



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

April 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

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Through Budget 2015, the Provincial Government is allocating a total of approximately \$8.1 billion in expenditures. The deficit for 2014-15, projected at mid-year to be \$916.1 million, is now revised to \$924.1 million as a result of declining oil prices globally. The budgeted deficit for 2015-16 is \$1.1 billion. The Budget outlines a Five-Year Fiscal Recovery Plan to return the province to surplus in 2020-21. Social policy-related highlights include:

Caregiving

- Approximately \$180 million for the Provincial Home Support Program. In 2014-15, more than \$170 million was invested to provide home support to approximately 9,000 seniors

Disability

- \$117.8 million to meet the needs of students with disabilities, providing instructional resource teachers, speech language pathologists, guidance counsellors, autism itinerants, inclusion itinerants, educational psychologists and assistive technologies
- \$1 million to continue accessibility improvements to Arts and Culture Centres in the province, bringing the total invested in accessibility at the centres in the past four years to \$4.7 million
- \$400,000 for the Accessible Vehicle Program, which helps individuals with mobility disabilities to acquire or adapt personal vehicles for accessibility. This funding also includes \$50,000 to assist the taxi industry acquire accessible taxis.
- \$200,000 for inclusion grants, which help communities and organizations install such items as accessible washrooms, automatic doors, visual smoke alarms and accessible playground equipment, and to provide sign language services and captioning at events

Education

- \$45.7 million to continue the implementation of the Caring for Our Future strategy. Investments under this strategy include:
 - \$17.3 million for the Child Care Service Subsidy
 - \$10.7 million for the newly implemented Operating Grant Program
 - \$6.5 million for Early Learning and Child Care Supplement
 - \$2 million for the Inclusion Supports Program
 - \$1.8 million for the Child Care Capacity Initiative
 - \$1 million for the Family Child Care Initiative
 - \$500,000 for the Workplace Training Program
- more than \$10.5 million to continue implementation of full-day Kindergarten beginning in September 2016. Implementing full-day Kindergarten is an investment in the early learning and development of children and supports the province's Early Learning Strategy, Learning from the Start



Health

- approximately \$700 million for long-term care and community support services, including home support and personal care homes
- \$133.7 million to ensure access to new and modern health care facilities and equipment \$938,000 to advance the Strategy to Reduce Emergency Department Wait Times. To date, this strategy and investments total more than \$160 million
- \$482,000 for a two-year agreement with Health Canada to fund development of a provincial Methadone Maintenance Treatment Policy to increase access to substance-abuse treatment services for youth and adults, and to expand the current Outcome Monitoring System for adults to include youth
- \$2.6 million to implement new drug therapies in the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program, including drugs for the treatment of Hepatitis C and pulmonary hypertension as well as new cancer therapies for lung cancer and multiple myeloma. The listing of any new drug therapy is contingent on the final recommendations of the national drug review committees, and the successful negotiation of pricing agreements with the manufacturer where appropriate
- \$172,800 to add the Rotavirus vaccine to the Provincial Vaccine Program. The vaccine protects infants from gastrointestinal illness, which can lead to severe illness and hospitalization
- \$422,000 to provide youth outreach to vulnerable and high-risk youth. This includes:
 - \$202,000 for three youth outreach workers in Labrador
 - \$220,000 to Choices for Youth for youth outreach
 - \$300,000 to continue the Strongest Families Program, which provides distance-coaching for youth with mental health issues over the phone and online
 - \$114,900 in annual funding to create a provincial system navigator position, as identified in the Premier's Summit on Health Care, to assist patients and families access mental health and addictions treatment

Housing

- \$8.8 million under the Provincial Home Repair Program to assist households with lower incomes make repairs to their homes. Historically, nearly 86 percent of applicants are seniors
- \$5.4 million to create new affordable housing units through the Investment in Affordable Housing Program, of which approximately 60 per cent will serve seniors
- \$104,000 to support the continuation of a Rent Supplement Pilot Project, which provides rental subsidies to eligible applicants who wish to remain in private sector rental accommodations

