profit organizations that have not been formally contacted are encouraged to call a toll-free line to participate. The

census is being conducted through a partnership of the Office of Public Engagement, Memorial University's Harris Centre, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency. Information collected will be protected and will guide general findings, further research and provide key information for the community sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2014/exec/0417n04.aspx>

New Brunswick

DISABILITY

Proposed changes to the *Community Planning Act* would modernize and enhance provincial building standards to ensure accessibility for persons with a disability. The amendments would make adoption of the Barrier-Free Design Building Code – which is now voluntary – mandatory for new construction province-wide. This would ensure that newly-constructed buildings will be more accessible by addressing issues such as parking areas, entrances, washrooms, accessibility signs, exterior walks, doorways, doors, counters and shelving.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2014.04.0402.html

SOCIAL FINANCE

The provincial government tabled legislation to amend the Small Business Investor Tax Credit, allowing for the creation of Community Economic Development Investment Funds in order to facilitate investment in small businesses. A Community Economic Development Investment Fund is a pool of capital, formed through the sale of shares to investors within a defined community (geographical, economic, cultural or industrial), and created to invest in local businesses. The funds will provide greater access to capital for social enterprises and co-operative associations, as recommended by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation. This type of investment fund can focus on developing many businesses in a community, such as farmers or food producers, or on a larger specific investment, such as a processing facility for local products.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2014.04.0392.html

Nova Scotia

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The 2014-15 Budget lays the foundation for:

- a more aggressive approach to population and workforce issues
- a comprehensive review of all taxes, fees and regulations
- a fresh perspective on economic development
- transformative changes to the education system
- a focus on front-line patient care.



Social policy-related highlights include action to:

Education

- eliminate the interest on the provincial portion of student loans for eligible students who have entered repayment on their provincial loans on or after November 1, 2007 (\$1.6 million)
- provide tuition relief to encourage more medical graduates (\$750,000)
- provide new graduate scholarships for innovation and research (\$1.85 million)
- help new graduates start their careers in Nova Scotia by defraying, through the Graduate Opportunities program (\$1.6 million), the cost employers incur in the first year of hiring
- conduct the first full education review in 25 years to improve learning outcomes and better prepare the next generation for success in the workplace. The province will:
 - allocate \$32.5 million for the Student Aid Fund
 - provide \$31.0 million for the Provincial Training Allowance
 - limit class sizes
 - reduce wait time for early intervention programs
 - re-introduce reading recovery
 - adopt new approaches to math and literacy
 - provide more support for students with special needs to ensure they get timely help

Employment

- modernize the Apprenticeship Program to give apprentices the experience they need to access good jobs (\$2.6 million)
- help high-value businesses recruit and provide meaningful work experiences to university and community college students by expanding the Strategic Co-operative Education Incentive program to a total of 425 funded private and non-profit positions each year (\$500,000)
- expand the Student Career Skills Development Program to support another 250 not-for-profit summer jobs in high unemployment areas for a total of 750 jobs for post-secondary students looking for career-specific experience (\$1 million)

Health

- move forward with a provincial approach to health-care delivery and reduce the number of district health authorities from ten to two to put more focus on front-line care
- continue to support programs to train, recruit and hire physicians, with a particular emphasis on rural and remote areas (\$10.6 million)
- work to meet the national standard for hip and knee replacement wait times (\$4.2 million)
- improve access to cancer drugs and other drugs including Lucentis and Avastin (\$1.9 million)

- increase the age of eligibility of the children's dental program to 14 (\$525,000)
- develop a three-year sexual assault strategy focused on prevention and victim services (\$2 million)

Seniors

- continue to support home-care services, allowing older Nova Scotians to stay in their homes longer (\$32.6 million)
- help 300 more seniors each year stay in their homes through a \$1.5-million increase in the Senior Citizens Assistance Program (for a total investment of \$4.15 million)

Community

- invest in public transit in the Halifax Regional Municipality (\$2 million) and public and community-based transit outside the capital region (\$1 million)
- invest in the Community Transportation Assistance Program to help Nova Scotians in communities without bus service stay mobile (\$500,000)
- help Nova Scotians drive less distance, move more actively and efficiently, use cleaner energy and access a wider range of sustainable transportation options (\$2 million)

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20140403002>

HEALTH

Nova Scotia worked with other provinces and territories to lower the cost of the following drugs to 18 percent of the brand-name equivalent:

- Citalopram: for depression
- Pantoprazole: for a variety of gastrointestinal conditions
- Rosuvastatin: for high cholesterol
- Simvastatin: for high cholesterol.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20140407003>

INCOME SECURITY

The Nova Scotia Child Benefit income threshold will rise from \$25,000 to \$26,000 on July 1, bringing 1,300 more children under the program's umbrella. Close to 40,000 children are in the program. Full benefits for families with incomes less than \$18,000 are:

- one child \$625 a year (\$52 monthly)
- two children \$825 a year (\$68 monthly)
- three children \$900 a year (\$75 monthly).

