




Canada Social Report  
Provincial/Territorial  
Policy Monitor

December 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

The province released the 2015-16 *Fiscal and Economic Update*. The projected deficit has been revised to \$1.96 billion, an increase of \$869.5 million over the Budget 2015-16 projection of \$1.093 billion. The economy is not performing as it was expected at the time of preparation of Budget 2015-16. The export sector was negatively impacted by lower oil production. For the year as a whole, final real domestic demand is expected to be down slightly compared to 2014, while real gross domestic product (GDP) is forecast to drop by 2.6 percent due to lower exports. In 2017 and 2018, economic growth is expected to be constrained by declines in capital investment and lower employment from completion of large scale projects.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2015/exec/1222n02.aspx>

## New Brunswick

### INCOME SECURITY

The minimum wage in New Brunswick will increase from \$10.30 per hour to \$10.65 per hour on April 1, 2016.

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news\\_release.2015.12.1185.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.12.1185.html)

### THRONE SPEECH

The Throne Speech confirmed that the first sitting of this session of the legislature would focus on completing the Strategic Program Review. The provincial government has released a report outlining the major choices to be considered in making the decisions necessary to repair the province's finances, including:

- reducing the size of government through administrative efficiencies, fewer senior executives and merging duplicate functions
- decreasing the amount of money transferred to universities and municipalities
- undertaking efficiency and rationalization measures in the health care and education systems
- raising revenues such as the harmonized sales tax, tolls, corporate income taxes and other taxes.

Several social policy-related initiatives will be undertaken in the legislature's spring sitting, including:

- a 10-year education plan will be developed to bring stability to the province's school system
- an aggressive literacy strategy will be developed
- the province's four publicly-funded post-secondary institutions will be required to appear annually before the standing committee on public accounts



- a new council on aging will be instrumental in developing a new strategy on aging.

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news\\_release.2015.12.1127.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2015.12.1127.html)

## Nova Scotia

No updates this month.

## Prince Edward Island

### HEALTH

The province announced the launch of its Paramedics Providing Palliative Care at Home program. It allows paramedics to provide patients with pain and symptom management at home, after hours. The new patient and family-centered program is funded through a partnership between PEI, Nova Scotia and the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and Health Canada. To be eligible patients must register with the Provincial Integrated Palliative Care Program. To date, 170 palliative patients have registered with the program.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=10534&dept=&lang=E>

### INCOME SECURITY

The province's minimum wage will increase by 50 cents per hour in the coming year. The rate was raised to the current \$10.50 per hour on July 1. Cabinet has approved 25-cent increases to take effect on June 1, 2016 and October 1, 2016, bringing the rate to \$10.75 per hour and \$11 per hour on those dates. Approximately 9.3 percent of Island workers are paid at the minimum wage rate. Government is currently working across departments and with community stakeholders to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=10516&dept=&lang=E>

## Québec

### GOVERNANCE

The province announced the reform of its *Code of Civil Procedure*, which will favour dispute resolution methods such as mediation, negotiation, out-of-court settlement conferences and arbitration. The new provisions are aimed at making the justice system more accessible, more timely and less expensive.

[Link](#)

### INCOME SECURITY

Recipients of Last Resort Financial Assistance (social assistance) will receive an additional \$31 million in 2016-17. The increase is due to the indexation of the benefit as of January 1, 2016, at the rate of 1.09 percent. The monthly basic social assistance benefit for a single adult with no limitations to employment will increase from \$616 to \$623,

while that of an independent adult with dependents will rise from \$937 to \$947. Benefits have been indexed each year since 2011.

[Link](#)

## Ontario

### CAREGIVING

Ontario has released a proposal for consultation aimed at giving patients better access to care no matter where they live in the province. The next stage of the *Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care*, the "Proposal to Strengthen Patient-Centred Health Care in Ontario" outlines ways to:

- make it easier for patients to find a primary health care provider when they need one, see that person quickly when they are sick, and find the care they need, closer to home
- improve communication and connections among primary health care providers, hospitals, and home and community care
- ensure the province has the right number of doctors, nurses, and other health care providers, and plan locally to make sure they are available to patients where and when these providers are needed.

The proposal outlines an expanded role for local health networks – including in primary care and home and community care – that reduces administrative overlap and invests in front-line services.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2015/12/ontario-proposes-a-path-towards-better-access-to-care.html>

### DISABILITY

Ontario is partnering with financial institutions to create a fund aimed at increasing employment opportunities for people facing employment barriers. The Community Loans Fund, part of Ontario's *Accessibility Action Plan*, will provide discounted rates on financial products, such as loans, to businesses that commit to hiring people facing barriers. They include persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed, older unemployed, newcomers to Canada and unemployed Indigenous persons. The province is partnering with Alterna Savings, Libro Credit Union, First Ontario Credit Union and Meridian to deliver this fund. The two-year, \$4 million fund will help up to 1,100 people find careers, support up to 500 businesses and allow businesses to receive a 0.5 to one percent reduced interest rate on a loan, in the form of a rebate, for each person they hire for a minimum of six months.