Income security

- introduction of a fourth rate of 14.3 percent for taxable income of \$125,001 to \$175,000 and a fifth rate of 15.3 percent for taxable

income over \$175,000, effective July 1, 2015

- Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) will increase from 13 percent to 15 percent effective January 1, 2016. To minimize the impact of the rate increase on low income individuals and families, the HST credit will be enhanced to offset the additional amount of HST paid. Government will increase the value of the credit to \$300 annually per adult and \$60 for spouse. There will also be an increase in the income threshold from \$15,000 to \$30,000, meaning that the number of eligible families will rise from approximately 58,000 to 127,000
- the Residential Energy Rebate program, introduced in 2011 to help residents offset the rising price of fuel used to heat their homes, will be ending effective July 1, 2015
- Over the past year, government has worked with public sector unions to formalize agreements that protect the defined benefit plans for approximately 97 percent of the plan members, including retirees. Work will continue to address the remaining unfunded pension liability in 2015-16

Poverty Reduction

- Budget 2015 includes more than \$185 million for Poverty Reduction Strategy initiatives designed to prevent, reduce and alleviate poverty, bringing the total investment in poverty reduction since 2006 to more than \$1.2 billion
- This year, the Provincial Government will release a new action plan to build on the strategy's successes and reflect priorities identified in a recent engagement process. Budget 2015 investments include:
 - more than \$25 million for early learning and child care initiatives designed to ensure all children have the opportunity to develop to their full potential
 - \$12.2 million for the Low Income Tax Reduction Program, which represents a \$1.1 million increase over last year

Recreation

- \$24.9 million for sport and recreation infrastructure projects, bringing the total invested since 2004 to \$169.6 million
- \$5.9 million for community-based organizations and agencies that are advocates for health and wellness, and deliver key programs and services
- \$2.2 million for initiatives, programs and projects focused on healthy living, recreation and wellness at the community level
- \$500,000 to develop and implement a physical activity program for school-aged children \$500,000 to promote healthy living initiatives that support breastfeeding, healthy eating, school health, smoking cessation and more

Seniors

- \$42.1 million for the Low-Income Seniors Tax Benefit; an estimat-



ed, 44,800 households will receive a tax benefit to a maximum of \$1,059 in October 2015

Transportation

- \$400,000 for age-friendly transportation services.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/fin/0430n08.aspx>

EDUCATION

Through an Atlantic Canadian initiative, educational personnel throughout Newfoundland and Labrador will have access to a new online training program for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The program will allow the education system to be more responsive to emerging research and the needs of students with autism. This 40-hour, self-paced online training program titled ASD and Behavioral Interventions: An Introduction for School Personnel includes 10 modules and addresses topics such as ASD and its impact on learning, communication and social skills development, identifying the student's needs as well as managing behaviour.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/edu/0402n02.aspx>

THRONE SPEECH

Social policy-related commitments made by the province included:

- placing a focus on primary health care, particularly in the areas of health promotion and prevention, chronic disease management, mental health and addictions, and supports for seniors
- making progress toward allowing pharmacists to prescribe for some defined minor ailments
- taking the recommendations of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions' and building them into a new provincial Mental Health and Addictions Strategy
- improving the existing e-mental health program to reduce wait times for children with mild-to-moderate behavioural problems
- implementing a strategic health workforce plan to consolidate existing initiatives and programs, including workforce projections, into a unified and strengthened provincial approach
- developing an Inclusion Action Plan to deliver on the objectives of the Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. The plan will outline concrete initiatives in five areas: changing how we think about disability, engaging people with disabilities, removing barriers from the built environment, enhancing access to disability-related supports and delivering services with dignity and respect
- building a Provincial Wellness Plan to complement the primary health care system and build a coordinated approach across departments and sectors to advance the wellness of the population's health and to reduce disparities
- strengthening partnerships with the leaders of Aboriginal communities, particularly in Labrador, to deliver innovative approaches to child, youth

and family services

- resourcing the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador to revise its Rules of Court in 2015-16. Not modernized since 1986, the revisions will ensure a simplified court process; faster, more user-friendly access to court services; and a resolution process proportionate to the complexity of the matter before the court. Self-represented litigants, in particular, will benefit from revisions in the Rules of Court when engaging on their own behalf in the court process.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/exec/0421n06.aspx>

New Brunswick

CHILDREN

Inspection reports on licensed child care facilities in New Brunswick are now publicly accessible online for the benefit of children and families.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.04.0238.html

EDUCATION

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development released its budget estimates today of \$1.1 billion for educational services and programs for students and preschoolers in 2015-16. Investments include:

- \$3.5 million for early childhood development. \$76.8 million for the Early Childhood Development division, which includes:
- \$23.6 million for the Quality Improvement Financial Program for wage enhancements for educators working directly with children in regulated child care facilities
- \$15.8 million for the Preschool Autism Intervention Program
- \$10 million for projects such as a new child care registry, early intervention program and new licensing technology

Educational Services, which includes prescribed instructional programs, has received \$786 million, while \$27 million has been allocated to the school district offices. Funding for the planning and operation of school facilities totals \$113.8 million.

