



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

November 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

No updates this month.

New Brunswick

CHILDREN

The province launched the *Strategy for the Prevention of Harm for Children and Youth in New Brunswick*. Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the strategy outlines 102 action items in relation to 10 priority areas within five broad categories of harm to children. It provides indicators to serve as benchmarks that will be used in measuring the outcomes and the success of the strategy over the next five years.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.11.1090.html

Nova Scotia

FAMILIES

Amendments to the *Maintenance and Custody Act* will update language and terminology around custody and parenting arrangements, introduce new terms for interacting and spending time with a child help parents clarify their responsibilities through use of a parenting plan. New enforcement options are outlined. The name of the legislation will change to the Parenting and Support Act.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20151124003>

The province announced \$1.2 million in funding for Stronger Families NS, which offers early intervention and prevention programs. Some of the programs being funded under Stronger Families NS are:

- expansion of the successful Parenting Journey program to 15 new communities across Nova Scotia
- new culturally relevant programs will be added in Aboriginal, African-Nova Scotian and Acadian communities
- Family Connections, a new program, will provide increased training for Parenting Journey staff so they can better support attachment relationships between parents and children
- Families Plus, an intensive family preservation pilot program in Cape Breton, will offer more practical and clinical support to strengthen families at increased risk.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20151130001>

GOVERNANCE

The ONE Nova Scotia Coalition released the *Collaborative Action Plan*, a response to the February 2014 Ivany Report which projected extended economic and demographic decline. The plan outlines seven action areas that hold the greatest promise for change, plus a comprehensive accountability framework. Progress will be measured and reported by an



independent organization or all-party committee of the legislature, with regular updates online. The action areas are:

- Early Years: Starting Strong
- Our Future is Young
- Universities and NSCC as Innovation Hubs
- Immigration and Welcoming Communities
- Our Information and Communications Technology Momentum
- Going Global
- Nova Scotia's Ocean Advantage
- Ensuring Accountability and Sustaining Momentum.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20151106003>

Prince Edward Island

MENTAL HEALTH

A new Youth Mental Health Day Treatment program will be established to better meet the needs of children and youth in the community. Specialized youth mental health staff will be added at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to care for youth with acute mental health needs. A Behaviour Support Team is being hired to provide more support to children with mental health conditions that cause significant behavioural disorders. The new Day Treatment Program will open in the spring in Charlottetown for youth ages 13 to 18. It will offer a range of programming including multidisciplinary assessment, intensive treatment, academic support, rehabilitation and family support, as well as assisted transition back to the community. The program will be staffed by nurses, a child psychologist, youth workers and social workers.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&dept=&newsnumber=10507&lang=E>

Québec

HEALTH

The province released the 2015-2020 palliative and end of life care development plan – *For better quality of life*. It include two objectives – the implementation of the terms of the Act relating to end of life care, and improving the supply of palliative care service and end of life. It was developed in collaboration with clinicians and network managers, as well as with various partners and experts. It presents 50 measures categorized by nine key priorities, including:

- maintaining people in their living environment, including those still at home
- palliative care for children and adolescents end of life
- support for caregivers, including respite services, for which the govern-

ment will provide \$4.5 million in funding

- ensuring service quality
- providing information for stakeholders and the public to prepare for the enactment of the legislation and to educate them about the issues related to palliative and end of life care.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

The province announced plans to change the rules governing asset income received from an estate in the calculation of social solidarity benefits. Such assets would be excluded from the calculation, regardless of payment method. Currently, amounts received as a result of a succession are subject to flexible rules when they are paid as a flat rate, while the income is recognized in full when paid in the form of a pension.

[Link](#)

The government introduced Bill 70, An Act to provide a better match between training and employment and to promote job integration. Among the measures proposed is the creation of the *Objectif Emploi* (Job Focus) program. Announced in the 2015-16 budget, *Objectif Emploi* was designed as a mandatory program for new social assistance applicants who are able to work. Intensive, personalized support would be available to help people integrate into the labour market and improve their living conditions. An additional amount would be added to the basic allowance paid to those receiving social assistance. In return, program participants who do not carry out their employment integration plan would face financial penalties.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The province announced the release of three-year action plan, *Together against bullying*, which includes 53 measures supported by 16 government departments and agencies.

[Link](#)

The government will spend \$720,000 for 40 new workplace initiatives with seniors in vulnerable situations. These projects are in addition to 44 ongoing projects and funds totalling \$3.1 million for fiscal year 2015-16, and a projected expenditure of \$13.7 million between 2015 and 2018.

[Link](#)

Ontario

DISABILITY

Ontario is seeking public input to develop a voluntary, third-party accessibility certification program which will recognize businesses and organizations that have championed accessibility.

