



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

June 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

COMMUNITY

The province released *Live Here, Work Here, Belong Here, A Population Growth Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015-25*. Committing \$29 million in funding to the effort over five years, the government aims to create an environment conducive to population stability and growth. It will introduce further supports for workforce development, families, communities and immigration.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/exec/0625n03.aspx>

DISABILITY

The Provincial Government released an action plan to guide further implementation of *Access. Inclusion. Equality – A Provincial Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*. The action plan outlines 43 initiatives which advance the plan's five strategic directions: shifting public perceptions of disability, engaging persons with disabilities, improving accessibility in the built environment, improving access to disability-related supports and changing the service delivery culture to be more fair and respectful.

Plan: http://www.swsd.gov.nl.ca/disabilities/pdf/dpo_jsap.pdf

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/swsd/0619n09.aspx>

EMPLOYMENT

The province announced the launch of the Community Enhancement Employment Program. Organizations and communities can apply for employment funding. The jobs created will allow individuals to amass up to 400 hours in order to become eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits. The \$5.7 million being invested not only assists residents in qualifying for EI but also provides skills development opportunities for workers.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/ma/0611n01.aspx>

New Brunswick

CAREGIVING

Inspection reports for licensed nursing homes, special care homes and specialized care bed homes in New Brunswick are now accessible online.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.06.0588.html

EDUCATION

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission released *Student Progression in the Maritime University System*. The report provides persistence and graduation rates for more than 100,000 students who started their post-secondary studies at a Maritime university directly after high school between 2001 and 2011. It also presents detailed statistics for the fall 2006 cohort. Of the nearly 10,000 students who started their post-secondary studies at a Maritime university:

- 79 percent were still enrolled at their university of first entry after one year; 4 percent were enrolled at another Maritime university.



- 58 percent completed a degree within six years at their university of first entry
- 5 percent completed a degree at another Maritime university.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.06.0512.html

POVERTY REDUCTION

The Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation released *Together: The Impact of New Brunswick's 2009–2014 Economic and Social Inclusion Plan*. The report covers the period from November 2009 to December 2014. It documents movement on the 12 performance indicators, success stories from the 12 Community Inclusion Networks, and a summary of the plan's 22 Priority Actions. Highlights of the report include:

- for female lone-parent families, two-parent families and unattached individuals, the incidence of poverty has seen a reduction from 25 percent to 43 percent. This surpassed the original goal of 25 percent.
- efforts to reduce deep income poverty by 50 percent have not achieved the same results. A slight increase of about 5 percent has been seen in some situations.
- 21 of the 22 Priority Actions set in the plan have been completed. The remaining actions are in progress and have been carried over into the Overcoming Poverty Together 2014–2019 Plan for completion.
- 12 Community Inclusion Networks were established to identify, through a collaborative process, regional poverty issues and priorities; to develop and implement regional plans; and to act on these challenges at a regional level. In a little over three years, the networks have established partnerships with numerous community groups and have had a significant impact on their communities:
 - 212 projects developed and/or implemented
 - more than 44,000 people mobilized
 - almost \$8.3 million of community investment in projects
 - for each dollar invested by ESIC, \$3.40 was invested by community partners
- development and implementation of Healthy Smiles Clear Vision Plan for children of low-income families
- increase of the minimum wage to \$10 per hour
- development and implementation of the New Brunswick Drug Plan
- reform of the provincial social assistance system.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.06.0592.html

SENIORS

The province announced a Seniors Navigator initiative as part of the Home First Strategy to enhance support to seniors living at home and in communities. The Seniors Navigator initiative is a voluntary, in-home consultation program to address wellness, health and social support to create a safe and healthy home environment. Beginning in late 2015, home visits will be conducted by trained workers to review personal wellness, health, social support, home safety and caregiver support. Up to \$1,500 in funding will be available for minor, safety-related home repairs to those who cannot otherwise afford them.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.06.0561.html

Nova Scotia

COMMUNITY

The province launched “Breaking the Silence: A Coordinated Response to Sexual Violence in Nova Scotia.” The strategy will offer better-coordinated supports for victims, more public education and awareness, and continued community engagement on prevention.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150616001>

DISABILITY

The province is drafting legislation to enact the recommendations contained in a report developed over the last 12 months. Key report priorities include identifying a detailed timeline for the legislative process, and key milestones and checkpoints to ensure that the work progresses. The legislative team is also tasked with laying out an education and awareness plan so residents and businesses understand the new legislation.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150603002>