The province is experiencing declining enrollment and will reduce its educational work force by 302 of a total 13,851 employees.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.04.0308.html

The New Brunswick Innovation Foundation announced \$1.4 million to fund 111 graduate and 62 undergraduate student researchers at five post-secondary institutions across the province, the largest amount in its 12-year history.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.04.0338.html



HEALTH

The Department of Health released its 2015-16 budget estimates. This year's \$2.6 billion budget is an \$8 million increase over the 2014-15 budget and includes:

- the creation of an Enhanced Patient Access Primary Care pilot project, which will see nurses and nurse practitioners working in community-based family physician practices and dropping 2,000 New Brunswickers off Patient Connect NB, the provincially-managed bilingual patient registry for New Brunswickers without a family doctor
- a Primary Care after-hours access premium pilot project will be made available to community-based family physicians that provide evening and weekend services
- the expansion of clinical services at sexual health clinics to individuals over the age of 19 with the addition of at least five nurse practitioners
- increasing fees paid to physicians providing Extra Mural Program (EMP) care in patients' homes. Known by many as the hospital without walls, provides home health services to New Brunswickers of all ages in their homes and/or communities. EMP services are publicly funded and provided by the Regional Health Authorities.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.8975.Extra-Mural_Program.html

Nova Scotia

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The province released its 2015-16 Budget. Revenue for 2015-16 is an estimated \$9.9 billion, a 3.7 percent increase from 2014-15. Expenses are an estimated \$10 billion, an increase of 0.9 percent from 2014-15. The projected deficit is \$97.6 million.

Social policy-related highlights include:

Caregiving

- increased funding in the Caregiver Benefit to support 385 more families (\$1.8 million) and homecare services (\$3.8 million)

Education

- \$6.5 million towards Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education
- \$3.6million increase for grades Primary to Grade 2 class-size caps, \$3.45 million for Grades 3 and 4 class-size caps
- \$3million increase for the math strategy; \$4.4 million for early literacy (a \$973,000 increase)
- early intervention offered in math for grades Primary to 3 students
- \$1.3million increase to reduce the wait lists for community-based Early Intervention
- \$700,000 increase for Early Learning Initiatives; \$500,000 increase

for four new SchoolsPlus sites

- Provide Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention to meet the needs of pre-schoolers with autism preparing to enter school
- \$3.2 million to increase university operating grants by one percent
- increased university funding, continuation of the Nova Scotia Bursary and no-interest student loans, and more generous (too many increases!) up-front grants and graduate scholarships (\$34 million)
- \$3.2 million to increase university operating grants by one percent
- allow universities to make one-time market adjustments to tuition, to charge similar amounts for similar programs.
- maintain the three percent cap on tuition increases for Nova Scotia undergrads once market adjustments are applied; remove cap for out-of-province and graduate students
- \$1.6 million in up-front grants to help more Nova Scotia students pay for school
- forgive up to \$15,000 in provincial student loans at Nova Scotia universities through the Nova Scotia Loan Forgiveness Program
- \$24.8 million to maintain the Nova Scotia Bursary, which automatically takes \$1,283 off tuition for Nova Scotia students studying at home
- \$3.8 million for the 0 Per Cent Interest Program, to pay the interest of provincial student loans for Nova Scotia graduates

Health

- strategic decisions at the Department of Health and Wellness to contain costs to an overall increase of 0.8 percent, the smallest increase in more than a decade
- the development of the province's first multi-year provincial health plan to ensure the most effective and efficient use of system resources to improve health outcomes
- development of the One Person One Record plan, a single, secure electronic record that connects a person's health information from various health sectors (\$2.6 million)
- creation of a new Division of Public Safety and Protection at the Department of Environment that will consolidate enforcement programs from the departments of Environment, Health and Wellness, and Natural Resources
- expansion of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program to two more areas (\$700,000)
- reduction in orthopaedic surgery wait time by providing 450 more surgeries
- increased age of eligibility from 19 to 25 years for insulin-pump funding



