



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

April 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

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The province's 2016 Budget had included a deficit forecast of \$1.09 billion. The deficit for 2015-16, projected at mid-year to be \$1.96 billion, is revised to \$2.2 billion. With the government's announced spending decisions, the 2016-17 deficit is reduced to \$1.83 billion. Social policy-related highlights include:

disability

- funding to help individuals and the taxi industry acquire or adapt vehicles for accessibility
- funding for recreation and sport development initiatives for persons with disabilities
- maintaining teacher allocations for supports for special needs students

education

- \$13 million annually for full-day Kindergarten, which will start in September 2016 and include 142 teaching positions and an increase in student assistants
- \$277,000 to implement the new Premier's Task Force on Educational Outcomes
- \$119 million to support inclusive education in schools
- \$38.3 million to support early childhood development
- \$106 million for school infrastructure including the completion of ongoing school construction projects, school extensions, repairs and maintenance
- \$400,000 to hold French and English school board elections by the end of 2016

health

- \$5.9 million for community-based organizations and agencies that deliver programs and services to encourage healthy living
- \$2.6 million allocated to the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program for coverage of a number of new drug therapies
- \$1.84 million for programs and projects focused on recreation, physical activity and wellness
- \$1 million to support initiatives dedicated to encouraging healthy living and increased physical activity in school-aged children
- \$500,000 for programs which focus on healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health promotion
- \$350,000 to support new and expanded programs and services to help people quit smoking

housing

- a \$2.5 million increase for the Supportive Living Program, bringing the total annual funding to \$7.6 million



- \$104,000 for rent supplement subsidies in Labrador to help low-income households afford private rental market options

income security

- Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement: Budget 2016 includes \$63.7 million annualized for the delivery of benefits to reduce the impact of additional measures on low income seniors, individuals, families and persons with disabilities. The supplement will be paid in quarterly installments. Eligibility will be based on net family income. Further details regarding eligibility and levels of support can be found at www.gov.nl.ca/budget2016
- effective July 1, 2016, tax rates for all income ranges will increase; however, households at every income level will pay less than they did prior to 2007

seniors

- \$12.7 million annualized to enhance the existing Seniors' Benefit. The increased Seniors' Benefit and the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement will replace the Home Heating Rebate Program and the Provincial Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) Credit
- \$3.5 million to support the placement of select individuals with enhanced care needs in a personal care home
- \$250,000 to create a new Seniors Advocate Office with an annual budget of \$500,000 beginning in 2017-18
- \$300,000 for the Seniors Resource Centre to enhance its information and referral system
- \$300,000 for age-friendly transportation services
- a new Director of Adult Protection to reduce risk to adults in need of protection
- \$100,000 to support continued development of age-friendly communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador

youth

- investing \$2.9 million to assist private and not-for-profit employers to hire students.

<http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2016/fin/0414n04.aspx>

New Brunswick

EDUCATION

The new Education and New Economy Fund will provide free tuition for New Brunswick students from low-income and many middle-class families. The new Tuition Access Bursary was established to deliver up-front financial assistance to students from families with an annual income of \$60,000 or less and who attend a publicly funded university or college in New Brunswick. The federal government provides grants for students with low and middle income who want to obtain a post-secondary education. Through the bursary, the provincial government will pay the

difference between the federal grant provided to an eligible student and the amount owing for that student's tuition.

Tuition Action Bursary link: http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary_education_training_and_labour/promo/TAB.html

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2016.04.0283.html

GOVERNANCE

The government announced the release of its open data policy. Its goals are to increase transparency; improve public trust and citizen engagement; enhance research, science and innovation; facilitate the creation of new businesses and services; and improve government services.

