



Canada Social Report  
Provincial/Territorial  
Policy Monitor

February 2016



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

### MENTAL HEALTH

Through the "Understanding Changes Everything Workplace Program," the province has provided training to 12 partner organizations to promote mental health in the workplace and build positive working environments that reduce stigma surrounding mental illness and addictions. This second phase of training, entitled "The Working Mind," is an education-based program that is offered through the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The program is designed to reduce stigma in the workplace and improve mental resiliency.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2016/health/0215n05.aspx>

## New Brunswick

### BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The final results of a Strategic Program Review were released in conjunction with the Budget. Decisions have been made that will improve the province's financial situation by \$589 million. The Strategic Program Review will reduce expenditures by \$296 million and will increase revenues by \$293 million once its measures are fully realized. Social policy-related highlights include:

#### Disability

- the Disability Support Program, which currently offers flexible support for persons with disabilities, will provide clients with the option to self-manage their own disability support funding.

#### Education

The province will:

- maintain or improve the ratio of teachers-to-pupils, while continuing the longstanding policy of reducing the overall number of teachers through attrition based on declining enrollment numbers; 150 new teachers will be hired to replace 200 retirements
- optimize student transportation over the next two years through technological and operational changes
- maintain the current funding for universities to reflect that enrollment has decreased by 11.8 percent between 2007-08 to 2014-15, while funding has grown by 11.5 percent over the same period.

#### Health

- the province will work with the New Brunswick Medical Society and Medavie EMS to explore the development of an enhanced community-based primary health care service.
- the Department of Social Development will proceed with a number of administrative efficiency measures that include:
- introducing dollar maximums and frequency limits to its Health Services program
- working with the New Brunswick Pharmacists' Association to develop a pricing model that provides consistent and predictable pricing for



### health supplies

- looking at mechanisms to purchase oxygen supplies at lower rates than it currently pays.

### Income security

- effective July 1, 2015, the government is increasing the provincial portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) by two percentage points resulting in the same HST rate as Nova Scotia and a rate that is comparable to Québec's combined rate of 14.975 per cent. To lessen the impact of an HST increase and make it more progressive, a refundable provincial HST credit of \$300 for individuals, \$300 for spouse or equivalent, and \$100 per child under age 19, will be provided. Single parent families will receive a \$300 credit for their first child.
- the full HST credit will be paid to New Brunswickers with a family income of less than \$35,000 per year. The credit will be reduced by two cents for every dollar of income above \$35,000. Individuals with incomes of less than \$50,000, or a family of two adults and two children with incomes of less than \$75,000, could receive some benefit from the HST credit. This credit is designed to assist low- to middle-income households and will return about \$100 million to New Brunswickers.

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news\\_release.2016.02.0068.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2016.02.0068.html)

### DISABILITY

On April 1, the Department of Social Development will create 30 new portable rent subsidies for people with disabilities. These monthly subsidies will help people with disabilities obtain affordable, adequate and suitable rental accommodations of their choice.

Portable rent supplements are assigned to a person rather than to a landlord. The program's main objective is to provide eligible individuals the freedom to choose housing that meets their specific needs.

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news\\_release.2016.02.0124.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2016.02.0124.html)

### HEALTH

The province released a report identifying health inequities that exist in New Brunswick. One of its findings is that low-income New Brunswickers have poorer health and experience more food insecurity than those earning higher incomes.

Report [Link](#)

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news\\_release.2016.02.0101.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2016.02.0101.html)

### SENIORS

The newly-created Council on Aging will begin its work to develop, in collaboration with the government and its community partners, an aging strategy that is based on the provincial government's vision for excellence on aging. The department will invest an additional \$5.5 million for the

province-wide expansion of the rapid rehabilitation and re-ablement initiative.

This program helps seniors leave the hospital sooner than otherwise, or avoid hospitalization altogether, by offering intensive rehabilitation and re-ablement services in the community or at home. The department will invest an additional \$1 million in the province-wide expansion of the Resident Assessment Instrument-Minimum Data Set and related initiatives aimed at strengthening person-centred care.

The Department of Social Development will invest \$10 million to increase the per diem rates to special care homes and memory care homes, the hourly rate paid to family support agencies and the grants to Adult Developmental Activities, Programs and Training agencies. These increases will allow for a \$1 per hour wage raise for these workers. The increase will come into effect on April 1. The department will invest \$56,000 to develop a tax credit of up to \$10,000 for eligible adoption expenses. As part of the provincial government's commitment to ensure the positive growth and development of at-risk children and youth, the department has allocated \$328,000 to expand the Integrated Service Delivery framework to three regions.

