



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

February 2015



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

HOMELESSNESS

The provincial government has agreed to move ahead with a Housing First approach to homelessness. A steering committee has been established to review recommendations made in a consultant's report and set out an action plan.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/swsd/0209n03.aspx>

New Brunswick

EMPLOYMENT

Three private sector leaders will be joining the leadership team of the New Brunswick Jobs Board secretariat. These individuals will work to create the conditions for economic growth in the province. The secretariat is chaired by Premier Gallant, with Economic Development Minister Doucet as vice-chair.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.02.0112.html

Nova Scotia

EDUCATION

Junior high school students now have access to new drug and alcohol prevention curriculum resources.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150219007>

EMPLOYMENT

A new provincial program will connect post-secondary graduates with their first full-time job in Nova Scotia. Graduate to Opportunity supplies eligible employers with a percentage of the salary paid to a new graduate – 25 percent in the first year and 12.5 percent in the second. The incentive is available to Nova Scotia-based small- and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 100 employees, start-up companies, social enterprises, non-profits and registered charities. The provincial government has allocated \$1.6 million in funding for Graduate to Opportunity in year one, increasing to \$6.5 million by year three. The incentive applies to graduates of any post-secondary institution in the last year. The recent graduate can be from anywhere, but must live in Nova Scotia to participate. The employer must pay a minimum base salary of \$30,000 in order to qualify.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150206002>

GOVERNANCE

The province released information on the financial health of its municipalities, including revenue, budget and capital assets. Financial Condition Indexes for each municipality for the past two fiscal years have been added to the Department of Municipal Affairs website. The index examines how each municipality gets revenue, and budgets for municipal priorities. There are 15 indicators with a municipality's score, the average for its



class (rural municipality and town) and the threshold, or achievement benchmark.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150217002>

SENIORS

The province is awarding senior safety grants to community organizations that provide information or services directly to seniors in their homes, or through group presentations and workshops at locations within the community. This includes one-on-one visits from safety coordinators, seminars with professional experts and the production of various materials. The support will help seniors to live longer and more comfortably in their homes. Fourteen groups each receive up to \$20,000, for a total of approximately \$278,000.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150209003>

Beginning in March 2015, changes to long-term care policies will ensure that efforts have been made to better support people in their homes or communities before seeking long-term care placement.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150217005>

Prince Edward Island

HEALTH

Construction of the province's first Youth Recovery Centre will be complete in April. It will have 12 in-patient beds and offer 18 weeks of around-the-clock care, up from the existing six beds and eight-week day treatment program. Community-based after care programs will also increase from 20 weeks to 24 weeks.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=10073&dept=&lang=E>

SENIORS

The province announced the new Seniors Safe @ Home Program. It allows Islanders who own their own homes to access a lifetime grant of up to \$5,000. The grant amount is determined based on income. To qualify for the grant, the modifications must support seniors age 60 and over in their everyday activities. Modifications will enhance accessibility and maintain health and safety, enabling seniors to remain in their own homes longer.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=10056&dept=&lang=E>

Québec

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

A congress of the Assembly of First Nations of Québec and Labrador (AF-NQL) included a meeting of indigenous women elected within the Circle of Women Parliamentarians. AFNQL will give this group of 103 women the support and training they need to exercise their responsibilities and

build for future female leadership. Aboriginal women currently hold 40 percent of seats in Québec and Labrador band councils.

[Link](#)

CHILDREN

The province appointed a committee of experts to address the issue of cyberbullying.

[Link](#)

GOVERNANCE

The government passed Bill 10, a health care reform bill, which will change the organization and governance of health and social services. Regional agencies will be dismantled in favour of an integrated network of facilities and the number of medical establishments will be reduced from 182 to 33.

[Link](#)

Ontario

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Ontario's delegation at the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women included family members and representation from the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Ontario Native Women's Association, Métis Nation of Ontario and the Independent First Nations. Delegates identified 10 proposed actions that can be taken to immediately improve the situation for Aboriginal women and girls, including the creation of a pan-Canadian public awareness campaign and a socioeconomic action plan for Aboriginal women and girls.