SENIORS

The province launched *Towards Understanding: A Dementia Strategy for Nova Scotia*. The strategy aims to improve access to timely and accurate diagnoses, provide more public education and awareness, give more support to families and caregivers, and enhance coordination in the health system. Some of the actions planned for the next three years are:

- enhancing dementia support as part of the 811 service
- building a toolkit for primary health care providers, focused on diagnosis, treatment, management and long-term care planning
- enhancing programs, such as supportive care, to allow caregivers of people younger than 65 who have been diagnosed with dementia to be considered for the program
- engaging with under-represented populations to identify needs and develop culturally specific programs and supports
- devising an education campaign to inform residents about the signs of dementia and the supports available



- ensuring accessibility of education programs for families and caregivers, and enhancing content to better meet their needs.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20150623009>

Prince Edward Island

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Social policy-related items include provincial commitments to:

- making a series of targeted, front-line investments in the health care system, which represents 40 percent of total program expenditures
- launching the PEI Generic Drug Program, saving Islanders without insurance \$2 million this year
- adding \$500,000 for enhanced home care for the elderly and to expand the seniors' mental health resource team
- doubling the funding for breakfast programs in our schools
- lowering or eliminating provincial income tax for 12,000 Islanders including seniors, working single parents and lower-income residents by adjusting credit levels and increasing the threshold at which Islanders can keep the full credits, returning an estimated \$1.7 million to low-income earners
- increasing total funding for Education and Early Learning by \$3.76 million.

Highlights document: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/budgethigh2015.pdf>

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&dept=&newsnumber=10243&lang=E>

INCOME SECURITY

Proposed amendments to the *Income Tax Act* will do three things to the province's Low Income Tax Reduction program:

- increase the amounts of the basic credit and the spouse/equivalent-to-spouse credit by \$50, to \$300 (from the current \$250) and the amount for each dependent child by \$50 to \$250 (from \$200)
- add a new senior credit of \$250 for Islanders ages 65 and older
- raise the income threshold at which someone will receive the full value of the credits to \$17,000/year, from the current \$15,000 (the value of each credit decreases by 5 percent for every dollar of income earned above \$17,000).

The changes will be in place to the beginning of the 2015 tax year. Residents will see the savings when they file their 2015 taxes in April 2016.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=10227&dept=&lang=E>

Québec

COMMUNITY

The government released an action plan entitled *2015-2018 Radicalization in Québec: Act, prevent, detect and live together*. Its goal is to provide a coordinated response to radicalization leading to violence. It presents 59 measures designed to ensure the safety of citizens and to foster social cohesion.

[Link](#)

DISABILITY

The Office for Disability Québec announced details of the *2015-19 À part entière* ("In full") plan to improve program delivery for people with disabilities. Twenty-four departments and agencies have made 63 commitments to the plan, and will aim to:

- develop ministry, agency and municipal action plans
- simplify access and service delivery
- obtain commitments to the achievement of performance targets.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

The Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Research will conduct a sex education pilot project in 15 primary and secondary schools during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 academic years.

[Link](#)

Ontario

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

The Chiefs of Ontario and the Government of Ontario agreed to an historic political accord that will guide the relationship between First Nations and the province. Building on a proposal presented by the Chiefs of Ontario, the accord outlines political commitments by First Nations and Ontario, serving as a guide to positive working relationships between the parties. The accord recognizes First Nations have an inherent right to self-government and commits the province and the Chiefs of Ontario to work together on shared priorities that improve the lives of First Nations people.

<http://news.ontario.ca/maa/en/2015/06/first-nations-ontario-agree-to-new-political-accord.html>

Ontario is launching the Aboriginal Procurement Program to help Aboriginal business owners sell products and services to the Ontario government and secure future contracts and clients. Provincial ministries will be encouraged to buy from Aboriginal-owned businesses when goods and services benefit Aboriginal people or communities. An annual report



will be released publicly to show the government's progress on increasing procurement from Aboriginal suppliers.

<http://news.ontario.ca/maa/en/2015/06/ontario-launches-aboriginal-procurement-program.html>

The province announced stable funding for Aboriginal post-secondary education totalling \$97 million over the next three years. The investment includes an additional \$5 million to support the sustainability of Ontario's nine Aboriginal-owned and operated learning institutes. Aboriginal institutes provide opportunities for students to start and complete post-secondary education credentials in a culturally appropriate and safe learning environment close to home.