[http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news\\_release.2016.02.0124.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2016.02.0124.html)

## Nova Scotia

*No updates this month.*

## Prince Edward Island

*No updates this month.*

## Québec

### HEALTH

The province announced the start of a one-year, \$4-million pilot project to compare the costs of day surgery at public and private clinics, with the aim of establishing a new patient-centered funding model.

[Link](#)

## Ontario

### BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Social policy-related Budget announcements include:

#### Disability

- the transformation of services so that people with developmental disabilities can be more independent.
- continued implementation of a Special Needs Strategy that will help children and youth with special and complex needs receive timely and effective services at home, at school, in the community and as they transition to adulthood



- a commitment of \$333 million over five years to redesign and improve autism services.

#### Education

- the creation of the Ontario Student Grant (OSG) starting in the 2017–18 school year. Under the proposed system, average college and university tuition will be free for students with financial need from families with incomes of \$50,000 or less, and tuition will be more affordable for middle-income families. More than 50 percent of students from families with incomes of \$83,000 or less will receive non-repayable grants in excess of average tuition, and no Ontario student will receive less through the OSG than they are currently eligible for through the Ontario Tuition Grant. Students in families with annual incomes of less than \$50,000 will have no provincial student debt.

#### Health

The province will:

- increase funding to hospitals by \$345 million
- reduce wait times for key services
- create more integrated, team-based primary care
- make more care available at home and in the community
- propose to make the shingles vaccine available free for eligible seniors age 65 and over
- invest an additional \$75 million in community-based residential hospices and palliative care, for a total investment of about \$155 million over three years.

#### Housing

- the updating of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy to continue the transformation of Ontario's housing and homelessness system, focusing on flexible and portable benefits that respond to individuals' changing housing needs.

#### Income security

- the implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) to ensure that, by 2020, all eligible Ontario workers will be covered by a comparable workplace plan or the ORPP. The ORPP Administration Corporation will launch an employer verification and enrolment process in 2017, with employer and employee contribution collection beginning in 2018.
- a 1.5 percent rate increase for adults receiving Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. The Province will also provide a further top-up to those with the lowest social assistance rates – singles without children receiving Ontario Works – bringing their total increase to \$25 per month (\$100 more per month than they received in 2012).

<https://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2016/02/ontarios-investments-creating-jobs-for-today-and-tomorrow.html>

#### CHILDREN

From 2016 to 2018, the province will transform and combine four current child-focused programs into one suite of integrated services. Offered at locations across the province, Ontario Early Years and Child and Family Centres will offer a set of core and customized services that bring together the elements of:

- Ontario Early Years Centres
- Parenting and Family Literacy Centres
- Child Care Resource Centres
- Better Beginnings, Better Futures.

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2016/02/improving-access-to-services-for-young-children-and-their-families.html>

#### COMMUNITIES

Ontario will establish an Anti-Racism Directorate to address racism in all its forms - including individual, systemic and cultural.

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2016/02/ontario-establishing-an-anti-racism-directorate.html>

#### DISABILITY

Ontario is making improvements to medical reviews for people receiving benefits through the Ontario Disability Support Program to ensure that assistance is going to people who need it. Starting March 2016, the province will begin working with stakeholders to design a new, simpler medical review process to reduce the administrative burden on clients, health care professionals, advocates and staff. As part of the new process, the province will also seek advice on the design of a new form.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mcss/en/2016/02/ontario-improving-odsp-medical-reviews.html>

#### EDUCATION

Ontario is taking steps to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action regarding education and training, including introducing mandatory Indigenous cultural competency and anti-racism training for every employee in the Ontario Public Service and implementing mandatory learning expectations in the public education system curriculum.

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2016/02/ontario-implementing-new-indigenous-training-and-education-requirements.html>

#### EMPLOYMENT

Ontario is establishing a new employment and training services centre of excellence. It will feature interconnected regional hubs in Toronto, Thunder Bay, London and Kingston/Gananoque and a Francophone coordinating centre in Sudbury. The centre will:



- offer professional development for stakeholders including an employment and training community of practice that brings together different organizations to share and collaborate
- research, pilot and evaluate innovative employment and training projects
- launch, manage and maintain an accessible bilingual website to share research and information with the professionals and the public.

