



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

February 2017



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. 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

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The New Brunswick economy is projected to grow by 0.6 percent in 2017, its third consecutive year of growth. A deficit of \$191.9 million is projected for 2017-18, continuing a downward trend as the province aims to return to fiscal balance by 2020-21. Social policy-related highlights include:

Caregiving

- the government will be investing \$58.2 million for construction, maintenance and improvements to the network of nursing homes across the province over the next three years

Education

- in support of its 10-year education plans, the province is investing an extra \$56 million into the education budget, an increase of \$103 million since 2014-15. This represents an increase of 4.9 percent – the largest increase since 2008-09
- the government will double the budget of the daycare assistance program effective January 1, 2018
- \$45 million over four years will be invested in publicly-funded universities. The government is preparing to fund a new program that will offer tuition relief for the middle class [program announced February 23]
- \$7 million per year in literacy programming will be allocated for both children and adults [A comprehensive literacy strategy was mentioned in the Budget and released on February 27]
- \$2.4 million will be spent for preschool autism interventions, in addition to the \$1.4 million provided to this program in last year's budget

Families

- the government will introduce legislation this session to better protect against domestic and intimate partner violence. New funding to support this legislation will be made available.

Health

- in partnership with the federal government, the health care budget is increasing by 3.3 percent, bringing the budget for the Department of Health to \$2.7 billion for 2017-18. This is the largest increase since 2010-11

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

Diversity and respect leads have been hired as part of an effort to support a safe school environment for all New Brunswick students. As part of the province's 10-year education plan, the 15 leads are working



in all school districts in both the francophone and anglophone sectors on issues such as LGBTQ inclusive education, creating welcoming and inclusive environments for newcomer learners and their families, and promoting positive pro-social behaviors.

[Link](#)

The government announced a new post-secondary education grant program, Tuition Relief for the Middle Class (TRMC). Based on family size and income, this program will provide more upfront financial assistance to post-secondary students. TRMC will be available to students who are enrolled full time in an undergraduate degree, diploma or certificate program at a publicly funded university or college in the province as of August 1, 2017. The government also announced health care support for international students.

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LITERACY

The province released *Unleashing the power of literacy: New Brunswick's Comprehensive Literacy Strategy* and invested \$2 million to hire more than 35 new literacy leads. The province has earmarked a \$7 million per year investment in literacy programming for both children and adults in the 2017-18 provincial budget.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

Amendments to the *Mental Health Act* were introduced to integrate community support orders into the province's mental health continuum of care. Community support orders are issued by a physician and agreed to by the patient. They allow the patient to receive care and treatment in their own community, which is less restrictive than being detained in a psychiatric facility. The model for community support orders in New Brunswick will be known as Supervised Community Care.

[Link](#)

WOMEN

The province tabled the *Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Act*. The proposed legislation will provide victims of intimate partner violence with additional tools to increase their safety while they seek more permanent solutions. It will allow victims to apply to a designated official for an emergency order, without notice to the respondent, to obtain remedies to respond to their circumstances.

[Link](#)

Nova Scotia

COMMUNITIES

The province introduced *Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan: Creativity and Community*. The plan focuses on six themes:

- promoting Mi'kmaw culture

- promoting creativity and innovation
- strengthening education
- partnerships and understanding
- advancing cultural diversity
- excellence in cultural stewardship
- driving awareness and economic growth of the culture sector.

[Link](#)

Prince Edward Island

MINIMUM WAGE

Minimum wage on Prince Edward Island will increase by 25 cents on April 1, 2017 to \$11.25 per hour. The province's minimum wage has increased 38 percent since 2008. During the same period, inflation has risen 11 percent.

[Link](#)

Québec

CHILDREN

To help parents achieve an optimal work-life balance, the province is providing \$580,000 to enhance or increase 60 spring and summer break projects under the Child Care Support Program.

[Link](#)

SENIORS

The Québec government announced an investment of \$11 million to support initiatives that promote the wellness and vitality of seniors. This funding will be used to fund 107 new projects under the two components of the Québec Friendly Seniors Program.