- expanded vaccinations for meningococcal meningitis, including introducing the quadrivalent meningococcal vaccine in the school program
- addition of the Human Papillomavirus Vaccine (HPV) for Grade 7 males through the school program

Recreation

- elimination of the Healthy Living Tax Credit, which is not helping low-income Nova Scotians

Seniors

- assistance for more low-income seniors to make health and safety repairs to their homes, such as installing rails and safety bars, or putting in ramps (\$1.5 million more in the Senior Citizens Assistance Program).

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150409002>

CHILDREN

Following a commitment made in January 2015, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is seeking feedback from parents and families on the strengths and challenges related to child care.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150421004>

Amendments to the *Children and Family Services Act* aimed at better supporting and protecting children and families include:

- taking a more proactive approach investigating child abuse and neglect
- focusing on early intervention and prevention to reduce serious harm to children
- extending protection and services to children 16 to 19 years old, on a voluntary basis
- updating language to reflect current family structures
- recognizing other forms of abuse and neglect, such as developmental neglect
- streamlining court practices, so children can return home or find permanent homes sooner.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150430009>

EDUCATION

A new *University Accountability and Sustainability Act* was introduced, requiring increased accountability and cost control at Nova Scotia's ten universities. The legislation requires more standard financial reporting and obliges universities to set outcomes and measure progress.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150422005>

GOVERNANCE

Amendments to the Vital Statistics Act will further protect transgender citizens from harassment and discrimination. Amendments will remove

the requirement for Nova Scotians to have sex reassignment surgery to change the sex designation on their birth certificate.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150408002>

INCOME SECURITY

The updated *Pension Benefits Act* will come into effect June 1, to increase transparency and access to information for plan members and pensioners. The new regulations will:

- update benefit standards to correspond with requirements in other jurisdictions
- enhance regulatory oversight
- improve plan administration
- introduce flexibility to allow for new plan design
- clarify funding rules.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150422003>

Prince Edward Island

HEALTH

This month, 18 new medications were added to the provincial drug formulary to improve treatment and lower the cost of drugs for patients with cancer, diabetes, lung disease, psoriasis, blood vessel disease and schizophrenia.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=10163&dept=&lang=E>

Québec

CHILDREN

Following the adoption of the Bill 28, the Ministry of Family announced changes related to the educational child care services fund for children and the parental contribution. The provincial adoption of Bill 28 creates an educational child care services fund for children. It will be used to cover additional family contributions to day care expenses. As of April 22, 2015, the parental child care contribution will be composed of a basic contribution \$7.30 per day, per child, paid directly to the child care service, and an additional contribution commensurate with net family income as reported on their income tax return. The base and the additional contribution will be indexed annually as of January 1, 2016. The province forecasts that:

- 30 percent of families will not experience increases, since they have an income of less than \$50,000
- families with incomes in the \$50,000 to \$75,000 range will pay a fee of \$8 per day
- nearly 60 percent of families will pay a fee of less than \$9



- the contribution of all parents in 2015-16 will increase to 19.7 per cent of the total costs of care, a level comparable to that which existed during the implementation of the care network funded in 1997
- like any other child care expenses, the parental contribution may be eligible for the federal Child Care Expense Deduction. For example, for a couple with a family income totaling \$70,000, the net cost of a contribution of \$8.00 would be \$6.84 after taxes and transfers.

[Link](#)

COMMUNITY

The province released Plan Nord 2035, the 2015-2020 Action Plan. Its goal is to ensure that northern resource development will benefit people living in the area and contribute to the province's overall economy. The plan outlines four fundamental principles:

- a planned, coordinated project which focuses on partnership, private sector investment and the support of communities
- sustainable development that integrates economic, social and environmental elements
- government intervention that is adapted to the realities of local and indigenous communities, and the whole of the Northern Territory
- a plan that is harmonious, ethical and respectful of indigenous and non-indigenous populations, and that seeks equality between women and men.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

The minimum wage in Quebec will increase to \$10.55 on May 1, 2015, a rise of \$0.20 per hour. The minimum wage rate payable to employees who receive tips will increase by \$8.90 to \$9.05 an hour. The hourly rate payable to employees in the clothing industry will go up from \$10.35 to \$10.55.