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/news/news_release.2016.04.0334.html

Nova Scotia

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The government introduced a balanced Budget, while making investments in economic growth, education and youth. Social policy-related highlights include:

children

- \$6.6 million for subsidized child care spaces, increased wage grants for early childhood educators and support for child care centres to provide inclusive programming

education

- the continuation of a \$65 million investment in education over four years to allow a reduction in class sizes in grades 3-6 (\$6.4 million), implementation of the Education Action Plan (\$21 million) and the addition of four more Schools Plus sites (\$500,000)
- \$3.6 million for the provision of supports for preschoolers with autism

food security

- the institution of a food bank tax credit to encourage farmers to donate produce to local food banks

income security

- \$7.5 million to increase income assistance payments by up to \$20 per month for eligible people
- \$9.9 million in increased funding to the Disability Support Program

labour market

- a doubling of funds for the Graduate to Opportunity program (\$1.6 million more in 2016-2017) that helps employers provide summer jobs and provides co-op opportunities

seniors

- \$14.4 million in funding for home support, nursing and other pro-



grams to keep seniors active and healthy in their communities as long as possible.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20160419001>

COMMUNITIES

The province announced more than \$40,000 in Prevention Innovation Grants for four organizations that work with youth, people with disabilities and sex workers. The grants are a commitment under government's Sexual Violence Strategy. An additional \$600,000 for these one-time grants will be made available again in the fall, for a total investment of more than \$1.2 million over two years.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20160418002>

GOVERNANCE

The Auditor General's 2016 report noted that there was little improvement over prior years in government completing recommendations from previous audits. Of the 400 recommendations followed up from 23 audits in 2012 and 2013, there are still 161 recommendations to be dealt with.

<http://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20160426003>

Prince Edward Island

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The yearly deficit is projected to decrease to \$9.6 million in 2016-17 as a result of the revenue and expense measures in this budget. A \$9.2 million budget surplus is projected for 2017-18. The provincial portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax will increase by one percent, bringing the combined federal-provincial HST rate to 15 per cent on October 1, 2016. This will add \$11 million in revenue in 2016-17 and another \$22 million in 2017-18 that will go directly to core investments including:

- ensuring sustained health and wellness (\$18.2 million)
- improving education and investing in youth and prosperity (\$7.1 million)
- supporting vulnerable populations (\$2.6 million)
- helping grow employment and the economy (\$7.1 million).

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=10728&dept=&lang=E>

THRONE SPEECH

The speech emphasized the government's commitment to rejuvenation, growing the province's population and workforce, and sustained economic growth. Social policy-related highlights include:

education

- 1,000 job opportunities for students to obtain employment will be supported

- a new Education Act will be introduced
- a pilot project will provide instruction in coding to students
- the new Start-Up Zone will open to support budding entrepreneurs
- multi-year funding arrangements with post-secondary institutions will be developed

health

- introduction of more nurse practitioners to the system
- the development of a rural recruitment program
- additional specialists in high-need areas
- the Women's Reproductive Health Centre will be established this year
- new Community Health Advisory Councils will be launched

labour market

- a comprehensive long-term strategy to repatriate, recruit and retain a skilled and talented workforce will be developed
- a new *WorkPEI.ca* website will match job seekers with local employers
- a new mobile app will provide students and parents access to student financial information to encourage Islanders to study at home
- the expansion of the successful Graduate Mentorship Program to include international students.

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/newsroom/index.php?number=news&newsnumber=10703&dept=&lang=E>

Québec

HEALTH

The Minister of Health and Social Services announced the creation of 50 'super clinics' as means of providing increased access to primary care. The new super clinics will be available throughout the province by the end of 2018. These facilities will be subject to several operational requirements and productivity criteria, and they will be evaluated every year regarding their ability to:

- conduct a minimum of 20,000 annual consultations
- operate for 12 hours a day, every day, or 84 hours per week
- take appointments every day, up to three hours before closing
- respond appropriately during episodes of increased need
- maintain an agreement with an imaging laboratory, located within or near the super-clinic
- develop an effective liaison mechanism for specialized services.

In addition, of the 20,000 minimum required annual visits, more than 80 percent shall be made by patients who are not registered family doctors



or are patients enrolled with a family doctor other than those practising in the super-clinic.