A total of \$1,904,327 will be devoted to 13 new projects under the Support to National Projects program component. This investment will support experimental projects, deployment projects resulting from the preliminary experimentation phase, and research-action projects aimed at improving knowledge and practices.

With respect to the Community Actions Support program component, \$9,305,664 will be devoted to the implementation of 94 new projects in 16 regions of Québec. Five types of projects will be funded:

- experimental projects
- starting an activity
- adding a complementary activity to existing activities
- adapting or modifying activities already offered by the organization
- the deployment of already experienced and proven activities.



Successful projects will receive up to \$150,000 annually over a one- to three-year period.

[Link](#)

Ontario

DISABILITY

Ontario will eliminate the 2014 Passport waitlist by the end of March 2017, one year ahead of schedule, providing direct funding for 13,000 adults with developmental disabilities. Passport is a government program that allows adults with developmental disabilities to take part in community programs, develop work and daily life skills, hire a support worker and live independently. When the Passport program was first launched in 2006 it served 1,700 people. It now supports more than 19,000 people with developmental disabilities and will continue to grow, supporting an estimated 24,000 recipients by 2017-18.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/WOMEN

The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) has been selected to deliver Ontario's Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons program in areas known for trafficking, including Toronto, Windsor, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, and remote areas identified through consultations with ONWA and other Indigenous partners.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The province announced efforts to improve access to mental health and addictions services through its *Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care*. This will include providing:

- more access to therapy to help thousands of people living with conditions like anxiety and depression learn strategies to improve their mental health
- up to nine hubs where young people ages 12 to 25 can receive walk-in, one-stop access to mental health and addictions services, as well as other health, social and employment supports under one roof
- up to 1,150 additional supportive housing units across Ontario for people living with mental illness and addictions, especially those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Ontario is investing \$140 million over three years to support these initiatives, which will be followed by a sustained increase in funding of \$50 million annually. This investment is in addition to the \$3.7 billion that Ontario invested in mental health and addictions services in 2015-16.

[Link](#)

Manitoba

EDUCATION

The Manitoba government is increasing funding for Kindergarten to Grade 12 education with a \$13.1-million investment in public schools, sustaining the overall budget at more than \$1.3 billion per year. The announcement represents an overall one percent increase in Kindergarten to Grade 12 funding for the 2017-18 school year.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The province is engaging a consultant to assist in the development of a mental health strategy comprising mental health and addictions programs and services, with an emphasis on better co-ordination and access.

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Saskatchewan

No updates this month.

Alberta

EMPLOYMENT

The province announced a new, two-year \$1.7-million youth employment partnership. It will help 1,200 Albertans ages 18-30 secure employment while showing 200 employers the benefits of hiring youth.

[Link](#)

British Columbia

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Social policy-related highlights include:

Disability

- \$199 million to fund a \$600 per year increase to income assistance rates for persons with disabilities
- \$175 million to provide income assistance supports for those in need, including \$8 million to exempt additional child-related benefits, expected to help 600 families and 1,000 children
- \$135 million over three years for community living services, primarily via Community Living BC

Education

- funding will increase by \$740 million over three years, including \$228 million to fund enrolment growth, rural education enhancement, student transportation, K-12 salary costs, continued funding for the Learning Improvement Fund, and an incremental \$320 million over three years to conclude a final agreement with the BC Teachers' Federation on class size and composition



Health

- Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums will be reduced by 50 percent as a first step to eliminating them entirely as it becomes affordable

Housing

- \$920 million to support the creation of over 5,300 affordable housing units. Leading up to Budget 2017, government committed an additional \$65 million to fund another 380 affordable housing units to house the homeless and those with mental health or substance use issues
- the BC HOME Partnership program, launched in January 2017, will provide more than \$700 million in repayable down payment assistance over the next three years to help over 42,000 individuals and families get into the housing market for the first time
- the threshold for the first-time homebuyers' program will be increased to \$500,000, saving first-time buyers up to \$8,000 in property transfer tax on the purchase of their first home.

