



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

October 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

CAREGIVING

The province is broadening the eligibility requirements for the Paid Family Caregiving Home Support Option to include clients who currently receive subsidized home support services. This option allows individuals to hire a family member to provide their care when eligibility requirements are met. Current home support recipients who are interested in transferring to this option may identify themselves to their regional health authority. In line with the province's 2012 Close to Home strategy for long-term care, Budget 2015 included an investment of approximately \$700 million for long-term care and community support services, including home support and personal care homes.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/health/1016n07.aspx>

Options are being explored to expand the Enhanced Care in Personal Care Homes Pilot Project, which allowed personal care homes to give a higher level of care to residents than is normally provided in such facilities.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/health/1029n05.aspx>

COMMUNITIES

The province announced it would invest \$30 million in four community projects. Three of the projects will be directed toward facilities. The fourth will contribute \$4 million over three years to the cost of providing supportive housing and health supports for vulnerable populations, such as those living with mental illness and addictions.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/exec/1029n02.aspx>

DISABILITY

The government is investing \$60,000 for a pilot project to increase awareness of the need for visual/tactile fire safety alerts in the homes of people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and to provide systems to households in greatest need.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/swsd/1005n02.aspx>

The province will forgive the student loans of individuals who develop a severe disability after borrowing. Effective October 2015, Student Financial Services will forgive the provincial student loans of those who have qualified for the Severe Permanent Disability Benefit under the Canada Student Loan Program. This program applies to persons who develop a permanent disability that prevents them from earning an income.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=10447&dept=&lang=E>

HEALTH

As part of ongoing efforts to increase access to early intervention services for mental health and addictions, the province has expanded Bridge the gAPP, a free mobile application that offers guidance and supports to residents. An adult version of the original youth-focused application is being released. Both include an array of self-help resources as well as



a searchable directory for mental health and addictions services. The applications also offer access to BreathingRoom, an online self-management program to help manage stress, depression and anxiety. The program is endorsed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada.
<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/health/1002n01.aspx>

HOMELESSNESS

The province is developing a 10-year strategy to end homelessness. Several initiatives are already under way, including the creation of a Deputy Minister Committee and a Provincial Advisory Council on Ending Homelessness. This second group is composed of representatives of key community-based organizations and persons with lived experience.
<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/swsd/1029n09.aspx>

MINIMUM WAGE

On October 1, the provincial minimum wage increased by 25 cents to \$10.50 per hour. Since 2005, the provincial minimum wage has risen from \$6.00 to \$10.50 per hour – a 75 percent increase.
<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/ma/0930n02.aspx>

INCOME SECURITY

Beginning October 2015, approximately 43,000 seniors began receiving an enhanced low-income seniors' benefit. The maximum payment will be \$1,059 for seniors with a net income of up to \$29,284.
<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/fin/1009n01.aspx>

POVERTY REDUCTION

The latest data (2013) from Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs – After Tax shows the province now has the lowest level of poverty in Canada. An infographic of key facts and figures can be seen at:
http://www.swsd.gov.nl.ca/photos/2015/PRS_info.jpg
<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/exec/1016n01.aspx>

New Brunswick

COMMUNITIES

The province is launching an awareness campaign, Love Shouldn't Hurt, to address the issue of intimate partner violence. A new directory of services website, a strong social media presence and ongoing collaboration with 38 partner organizations, will help connect the public with information and support services. Campaign banners, posters and pamphlets will be distributed throughout the province.
http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.10.1030.html

EDUCATION

Beginning in January 2016, Sistema New Brunswick, the province's free after-school music program, will be offered to up to 75 children in Miramichi. Currently, the three-hour per day, five-day per week program

is offered to 700 children in Moncton, Saint John, Richibucto, the Tobique First Nation and Edmundston.
http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.10.1011.html

Nova Scotia

EDUCATION

As part of its Action Plan for Education, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development released *Let's Play Together: A Guide for Parents of 4-Year-Olds*. The bilingual resource is designed to help families support children's early development through play. It contains tips for low- to no-cost activities and includes a list of books that match each area of development.
<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20151023002>

HEALTH

The province released progress data on its four-year mental health strategy. Improvements include:

- doubling the number of families receiving support for children with anxiety or behavioral issues through expanded telephone coaching
- adding 20 mental health clinicians in schools as part of the expansion of SchoolsPlus, which serves more than 40,000 students in all school boards across the province
- reducing, almost by half, the waits for non-urgent mental health care for adults
- adding 34 more gay-straight alliances in schools in the past two years
- training up to 50 family doctors to support patients with mild to moderate mental health issues
- funding 37 organizations over three years to provide projects and support in the community
- launching the Gambling Support Network in March 2015, with online and mobile options, and an awareness campaign to promote it
- nearly doubling the number of methadone treatment spots, from 75 to 145, and training approximately 200 more physicians in opioid replacement treatment.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20151013003>

Prince Edward Island

HEALTH

A new generic drug plan came into effect on October 1, 2015. Under the new plan, uninsured Islanders under age 65 will pay a maximum of \$19.95 for generic drug prescriptions. The plan will address an unmet



need for the one-third of residents who do not have private drug coverage. The Generic Drug Plan will cap the maximum price for the more than 1,000 generics on the formulary at \$19.95, with the exception of diabetes drugs (which are covered under another plan) and controlled substances, such as narcotics. The plan is estimated to cost \$4 million annually, but is expected to be largely offset by other savings. More than 250 drugs have been added to the provincial formulary since 2007, including many new cancer drugs.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&dept=&newsnumber=10393&lang=E>

Québec

DISABILITY

The province has released \$1.5 million for 2015-16 to continue funding the Grant Program Group for accessible vehicles. The program ensures the renewal of the province's accessible taxi and coach fleet in order to guarantee the continuity of transport services for people who use wheelchairs.

[Link](#)

HEALTH

The province launched its updated Mental Health Action Plan 2015-2020 – *Faire ensemble et autrement* – which includes measures to support people with mental disorders and their family members as well as help prevent mental illness and suicide.

[Link](#)

YOUTH

Access to employment, mental health, and educational rights and freedoms are three key issues identified by the Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Youth during the provincial government's consultations for the renewal of its youth policy.

[Link](#)

Ontario

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

New ceremonies meeting rooms are being prepared as part of the province's efforts towards reconciliation and a stronger relationship with Aboriginal partners. Called "The Gathering Rooms," they are the first of their kind in Ontario and offer a space to conduct meetings using traditional Aboriginal ceremonies. A dedicated ventilation system will allow smudging practices, including the burning of traditional medicines such as sweetgrass, sage, cedar and tobacco.

<http://news.ontario.ca/maa/en/2015/10/ontarios-gathering-rooms-a-first-for-the-province.html>

CHILDREN

The province is investing \$120 million over the next three years to create an estimated 4,000 new licensed child care spaces across the prov-

ince. Funding for the first round of 766 spaces has been allocated to 13 schools to build a total of 42 new child care rooms.

<http://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2015/10/ontario-building-new-licensed-child-care-spaces-in-schools.html>

COMMUNITIES

Ontario has launched a \$2.25 million Creative Engagement Fund, which will partner artists and advocates to help prevent sexual violence. They will challenge norms and change attitudes about sexual violence and harassment through artistic projects.

<http://news.ontario.ca/owd/en/2015/10/artists-and-advocates-to-join-in-challenging-attitudes-on-sexual-violence-and-harassment.html>

EDUCATION

Ontario launched an online education portal to give post-secondary students access to thousands of accredited online college and university courses. The province will invest \$72 million over five years to support the development and operation of eCampus Ontario. All of the province's 45 publicly-assisted colleges and universities are offering online courses on the web portal.

<http://news.ontario.ca/tcu/en/2015/10/ontario-launches-online-education-portal.html>

HOMELESSNESS

Implementing recommendations from an Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness, Ontario is moving ahead with a plan to end chronic homelessness in 10 years. The province is committing to a number of immediate and long-term actions, including:

- setting a target to end chronic homelessness in 10 years
- providing up to \$10 million over two years in targeted funding from the Local Poverty Reduction Fund to help prevent and end homelessness across the province
- adopting the recommended definition of homelessness, including chronic homelessness, to build common language and understanding about the problem
- planning to require enumeration at the local level to gather data about homelessness
- prioritizing provincial action to reduce homelessness in four areas: youth, Aboriginal and chronic homelessness as well as homelessness following transitions from provincially-funded institutions and service systems, such as jails and hospitals.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2015/10/report-of-the-expert-advisory-panel-on-homelessness.html>



MINIMUM WAGE

Effective October 1, 2015, Ontario raised the general minimum wage from \$11 to \$11.25 per hour. The increase is a result of recent changes to the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and a recommendation from the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel to tie the annual increase to Ontario's Consumer Price Index.