<https://news.ontario.ca/tcu/en/2016/02/modernizing-employment-and-training-services-for-ontario-jobseekers.html>

The province is investing \$36 million over two years to help the next generation of skilled tradespeople access the training, equipment and facilities they need to prepare for the workforce. Support will include:

- \$23 million over two years through the Apprenticeship Enhancement Fund for 47 new capital projects at colleges and other training organizations for new equipment, facilities and technologies such as welding simulators, to provide opportunities for hands-on training
- \$13 million through the Pre-Apprenticeship Training program to support 84 pre-apprenticeship training programs. The investment will help more than 1,500 people primarily from traditionally under-represented groups, including women, Aboriginal peoples and at-risk youth, consider careers in the trades by developing their skills through in-class training sessions and work placements.

<https://news.ontario.ca/tcu/en/2016/02/ontario-allocates-36-million-to-help-apprentices-become-ready-to-work.html>

## FAMILIES

In 2014-15, more than 57 percent of Ontarians did not have legal representation in family court. The province will lead a review to consider whether a broader range of legal services providers, such as paralegals, law clerks and students, should be allowed to handle certain family law matters. The inquiry will also ask for input on what types of legal services, if handled by a broader range of legal service providers, could improve the family law system and how alternative service providers could be held accountable.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mag/en/2016/02/province-seeking-feedback-to-make-family-legal-services-more-accessible.html>

## HOUSING

Ontario is investing \$92 million from its new Green Investment Fund into social housing retrofits to take advantage of the economic opportunities in clean technologies, improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The funding will include directing \$82 million toward energy retrofits for high-rise social housing towers of 150 units or more. At an average cost of \$3.5-\$5.5 million for each high-rise project, the funding is expected to retrofit between 16 and 23 buildings. The province will invest a further \$10 million to help improve electricity efficiency in an

estimated 1,300 single social housing homes in smaller and rural communities.

Ontario's new Green Investment Fund is a \$325-million down payment on the province's cap and trade program to strengthen the economy, create jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This \$92-million investment will lower greenhouse gas emissions by about 3,600 tonnes over a 20-year period and create approximately 1,650 job years.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mah/en/2016/02/ontario-investing-92-million-to-create-jobs-and-retrofit-social-housing.html>

## INCOME SECURITY

The federal and Ontario governments announced they will work together to achieve their mutual goal of improving pensions for Canadians. To provide more time for discussion among provinces and the federal government, Ontario is proposing to phase in the launch of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan by starting enrollment in January 2017, one year later than the original start date, and by starting the first phase of contributions in January 2018. This will give businesses more time to enroll, and provide about 400 businesses with the additional time.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mof/en/2016/02/governments-of-canada-and-ontario-announce-agreement-to-help-canadians-enjoy-a-more-secure-retirement.html>

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The Ontario government released *Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women*. The three-year, \$100-million strategy outlines actions to prevent violence against Indigenous women and reduce its impact on youth, families and communities. The strategy focuses on six action areas: support for children, youth and families; community safety and healing; policing and justice; prevention and awareness; leadership, collaboration, alignment and accountability; and improved data and research

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2016/02/ontario-acting-to-end-violence-against-indigenous-women.html>

## MENTAL HEALTH

Ontario is putting in place a number of new initiatives to prevent or mitigate the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder among first responders.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2016/02/ontario-announces-new-ptsd-strategy-for-first-responders.html>

## YOUTH

Ontario is investing \$1.6 million over four years in a new facility that will combine sport, education and research for at-risk youth. MLSE LaunchPad will give 200,000 young people ages 6 to 25 from underserved communities in the Greater Toronto Area access to a multipurpose gymnasium, classrooms and teaching kitchen. The facility will encourage teamwork, resilience and striving for excellence; promote a healthy and active lifestyle; provide education on nutrition to encourage healthy eating



habits; and teach life skills to prepare young people for school and work. The first of its kind in North America, the facility is scheduled to open in 2017.

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2016/02/ontario-investing-16-million-in-sports-centre-for-at-risk-youth.html>

## Manitoba

No updates this month.