Indigenous peoples

- \$287 million over the next three years to the Ministry of Children and Family Development, of which \$120 million will be used to address recommendations of the Grand Chief Ed John Report on Indigenous Child Welfare

Mental health

- a \$100-million, three-year enhancement in services that address mental health and substance use issues, particularly for youth

[Link](#)

DISABILITY

The province is providing the BC Spinal Cord Injury Community Services Network with \$5 million over five years to enhance their services for British Columbians with a physical disability. The funding will help support the growth and efficiency of the Network, including:

- providing supports and services to more individuals with physical disabilities throughout the province
- promoting and updating education and information resources covering all aspects of living with a physical disability, including housing, finding employment, and physical and mental health
- increasing services to enhance active living and community participation
- promoting best practices in care and support
- developing and providing assistive and adaptive technologies.

[Link](#)

EMPLOYMENT

An entrepreneurial program launched by the BC Innovation Council to help residents transform their ideas into successful businesses is contributing to the province's growing tech sector. Over the past five years, the Venture Acceleration Program has created 1,640 jobs, attracted \$196 million in investment and generated more than \$81.6 million in revenues province-wide.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

As part of Budget 2017, the province is investing \$8 million over three years to increase child benefit exemptions for people who receive income or disability assistance. As of April 1, 2017, the Canada Pension Plan disabled contributor's child benefit, foster-care payments, and Public Guardian and Trustee payments for children will all be exempt from calculations of income and disability assistance.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

As outlined in Budget 2017, the province will spend \$140 million over three years on targeted mental health initiatives. A new mental-health digital hub has been designed to help people find mental health and substance use information and services. Based on audience, topic and location it brings together 6,000 services from 450 providers throughout the province. Further investments will focus programming and resources to meet the needs of children and youth, the school system and Indigenous communities.

[Link](#)

MINIMUM WAGE

Effective September 15, 2017, the province will increase the minimum wage by 50 cents to \$11.35 an hour. The new rate includes a 20-cent increase based on the BC 2016 Consumer Price Index, plus an additional 30 cents. There will also be an identical increase of 50 cents per hour to the liquor server minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour.

[Link](#)

Yukon Territory

GOVERNANCE

The territory launched a new website: the *Compendium of Research and Monitoring*. The site compiles research and monitoring initiatives conducted by or in partnership with the Government of Yukon.

[Site Link](#)

[Release Link](#)



Northwest Territories

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The territory released its 2017-18 Budget, proposing operating expenditures of \$1.66 billion and revenues of \$1.86 billion. The Budget projects an operating surplus of \$167 million and, after accounting for infrastructure investments, an overall cash surplus of \$15 million for 2017-18. Social policy-related highlights include:

Communities

- \$750,000 for actions to address homelessness in Yellowknife
- \$616,000 to implement a territorial wide 9-1-1 service
- \$6.4 million to address cost pressures in the medical travel budget
- \$1.1 million increase for community government funding

Education

- \$1.5 million for Junior Kindergarten with a commitment of another \$2.7 million before the end of the 18th Assembly to fully implement the program [Assembly end date uncertain]

Employment

- \$3.0 million in additional support for employment in small NWT communities

Income security

- \$4.2 million in additional support for income assistance
- \$750,000 to extend the NWT Child Benefit for more than 2,000 families with children who earn less than \$80,000 annually

Seniors

- \$500,000 for a new home repair program for Seniors

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Nunavut

MENTAL HEALTH

The federal and territorial governments announced \$75.8 million for the Qikiqtani Correctional Healing Centre in Iqaluit. The first phase of the project includes the construction of a two-story maximum security unit. The second phase will renovate the existing facility (formerly known as the Baffin Correctional Centre) into two medium security living units, along with program and counselling spaces. Once complete, it will accommodate 112 beds and meet modern security standards, increasing the safety of both staff and inmates. The Centre will also provide inmates with culturally appropriate services and skills training to help them return as productive members of their communities and to reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

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