<http://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2015/09/ontario-continuing-to-increase-minimum-wage.html>

Manitoba

CAREGIVING

The province is investing \$300,000 in a new patient lifting and transferring training program for personal care home staff. The Safe Resident Handling Program was developed under the leadership of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in partnership with representatives from all regional health authorities to reduce the number of lift- and transfer-related workplace injuries to personal care home staff.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36557&posted=2015-10-30>

DISABILITY

Effective November 1, the Manitoba government regulation that removes customer service barriers for people with disabilities comes into effect. In 2013, the Manitoba government established the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, providing a process to prevent and remove barriers that hinder people with disabilities from fully participating in daily living. The Act requires the development of accessibility standards in five areas including customer service, employment, information and communication, transportation and the built environment.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36476&posted=2015-10-21>

HEALTH

Manitoba continues to expand newborn hearing screening to create a universal program, with teams in development in every regional health authority. The province is investing more than \$3 million in new funding to develop and implement the program, including funds for capital equipment, staff training and ongoing operating costs.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36372&posted=2015-10-08>

StressHacks, a new child and youth mental health navigation website, is now available to the public. The Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, with support from the Manitoba government, developed the content and design with feedback from stakeholders. The site is geared toward children and youth between the ages of 10 and 24. It provides quick suggestions, or hacks, that will help individuals to decide if and when they need help, how to find help, and offer self-help tips and resources. The site will also assist users to locate a range of local and provincial mental

health supports and services by providing links, resources and a Services Map (geo-locator) developed by Manitoba eHealth.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36317&posted=2015-10-05>

The Manitoba government will invest \$400,000 over the next two years in the new Prairie Climate Centre at the University of Winnipeg. Manitoba also becomes the first Canadian province to sign the Blue Dot Declaration put forward by the David Suzuki Foundation, which demonstrates the province's commitment to a healthy environment for all Manitobans.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36454&posted=2015-10-16>

The Manitoba government launched the Manitoba Patient Safety Framework (2015), an updated five-year framework to guide work and enhance patient safety across the province.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36516&posted=2015-10-26>

MINIMUM WAGE

On October 1, 2015, the province raised minimum wage to \$11 from \$10.70, making Manitoba's rate the fourth highest among Canadian jurisdictions.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36230&posted=2015-09-28>

Saskatchewan

MINIMUM WAGE

Effective October 1, 2015, Saskatchewan minimum wage earners will earn \$10.50 per hour. Since 2007, Saskatchewan's minimum wage has increased by 32 percent, with eight increases from \$7.95 to \$10.50 over the past eight years. Each year, minimum wage is reviewed using an indexation formula which is based on equal weighting of the change in Consumer Price Index and the Average Hourly Wage for the previous year. Changes are subject to Cabinet approval and are to be announced by June 30 each year. There are an estimated 23,800 minimum wage earners in Saskatchewan's workforce.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/sep-tember/30/minimum-wage-increase>

WOMEN

The province launched the #WhoWillYouHelpSK public awareness campaign to continue its efforts to address the major issue of sexual violence and abuse.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/october/15/campaign-against-sexual-violence-and-abuse>



Alberta

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The province is expecting to report a \$6.1 billion deficit in 2015-16, an increase in provincial debt to \$36.6 billion by 2018, and to borrow \$4 billion to cover operating expenses. The government will impose a debt limit of 15 percent of the province's gross domestic product when it introduces amendments to the Fiscal Management Act in the near future. The 2-15-16 Budget focuses on three key priorities:

- stabilizing frontline public services, including health care, education and social services
- setting out a prudent path to return to balance
- stimulating job creation, economic growth and diversification.