[Link](#)

YOUTH

The government's decision to establish new partnerships for Québec youth will foster the social and professional integration of young talent. In the meantime, staff at existing Youth Forum organizations are eligible to receive Employment Insurance.

[Link](#)

Ontario

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Ontario is helping to distribute the Walk-A-Mile Film Project across the province to promote a greater understanding of treaties. The project explores different aspects of the treaty relationship and its implications for the urban Aboriginal population. Intended as an educational resource,

each segment of the film is written to foster dialogue among participants on a wide variety of issues.

<http://news.ontario.ca/maa/en/2015/04/ontario-helps-bring-aboriginal-experience-to-a-larger-audience.html>

While ruling on an individual family's medical decisions for their child, Justice Gethin Edward ruled that the aboriginal right to practice traditional medicine is protected under Section 35 of the Constitution. His decision further clarifies that the best interests of the child are paramount and that the Aboriginal right to practice traditional medicine must be respected. The practice of this right can work together with other approaches to health care.

<http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/news/2015/20150424-jj-en.pdf>

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The province presented a four-part Budget plan that invests in talent and skills; builds public infrastructure such as roads and transit; creates an innovative, dynamic business environment; and builds a new retirement pension plan. Social policy-related highlights include:

Caregiving

- improving home and community care services by increasing investments by an average five percent per year, or more than \$750 million over the next three years

Community

- stopping sexual violence and harassment, and improving support for survivors through It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment

Education

- modernizing the Ontario Student Assistance Program to strengthen financial assistance for students

Employment

- allocating an additional \$200 million for the Jobs and Prosperity Fund to attract more business investments and create jobs, bringing the total

to \$2.7 billion over 10 years, and extending eligibility to the forestry sector

- participating in the creation of a new innovation initiative that will convene an experienced group of senior business leaders who will help bring their capital, knowledge and networks to Ontario start-ups

Income security

- increasing Ontario social assistance rates by one percent for adult Ontario Works recipients and people with disabilities receiving Ontario Disability Support Program benefits. Those with the lowest incomes, Ontario Works single adults without children, will receive an additional top-up



- moving forward with strengthening workplace pension plans and introducing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan in 2017

Youth

- implementing the next phase of the Youth Action Plan – an annual investment that starts at \$14 million in 2015-16 and grows to almost \$21 million in 2016-17 – aimed at improving outcomes for at-risk youth.

<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/budget/ontariobudgets/2015/budhi.html>

CHILDREN

The government released the 2015 Review of the *Child and Family Services Act*. See the executive summary at:

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/about/CFSA2014/CFSARReview-ExecSummary.pdf>

Over the next three years, \$120 million in new funding will be dedicated to building 4,000 new licensed child care spaces in schools across the province where there is significant demand. Schools boards in Ontario can apply now to the Ministry of Education for funding.

<http://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2015/04/ontario-creating-4000-new-child-care-spaces-in-schools.html>

EDUCATION

The province will invest an additional \$55 million in three programs that support apprenticeship.

<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2015/04/ontario-investing-55-million-to-help-more-people-enter-the-skilled-trades.html>

GOVERNANCE

As part of its Open Government initiative, Ontario is the first province to post a draft Open Data Directive for public feedback.

<http://news.ontario.ca/tbs/en/2015/05/ontario-releases-open-data-directive-for-public-feedback.html>

HOUSING

The province is conducting consultations to renew its Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. Submissions will be accepted until July 3, 2015.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2015/04/ontario-launches-public-consultations-to-improve-access-to-affordable-housing.html>

INCOME SECURITY

The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2015 has been approved by the Ontario Legislature. The Act forms the foundation of the ORPP, which the government will put in place by January 1, 2017.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2014/12/ontario-retirement-pension-plan-act-2014.html>

POVERTY REDUCTION

Ontario is investing \$50 million over six years to support grassroots community partners in lifting people and families out of poverty. The Local Poverty Reduction Fund will support innovative local solutions and help community organizations demonstrate their progress, evaluate programs and build a body of evidence on effective poverty reduction initiatives..