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20140425002>



Prince Edward Island

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

For the 2013-14 fiscal year, the province improved on its Budget target of a \$58.9 million deficit, with a forecast deficit of \$51.9 million. In the upcoming fiscal year, there will be a further reduction in the deficit to \$39.7 million before achieving a small surplus in 2015-16.

Social policy-related highlights include:

Children

- \$400,000 for the purchase of insulin pumps and related supplies for children with Type 1 diabetes
- a Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) will offer proven parenting solutions
- a new “Eye See, Eye Learn” program, launched with the PEI Association of Optometrists will provide free eye exams and glasses for eligible kindergarten children
- a further two percent increase in room and board and clothing allowance for children in care

Caregiving

- a partnership with Maritime Bus will lower off-Island transportation costs for those needing to travel for medical care
- the province will partner with the Red Cross to offer an expanded Health Equipment Loan program to allow Islanders to recover independently in their own homes
- Health
- regulations will be changed to allow pharmacists to directly deliver the flu vaccine

Seniors

- a new home care renovation program will be implemented and the grant amount for the Seniors Home Repair Program will be increased.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=9541&dept=&lang=E>

INCOME SECURITY

Minimum wage will be increased to \$10.20 an hour as of June 1 and to \$10.35 an hour as of October 1.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=9554&dept=&lang=E>

Québec

No updates this month.

Ontario

ABORIGINALS

Ontario is investing \$565,000 in the Aboriginal Skills Advancement Pilot Program that will support jobs and improve the quality of life for First Nations communities near the Ring of Fire. The investment is in addition to \$2.7 million the province has already paid to the Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training Services for this program. <http://news.ontario.ca/mndmf/en/2014/04/ontario-enhancing-job-skills-programs-for-first-nations-communities.html>

CAREGIVING

The province plans to increase the hourly wage by \$4.00 over the next three years of publicly-funded Personal Service Workers (PSWs) who work in home and community care settings. Ontario is also setting a new base wage for these PSWs that will increase along with the hourly wage to \$16.50 per hour by April 1, 2016. Through its new PSW Workforce Stabilization Strategy, the government will:

- develop measures to create more permanent and less casual employment for PSWs
- help new graduates find work through an on-the-job orientation program
- provide opportunities to strengthen sector leadership across the profession
- further examine challenges affecting recruitment and retention, including how PSWs can become more involved in teams of health care professionals to better care for patients.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2014/04/improving-home-and-community-care-for-ontario-seniors.html>

The province passed the *Employment Standards Amendments Act (Leaves to Help Families), 2014*. The legislation will allow caregivers to focus their attention on what matters most – providing care to their loved ones – without the fear of losing their job. The new legislation – the 16th government bill to pass since February 2013 – builds on the existing Family Medical Leave by creating three new job-protected leaves:

- Family Caregiver Leave: up to eight weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for employees to provide care or support to a family member with a serious medical condition
- Critically Ill Child Care Leave: up to 37 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to provide care to a critically ill child
- Crime-Related Child Death or Disappearance Leave: up to 52 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for parents of a missing child and up to



104 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for parents of a child who has died as a result of a crime.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2014/04/family-caregivers-bill-passes-final-vote.html>

CHILD CARE

To help recruit and retain workers by providing fairer wages, Ontario is proposing an increase of an average of \$2 per hour for early childhood educators and other front-line child care workers. The first increase will be an average of \$1 per hour and will start January 2015.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2014/04/ontario-giving-kids-the-best-possible-start.html>

COMMUNITIES

Release of the province's Rural Roadmap. The report outlines key government priorities aimed at building on the strengths of Ontario's rural communities.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mra/en/2014/04/strengthening-ontarios-rural-communities.html>

DISABILITY

The province plans to eliminate waitlists for direct funding for 21,000 people with developmental disabilities. The current waitlist for the Special Services at Home program for children would be cleared in two years and the Passport program for adults in four years. These programs provide direct funding for people with developmental disabilities, allowing them and their families to customize their services and supports to best meet their individual needs.

