



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

March 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

MENTAL HEALTH

The province's Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions released *Towards Recovery: A Vision for a Renewed Mental Health and Addictions System*, which outlines 54 recommendations in the areas of:

- promotion, prevention and early Intervention
- access to services
- quality of care
- policy and programming
- community supports
- accountability and performance monitoring.

[Link](#)

THRONE SPEECH

Social policy-related highlights include:

education

- continued expansion of francophone instruction options at the intermediate and secondary levels in the Greater Saint John's area
 - increased educational support for disengaged and at-risk students and youth
 - expanded options for acquiring high school equivalency testing
 - more opportunities for career education and accessibility for distance education supports
 - more child care subsidies to low-income families by increasing the income threshold eligibility requirement
- raising the Early Learning and Child Care Supplement for qualifying early childhood educators

health

- efforts to improve health care, including its plans to curb opioid abuse, expand homecare services, offer enhanced care in personal care homes, expand the number of interdisciplinary health teams and respond to a recent all-party report on mental health and addictions

women

- efforts to improve women's social and economic status will continue
- the province maintain its focus on protecting vulnerable populations from violence
- a Sexual Assault Response pilot program is in the planning stages.

The speech emphasized the province's new three-phase economic plan: *The Way Forward: A vision for sustainability and growth in Newfoundland and Labrador*.

[Link](#)



New Brunswick

EDUCATION/EMPLOYMENT

The province is offering job experience and renewing job placement programs for graduates. The [Student Employment Experience Development](#) program has been revamped to make it more student-focused. The government is also partnering with universities, employers and students to enhance experiential learning opportunities in order for students to receive more work experience in their chosen discipline through co-op placements. Through the [One Job Pledge](#) program, the province is working to retain trained young professionals through a wage incentive for employers when they hire a recent post-secondary graduate in a job related to their field of study. The government is also investing \$10 million in the [Youth Employment Fund](#) to help employers hire young New Brunswickers.

[Link](#)

MINIMUM WAGE

The province's minimum wage will increase from \$10.65 per hour to \$11 per hour on April 1.

[Link](#)

Nova Scotia

HEALTH

The Department of Health and Wellness is spending \$564,000 to expand access to naloxone, a medication that blocks the effect of opioids and can reverse an overdose. The funding will support the purchase and distribution of naloxone kits through a range of community and health care organizations, including community pharmacies and municipal police.

[Link](#)

A Matter of Black Health: Health Coaching to Live Well in Nova Scotia is a project from the Health Association of African Canadians and Diabetes Canada. The province is supporting the project with \$96,666 over the next two years from the new Chronic Disease Innovation Fund.

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INCOME SECURITY

Nova Scotia announced improvements to Employment Support and Income Assistance. Some youth on income assistance are now able to access supports and services from both that program and Children, Youth and Family Services. At-risk youth can access therapeutic services, and educational and financial support.

Allowable asset levels have doubled for people receiving assistance from \$1,000 to \$2,000 for individuals and from \$2,000 to \$4,000 for families.

[Link](#)

SENIORS

The province is committing \$13 million over three years to *SHIFT: Nova*

Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population. The plan identifies a dozen priority commitments with more than 50 specific actions. It focuses on keeping seniors involved and connected to their communities, promoting healthy living and keeping older adults in the workforce. Part of the funding enables Nova Scotia to access an estimated \$21.4 million from the federal government for affordable housing.

[Link](#)

Prince Edward Island

DISABILITY

The Department of Family and Human Services will expand the province's Disability Support Program to include mental health supports. Program improvements will create a single-entry point where Islanders with disabilities, both physical and mental health related, can access a full range of government and community services. Under the expanded supports, eligibility will be based on functional needs rather than a diagnosis, and Islanders who receive more than one service will have a single case worker once they are assessed.

[Link](#)

Québec

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Social policy-related highlights include:

education

\$3.4 billion over five years:

- \$ 130 million to encourage educational success from early childhood
- \$ 1.8 billion to improve support for students throughout their school career
- \$ 1.5 billion for higher education in order to improve the quality of training, raise graduation rates and provide financial support to students

employment

\$290 million over five years to:

- promote the trades in demand and to encourage young people to orient themselves towards these trades
- support the integration of immigrants into the labour market
- support continuing training and skills development for workers
- support businesses in managing their workforce

[Link](#)

health

- \$3 billion over two years in health care improvements, an average annual growth of the health budget of 4 percent
- elimination of the health tax, coupled with a general tax reduction this year, will permanently return more than \$ 1 billion to taxpayers'



pockets annually

- investments of nearly \$ 590 million to reduce poverty and social exclusion, support for Indigenous communities and fight elder abuse

[Link](#)

housing

- \$200 million for the construction of 3,000 new social housing units for vulnerable families

[Link](#)

poverty reduction, social inclusion

\$590 million for:

- the construction of 3,000 new social housing units
- encouraging the social involvement of vulnerable youth
- combating homelessness
- supporting Indigenous communities, supporting their economic, social and community development and implementing the Government's Action Plan on Indigenous Social Action
- responding to elder abuse, hiring environmental workers, enhancing the availability of the Help *Abus Aids* telephone line and encouraging friendship visits.