<http://news.ontario.ca/tbs/en/2015/04/local-poverty-reduction-fund-to-support-community-driven-solutions.html>

RECREATION

As part of its 20-year #CycleON strategy, the province is investing \$25 million over three years to create a more cycling-friendly future for the province: \$15 million for cycling routes that provide key connections and linkages on provincial highways and \$10 million to the Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program to help municipalities.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mto/en/2015/04/ontario-investing-25-million-in-cycling-infrastructure.html>

TRANSPORTATION

The new Community Transportation Pilot Grant Program will improve community transportation services for seniors, persons living with disabilities, youth and other members of the community who need transportation. 22 municipalities were selected to receive up to \$100,000 to provide better transportation services by sharing and coordinating community transportation resources. Municipalities will partner with health and community agencies, transit agencies, school bus operators and private transit operators, to co-ordinate local transportation services.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mto/en/2015/04/improving-transportation-for-youth-seniors-persons-living-with-disabilities-1.html>

WOMEN

Ontario has appointed a new Steering Committee to lead the development of a wage gap strategy that will work to close the wage gap between men and women.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2015/04/ontario-takes-another-step-to-close-the-gender-wage-gap.html>

YOUTH

The province reported on the results of three employment-focused youth strategies:

- the government is partnering with Ontario Centres of Excellence to provide customized training for social entrepreneurs to help grow their business. The Ontario Social Impact Vouchers pilot program will supply 125 vouchers worth up to \$3,000 each to eligible social entrepreneurs to get needs-specific training.
- through the Young Entrepreneurs, Make Your Pitch competition, the province is giving young entrepreneurs the chance to pitch their business ideas to experts and the public. Six successful high school students will receive \$750 towards their postsecondary education



and a reserved spot in Ontario's Summer Company program, which provides mentoring and funding to help launch businesses.

<http://news.ontario.ca/medt/en/2015/04/ontario-investing-in-training-for-young-entrepreneurs.html>

Manitoba

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Social policy-related highlights include:

Caregiving

- increasing the Caregiver Tax Credit by 10 percent, so people who care for friends or family members can receive benefits of up to \$4,200 each

Children

- Investing in 900 new, universally accessible and affordable child care spaces

Education

- creating a new Post-secondary Education Strategy
- ensuring funding increases for universities and colleges
- continuing education funding for public schools to hire more teachers and build new schools
- starting in August, Manitoba student loans will be interest free and car ownership will be removed as a barrier to accessing student loans

Employment

- creating the Youth Jobs Strategy including more support for paid work and on-the-job training opportunities
- doubling the Career Development Initiative to give more students opportunities to explore a career
- enhancing co-op education and apprenticeship tax credits
- creating 200 more apprenticeship seats

Health

- hiring more doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals
- adding two new QuickCare clinics, bringing the total to seven
- adding more supports for foster parents
- creating a new child and youth mental health strategy
- increasing smoking cessation programs by \$2 million, funded entirely by a 0.5-cent increase in tobacco tax

Housing

- increasing Rent Assist to 75 percent of the median market rent to help low-income families afford better housing

Income security

- increasing minimum wage to \$11 per hour in October
- introducing new volunteer firefighter and search-and-rescue tax credits

Seniors

- doubling the Seniors School Tax Rebate in 2015 to \$470.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=34730&post-ed=2015-04-30>

HEALTH

Three drugs to support people living with hepatitis C are among 69 new drugs now covered under Manitoba's pharmacare program.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=34634&post-ed=2015-04-23>

Saskatchewan

CHILDREN

\$7.2 million to help the Native Co-ordinating Council and other community based organizations in Northern Saskatchewan support vulnerable families. The Native Co-ordinating Council receives funding for their Diversion programs. The goal of these programs is to provide in-home support and education to parents whose children are at risk of coming into care of the Ministry of Social Services.