<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2015/02/joint-statement-from-ontarios-delegation-at-the-roundtable-on-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women.html>

CAREGIVING

The province is investing \$75 million in 2015 to help more patients receive care at home within Ontario's five-day wait time target, which is now publicly reported on the Ontario Wait Times website. The investment will support more visits at home for people who need nursing services. It will provide more hours of care for people who have complex care needs and require in-home personal support services like dressing, bathing and help taking medication. Ontario is also investing up to \$9.7 million in 2015 to train personal support workers (PSWs) in the home and community support sector. This funding will help PSWs access additional training to care for people living with specific conditions like dementia, and offer direct care workers the opportunity to receive training towards a PSW certificate.

<http://news.ontarionewsroom.com/mohltc/en/2015/02/reducing-wait-times-for-home-care-services.html>

In partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the province is expanding the Finding Your Way program, a multicultural safety awareness campaign that helps prevent people with dementia from going missing.



The program also helps families, caregivers and the community respond when incidents occur.

<http://news.ontario.ca/oss/en/2015/02/ontario-providing-alzheimers-resources-in-additional-languages.html>

DISABILITY

Trinity College Provost Mayo Moran's review of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* concluded that while persons with disabilities continue to support the Act, its slow implementation has resulted in only minor changes on the ground. The government plans to address the report's recommendations, which include providing more support, education and enforcement.

<http://www.news.ontario.ca/medt/en/2015/02/statement-by-brad-du-guid-on-provost-morans-review-of-the-accessibility-for-ontarians-with-disabiliti.html>

EDUCATION

The province is releasing an updated Health and Physical Education curriculum to give students accurate sexual health information. It is also offering parents resources to help them understand and participate in what will be taught to their children.

<http://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2015/02/ontario-releases-updated-health-physical-education-curriculum-parent-resources.html>

EMPLOYMENT

In spring 2015, Ontario will launch public consultations on the changing nature of the modern workplace. They will focus on amending the *Labour Relations Act, 1995* and *Employment Standards Act, 2000* as they are affected by workplace trends, including:

- the increase in non-standard working relationships such as temporary jobs, part-time work and self-employment
- the rising prominence of the service sector
- globalization and trade liberalization
- accelerating technological change
- greater workplace diversity.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2015/02/ontario-to-launch-public-consultations-on-labour-laws.html>

HEALTH

My CancerIQ is a new online tool that allows Ontarians to find out their risk for breast, cervical, colorectal and lung cancer. Users can determine their risk of developing one of these four cancers by completing a series of interactive questionnaires in less than 10 minutes.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2015/02/helping-ontarians-lower-their-risk-of-developing-cancer.html>

Ontario is investing in local mental health and addictions organizations to deliver care closer to home for people who are experiencing mental health and addictions challenges. The province is also creating a province-wide registry of mental health beds to connect those experiencing a mental health crisis with the closest available bed. This investment will support mental health and addictions services, including:

- increased access to services such as supportive housing, short-term crisis support beds, peer support groups and treatment programs
- shorter wait times for care through the new registry of in-patient mental health beds. It will provide doctors, first responders and emergency departments with up-to-date information about available in-patient beds across the provinces
- improved transitions between care teams so people do not have to tell their story multiple times
- more early intervention initiatives to reduce repeat visits to emergency departments. For example, expanding the number of early psychosis intervention teams to help people early on after the onset of psychosis.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2015/02/ontario-investing-28-million-in-mental-health-and-addictions-services.html>

HOUSING

An \$8.23 million investment allocated by the federal and provincial governments has been used to create 74 new affordable rental housing units in Ottawa. As part of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative made the surplus federal real properties available to the City of Ottawa for housing and housing support services to help stabilize the living arrangements of those at risk of becoming homeless. The investment is complemented by \$2.8 million in municipal grants, land contribution and waived charges from the City of Ottawa.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2015/02/governments-of-canada-and-ontario-celebrate-new-affordable-rental-housing-in-ottawa.html>

INCOME SECURITY

There is no longer a ceiling on the amount residents can claim for wages owed. Employees also now have up to two years to recover those wages, under recent amendments to the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*. The change brings the province in line with other Canadian jurisdictions that have removed caps and set longer time limits for employees to recover wages.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2015/02/ontario-eliminates-cap-and-extends-time-limit-for-wage-recovery.html>

SOCIAL ECONOMY

Ontario will support 11 social finance organizations across the province. These organizations will make loans or grants available to early-stage



social enterprises, helping them start or grow their businesses. Ontario's \$4 million contribution is expected to leverage more than \$6 million in investment from other sources, including the private sector.