<http://www.fil-information.gouv.qc.ca/Pages/Article.aspx?aiguillage=ajd&-type=1&idArticle=2404257708>

LABOUR MARKET

The Québec government and youth employment centers announced a framework agreement to help young people enter the labour market. At a cost of \$45.67 million per year for the next three years, the agreement provides that the services offered by the *Carrefour jeunesse-emploi* (CJE) will place a priority on young people age 35 and under, those receiving financial assistance of last resort, young recipients of Employment Insurance and youth participating in the Job Focus Program. Upon the adoption of Bill 70, the government will ensure stable funding for CJEs, which will allow them to concentrate fully on their mission to support young people.

<http://www.fil-information.gouv.qc.ca/Pages/Article.aspx?aiguillage=ajd&-type=1&idArticle=2404253028>

POVERTY REDUCTION

The Québec Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity is accepting applications for local and regional projects to fight against poverty and social exclusion. \$6.9 million is being made available for this purpose from the Québec Social Initiatives Fund.

[Link](#)

WOMEN

The government is investing \$1,665,000 from the financial support for partnership initiatives program – Equality between women and men – to support 25 initiatives in 15 regions of Québec. Projects were chosen from among regional county municipalities, community organizations, women’s groups and Indigenous organizations. They affect different areas, including female entrepreneurship and women’s integration in the labour market.

[Link](#)

Ontario

COMMUNITIES

The province is supporting 314 non-profit initiatives across the province that will build healthy and vibrant communities. With an investment of \$48 million through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, these projects are expected to benefit nearly two million people.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mtc/en/2016/04/ontario-investing-48-million-in-non-profit-initiatives.html>

EDUCATION

Ontario is dedicating more than \$60 million to help support students achieve better results in mathematics.

<https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2016/04/ontario-dedicating-60-million-for-renewed-math-strategy.html>

HEALTH

The province is making changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit Program that will allow more than 170,000 seniors to become newly eligible for the low-income seniors program. An estimated 500,000 seniors will pay no deductible and only a co-payment of up to \$2 per prescription. Starting August 1, 2016, the government proposes to increase the income thresholds to qualify for the low-income seniors benefit:

- from less than \$16,018 to less than or equal to \$19,300 for single seniors
- from less than \$24,175 to less than or equal to \$32,300 for senior couples.

The government is temporarily freezing the planned increases to drug cost contributions from seniors who are not low income. Beginning this year, the government will continue to consult on the appropriate income thresholds for an improved Ontario Drug Benefit.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mohlhc/en/2016/04/ontario-lowers-drug-costs-for-over-170000-more-low-income-seniors.html>

Ontario is expanding its publicly funded immunization program to protect more youth from Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection and related cancers. Beginning September 2016, the province will offer the cancer-fighting HPV vaccine to boys as well as girls.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mohlhc/en/2016/04/ontario-expanding-hpv-vaccine-program-to-include-boys.html>

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Ontario is investing \$250,000 in three research projects to support a more compassionate, sensitive and culturally appropriate response from law enforcement authorities when dealing with incidents of sexual violence and harassment against Indigenous women, and to encourage more survivors to report sexual violence.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mcscs/en/2016/04/ontario-funding-research-on-sexual-violence-against-indigenous-women-1.html>

LABOUR MARKET

Ontario’s Business Growth Initiative is the government’s new economic strategy to fast-track the knowledge-based economy. The strategy will commit \$400 million over the next five years and leverage Ontario’s workforce to compete through innovation.

https://www.ontario.ca/page/business-growth-initiative?_ga=1.215870423.152250233.1360850154

LEGAL AID

Ontario is giving more people access to affordable legal services by increasing the financial eligibility threshold for Legal Aid Ontario by six percent. Ontario’s 2014 Budget committed to increasing the eligibility threshold by six percent each year over three years. This year’s investment amounts to over \$48.8 million and as a result of these three



combined threshold increases, nearly 400,000 more people will have access to legal aid services.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mag/en/2016/04/ontario-raising-legal-aid-eligibility-threshold-by-another-6-per-cent.html>