<https://news.ontario.ca/medt/en/2015/11/help-develop-ontarios-accessibility-certification-program.html>



EDUCATION

Ontario is investing \$498 million in new and renovated schools as well as new child care spaces. Over the next few months, work will begin on:

- 30 new schools
- 26 major additions and renovations
- 122 safe, high-quality licensed child care rooms, resulting in 2,135 new licensed spaces for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

The province is providing school boards across the province with more than \$11 billion over 10 years to build new schools in areas of high growth, improve the condition of existing schools and invest in projects to reduce surplus space through school consolidations.

<https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2015/11/ontario-building-30-new-schools-over-2000-licensed-child-care-spaces.html>

EMPLOYMENT

The province's *Employment Standards Act, 2000* will be amended to allow individuals who are hired through a temporary help agency to recover unpaid wages from both the agency and the agency's client-business, where the agency has not paid the wages. To strengthen protections for foreign workers, coverage under the *Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, 2009* is also being extended to foreign nationals who are employed or seeking employment in Ontario through an immigration or foreign temporary employee program.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2015/11/province-helping-vulnerable-workers-collect-unpaid-wages.html>

GOVERNANCE

Ontario is making government data publicly available as a means of increasing transparency and encouraging innovation. The province's *Open Data Directive* will take effect on April 1, 2016, and will apply to all Ontario ministries and provincial agencies requiring them to make data public, unless it is exempt for privacy, legal, confidentiality, security or commercially sensitive reasons. The directive will ensure that open data does not contain personal or confidential information.

<https://news.ontario.ca/tbs/en/2015/11/ontario-making-data-open-by-default.html>

INCOME SECURITY

Social assistance rate increases announced in the 2015 Budget came into effect, including:

- \$25 more per month for single adults receiving Ontario Works (OW) who don't have children, for a total monthly increase of \$75 since 2013
- one percent more for families receiving Ontario Works

- one percent more for people with disabilities who access the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- one percent more for various other rates, including the Remote Communities Allowance and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities.

Since 2003, Ontario has increased social assistance rates by 18.3 percent for families who access OW, by 29 percent for singles without children who access OW and by 18.3 percent for people with disabilities who receive ODSP payments.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mcss/en/2015/11/increasing-support-for-people-receiving-social-assistance-1.html>

SOCIAL FINANCE

The province issued a report regarding the development of its first Social Impact Bond (SIB). *Piloting Social Impact Bonds in Ontario: The Development Path and Lessons Learned* offers a basic introduction to SIBs and summarizes the province's development process to date. [Four project ideas](#) have been shortlisted and further work will be done to determine their viability for implementation.

http://www.ontario.ca/page/social-impact-bonds?_ga=1.18754297.152250233.1360850154#section-2

Manitoba

CHILDREN

The province is funding four new child care centres (158 spaces) in partnership with public schools as it acts on its 2015 Throne Speech commitment to establish 12,000 new spaces, support early childhood educators and create a universally accessible child care system for families. Over the last 15 years, the Manitoba government has funded more than 14,000 child-care spaces, bringing the total number of funded spaces to more than 30,000, and invested in building and renovating more than 100 new or expanded child care centres. There are currently more than 300 child care centres in schools in communities throughout the province.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36831&posted=2015-11-20>

The Manitoba government has ended the use of hotels as emergency placements for children and youth in Manitoba Child and Family Services care in all areas of the province, fulfilling a commitment to bring in more supports for families and additional resources for agencies.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36910&posted=2015-11-30>

FAMILIES

The Manitoba government will be introducing groundbreaking proposed changes to the Employment Standards Code that would give victims of domestic violence the right to time off work without fear of job loss, give employees a new leave for long-term illness and injury, and extend the



length of leave for compassionate care. These proposed leaves would be available in each 52-week period, with up to five days of leave being paid. <http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36865&posted=2015-11-25>

HEALTH

The province launched the Manitoba Addictions Helpline. The new service, which will be managed by Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, has:

- a toll-free line for information and support
- a no-appointment-needed, walk-in option located at River Point Centre
- a website with up-to-date information on services available and how services can be accessed
- an online self-screening tool to help guide people to the most appropriate services to meet their needs.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36771&posted=2015-11-17>

POVERTY REDUCTION

The Manitoba government released its 2014-15 annual report on ALL Aboard, the province's poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy. Highlights of the ALL Aboard report include:

- 5,000 fewer Manitobans, of whom 4,000 are children, living below the poverty line in 2013 than in 2012
- an 8.8 percent decrease in the percentage of Manitoban households living without affordable, quality housing since 2006, a decrease of 3,505 households
- high school graduation rate increased to 87 percent, a 22.4 percent increase since 2002
- minimum wage has increased by 26 percent since 2008, more than twice the rate of inflation
- more than 1,000 new child-care spaces in 2014-15, an 11 percent increase in the percentage of children who have access to child care
- a 44 percent increase in university enrolment and a 51 percent increase in college enrolment since 2000
- a 20 percentage point decline in the teen birth rate.