<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2015/02/ontario-investing-4-million-to-help-social-enterprises-grow.html>

Manitoba

CHILDREN

The Manitoba government has established a commission to look at ways to redesign Manitoba's early learning and child-care system to guide future plans, including developing options to create universally accessible early learning and child care for all Manitoba families who need it.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=33915&posted=2015-02-03>

The province has launched Starting Early, Starting Strong, a five-year plan that charts a course for early childhood development. The government will enhance parent supports including the toll-free Manitoba Parent Line – which provides confidential parenting support, information and referral services to all families – and Manitoba ParentZone, an online resource that includes an Ask the Expert feature. Early childhood development hubs will be established in communities serving vulnerable populations.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=34071&posted=2015-02-18>

EDUCATION

The province is allocating \$3 million in additional funding to schools that have some of the largest Kindergarten to Grade 3 classes, bringing total provincial funding for smaller classes to \$13 million in 2015-16.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=34093&posted=2015-02-19>

EMPLOYMENT

The Manitoba government is launching a new strategy to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion by partnering with community groups to create jobs for those facing serious barriers to work. The Manitoba Social Enterprise Strategy is a partnership with community groups, the Manitoba government and the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet-Manitoba). Manitoba Jobs and the Economy will continue to support social enterprises by:

- expanding awareness of department programs, including Entrepreneurship Manitoba, to all businesses including social enterprises
- exploring new opportunities to improve access by social enterprises to key employment support programs

- implementing eligibility changes to the Workforce Development Program to allow for direct participation by social enterprises.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=33920&posted=2015-02-04>

GOVERNANCE

The province is coordinating a boreal summit in northern Manitoba to help Indigenous communities, stakeholders and citizens work towards a shared vision of prosperity and sustainability. Key issues include:

- ways to acquire current information, science and other local knowledge and data
- the coordination of existing and future planning, policy and initiatives
- collaboration for economic prosperity, northern jobs and environmental health
- organization of approaches to challenges, such as addressing issues with endangered species, ecological goods and services, and water management
- adaptation to climate change impacts and risks.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=34051&posted=2015-02-17>

Saskatchewan

CHILDREN

The province will spend \$107,500 over two years to Crimes Stoppers Saskatchewan to allow students to anonymously text or phone in reports of bullying behavior. Reports made by students through text or by phone to Crime Stoppers will be redirected to the appropriate group, school division, ministry or law enforcement, based on the nature, severity and location of the incident as well as the needs of the caller.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/february/26/another-tool-to-report-bullying>

INCOME SECURITY

The province is making available information to raise awareness about payday loan operations. It reports that, in Saskatchewan, payday loan borrowers are charged up to \$23 for every \$100 borrowed. Loans are due on the next regular payday and loan agreements must be in writing, dated and signed by the borrower.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/february/11/using-payday-loans>

TRANSPORTATION

Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) passenger fares will increase by an average of 4.5 percent beginning March 2, 2015. The average fare increase per ticket will be \$1.65 based on an average one-day trip of 182 kilometres (113.4 miles). STC is a provincial coach company



that provides affordable and accessible bus passenger and parcel express services to communities throughout the province (see: www.stcbus.com). <http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/february/20/stc-fare-increase>

Alberta

HEALTH

The province is ensuring child victims of sexual abuse will have access to additional counselling services and specially-trained counsellors at child advocacy centres in Calgary, Grande Prairie and Edmonton. The centres received a Counselling for Children grant from the Alberta government through the Victims of Crime Fund, made possible as a result of the *Children First Act*.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=37686C70E10FD-DC9C-F6EB-0CB50F1F4A2DDA26>

SENIORS

Seniors in Edmonton will have access to an additional 53 long-term care spaces through the awarding of an Affordable Supportive Living Initiative (ASLI) grant. An ASLI request for proposals was issued by government in fall 2014 that targeted areas of the province with a need for supportive living spaces. The goal is to ensure that those who are no longer able to stay at home will have choices in their own communities that support their independence and provide the care they need.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=377309C94A350-D5C2-0AB7-7FF571952AD98661>

Seniors in Whitecourt community will have access to an additional 50 continuing care spaces.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=377329E264912-FAF6-BEB0-964D6F1C31151DCC>

British Columbia

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Budget 2015 social policy-related announcements include:

Education

- Introduction of the Training and Education Savings grant – a one-time payment of \$1,200 for every child resident who was born since January 1, 2007. As many as 40,000 children may be eligible every year, once they turn 6.
- Kindergarten to Grade 12 education will receive additional funding of \$564 million over three years to meet funding commitments for collective agreements negotiated in this sector – including a 33 percent increase to the Learning Improvement Fund.