In addition to eliminating waitlists for direct support, this investment would:

- provide support for urgent residential needs for approximately 1,400 people
- support young adults as they navigate key life transitions such as going to school or getting a job
- promote community living partnerships through expanded Host Family and Supported Independent Living programs
- provide more funding for agencies and front-line workers in the community services sector
- promote innovation and cost-efficiency so that costs savings can be re-invested into improving services.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2014/04/eliminating-waitlists-for-developmental-services.html>

EDUCATION

The province will spend \$150 million over three years in technology and learning with such tools as new digital tablets, netbooks, cameras, software and professional development for teachers. This fund will accelerate the way in which students learn and prepare them for good jobs in the global economy.

<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2014/04/opportunity-and-security-for-health-care-and-education.html>

In partnership with First Nation leaders, new school curriculum about treaties is being developed to give students a better understanding of First Nation communities, cultures and perspectives. Ontario will also be working with First Nation partners to look for other opportunities to raise awareness and to better understand different perspectives on treaties and related issues.

<http://news.ontario.ca/maa/en/2014/04/new-first-nations-treaty-map-for-ontario-schools.html>

HEALTH

The province is investing \$6 million in the Rick Hansen Foundation and \$9 million in the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation over three years.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mri/en/2014/04/investing-in-critical-research-to-transform-lives.html>

INCOME SECURITY

Starting in July 2014, hundreds of thousands of families will receive an Ontario Child Benefit increase of up to \$100 annually while many families will become eligible benefit for the first time. With this increase, the benefit will have more than doubled to up to \$1,310 annually since it was created in 2008.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2014/04/ontario-giving-kids-the-best-possible-start.html>

YOUTH

As part of its Youth Jobs Strategy, the province is investing \$51 million in five youth employment programs that will help young people start companies and create jobs.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mri/en/2014/04/helping-students-start-innovative-companies.html>

Manitoba

COMMUNITY

Funding for Manitoba's Partner 4 Growth program is doubling and will offer up to \$260,000 in grants to support community-led projects focused on strengthening and diversifying local economies and creating new jobs. The program provides grants of up to \$8,000 to help communities identify regional development projects and undertake feasibility studies. A second grant of up to \$15,000 is available to help complete projects identified in the first part of the process. Both grants are cost-shared with the community, with government funding not to exceed 50



percent of total project costs. All projects must be regionally focused and involve more than one local government to support regional partnerships and broader economic planning.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=30286&post-ed=2014-04-02>

GOVERNANCE

Twenty more Manitoba municipalities have officially amalgamated under the Municipal Amalgamations Act.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=30425&post-ed=2014-04-11>

HEALTH

The province is investing in six new cancer drugs and additional supports for front-line staff to improve cancer treatment and care for patients.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=30268&post-ed=2014-04-01>

Helping people living with a mental illness and their families will be the focus of a third Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) team in Winnipeg. PACT teams offers assistance for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, and other issues such as homelessness or substance abuse. The team provides comprehensive treatment, rehabilitation and intervention services and is considered a leading-practice model that has been carefully defined, documented and evaluated.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=30505&post-ed=2014-04-17>

University College of the North is working with the University of Manitoba to launch the new bachelor of midwifery program for 2015.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=30646&post-ed=2014-04-30>

Saskatchewan

No updates this month.

Alberta

HEALTH

Budget 2014 includes a total of \$48 million to support the continuing implementation of Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy, a \$28 million increase over last year:

- \$23 million has been established as permanent funding for programs and services, such as mental health capacity building projects, including mentoring programs and life skills training in schools
- \$5 million will be used to develop residential treatment beds for youth in the Calgary and Edmonton regions
- \$20 million will go towards continued mental health programming such as counselling services.

The \$48 million investment is in addition to the \$600 million Alberta Health Services budgets to deliver mental health and addiction programs and services.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=3620633D2687D-0766-02F1-33EDE33241064835>

Optometrists certified by the Alberta College of Optometrists will soon become responsible for primary eye care, which includes treating minor eye conditions. They will also be authorized to provide four new services:

- prescribe certain oral and topical drugs
- order lab tests
- order and apply ultrasound tests
- treat certain types of glaucoma.