MENTAL HEALTH

Ontario passed legislation that will create a presumption that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosed in first responders is work-related. Under the *Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act*, the presumption allows for faster access to Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits, resources and timely treatment. Once a first responder is diagnosed with PTSD by either a psychiatrist or a psychologist, the claims process to be eligible for WSIB benefits will be expedited, without the need to prove a causal link between PTSD and a workplace event.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mol/en/2016/04/ontario-passes-legislation-to-support-first-responders-with-ptsd.html>

POVERTY REDUCTION

323,000 children from low-income families are now receiving free dental care through the newly-expanded Healthy Smiles Ontario program. Children from low-income families can access free preventive, routine, emergency and essential care from licensed dental providers. The province has integrated six publicly funded dental programs into one, providing a simplified enrolment process and making it easier for eligible children to get the care they need. These changes also mean that 70,000 more children from low-income families have become eligible for free dental services.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2016/04/ontario-expands-free-dental-care-for-eligible-children-and-youth.html>

SENIORS

The province announced that 300 long-term care homes that will be upgraded over the next nine years and are eligible to receive a construction funding subsidy.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mohltc/en/2016/04/ontario-renovating-more-than-300-long-term-care-homes.html>

Manitoba

No updates this month.

Saskatchewan

No updates this month.

Alberta

DISABILITY

Responding to community concerns, the province has repealed the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) Safety Standards Regulation. In the meantime, Safety codes legislation (i.e., building/fire codes)

will apply to homes of individuals receiving PDD services to a residential standard. Inspections will occur based on a referral, complaint or incident. The care standard will still apply when the individual is detained or totally dependent on staff to evacuate in the event of a fire or other emergency.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=414873A173CE1-CE8B-239F-2FD1BED5BB861F94>

EMPLOYMENT

The new Alberta Investor Tax Credit (AITC) will encourage investment in small- and medium-sized businesses in non-traditional sectors, diversifying the province's economy and creating new jobs. The AITC will offer a 30 percent tax credit to investors who provide capital to Alberta companies in the information technology, clean technology, health technology, interactive digital media and game products, and post-production, visual effects and digital animation sectors.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=41582A23D61BD-FE1E-3F44-CA58C32FEE6AC075>

The Alberta Jobs Plan supports a \$75 million Capital Investment Tax Credit (CITC) to encourage investment and support job creation as part of Budget 2016. The proposed CITC will encourage companies to make timely capital investments by returning a percentage of the company's costs, including the purchase of machinery, equipment and buildings. The two-year program will be implemented as a 10 percent non-refundable tax credit of up to \$5 million.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=416023CD6C-CA9-CF41-0794-85236A2E44A687EC>

HEALTH

The 2016 capital plan includes \$759.5 million for maintenance and renewal of the province's health care facilities over the next five years, as part of Alberta's Infrastructure Maintenance Program. This represents an overall increase of about \$107 million, or roughly 16 percent, over last year's capital plan.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=41614799B2423-BCE6-9FE6-C0A49912C0CC5972>

INCOME SECURITY

To offset the typical consumer costs that may result from Alberta's new carbon levy, 60 percent of Alberta households will receive a full Climate Leadership Adjustment Rebate. An additional six percent will be eligible for a partial rebate. To help lower- and middle-income households in 2017, the government will implement rebates of up to:

- \$200 for single adults
- \$300 for couples
- \$30 per child under 18 years of age (to a maximum of four children).



To coincide with the scheduled increase to the carbon levy, in 2018, rebates will increase to a maximum of:

- \$300 for single adults
- \$450 for couples
- \$45 per child.

