



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

May 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

CHILDREN

As part of the ongoing effort to improve programming and placement stability for children and youth in care, the province is modifying its approach to procuring the services of staffed residential out-of-home placements, moving to a program rather than the public tendering process that has been in place since 2014. This change will provide greater flexibility in supporting the changing needs of children and youth and increase placement stability. Under the current public tendering process, children/youth could experience disruption in their living arrangements, given contracts that were awarded in 2014 would need to be retendered, possibly leading to alternative care arrangements.

[Link](#)

HOUSING/SENIORS

The governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador are investing more than \$6.1 million to support the construction of affordable housing for seniors. The funding is part of the \$48.9 million under Investments in Affordable Housing announced in October 2016. Conditional approvals have been provided to six non-profit groups to develop projects.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/EDUCATION

The province signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Miawpukek First Nation, formalizing a long-standing relationship for sharing resources and supports to complement Miqmaq K-12 curriculum and teaching practices.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The province will launch a Drug Treatment Court pilot project in St. John's in 2018. This court is intended for offenders with serious drug addictions who commit non-violent, drug-motivated offences. It brings together treatment services for substance abuse and the criminal justice system. It uses a problem-solving alternative to traditional criminal justice responses by addressing the underlying problems that contribute to crime.

[Link](#)

New Brunswick

COMMUNITIES

An investment of more than \$1.2 million by the provincial and federal governments has helped launch Enterprise Saint John's Smart and Connected Community Data Strategy. The initiative aims to transform the Saint John regional economy by using large collections of data. The initiative involves strategically placing beacons and sensors throughout the Greater Saint John area to collect real-time data. This information will be analyzed and shared to create smart applications for businesses



and communities interested in becoming more efficient, while helping researchers and innovators resolve social and economic issues.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

The provincial government is investing an additional \$56 million in early childhood and education initiatives as part of the 2017-18 budget, bringing the total budget for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to \$1.2 billion.

Investments this fiscal year include staffing increases, pay equity measures and continued implementation of 10-year education plans. In the addition, the government will:

- double the budget of the Daycare Assistance Program by 2018 to make daycare more affordable. \$3.8 million will be invested in the program this year, bringing the total budget for the program to nearly \$20 million
- release \$2.7 million for enhancements to the Preschool Autism Intervention Program and increase in per-child funding from \$27,500 to almost \$33,000.

[Link](#)

Effective August 1, the government will implement changes to the provincial portion of the Canada Student Loans Program, making many more students eligible for greater levels of financial assistance. Students will only be expected to provide a fixed contribution between \$1,500 and \$3,000 per academic year based on their family income and family size. This effort will also benefit adult learners, many of whom may work while studying or have spouses whose income would have been considered in determining eligibility. In addition, Indigenous students, students with permanent disabilities, students with dependent children, and current or former children in permanent care will be exempt from making any contribution.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/WOMEN

Three First Nations communities in the Miramichi region now have access to community-based resources and services for victims of intimate partner violence with the establishment of an Aboriginal Domestic Violence Outreach Program. The commitment to establish the five-year pilot program was announced in October 2016 and was made possible by the federal Department of Justice's Victims Fund, a five-year funding agreement to provide victims of crime in New Brunswick with increased access to services. The program is also receiving in-kind support from the Miramichi Emergency Shelter for Women.

[Link](#)

POVERTY REDUCTION

The provincial government has released [a report on reducing poverty](#). It outlines action to be taken, including:

- removing barriers to employment.
- improving labour market outcomes
- improving the health and well-being of people living in poverty
- reducing barriers that prevent people from fully participating in their community
- facilitating access to programs and services to improve the quality of life of all New Brunswickers.

[Link](#)

The provincial government is investing \$10 million over five years to create a fund aimed at ending generational poverty in Saint John. The fund represents a strategic partnership between the government and Living SJ to test new initiatives to help end a lifetime of poverty for children.

The new fund complements efforts of reducing poverty in New Brunswick such as:

- increasing the minimum wage
- implementing pay equity across more groups of employees
- expanding the Home Energy Assistance Program
- investing more in education than ever in the province's history
- introducing the free tuition program for publicly funded post-secondary education institutions earmarking a \$7 million per year investment in literacy programming for both children and adults increasing access and affordability for child care
- in partnership with the federal government, investing more than \$56 million in affordable housing and enhancing the Canada Pension Plan.

[Link](#)

SENIORS

The provincial government has released a report on fostering healthy aging and support for seniors. It stems from the stakeholder engagement process to develop the New Brunswick Family Plan. Efforts to foster healthy aging and support for seniors will be undertaken in the following areas:

- focusing on healthy, active aging with particular attention to prevention and wellness within an inclusive, age-friendly community environment
- improving access to home- and community-based support through a coordinated model of care



- providing a responsive and integrated system that is accessible, that identifies and bridges gaps between health and social services, and that is centred on rehabilitation and reablement
- facilitating access to appropriate support and care to enable healthy aging.