## Saskatchewan

### DISABILITY

An agreement between the province and the Saskatchewan Abilities Council will provide \$904,438 in funding to help the council deliver its Partners in Employment program. The council, through their Partners in Employment offices in Regina and Moose Jaw, will assist up to 423 people living with disabilities. These are individuals age 16 or older who are legally entitled to work in Saskatchewan and are facing barriers to employment, which may include physical, cognitive or learning disabilities, mental health issues, health conditions, or limited education and work experience.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2016/february/04/remove-employment-barriers>

Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (SDHHS) will receive \$385,088 in funding from the province to deliver its Vocational Counselling, Disabilities & Employment Supports program. Established in 2010, the program offers a range of services to both individuals and employers to assist people living with hearing loss. SDHHS, through their no-fee Vocational Counselling, Disabilities & Employment Supports program will offer support to 85 individuals with all degrees of hearing loss.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2016/february/09/employment-supports>

### POVERTY REDUCTION

The Government of Saskatchewan released the *Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy*. It contains a number of initiatives that will benefit those affected by poverty and aims to reduce the number of residents who experience poverty for two years or more by 50 percent by the end of 2025. In addition to improving communication and teamwork among government and communities, the strategy focuses on six key areas for action:

- income security
- housing and homelessness
- early childhood development and child care
- education, skills training and employment
- health and food security

- vulnerable families and individuals.

Early efforts will focus on:

- implementing a Ministry of Education Early Years Plan
- initiating a redesign of the Ministry of Social Services' Income Assistance programs and services
- expanding housing for "hard to house" individuals to support their integration into the community.

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2016/february/24/poverty-reduction-strategy>

## Alberta

### COMMUNITIES

The province is providing \$6 million in Community Facility Enhancement Program grants and \$4.5 million in Community Initiative Program grants to assist 294 community projects. These will include facility upgrades and construction, playground development and support for the delivery of social, cultural and recreational programs and activities.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=402122D58DA95-E3B0-CF90-14707E99AFB699D7>

### DISABILITY

Albertans with developmental disabilities, their families and guardians, service providers, community members, landlords and other stakeholders are being invited to share their ideas and proposed solutions about safety that respect the personal choices, privacy, priorities and needs of the disability community. Until March 14, 2016, Albertans can fill out an online survey or attend a community forum to hear ideas and propose solutions regarding safety and the rights of people with developmental disabilities to live in their community with dignity.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=40241945F8CF2-9C36-7854-FDB67B5D28B78449>

### MENTAL HEALTH

The province has accepted the "Valuing Mental Health" report that includes 32 recommendations aimed at supporting mental health by strengthening service delivery for Albertans with mental illness and addictions. It will act immediately to:

- add medical detoxification beds for adults, including six to eight new beds in Lethbridge and converting 20 beds in Red Deer
- expand access to addiction treatment by opening three new social detoxification beds for children and youth in Calgary
- work in partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to develop an opiate addictions action plan
- increase technology-based solutions by launching a child and youth



mental health website in spring 2016

- develop a performance monitoring and evaluation framework to track results on report recommendations and benefits to Albertans
- establish an Addiction and Mental Health Implementation team to work with community and health partners to coordinate implementation of the report.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=402516156EDC3-A886-A051-648F62F05AF06CF3>

### SENIORS

The University of Alberta's Medically At-Risk Driver Centre developed the Transportation Toolkit for the Implementation of Alternate Transportation for Seniors in Alberta with funding assistance from the Alberta government. The free kit is a resource for communities that want to set up alternate transportation services. For example, the Toolkit provides guidance on how to set up a handivan program for seniors.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=40267C9FDD54F-AFA9-E08C-2F644AB1A311A420>

## British Columbia

### BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The province will again balance its budget in 2015-16, and in each year of the three-year fiscal plan. Social policy-related highlights include:

- \$3.2 billion over three years for the Ministry of Health
- \$673 million over three year for additional support for children, families and individuals in need, including \$217 million for the Ministry of Children and Family Development to support vulnerable youth and their families, and \$456 million for the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation to support those in need and to increase monthly disability income assistance rates
- \$143 million over three years to enhance key areas of the BC economy that support jobs in communities, including the new \$75 million Rural Dividend Program to help small communities strengthen and diversify their economies
- effective January 1, 2015, changes to Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums and enhanced premium assistance will help lower-income families, individuals and seniors with the cost of living. All children will be exempted from MSP premiums, directly benefiting about 70,000 single-parent families. By having no charge for child premiums and expanding premium assistance, an additional 335,000 people will see their premiums reduced and an additional 45,000 people will no longer pay MSP premiums at all.
- an investment of \$355 million over the next five years for construction and renovation of affordable housing for people with low to moderate incomes.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016FIN0003-000217>