<http://news.ontario.ca/tcu/en/2015/06/ontario-investing-in-aboriginal-postsecondary-education-and-training.html>

COMMUNITY

Ontario is moving to standardize police street checks across the province, and will establish rules to ensure these encounters are without bias, consistent and carried out in a manner that promotes public confidence.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mcscs/en/2015/06/ontario-to-standardize-police-street-checks.html>

DISABILITY

Ontario is providing an additional \$6 million to help students with disabilities at college or university. There are now twice as many students with disabilities enrolled in post-secondary education than there were in 2002-03. Students with disabilities make up 8.8 percent of post-secondary students, which totalled 54,300 students last year.

\$4.5 million in the Accessibility Fund for Students with Disabilities and the Summer Transitions Program will:

- deliver a wide range of services to students with disabilities on campus
- offer workshops and courses for high school students transitioning into postsecondary education.

\$1.5 million will be directed to other programs including:

- note-taking services for students with visual impairments
- interpreter services for students who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing
- learning assessments to help students determine what accommodations they need
- computers and tablet applications that change text-to-speech or speech-to-text, provide word prediction capabilities and graphic organizers.

<http://news.ontario.ca/tcu/en/2015/06/ontario-increasing-funding-for-postsecondary-students-with-disabilities.html>

HEALTH

Ontario is investing \$25 million over five years to support new treatments and therapies for people living with chronic diseases, such as cancer, multiple sclerosis and diabetes.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mri/en/2015/06/ontario-invests-25-million-in-stem-cell-research.html>

INCOME SECURITY

The province is inviting residents to share ideas on how to better protect consumers who use high-cost financial products and services outside the mainstream banking and credit union systems. The government is seeking feedback about issues such as payday loans, cheque cashing, money transfer services and experiences with debt collection agencies.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mgs/en/2015/06/ontario-launches-consultation-on-new-financial-protections-for-consumers.html>

The province is increasing its maximum monthly Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) payment. The OCB provides direct financial support to low- to moderate-income families with children under age 18. Starting July 1, 2015, the OCB, which supports about one million children in Ontario, will increase to a maximum of \$1,336 per child, per year. Future increases will be tied to the Ontario Consumer Price Index.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en/2015/06/government-increasing-ontario-child-benefit-to-help-500000-families.html>

SENIORS

Ontario is doubling the investment in the Seniors Community Grant Program from \$1 million to \$2 million.

<http://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2015/06/ontario-connecting-more-seniors-with-their-communities.html>

YOUTH

The province announced \$55 million over three years for an enhanced Youth Action Plan to support more high-risk youth and additional high-needs communities across the province. Building on the 2012 Ontario Youth Action Plan, additional investments are being made in areas of high need, including Sudbury, Kingston, Brantford, Peterborough, Thunder Bay and the Greater Toronto Area. The updated plan is based on five pillars:

Best Start, Right Start – providing early and ongoing support to help young people make better choices and successfully transition into their teen years and developing a Middle Years Strategy

- Safe Communities – laying the foundation for keeping youth and communities safe through programs like Youth Justice Family Workers and a new Restorative Justice and Conflict Mediation Program
- Youth Well-being – decreasing risk factors such as disengagement with school, unemployment and antisocial activity through programs like the Youth Outreach Worker Program and the province-wide expansion of the Youth Opportunities Fund



- Youth Engagement – addressing barriers to social inclusion and creating more positive opportunities for newcomer and Aboriginal youth, through measures including a new Youth Mentorship Program
- Working Together, Building on Success – working together with the private sector and community providers to create new opportunities for youth through programs like the Private Sector Jobs and Mentorship Initiative.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en/2015/06/ontario-launches-enhanced-youth-action-plan.html>

Manitoba

CHILDREN

A proposed sweeping rewrite of Manitoba’s laws governing enforcement of child and spousal support, parentage, child custody and access has been introduced to enhance the well-being of children.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=35072&post-ed=2015-06-03>

The province is committing funding for 14 new or expanded child care centres and raising wages for child care workers as part of a five-year plan to create a universally accessible child care system and add 5,000 newly-funded licensed spaces.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=35076&post-ed=2015-06-04>