The council also received funding for the operation of two emergency receiving homes; family supports; in-home support for foster parents; visitation, supervision and transportation for parents with children in care; supported independent living; and two peer homes.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/april/08/help-for-northern-families>

COMMUNITY

Province-wide, the Ministry of Justice's Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Program is providing more than \$11 million toward interpersonal violence programming this fiscal year.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/april/09/violence-program-in-swift-current>

EDUCATION

Saskatchewan families have received more than \$6.7 million from the Saskatchewan Advantage Grant for Education Savings (SAGES) program since the program was announced. More than 26,000 children in the province are now SAGES recipients.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/april/29/sages-program-update>

HEALTH

The province will provide coverage for two new lifesaving drugs for treating hepatitis C.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/april/01/hep-c-drug-coverage>

POVERTY REDUCTION

\$263.3 million in funding in the 2015-16 Budget for community-based organizations that assist persons with disabilities, vulnerable men, women and children, people struggling with homelessness and other Saskatchewan people in need.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/april/08/social-services-cbos>

The Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction launched its online public consultation website. In addition to the online process, the Advisory Group is holding one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders across the province. The 11-member Poverty Reduction Advisory Group is made up of six members of the public and five members of government. The group is expected to provide its recommendations to government that will inform the development of a poverty reduction strategy in June 2015.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/april/22/sharing-ideas-to-reduce-poverty>

Alberta

HEALTH

The provincial government will expand the Empathy™ pilot project that provides mental health supports to children in Red Deer schools, and develop a province-wide approach based on an evaluation of all current school-based mental health programs.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=379859A6902DD-FEF3-33ED-86FC1A627650B487>

British Columbia

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

As part of BC's Skills for Jobs Blueprint, government is partnering with industry to invest a combined total of \$1.2 million in the Pathways to Success program for six First Nations communities. The government is providing \$600,000 of the \$1.2 million and industry partners are providing matching funding. These industry partners include BG Canada, LNG

Canada and Pacific NorthWest LNG.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/04/getting-job-ready-12-million-for-aboriginal-skills-training.html>

HEALTH

The Province is helping low-income adults and children access urgent dental care with a \$120,000 one-time grant to support dental programs throughout BC. Twenty not-for-profit dental clinics will receive \$4,000

each. The majority of the \$80,000 distributed to the clinics will be used to deliver services at reduced rates for low-income families and individuals. The funds will assist with operating and capital costs, such as replacement equipment. Another \$40,000 will go directly to the British Columbia Dental Association's Save a Smile program, which supports urgent dental care to children of families without public or private dental-plan coverage.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/04/low-income-families-benefit-from-dental-care-funding.html>

WOMEN

The province is putting its Vision for a Violence Free BC strategy into action, investing \$5 million for projects focused on ending violence against women and preventing crime. More than 220 grants, funded through BC's civil forfeiture program, have been allocated to groups throughout the province for initiatives that address violence against women, support youth and community crime prevention and support victims through restorative justice programs. Funds may also be put toward police education, training and the purchase of specialized crime prevention equipment.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/04/5-million-invested-for-a-safer-violence-free-bc.html>

Yukon Territory

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The territorial government tabled its 2015-16 Budget of \$1.367 billion, the largest in Yukon's history and includes the largest Capital Budget in Yukon's history at \$312.8 million. Social policy-related highlights include:

Children

- The territory announced enhancements to the Yukon Child Tax Benefit, which applies to approximately 1200 Yukon families. The maximum annual amount per child will rise to \$820 from \$690, and the family income threshold for receiving the maximum benefit will increase to \$35,000 from \$30,000. These increases will begin with the July 2015 payment.

Employment

- \$5.991 million from the federal government under the Canada-Yukon Job Fund Agreement over the next six years starting in 2014 to encourage greater employment involvement in training and to enable residents to develop the skills they need to find and maintain employment
- \$5 million over four years beginning April 1, 2014, from the Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPD) to provide labour market support to persons with disabilities to develop the skills and experience they need for employment



Health

In addition to numerous capital projects, the territory will provide:

- \$2.4 million for programs formerly funded by the federal government under the Territorial Health Access Fund that are now financed by Yukon and include programs for Palliative Care, Public Health and Prevention, Rural Mental Health Services and Chronic Conditions Management
- \$8.9 million from the new Territorial Health Investment Fund with the Territorial components comprising chronic disease management and mental wellness while the Pan-Territorial includes e-mental Health Supports and Yukon Tele-psychiatry programs
- \$659,000 operation and maintenance funding to convert a building in Whitehorse in order to provide transitional housing for persons with mental health conditions for a period of two months to two years
- \$4.2 million to rebuild the St. Elias adult group home to support Yukoners with cognitive disabilities, and increasing the capacity from five to 10 spaces
- \$21 million for the construction of the new Sarah Steele building to provide enhanced medically-supported detox, a separate youth detox unit, concurrent in-patient treatment for males and females and continuous intake
- The government will continue the territory's history of innovative Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) programming by:
 - establishing a local Adult Diagnostic Clinic to replace the current itinerant model
 - training physicians and psychologists to better respond to individuals with FASD
 - investing \$298,000 for the completion of the FASD Prevalence Study to look at the incidence of FASD, substance abuse and mental health issues in the adult corrections population