### CHILDREN

Families in 21 communities will be able to access Early Years Centres – one-stop supports and service centres that help children learn, grow and thrive. These new centres will bring the total to 47 BC Early Years Centres throughout the province.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016CFD0003-000183>

### DISABILITY

The province is introducing legislation to make it easier for some people with disabilities to receive disability assistance. The proposed legislation will allow government to prescribe groups of people as Persons with Disabilities (PWD) without them completing a 28-page application or additional assessments by medical practitioners. They will still need to apply for assistance and meet all other eligibility criteria. When the legislation comes into force, people in the following provincial and federal programs will complete a much simpler PWD application process:

- Community Living BC
- The Ministry of Children and Family Development At Home Program
- BC PharmaCare Plan – Palliative Care
- Canadian Pension Plan – Disability.

Initially, about 1,000 people each year will benefit from the change, most of whom will be youth transitioning into CLBC services.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016SDSI0004-000193>

As announced in Budget 2016, BC is investing \$170 million over the next three years to ensure about 100,000 people on disability assistance will receive a rate increase of up to \$77 a month as of September 1, 2016. BC is also providing people on disability assistance with more choice in how they receive transportation supports. Currently, around half of the people with the Person with Disabilities (PWD) designation receive either a subsidized BC Bus Pass at a cost to the ministry of \$52 a month or a special transportation subsidy equivalent to \$66 a month. The rest, particularly those living in smaller communities, receive no transportation support. Once the changes are in effect, all people with the PWD designation will receive up to \$77 cash per month. They can decide how to spend it – they can purchase a subsidized bus pass – or use it for something else.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016SDSI0005-000239>

### EMPLOYMENT

Operating grants to public post-secondary education institutions continue to be aligned with education and training for in-demand occupations, with an additional \$90 million targeted in 2015-16. Targeted operating grants for public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia now account for approximately 17 percent of total funding. The goal is to tar-



get 25 percent of operating grants by 2017-18 to education and training that supports in-demand occupations as part of the commitment made in BC's Skills for Jobs Blueprint.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016AVED0011-000120>

#### FAMILIES

Twenty-four Aboriginal organizations and communities throughout BC will receive \$1.5 million from the provincial government to support culture-based domestic violence programs for Aboriginal families and communities. The projects range from individual and family counselling services with a cultural focus, to healing discussions for entire communities to increase awareness about domestic violence. These initiatives are part of BC's three-year, \$5.5 million Provincial Domestic Violence Plan.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016ARR0005-000144>

#### HOUSING

Over the next five years, the province will allocate \$355 million to create 2,000 new affordable housing units across BC. Through the new Provincial Investment In Affordable Housing Program, individuals with low-to moderate-income will have access to additional affordable housing options throughout the province. The funds will be distributed over a five-year period:

- \$50 million in 2016-17
- \$50 million in 2017-18
- \$75 million in 2018-19
- \$90 million 2019-20
- \$90 million in 2020-21.

The funding will be generated from the Non-Profit Asset Transfer program initiated in 2014. The transfer of properties to non-profit societies was undertaken at the request of the societies, and is part of the government's commitment to strengthen the non-profit housing sector.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016PREM0017-000200>

#### INNOVATION

The province announced a three-year Creative Economy Strategy. As part of the strategy, the province will target \$1.5 million over the next three years towards shared creative spaces. Such spaces are proving to be catalysts for creative activity by providing sustainable facilities for organizations and individual artists. Also announced was an additional \$300,000 investment over two years in artsVest, a training program designed to spark new business sponsorship of arts and culture.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016CSCD0003-000146>

#### YOUTH

The province is investing \$400,000 to allow public post-secondary institutions to address substance abuse. A project is being co-led by the University of Victoria's Centre for Addictions Research and the Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016HLTH0012-000294>

### Yukon Territory

#### BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The federal government has restored \$16.5 million of the \$23 million cut made to the Territorial Funding Formula in December 2015. The Territorial Funding Formula is a legislated arrangement and the change comes in the middle of the current term.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/16-056.html#.VsRjePkrJD8>

### Northwest Territories

*No updates this month.*

### Nunavut

*No updates this month.*