Alberta currently has more than 645 local optometrists in 80 communities. The move to expand the scope of optometrists follows a similar expansion of the scope of services pharmacists now provide.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=36306CE44F-6BA-A236-122E-23B6AB3F16ABB630>

British Columbia

CHILDREN

The province is investing \$2 million in one-time-only funding to help more children and youth in care to find permanent homes through adoption and guardianship. This funding will increase the number of home studies being done so a greater number of families are approved to adopt or permanently care for children and youth. Home studies are mandatory because they help social workers assess the strengths and parenting abilities of the adoptive family or guardian. The province is committed to placing 300 children and youth in adoptive homes by March 31, 2015, and approximately 150 in permanent guardianship environments.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/04/2-million-improves-access-and-accelerates-adoption-services.html>

EDUCATION

Announcement of a comprehensive strategy to re-engineer BC's education and apprenticeship systems. This fiscal year, more than \$160 million will be allocated to re-engineering education and training. Over the span of the province's 10 Year Plan, this represents about \$3 billion redirected toward training for high-demand occupations. BC's Skills for Jobs Blueprint lays out a major shift to a data-driven system in which training dollars and programs are targeted to jobs in demand. This system will also be outcome focused. Success will be measured, and funding and programs adjusted as the economy evolves.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/04/post-secondary-education-shifts-focus-to-better-align-training-with-jobs.html>

EMPLOYMENT

The BC Skills for Jobs Blueprint will give Aboriginal learners opportunities to prepare for in-demand jobs. This year, \$4.4 for the Aboriginal Community-Based Delivery Partnerships Program will fund post-secondary education and training for Aboriginal learners in their communities. The program offers support for the community's needs and priorities, including responding to new economic opportunities and industry requirements for a local skilled labour force. The program will allow students to earn recognized credentials or credits that are portable or transferable so learners may enter their chosen field or continue on to further education and training.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/04/bc-announces-44-million-to-support-aboriginal-job-training.html>

HOUSING

\$12.5-million annual investment from the federal and provincial governments will enhance the existing provincial Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program and Rental Assistance Program (RAP), providing greater benefits to low-income seniors and family households renting in the private market. Effective April 1, 2014, the maximum amount of rent used to calculate benefits for both programs was increased. On average, families will see an extra \$40 per month; the average increase for seniors will be about \$34 per month. Both are non-taxable benefits. In addition, for SAFER, the minimum monthly benefit will increase to \$25, up from \$1 and the income eligibility level will rise by approximately 9 percent throughout the province. Funding for the program enhancements, totalling \$62.5 million over five years, will be provided through the Canada-BC Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) Agreement 2014-2019. Signed in March 2014, the IAH provides an equally shared, combined investment of \$300 million to support and enhance existing programs and for new construction or renovations.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/04/benefits-increase-under-rental-assistance-programs.html>

SOCIAL FINANCING

The province is supporting social innovation by investing \$194,450 to research the social venture sector and its human resource challenges through a labour market partnership agreement with the ISIS Research Centre at UBC's Sauder School of Business. During the 15-month project, ISIS will partner with a number of organizations to study the size and scope of the social venture sector in BC to better understand labour market needs and challenges. The study will provide a baseline to help inform strategies and next steps for this sector to ensure access to the people and skills it needs.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/04/labour-market-funding-supports-social-enterprise-study.html>

YOUTH

The province will invest \$750,000 to double the size of the Inner City Youth team in Vancouver to now support 240 youth. The program offers

access to housing, health care and social supports. The Inner City Youth team connects with vulnerable youth through outreach work at sites in downtown Vancouver and St. Paul's Hospital. The Inner City Youth team of psychiatrists, registered psychiatric nurses, a nurse practitioner, social workers, an occupational therapist and rehabilitation assistants find and help young people to get their lives back.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2014/04/government-expands-support-for-vancouvers-most-vulnerable-youth.html>

Yukon Territory

CHILDREN

Release of *On the Path Together: Wellness Plan for Yukon's Children and Families*. The plan provides evidence-based strategies for improving the health and well-being of children and youth that will be used to help plan and set priorities and to provide practical information on healthy living. The plan sets out three pathways to improve wellness:

- giving kids a good start in life (0-5 years)
- raising kids who flourish (6-19 years)
- healthy living for all.

The plan includes specific short-term actions the Department of Health and Social Services will take to improve the health and well-being of children, youth and families.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/14-104.html#U1pi7PldXbo>

HEALTH

Release of *A Clinical Services Plan for Yukon*, a roadmap for the long-term evolution of health and social services in Yukon. The data-driven plan provides a comprehensive picture of existing Yukon services and resources. It emphasizes collaborative practices between health professionals and social professionals, and offers suggestions on how to move forward. It also stresses the importance of using current data to determine needs, and guide decision-making about how best to address gaps and inequities.

http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/14-106.html#U1-JF_IdXbo

Negotiations with BC on a new electronic information system for public health have been successful. The IBM-developed system, called Panorama, is used in several Canadian jurisdictions. Yukon will implement Panorama in the coming year. The system will improve clinical services by making records available to health care professionals, whether patients receive health care in Yukon or BC. Panorama will help manage patient records on immunization and communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/14-109.html#U2JEcPldXbo>

Northwest Territories, Nunavut

No updates this month.