Families

Approximately 180,000 families will begin receiving the BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit starting April 1, 2015. It provides up to \$660 a year for

each child under age 6, to help with the cost of child care. The cost of this program will be \$146 million annually beginning in 2015-16.

Health

The province commits an increase of almost \$3 billion to the Ministry of Health. Additional funding will support hospice services for children and adults. The province also intends to provide up to \$12.5 million to the Canadian Cancer Society towards establishing a cancer prevention centre in Vancouver.

Income security

- Effective September 1, 2015, child support payments will be fully exempted from income assistance calculations. This measure translates into an additional \$32 million over three years for some of the neediest children and families in the province. The change will benefit approximately 5,400 children in 3,200 families who currently receive income and disability assistance.
- \$106 million in additional funding over three years for Community Living BC
- \$20 million in additional funding for income assistance programs
- \$5 million to enhance the BC tax reduction credit, allowing individuals to earn more than \$19,000 a year before paying any provincial income tax.

Recreation

\$3 million for a new Children's Fitness Equipment Tax Credit, allowing families to claim up to \$250 a year for equipment costs. This amount is in addition to the existing \$500 Children's Fitness and Arts Tax Credit. <http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/02/balanced-budget-2015-main-tains-discipline-supports-economic-growth-and-job-creation.html>

Disability

The province announced a partnership with the Paralympic Committee and ViaSport that will bring \$735,000 to accessibility programming for persons with different abilities living in northern BC and in communities throughout the province.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/02/accessibility-programming-encourages-lifelong-love-of-sport.html>

EDUCATION

The province introduced Bill 7, the *Private Training Act*, to strengthen education quality, streamline administrative and approval processes, and improve public confidence in the private career training sector domestically and internationally.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/02/legislation-strengthens-private-career-training-sector.html>

Eighteen public post-secondary institutions are receiving a total of \$6.9 million in one-time funding that will give them an opportunity to plan



changes that would be needed if they decide to move to a tuition-based model. The funding will allow public post-secondary institutions to continue to provide Adult Basic Education to all students for 2015-16. Low-income students will be eligible for up front, non-repayable grants. These adult upgrading grants cover the cost of tuition, textbooks, supplies, child care and transportation. In anticipation of greater demand, the grant budget is being increased by 33 percent to \$7.6 million annually. Students in need will be included as well; a more flexible approach means students who are 10 percent above the income threshold are now eligible for a grant to cover half their tuition costs.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/02/funding-to-support-transition-to-new-adult-upgrading-model.html>

HEALTH

The province released The Plan for Public Health and Gambling. It includes 21 commitments focused on four main themes: problem gambling prevention among youth, encouraging responsible gambling, problem gambling treatment and research.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/02/new-plan-provides-roadmap-for-addressing-health-risks-of-gambling.html>

An interactive map and improved patient intake process will make it faster and easier for families to get child and youth mental health and substance use services in BC.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/02/access-to-mental-health-substance-use-services-made-easier.html>

THRONE SPEECH

The Throne Speech focused on the government's agenda to create jobs and opportunity throughout the province. One social policy-related highlight was the announcement of the establishment of a Rural Advisory Committee. It will offer independent and impartial advice on helping rural BC increase opportunities, manage growth and meet its full potential in both large and small communities.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/02/throne-speech-sets-course-to-grow-diverse-economy.html>

Yukon Territory

DISABILITY

The Yukon government's American Sign Language Interpreting Program has been extended for three years. The program provides members of the Deaf and hard-of-hearing communities with interpretive services to access health care, social services, employment opportunities, community meetings and events. In the past two years, more than 2,000 hours of interpretation services were made available through 1,306 appointments.

http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/15-038.html#.VNIV3p3F_WE

Northwest Territories

INCOME SECURITY

On June 1, 2015, the minimum wage will increase from \$10.00 per hour to \$12.50 per hour, making it the highest in Canada. A Minimum Wage Committee was established in 2013 to review social and economic factors, compare minimum wage and hourly rates across the country, and recommend changes to the territorial rate, as appropriate.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/jackson-lafferty-increase-to-the-minimum-wage-in-the-nwt/>

Nunavut

No updates this month.