Social policy-related highlights include:

Caregiving

- \$90 million over two years starting in 2016-17 to expand public home care

Communities

- \$25 million in new funding for Family and Community Support, which provides social services to 319 municipalities and Métis settlements

Education

- hiring of approximately 380 teachers and 150 support staff
- more support for students with special needs in the form of educational assistants and other classroom supports
- a new school nutrition program
- a \$45 million annual investment to reduce the burden of school fees for families
- a two-year tuition freeze for post-secondary students

Families

- \$297 million budgeted for child care programs; \$175 million to create access and affordability, moving toward \$25 per day for child care
- more support for children in care, helping vulnerable families with new funding for the Family and Community Support Services program
- increased support for people with disabilities, child intervention, child care, and homeless and outreach supports
- an enhanced Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit to provide lower- and middle-income working families with additional support
- a new Alberta Child Benefit of up to \$2,750 per family to help families with incomes lower than \$41,220

Health

- \$10 million annually to support mental health services

Seniors

- \$120 million over two years starting in 2016-17 for new long-term care spaces; Increased support for seniors' health care, including drug, dental, optical and supplemental health benefits

Women

- new annual funding of \$15 million to support women's shelters.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=38746AA41AC99-A600-1EBE-D733409D1B612203>

CAREGIVING

Twenty-five new supportive living projects will deliver long-term care and dementia care spaces across Alberta. Projects were approved following a review of the 2014-15 Affordable Supportive Living Initiative program (ASLI). Grant recipients are required to maintain the units at government-established rates for 30 years. ASLI funds will cover up to 50 percent of capital costs of the new spaces, with remaining amounts coming from the applicant organizations.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=3875910797833-E40F-850B-DF-77327C8180D5B9>

HEALTH

Effective October 1, Albertans will be able to choose treatment with either Lucentis or Avastin to treat age-related macular degeneration, diabetic macular edema, retinal vein occlusion and other retinal conditions. There will be no co-payment for patients under the program, which will save seniors \$25 per injection, or \$300 per year. These patients will also be able to receive treatment directly from their doctors, simplifying their access to treatments. An estimated 7,000 Albertans will be eligible to participate in the pilot project, based on advice from their physicians.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=386013C86CA06-B059-36C8-B0F92434C5C65946>

MINIMUM WAGE

Alberta's general minimum wage will increase from \$10.20 to \$11.20 per hour. The liquor server minimum wage will rise from \$9.20 to \$10.70 per hour, and will be eliminated next year. The increases are the first step towards a single \$15 per hour minimum wage.

Weekly and monthly minimum wages are also going up. The weekly minimum wage for some salespersons, land agents and other professionals will rise from \$406 to \$446. The monthly minimum wage for domestic employees who live in the employer's residence will increase from \$1,937 to \$2,127.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=386003452BE44-BDDF-16BE-7438FA71C359027C>



British Columbia

DISABILITY

A new guide to the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) was released today by the RDSP Action Group, made up of leaders from the financial and disability communities, to help more British Columbians with disabilities and their families benefit from the financial savings tool.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015SDSI0067-001806>

SENIORS

Health care staff and physicians are developing new models of primary and community care for seniors in 14 communities. The models will shape improvements to how frail seniors access and are supported by the health care system throughout the province. Supports may include:

- hiring care coordinators, who can proactively identify seniors at risk of decline and help them to access more appropriate services
- after-hours phone services where frail seniors in distress can talk to a nurse to determine whether they should go to the hospital or can wait to get services in the community
- establishing primary care pharmacists to help seniors proactively manage their medications
- communities partnering with long-term care homes to establish more responsive resources for seniors in the community through day programs and quick access to respite programs.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015HLTH0083-00172>

Yukon Territory

FAMILIES

The territorial government is enhancing the Child Care Subsidy Program to help families with the cost of licensed child care. The subsidy is awarded based on family income, family size and geography. Eligible families will receive more support and more families will receive full or partial subsidies.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/15-318.html#.Vi-q9rerTcs>

RECREATION

The territorial government released the Community Recreation Leaders Guide, a training tool based on core competencies that will build leadership capacity in community recreation.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/15-317.html#.Vi-rZrerTcs>

Northwest Territories

No updates this month.

Nunavut

No updates this month.