[Link](#)

DISABILITY/EDUCATION

The province announced the Autism Spectrum Disorder Action Plan 2017-2022. Aimed at reducing wait times and enhancing services, the government will make an annual investment of \$29 million and an additional \$1.25 million to support research, training and the production of intervention tools.

[Link](#)

HEALTH

The province announced that it has reached an agreement with the federal government on health financing. Québec will receive \$2.5 billion over 10 years.

[Link](#)

The province announced \$53 million for the Montréal region to create spaces for people awaiting accommodation, rehabilitation, mental health and convalescent services, as well as additional human resources in residential and long-term care facilities.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The government of Québec is investing \$12 million to provide more youth protection and mental health services for troubled youth and their families.

[Link](#)

Ontario COMMUNITIES

New legislation was introduced that would embed Ontario's Anti-Racism Directorate in law, creating a framework for continued work to promote equity for racialized groups across the province.

[Link](#)

The province released *A Better Way Forward: Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan*. It includes the following measures to identify and eliminate systemic racism. It includes:

- developing a framework for the collection of race-based data in various institutions
- launching an Ontario Black Youth Action Plan targeted at increasing access to supports and opportunities for Black children, youth and their families to address outcomes disparities
- implementing an anti-racism impact assessment framework to anticipate and remove bias in proposed policies, programs and decisions
- new legislation to ensure the sustainability and accountability of the province's anti-racism work
- public education and awareness initiatives targeting racism, including Islamophobia and antisemitism.

[Link](#)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ontario drivers now have the option to display an 'X' in the sex field of their driver's licence, to ensure the fair treatment of people with trans and non-binary gender identity.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

Forty-five recipients from universities and colleges across Ontario will receive a range of research and innovation grants through eCampusOntario to explore technology-enabled learning and highlight best practices in student engagement. Examples of funded projects include:

- studying the use of gaming as a teaching method in science-based fields



- evaluating the impact of virtual simulations as a means of preparing nursing students for clinical practice, compared to more traditional approaches
- creating an online space for Indigenous students to virtually gather, record and engage in stories from local Elders.

[Link](#)

Ontario is partnering with educators on 29 pilot projects across the province to revise the current career studies course and help students develop the skills they need to in the global economy.

[Link](#)

HOUSING/HOMELESSNESS

Ontario is increasing investment in housing assistance and supports across the province to help up to 6,000 families in need remain permanently housed. Twenty percent of the new funding will be dedicated to supporting Indigenous people. Counselling, addictions services and life skills support will help people who are homeless and experiencing addictions, or living with mental illness or disabilities, to obtain housing and remain permanently housed. The funding will allow municipalities and Indigenous organizations to deliver supportive housing programs to chronically homeless people in their communities.

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The province and the Kashechewan First Nation announced the signing of a Framework Agreement that will support a sustainable future for the roughly 2,300 First Nation members of the Kashechewan First Nation community. The agreement commits the parties to the development of an action plan to support the short-, medium- and long-term sustainability of the community, with a focus on improving outcomes in priority areas. These include housing, socio-economic sustainability, health programs and facilities, infrastructure development, and schools and community facilities.

[Link](#)

MINIMUM WAGE

As of October 1, 2017, Ontario's minimum wage will rise to \$11.60.

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POVERTY REDUCTION

The province released its *Poverty Reduction Strategy Annual Report* for 2016, which highlights progress made by the province in lifting people out of poverty in 2016.

[Link](#)

Manitoba

CHILDREN

Legislation has been introduced to expand the mandate of the Office of the Children's Advocate to ensure greater accountability of a range of key public services. The proposed legislation would empower the advocate by:

- expanding its mandate beyond the Child and Family Services (CFS) system to help other vulnerable children and young adults
- strengthening the public reporting abilities of the advocate, including the preparation of special reports to increase transparency and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of services
- granting the advocate the power to review deaths and serious injuries of vulnerable children involved in the child welfare, mental health, addictions and justice systems, as well as young adults ages 18 to 21 who required CFS services to help them transition to adulthood.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

A new Early Years Education Initiative will replace the Smaller Classes Initiative, affording school divisions greater flexibility and autonomy to direct funding in ways that will improve outcomes for students in the early years (kindergarten to Grade 3). Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, school divisions may decide how to use the associated funding to improve outcomes within their unique student populations – either by covering operating costs in order to maintain the smaller classes, investing in improvements to teacher capacity and student achievement, or some combination of the two. The initiative will include an evaluation component to measure province-wide progress annually within a four-year implementation time frame.