The province introduced legislation that would be the first step in implementing the recommendations of the Hughes commission to strengthen the Office of the Children’s Advocate to make it more independent and enhance transparency of the child welfare system.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=35152&post-ed=2015-06-10>

DISABILITY

Wages for support workers at eligible agencies that offer valuable residential services for adults with intellectual disabilities will rise July 1 with the help of a special \$3 million, three-year fund established by the Manitoba government to boost these incomes. Beginning July 1, agencies that offer community living disability services can apply to the Wage Enhancement Fund (WEF) for additional funding to increase the starting wage of direct service workers in residential care facilities to \$13 per hour, up from the starting wage of \$12.50 per hour. Only agencies that have starting wages of less than \$13 per hour are eligible to receive the WEF funding.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=35373&post-ed=2015-06-29>

EDUCATION

Manitoba announced a new Post-Secondary Education Strategy. Its goals include:

- raising the Aboriginal post-secondary education participation to the provincial average
- transitioning supports for all high school students
- a “pathways approach,” including multiple routes to advanced education credentials
- leadership in teaching innovation, research and student experience
- building an integrated, collaborative education system.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=35290&post-ed=2015-06-23>

Saskatchewan

DISABILITY

The province announced the release of its new disability strategy, *People Before Systems: Transforming the Experience of Disability in Saskatchewan*. Launched by a Citizen Consultation Team and jointly developed with the provincial government, the strategy contains six broad Priority Outcome Areas:

- People Before Systems
- Safeguarding Rights and Safety
- Increasing Economic and Social Inclusion
- Building Personal and Community Capacity
- Creating Accessible Communities
- Becoming an Inclusive Province.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/have-your-say/saskatchewan-disability-strategy/about-the-strategy>

Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability (SAID) benefit levels increased on June 1 for more than 13,000 individuals with significant and enduring disability. The 2015 Budget included \$5.7 million for the increase. Increases are based on family size and living arrangements:

- single persons receiving care in a residential care setting (i.e., family home, personal care home, group home, approved private service home, special care home or long-term care facility) will receive a boost of up to \$20 per month
- single persons or single parents who rent, own a home, or live in board and room accommodation, will receive an additional maximum \$50 per month



- couples with no children or two-parent families who rent, own a home, or live in board and room accommodation, will receive an increase of up to \$55 per month.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/june/01/said-benefits>

INCOME SECURITY

Saskatchewan's minimum wage rise from \$10.20 to \$10.50 per hour, effective October 1, 2015. This is the seventh increase in the minimum wage since 2007. There are almost 24,000 minimum wage earners in the Saskatchewan workforce who will benefit from this measure. The province is also assisting minimum-wage earners by increasing the basic personal tax exemption, the child tax credit and the Saskatchewan Low Income Tax Credit.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/june/11/minimum-wage-increase>

Alberta

INCOME SECURITY

Alberta's general minimum wage will go up from \$10.20 to \$11.20 per hour on October 1, 2015. The liquor server minimum wage will rise from \$9.20 to \$10.70 per hour in the first of two steps to eliminate the differential rate altogether in 2016. This action is a first step towards establishing a \$15 per hour minimum wage by 2018.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=38250813B581D-CC26-47A2-0C917F2173239A46>

THRONE SPEECH

Alberta's new government pledged to renew democracy and restore stability to health, education and other vital public programs. Bill 1, *An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta*, will fulfill the government's promise to end corporate and union donations to political parties. An interim supply bill will be introduced to roll back health, education and human services cutbacks. Bill 2 will be *An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue*. It will include a modest increase in corporate taxes for profitable firms, and the reintroduction of a progressive income tax for earners at the highest-income levels. A full budget will be introduced in the fall.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=38189B4D5A54D-F31C-CDAA-66692E45297371EE>

British Columbia

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

The Education Minister and the president of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), signed a protocol agreement to help guide further collaboration on improving educational outcomes for BC's Aboriginal students. This is the first formal protocol between FNESC and the ministry, which builds on previous federal and provincial agreements such as the Tripartite Education Framework Agreement (TEFA). The protocol will help the parties continue to implement the requirements under TEFA,

formalizes their bilateral relationship and provides a clear framework for how they will continue to cooperate on Aboriginal education initiatives. The protocol is a living document, meaning the parties can also attach appendices once consensus is reached on the details of future projects. In addition to the protocol, and to help support government's commitment to Aboriginal education, one professional development day for teachers next year will focus on improving Aboriginal student learning. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/new-protocol-to-strengthen-collaboration-on-aboriginal-education>