Housing

The Northern Housing Trust funding is being distributed as follows:

- \$1.395 million for affordable rental units
- \$3.5 million for the Municipal Rental Construction Program to partner with municipalities to increase the supply of rental housing in Yukon communities
- \$1 million for the Rental Housing Allowance for families
- \$800,000 for Rental Quality Enhancement Grants to increase the quality of rental housing stock in Yukon to meet or exceed the minimum rental standards
- \$800,000 for Accessibility Enhancement Grants to enhance the accessibility of housing stock for homeowners and landlords

- \$480,000 for Housing Action Plan (HAP) implementation
- \$250,000 for a public, private partnership plan for 5th and Rogers (what does this mean?) designed to increase the supply of affordable rental housing as well as meet other needs. This plan will maximize private sector investment and involve the City of Whitehorse
- \$1.565 million per year over five years in matching contributions from spell out CMHC and the Yukon Government to fund affordable housing projects under the Investment and Affordable Housing agreement.

Income security

- Introduction of significant changes to the *Income Tax Act* that will provide more than \$5.5 million in savings annually to taxpayers. The amendments would be retroactive to January 1, 2015, and include new tax rates for all existing tax brackets. If accepted, the 2015 Budget will eliminate the five percent surtax on taxes payable over \$6,000 and introduce a fifth tax bracket on incomes over \$500,000.

Recreation

- proposed amendments to the *Income Tax Act* will provide additional support to families with modest incomes by changing the Yukon Children's Fitness Tax Credit from a non-refundable credit to a refundable credit. This change ensures that parents will receive the credit even if their income is too low to pay taxes
- \$400,000 increase in Community Recreation Assistance Grant funding for unincorporated Yukon communities to support community recreation, wellness and active living
- the allocation of more than \$2 million from Canada's Northern Wellness Approach during the next five years with \$531,000 made available in 2015-16 to build capacity at the community level and promote healthy, active living.

Women

- \$281,000 over three years for the provision of a Woman's Legal Advocate
- \$450,000 had been allocated over three years starting in 2013 to support Aboriginal women's organizations, in response to the second Yukon Aboriginal Women's Summit recommendations of 2012
- the October 2015 launch of an interactive website by the Women's Directorate showcasing a current profile of women's equality in Yukon based on indicators such as health, education, economic security, leadership, child care, safety, arts and athletics.

<http://www.finance.gov.yk.ca/pdf/budget/highlights.pdf>

HEALTH

The Yukon government has tabled Bill 88, the *Pharmacy and Drug Act*, a step toward modernizing the regulation of pharmacies in Yukon and the first step in the Pharmacy Initiative.

http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/15-119.html#.VSb_lfnF_el



INCOME SECURITY

Amendments to the *Income Tax Act* were passed, including reduced tax rates and improvements to the Yukon Child Benefit and the Yukon Children's Fitness Tax Credit. The Yukon Child Benefit is a monthly payment targeted at helping lower-income families raise children. The annual amount per child is increasing from \$690 to \$820. The income threshold that triggers a reduction in this benefit is rising from \$30,000 to \$35,000 per year starting with the July 2015 payment. These changes represent a 35 percent increase in government's investment to the child benefit. There are approximately 1,200 families with 2,100 children who are eligible for the Yukon Child Benefit.

The amendments to the *Income Tax Act* also provide additional support to families by changing the Yukon Child Fitness Tax Credit from a non-refundable credit to a refundable credit. This change ensures that parents will receive the credit even if their income is too low to pay taxes.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/15-157.html#VUOVPIVhHw>

Northwest Territories

No updates this month.

Nunavut

INCOME SECURITY

The Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit provides low-income seniors in Nunavut, who qualify for the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement, a monthly payment to help offset high cost of living. Effective April 1, 2015, the amount paid to eligible seniors will increase from \$175 to \$200 per month.

<http://www.gov.nu.ca/family-services/news/changes-senior-citizen-supplementary-benefit>