[Link](#)

Legislation is being introduced to keep post-secondary tuitions low and to ensure ensure the long-term sustainability of the province's post-secondary institutions. The proposed *Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act* would:

- maintain Manitoba's average tuition fees as the lowest of those charged among western provinces
- enable universities to set tuition at rates that better reflect the cost of delivering programs
- removes the unnecessary processes to review course-related fees, a procedure that has not demonstrated value
- allow the provincial government to deduct a portion of the grants to universities, if the average tuition fees in Manitoba are not the lowest among western provinces



- provide for a maximum permitted increase for tuition fees, set out as follows:
 - tuition fee increases to be limited to an annual rate of no more than five percent plus the Consumer Price Index.

[Link](#)

HEALTH

The Manitoba government is introducing new legislation that would focus on harm reduction and public safety as part of its preparation for federal legalization of marijuana.

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Saskatchewan

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

A deficit of \$685 million is forecast for this year. A smaller shortfall of \$304 million is projected for 2018-19, followed by a \$15 million surplus in 2019-20 and a \$183 million surplus in 2020-21. The Provincial Sales Tax (PST) rate is being raised by one point, from five to six percent, and a number of PST exemptions are being eliminated to meet the current financial challenge. At the same time, the government is shifting away from taxes on income and productivity by lowering personal and corporate income tax rates and introducing new growth tax incentives. To mitigate the effect of the tax changes, the annual Saskatchewan Low-Income Tax Credit will be enhanced by \$100 per adult and \$40 per child.

Since 2007-08, total investment into three priority areas – health, education, social services and assistance – has increased by nearly 72 percent or \$4.4 billion. These three areas, projected to be a combined \$10.6 billion in 2017-18, make up nearly three quarters of government's total expense:

- in 2017-18, total spending for health is forecast to be \$5.6 billion, an increase of \$39.0 million or 0.7 percent more than last year's budget
- education expense, which includes both the K-12 and post-secondary sectors, budgeted at \$3.6 billion in 2017-18, down \$45.1 million or 1.2 percent from last year
- social services and assistance expense is nearly \$1.4 billion, an increase of \$113.0 million or 9.1 percent over last year.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

Saskatchewan's population continues to grow, up by 2,946 people in the last quarter of 2016 and up by 17,217 in 2016. There were 1,158,339 people living in Saskatchewan as of January 1, 2017, according to the

latest population estimates released by Statistics Canada. Both the quarterly and annual population gains were the third highest among Canadian provinces.

[Link](#)

HEALTH

Legislation was introduced to remove health region boundaries and create a single Provincial Health Authority. The *Provincial Health Authority Act* will:

- remove arbitrary geographical areas of responsibility (Regional Health Authority boundaries)
- provide oversight of compensation levels to the contracts of the CEO and those who report to the CEO
- allow for the creation and continuation of Community Advisory Networks to ensure community needs and interests are identified and advanced
- ensure donations raised by local foundations continue to be used for the local health services or facilities for which they were raised
- establish the specific roles and responsibilities of the Minister and Provincial Health Authority
- repeal *The Regional Health Services Act*.

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Alberta

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The Budget focuses on an anticipated economic growth rate of 2.6 percent. Social policy-related highlights include:

caregiving

- helping seniors stay in their homes longer with better home care

education

- providing Alberta's colleges, institutes and universities with stable funding
- freezing tuition fees for post-secondary students for the third consecutive year
- reducing school fees by 25 percent

families

- helping families reduce their energy bills by capping electricity rates

housing

- modernizing and building affordable housing across the province



- Indigenous peoples
- supporting Indigenous businesses and job creators with a new investment fund.

[Link](#)

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS/CAREGIVING/DISABILITY

Budget 2017 is increasing home and community care funding by \$200 million. The announcement brings total funding to more than \$2 billion for home care and community care in 2017-18. The funding will support services such as nursing and personal assistance, day programs, respite relief, palliative care and wound care, to enable seniors and persons with disabilities to continue to live and participate in their communities.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

The government tabled *Bill 1: An Act to Reduce School Fees* under which parents would no longer have to pay school fees for instructional supplies or materials or for eligible students taking the bus to their designated schools. These two fees cost families more than \$50 million each year. They account for approximately 25 percent of the total fees charged to parents.