Rebates will be fully phased out when income reaches \$51,250 for singles, \$100,000 for couples, \$101,500 for couples with two children and \$103,000 for couples with four children.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=415970E266D38-EAD9-ECF3-8BC0A83EB4F62E9E>

SENIORS

The proposed *Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act* would enable a new low-interest home equity loan program to help seniors improve the safety and sustainability of their homes. About 145,000 senior households would be eligible for the loan program. Under the program, seniors would not be required to make monthly loan payments as they would with traditional loan programs.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=41522456D2EFB-03EA-F54E-A520DA734727EAE7>

YOUTH

The living allowance for the Advancing Futures Bursary is being increased to help former youth in care focus on education as they prepare for careers. Advancing Futures Bursary supports students ages 18 to 30 by mentoring them through their transition out of care into post-secondary education and helping fund their studies. Individuals also receive a living allowance to supplement monthly living costs, such as rent and food, and to alleviate stress associated with paying for living expenses during school.

<http://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=416487A6E7CB7-F2BE-6E18-A86432B737815A86>

British Columbia

LABOUR MARKET

The newly-published *WorkBC Parents' Guide* is designed to help parents and guardians support their teens as they learn about the wide range of educational opportunities and career options available to them.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016JTST0046-000502>

The province announced \$750,000 for two partnerships that will enhance mentorship for women and apprentices in the skilled trades.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016JTST0048-000548>

After four years in operation, WorkBC Employment Services Centres have helped put more than 77,000 British Columbians back to work. In 2015, 52 percent of those who received one-on-one personalized supports

found a job. WorkBC Centres provide specialized services and supports to persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, youth and survivors of violence or abuse – specialized populations who often find it difficult to gain a foothold in the job market.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016SDSI0011-000534>

Fewer youth in BC are entering the workforce than older workers leaving it. Through its Skills for Jobs Blueprint strategy, the province is using funds from the Canada Job Fund agreement to re-engineer education and training programs. It is working towards establishing a data-driven system that aligns investment decisions with the needs of a rapidly changing labour market. Under the Canada-British Columbia Job Fund Agreement, BC receives a total of \$65 million per year, its per capita share of the available funding. Currently, 5,500 British Columbians are receiving training for jobs in their communities as a result of a \$36 million investment.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016JTST0063-000661>

Yukon Territory

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Social policy-related highlights of the territory's 2016-17 Budget include:

- \$520,000 in new funding to provide \$100 in school supplies for every child in Yukon
- more education assistants for Yukon communities
- maintaining the territorial portion of the Children's Fitness Tax Credit and the Children's Arts Tax Credit, which were eliminated in the recent federal Budget
- an increase to the number of hours of home care available to Yukoners with the addition of three new full-time care providers
- more than \$2 million in operational funding for the new Sarah Steele facility to provide alcohol and drug addiction programs for adults and youth.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/16-116.html#VweT7PkrJD8>

MENTAL HEALTH

The territory established a \$1-million fund to support community mental health initiatives that align with the soon-to-be released Yukon Mental Wellness Strategy. The fund will be time-limited and cannot be used for core funding. Communities and individuals will have to submit proposals that support community capacity-building. The government is currently working with communities, stakeholders and service providers to determine how best to use the fund.

<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/16-115.html#VweUTPkrJD8>



Northwest Territories

LABOUR MARKET

The government released new labour market information on NWT jobs in demand over the next 15 years. This information will help Northerners make informed decisions so they may maximize the NWT employment opportunities that are and will be available over the coming years. <http://www.gov.nt.ca/newsroom/news/gnwt-releases-labour-market-information-nwt-jobs-demand-over-next-15-years>

Nunavut

INCOME SECURITY

Effective April 1, 2016, the income that families receive from the National Child Benefit Supplement is now exempt from the Government of Nunavut's Social Assistance program calculations. The Department of Family Services expects the exemption to impact approximately 2,500 families, providing low-income families with up to \$6.8 million additional dollars in social assistance this fiscal year. A family with one child can receive up to \$190 more in social assistance per month; a family with two children can receive up to \$358 more per month; and for each additional child thereafter, a family can receive an extra \$160 per month. <http://www.gov.nu.ca/family-services/news/national-child-benefit-supplement-exemption>