<https://news.ontario.ca/medt/en/2015/12/ontario-improving-employment-opportunities-for-people-facing-barriers.html>

### HEALTH

Fifty clinics across the province will now be offering government-funded fertility treatments. The province is contributing to the cost of one *in vitro* fertilization cycle per eligible patient per lifetime. This funding will help support more than 5,000 Ontarians per year. It is estimated that one in



six Ontario couples is affected by infertility at some point in their lives. <https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2015/12/ontario-announces-50-clinics-offering-government-funded-fertility-treatments.html>

## Manitoba

### CAREGIVING

As part of the work of Manitoba's Home Care Leadership Team launched earlier this year, Manitobans are invited to share their perspectives and recommendations on home care in an online consultation. A comprehensive plan for the future of Manitoba's publicly-funded home care services will take into consideration short- and long-term human resources, ensuring consistent province-wide services and developing a reliable system, regardless of ability to pay. This long-term plan will also include a review of relevant literature and reports, and an analysis of information and data.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36980&posted=2015-12-08>

### HEALTH

The province is implementing a new policy to allow organ donation after cardio-circulatory death. Making the change to allow organ donation after cardio-circulatory death is expected to increase donation rates by 20 to 25 percent. Until very recently in Canada, organs for transplant were recovered only from patients who were declared brain dead, which accounted for 1.5 percent of all hospital deaths. Organ donation after cardiac death makes it possible for organs to be donated after the heart stops beating. The most common organs donated after cardiac death are kidneys.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=37120&posted=2015-12-23>

Changes to the *Workers Compensation Act* recognizing post-traumatic stress disorder as a work-related occupational disease will come into effect January 1, 2016.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=37113&posted=2015-12-22>

### HOUSING

Legislation that will enhance the Rent Assist shelter benefit and help support low-income earners in Manitoba is now in effect. The Rent Assist program provides financial benefits for people who pay more than 25 percent of their income on rent for a modest apartment in the private market. It is available to low-income earners in Manitoba. Rent Assist is also available to people on Manitoba Employment and Income Assistance, which makes it easier for recipients to access training, education and employment opportunities. The benefit is also available to newcomers who are permanent residents of Canada.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36914&posted=2015-12-01>

### INCOME SECURITY

Taxation changes coming into effect in 2016 will reduce the amount of taxes paid by regular, middle-class Manitobans and small businesses across the province. Changes include increasing the small business income limit eligible for the zero percent corporate income tax rate to \$450,000 from \$425,000. In addition, the Manitoba government is providing more support to seniors by reducing the school taxes seniors pay. In 2016, the maximum seniors' school tax rebate will increase to \$2,300 from \$470, providing savings of up to \$47.8 million for Manitoban seniors. The seniors' school tax rebate will be capped to ensure that two percent of seniors with high-valued homes still pay some school taxes. Seniors can start applying for the tax rebate when they receive their property tax statement from their local municipality, which is expected to commence in May.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=37152&posted=2015-12-31>

### INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Proposed legislation under the *Child and Family Services Act* would benefit Indigenous children in need of protection while maintaining cultural ties with their home community. Under the proposed legislation:

- there would be an increased focus on supporting families to prevent children from coming into the care of Manitoba Child and Family Services (CFS)
- indigenous communities, in collaboration with CFS agencies, would be directly involved in developing care plans and in arranging and planning supports and services for children and families
- parents would maintain guardianship of their children in customary care arrangements
- there would be an understanding that family healing takes time
- there would be collaborative planning for healing, family reunification and permanency opportunities for CFS-involved families.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36930&posted=2015-12-02>

The Manitoba government is introducing new proposed legislation that would mandate the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework to ensure all Manitoba students and teachers would learn about the histories and cultures of Indigenous peoples, the legacy of residential schools and the significance of treaties in the present day.