[Link](#)

HEALTH

Federal funding of \$6 million will contribute to the province's opioid strategy for those at risk of overdosing on fentanyl or other opioids.

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A 10-year funding agreement between the federal and provincial governments will result in \$1.3 billion to help meet Albertans' home care and mental health needs. Under the funding agreement, Alberta will receive these federal investments in home care and mental health:

- \$703.2 million for improved home care, including addressing critical home-care infrastructure requirements
- \$586 million to support mental health initiatives.

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THRONE SPEECH

Key initiatives announced include reducing school fees, building new schools, using court process to advocate for the Trans Mountain Pipeline, working with the federal government to create good oilfield service jobs, implementing a consumer bill of rights and expanding protections for victims of sexual and domestic assault. Social policy-related announcements include:

- reducing school fees to help families save money
- approving more new schools

- partnering with the Alberta Medical Association to help communities find and retain health care professionals
- building more long-term care and dementia spaces
- introducing new legislation focused on ensuring child death reviews receive the utmost care and attention
- eliminating barriers to justice for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence
- ensuring access to clean drinking water in First Nations communities.

[Link](#)

British Columbia

COMMUNITIES

The province's new *Building on our Rural Advantages: BC's Rural Economic Development Strategy* outlines a three-pronged approach to build, strengthen and diversify rural communities. Investments are expected to support up to 26,600 direct and indirect jobs with an overall impact of \$2.8 billion to provincial GDP.

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EDUCATION

The province is investing \$2 million to enhance the recruitment and retention of teachers and other qualified education sector professionals to rural schools. Funds will be used to support:

- cost-free job posting services and access to an online teacher application management system
- coordination of national and international recruitment efforts
- local incentives, such as enhanced funding for travel expenses for professional development, relocation expenses and transitional housing assistance.

[Link](#)

EMPLOYMENT

The government released its updated #BCTECH Strategy, which includes a significant expansion of tech-related student openings (grad seats) and co-op placements throughout the province to support growth in regional technology training and expertise and strengthen local economies.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

British Columbia and the Lake Babine Nation have agreed to develop a 25-year roadmap to reconciliation. The agreement sets out a commitment for the province and Lake Babine to negotiate a Foundation Agreement, a 25-year framework to strengthen the government-to-government relationship, reconcile respective jurisdictions and responsibilities, and provide certainty and benefits.

[Link](#)



MENTAL HEALTH

Promoting safety in relationships and a violence-free province are goals of new learning resources the province is piloting in schools in three communities. Final versions will be available in all BC school districts by the end of the year. "Respectful Futures" promotes better understanding of healthy relationships among students in grades 6 and 9 through 12. Learning modules focus on diverse topics including the characteristics of healthy relationships, identifying violent and controlling behaviours, building better relationships through better communication, and understanding and managing anger.

[Link](#)

The province and Fraser Health are partnering to test an innovative way for people living with severe mental illness to find long-term employment that fits their needs. "Thinking Skills at Work," a \$1.6 million, three-year research project conducted in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, will combine a new treatment with an existing service to help individuals get back into the workforce. Cognitive Remediation Therapy is a promising new treatment that enhances thinking skills in people with severe mental illnesses. It is designed to improve neuro-cognitive abilities such as attention, working memory, cognitive flexibility, planning and functioning.

[Link](#)

POVERTY REDUCTION

The province is investing \$24 million to increase access for low-income families to fresh food, dental care and hearing care for children, and to support community initiatives to reduce poverty. The funding includes \$10 million to Food Banks BC to help the organization's 100 food banks. A new Community Poverty Reduction Fund that will support community-driven programs tailored to the unique circumstances and needs of each region.

[Link](#)

SENIORS/CAREGIVING

The province is investing \$500 million over the next four years as part of a Ministry of Health action plan to improve care for seniors across the system, including increasing direct-care hours for seniors in residential care. This will result in a consistent average of 3.36 direct-care hours per resident day across both publicly-administered and contracted residential-care facilities.

[Link](#)

WOMEN

As part of the Provincial Domestic Violence Plan, the province is investing more than \$1.5 million to expand and strengthen supports for those affected by domestic violence.

[Link](#)

Yukon Territory

No updates this month.

Northwest Territories

No updates this month.

Nunavut

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/EDUCATION

Proposed amendments to the *Education Act* will allow for an assessment of Inuktitut language instructional capacity as well as the re-direction of resources support high-quality instruction. Bill 37 recognizes the current lack of capacity to fully implement Inuktitut as the language of instruction from kindergarten to Grade 12.

[Link](#)