Future plans include:

- creating a universally accessible child care system with a commitment to fund 12,000 additional spaces for families
- investing \$22 million in Rent Assist, bringing more people on employment and income assistance (EIA) and the working poor above the

poverty line

- building 500 more units of social and 500 more units of affordable housing over three years
- enhancing the Rewarding Work Health Plan to support EIA participants transition into sustainable employment
- eliminating interest on student loans and removing car ownership as a barrier to accessing student loans
- launching a new, \$2-million child and youth mental health strategy.

The complete progress report is available at: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/allaboard/>
<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36895&posted=2015-11-26>

THRONE SPEECH

The province's Throne Speech focused on building rural and northern economic development and creating good jobs and training opportunities for northern and rural Manitoban communities. Social policy-related initiatives include:

- investing more in after-school programs in northern and rural Manitoba
- partnering with the University College of the North to build a new trades training centre to help northern students take advantage of northern jobs in created by the mining sector, Manitoba Hydro and infrastructure projects
- investing in community-based strategies to expand the local production of healthy foods across the north and work with producers in the agriculture sector to bring local foods to new markets.

Infrastructure and community-building initiatives were announced for the City of Winnipeg, including:

- funding for new and existing recreation centres for families
- working with the federal government to lift the cap for immigrants and refugees, and strengthening settlement services to help the province continue to grow through immigration, while ensuring newcomers have access to specialized supports including language and skills training
- investing and creating new roads connecting First Nation communities along the east side of Lake Winnipeg and building Freedom Road to Shoal Lake 40
- forging new partnerships with Indigenous communities, business leaders and educators to provide more opportunities to Indigenous youth
- providing stable, predictable and long-term funding to municipalities that will allow future community planning and development



- launching a new Growing Communities Infrastructure Fund to help rural and northern communities build and renew roads, sewer, water and community centres that families use every day.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36751&posted=2015-11-16>

Saskatchewan

HEALTH

Saskatchewan will amend regulations to increase the amount of time residents are allowed to be out-of-province while still maintaining their health care benefits. Residents will now be able to maintain health coverage after spending a maximum of seven months outside of Saskatchewan. Currently, residents are allowed to be absent for only six months over any 12-month period before their health benefits are discontinued. The new policy will take effect January 1, 2016.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/november/17/snowbirds-health-coverage>

FAMILIES

A program that aims to minimize the effect of separation and divorce on family members, especially children, is being profiled in a social media campaign. Family Matters: Assisting Families through Separation and Divorce program will be profiled on Facebook and YouTube, including a video emphasizing the impact on children and how the program can help families resolve these situations. The campaign is designed to ensure families who could benefit from the program are aware of the services available to them.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/november/12/family-matters>

Alberta

GOVERNANCE

The province introduced Bill 7, the *Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act 2015*. If passed, it would add gender identity and gender expression as expressly prohibited grounds of discrimination into the *Alberta Human Rights Act*.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=388695094BE5B-F477-BE73-C5188D3BEB673222>

INCOME SECURITY

All families earning less than \$41,220 per year, including those receiving AISH and Income Support, are eligible to receive the new *Alberta Child Benefit*. The maximum annual benefit is \$1,100 for families with one child, and up to \$2,750 for families with four or more children.

The enhanced *Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit* will support more working families with children and provide a larger benefit for many families. The maximum annual credit is \$754 for families with one child, and up to \$1,987 for families with four children or more. The programs

will support a combined 380,000 children in 199,000 families with \$336 million in annual benefits.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=388267B3F8185-DC94-675D-AE-79CE1CACFF7252>

YOUTH

The provincial government reinstated and expanded the Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP), providing wage subsidies for more than 3,000 student positions starting in summer 2016. For the first time, STEP will be available to small businesses. Municipalities, not-for-profit groups, school boards and publicly-funded post-secondary institutions may also participate.

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=3878510C49EF2-E6B5-7977-B837CC8B9C6EF500>

British Columbia

DISABILITY

Beginning December 1, 2015, the amount of assets that people receiving disability assistance may hold without losing eligibility for assistance will rise to \$100,000 for an individual with the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) designation, and \$200,000 for a couple where both have PWD designation. Currently, the asset limits are \$5,000 and \$10,000, respectively.

For the first time in BC, persons with disabilities will be able to receive cash gifts with no effect on their eligibility for assistance. Under current policy, people receiving income and disability assistance can only receive one-time gifts without affecting their eligibility. In the case of an inheritance, the higher asset limits will relieve many clients from having to set aside that money in a trust.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015SDSI0069-001847>

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The provincial government has declared November as Aboriginal Disability Awareness Month. It is working with Aboriginal communities, disability organizations like the British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society and individuals with disabilities and their families to reduce barriers to full participation in BC.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015SDSI0066-001801>

Yukon Territory, Northwest Territories, Nunavut

No updates this month.