<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=36931&posted=2015-12-02>



## Saskatchewan

### DISABILITY

The provincial government announced the six priority areas on which it will focus as it begins work on Saskatchewan's Disability Strategy. Taken directly from the Citizen Consultation Team's final report, *People Before Systems: Transforming the Experience of Disability in Saskatchewan*, these priorities are:

- availability of accessible and safe transportation in communities
- respite services for families with children and adults experiencing disabilities
- improvements to existing accessibility legislation or the development of new accessibility legislation
- residential services for people with disabilities
- service coordination and navigation of services required for persons with disabilities
- awareness and understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/december/03/disability-strategy>

### HEALTH

EGADZ (Saskatoon Downtown Youth Centre) unveiled its Cyber Outreach initiative "I Am Not for Sale," as a means of addressing violence and abuse against women and youth. A new website and app were developed by youth to help vulnerable individuals who are sexually exploited and trafficked through social media. The free app provides immediate access to 24 hour resources with confidential, appropriate supports that offer safe and positive solutions and, when necessary, access to an immediate community agency response.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/december/01/egadz-mobile-app>

### INCOME SECURITY

All Saskatchewan income tax brackets and tax credit amounts will go up 1.3 percent in 2016, matching the national rate of inflation. Indexation will save Saskatchewan residents an estimated \$8.1 million in 2016, and is part of an array of measures aimed at keeping taxes low. Individual taxpayers now pay no Saskatchewan income tax on their first \$19,220 of income while a family of four pays no Saskatchewan income tax on their first \$49,800 of income – the highest tax-free income threshold for a family of four in Canada.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2015/december/30/indexation>

## Alberta

*No updates this month.*

## British Columbia

### CHILDREN

As part of the third phase of the BC Early Years Strategy, the province is supporting the creation of approximately 1,700 new licensed child care spaces. During Phase 3, which is open from November 30, 2015 to February 26, 2016, child care providers can apply for up to \$500,000 (non-profit providers), or up to \$250,000 (private child care organizations) to help build new child care spaces in their communities. This effort is part of the BC Early Years Strategy's goal of creating 13,000 licensed child care spaces across the province by 2020.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015CFD0055-001990>

### DISABILITY

A made-in-BC autism research project will explore the benefits of parent coaching intervention for approximately 70 infants and toddlers who show early signs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Three million dollars in one-time government funding was spurred by other studies linking early infant-toddler interventions to better developmental outcomes in children with ASD and in children who show early warning signs of ASD.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015CFD0057-002042>

The province announced an increase in hourly rates for the Choice in Supports for Independent Living (CSIL) program. CSIL is a self-managed model of care where individuals receive funds directly to hire their own workers to provide home support services. The assistance includes help with daily living activities, meal planning, lifts and transfers, bathing and grooming. The hourly rate will increase 5.5 percent over five years:

- January 1, 2016: \$29.80 per hour (retroactive to April 1, 2015)
- April 1, 2016: \$29.94 per hour
- April 1, 2017: \$30.39 per hour
- April 1, 2018: \$30.85 per hour
- February 1, 2019: \$31.16 per hour.

People in the CSIL program receive funding each month from their regional health authority. The number of hours funded varies by person and is based on a clinical assessment by the client's health care team. CSIL employers assume full responsibility for covering wages and costs for advertising, recruiting and hiring a bookkeeper for financial reporting. BC has 976 people who receive home support through CSIL, comprising approximately 2 percent of all home support clients, but accounting for approximately 23 percent of total home care support service hours.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015HLTH0106-002155>

### EMPLOYMENT

More than 1,300 single parents on income and disability assistance are participating in the provincial government's Single Parent Employment Initiative launched on September 1. The initiative helps single parents on



income and disability assistance get the supports they need to overcome barriers to employment and build a better future for their families. Participants may receive up to 12 months of funded training for in-demand jobs, or on-the-job training, through a paid work experience placement. Single parents enrolled in the program may also receive child care costs during training or job placement and for the first year of employment as well as transportation costs and exemptions for bursaries, scholarships and grants. Participants are able to remain on income assistance while enrolled in a training program.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015SDSI0080-002130>

#### INCOME SECURITY

The province is enacting the *Business Practices and Consumer Protection Act* on April 1, 2016. The legislation is aimed at regulating the debt settlement industry, making sure individuals and families can pay what they owe, without being taken advantage of.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015JAG0301-002057>

## Yukon Territory

#### DISABILITY

Beginning February 1, 2016, the Department of Health and Social Services will expand the options for parents accessing in-home respite. This expansion will allow household residents, other than parents, to be paid as respite caregivers. Currently, both Family Supports for Children with Disabilities and Services to Adults with Disabilities provide funding to families for respite care as a means of providing temporary short-term relief to caregivers looking after a relative. Parents were able to select and pay their own caregivers, but other household residents including family members were not eligible to be paid. The Department is also working with foster parents on changes to the respite policy for the foster care program.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/15-378.html#.VmGdVbiDFHw>

## Northwest Territories

*No updates this month.*

## Nunavut

*No updates this month.*