DISABILITY

A three-year pilot project aimed at improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities was launched in Vancouver. The BC Centre for Employment Excellence received \$640,000 from the province to create the BC Partners in Work Innovation Project, a collaboration that will bring together local businesses and a network of local service agencies that support people with disabilities who are looking for work. A recruitment specialist will work with participating employers to understand their staffing needs and then work with partner agencies to match the right person to the job. The specialist will identify required supports and monitor job placements to ensure the employment relationship remains successful. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/bc-partners-in-workforce-innovation-project-launched-today>

The province released a one-year progress update on *Accessibility 2024*, its 10-year vision to be the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities. Achievements include:

- BC became the first province to introduce Annual Earnings Exemptions for people receiving disability assistance
- BC will become the first province to fully exempt child support payments for families receiving income and disability assistance (effective September 1, 2015)
- improved technology supports leading to increased employment opportunities and independence:
 - \$3 million annually for the Technology at Work program, operated by the Neil Squire Society, to provide assistive technologies
 - \$5 million in one-time funding provided for the University of Victoria's CanAssist program
 - \$2.7 million to develop training and resources aligned with in-demand occupations in a range of sectors for post-secondary students with disabilities
- BC was the first province to support the Registered Disability Savings Plan
- modernizing the province's guide dog and service dog program



- the Community Action Initiative awarded \$2.9 million in grants to 16 community-based projects to promote positive mental health.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/making-progress-on-accessibility-2024>

YOUTH

A new website, AgedOut.com, will help current and former youth in government care navigate the challenges that arise as they transition to adulthood. AgedOut.com showcases services and supports for young people preparing to leave government care and those who have already made the transition. The program also highlights common experiences through videos of former youth in care. There are also gaming ‘Quests,’ where youth can earn rewards for completing real life challenges (e.g., handling an abusive relationship, renting an apartment).

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/06/new-website-for-youth-in-and-from-government-care.html>

Former children and youth in care will receive support for their future training and educational needs through the newly-established Learning Fund for Young Adults (LFYA). The fund, which includes an initial government investment of \$250,000, will provide an alternative source of support to mirror what is available through the BC Training and Education Savings Grant (BCTES Grant). Many children and youth who have had significant involvement with the BC child protection system would not have the opportunity for the BCTES Grant because it requires a parent, relative or guardian to open up a Registered Education Savings Plan on their child’s behalf. These young people will instead qualify for the LFYA, which is less restrictive and allows grant funding for the types of education and training that former children and youth in care sometimes require.

To be eligible, a child must have been born on or after January 1, 2007, and have been in government care for at least one year. Those young people will be able to access the fund to support their vocational training and post-secondary pursuits after they reach the age of 17. The first disbursements from the fund will begin in 2024.

<http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/2015/06/education-savings-fund-established-for-youth-in-care.html>

Yukon Territory

HOUSING

The Yukon government has released a Housing Action Plan for the territory. It identifies a three-stage housing continuum – housing with services, rental housing and home ownership.

Plan: <http://www.housingactionplan.ca/#the-pillars>

http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/15-210.html#.VZLQy_lVhHx

Northwest Territories

EDUCATION

In support of the territories’ *Population Growth Strategy*, the territorial government will be making the following improvements to Student Financial Assistance program for the 2015-16 academic year:

- increasing loan remission rates, so students have their debt forgiven faster while residing in the NWT
- implementing a \$2,000 Northern Bonus for both NWT and southern students who reside in the NWT to be applied to their student loan debt
- introducing a 0 percent interest rate for students who return to live in the territory after completing their studies
- increasing funding for tuition and books
- removing the 20 semester funding limit and re-introducing a revolving loan limit, so students who pay down their loan can access additional funding.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/jackson-lafferty-improvements-to-the-student-financial-assistance-program/>

HEALTH

Bill 44: *An Act to Amend the Hospital Insurance and Health and Social Services Administration Act* received assent. The legislation will improve patient and client care by enabling health and social services across the territory to work as one system.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/new-legislation-sets-stage-for-health-system-transformation/>

TRANSPORTATION

The territory released *Connecting Us: Northwest Territories Transportation Strategy 2015-2040*, which will guide development of the transportation system for the next 25 years.

<http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/territory-wide-transportation-strategy-tabled/>

Nunavut

No updates this month.