[Link](#)

WOMEN

The province has released a report on advancing women's equality. It aims to address inequities that persist in the workforce, including representation in positions of leadership, and challenges affecting the personal, economic and social security of all women. This is to be achieved through initiatives that reinforce access to education and training, financial independence and the right to live free from violence.

[Link](#)

Nova Scotia

No updates this month.

Prince Edward Island

No updates this month.

Québec

CAREGIVING

The province announced a recurring supplementary budget of \$69 million to improve home support services. Of this amount:

- \$60 million will be used to develop care teams
- \$3.5 million will be allocated to purchase equipment
- \$2.5 million will fund a computerized clinical pathway training program and other best practices
- \$3 million will be used for interprofessional (multi-disciplinary) team coordination.

The government is also committed to making wait list information available, setting up interprofessional clinical training units, disseminating a home support reference framework and increasing the availability of equipment needed to support the autonomy of home users. It will also monitor results.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

The *Québec Pension Plan Act* provides that disability pensions are paid to persons under the age of 65 who have a severe and prolonged physical or mental disability and are therefore unable to work. From the age of 65, this disability pension is replaced by a retirement pension. Anyone who has contributed to the Plan may retire early from the age of 60.

However, a person who anticipates retirement before age 65 has to pay a penalty. Under the *Québec Pension Plan Act*, a person who receives a disability pension between the ages of 60 and 65 will be subject to the same penalty from the age of 65.

The provincial human rights commission argues that imposing the same penalty on persons who have received a disability pension violates the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*. The Commission is recommending that section 120.2 of the Act respecting the Québec Pension Plan be repealed.

[Link](#)

MINIMUM WAGE

As of May 1, Québec's general minimum wage rate will be \$11.25 per hour, an increase of \$0.50.

[Link](#)

WOMEN

The Workplace Safety, Health, and Safety Commission released the *Action Plan to Enforce the Employment Standards Act, Pay equity for non-unionized workers*. A commitment by the organization to non-unionized workers, the plan aims to increase their understanding of the rights and obligations under the *Pay Equity Act* and to support their workplaces. The plan is based on three principal actions:

- implementation of effective partnerships to promote the application of the Act to non-unionized workers
- awareness of the concept of pay equity
- support for non-unionized workers and employers.

[Link](#)

YOUTH

As part of its Youth Action Strategy, the province allocated \$630,000 to the *Institut du Nouveau Monde* (INM) in support of two initiatives:

- \$450,000 over three years for the continuation of the CiViQc program. It offers workshops and conferences to train student council members. Some of these funds will be directed toward FabriQ to décliQ, conversation spaces that bring together youth and local decision-makers
- \$180,000 over three years for Citizenship Schools.

[Link](#)

Ontario

CAREGIVING/SENIORS

As part of the 2017 Budget, Ontario is improving access to high-quality care for people living with dementia and their care partners. New supports that are part of Ontario's dementia strategy include:



- increasing access to adult day programs for people with dementia and additional hours of care and transportation to help people travel to their local program location
- enhancing caregiver respite services, both in-home or overnight
- expanding behavioural supports in all long-term care homes and providing similar support at home and in the community
- improving the coordination of care, including building strong partnerships between primary, specialist and community care providers
- continuing to invest in health care providers' education with in-person, educational resources and public awareness
- raising awareness about dementia risk factors and reducing stigma through targeted public awareness campaigns to educate people about dementia and how to maintain a healthy brain.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

By year end, the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) will allow all families to choose between receiving direct service or accepting funding to purchase services for their child. Families currently getting direct funding will continue to receive their funding throughout the transition, and will be able to choose the new OAP direct funding option to obtain services from their preferred provider.

[Link](#)

The province is increasing support for approximately 20,000 students with special education needs across Northern Ontario.

[Link](#)

HEALTH

Ontario will invest an additional \$518 million in public hospitals to provide faster access to health care, expand crucial services and procedures, and improve patient experience.

[Link](#)

Ontario passed *Medical Assistance in Dying Statute Law Amendment Act* to support the implementation of medical assistance in dying by providing more protection and greater clarity for patients, their families, health care providers and health care institutions.

[Link](#)

Ontario is adding to the 294 interprofessional care teams it currently has in place. Serving the needs of 4 million people, these teams can include doctors, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, physician assistants, dietitians, pharmacists, mental health workers, social workers, psychologists, physiotherapists, chiropractors and other professionals. The province is investing \$248.4 million over the next three years to:

- support existing teams, including recruiting new staff and retaining current health care workers
- create new care teams across the province so that every region in Ontario has at least one team.

[Link](#)

Ontario is supporting mothers and babies with new and expanded health care services, including more midwives, enhanced newborn screening and increased supports for vulnerable babies.

[Link](#)

The province is taking steps to help protect women who are seeking reproductive health care. In fall 2017, the province plans to introduce a bill that would, if passed, create "safe access zones" at specified health care facilities that offer women's reproductive services. The zones would help ensure the safety and privacy of women, visitors and health care workers travelling to and from these facilities.

[Link](#)

HOUSING

Ontario is investing more than \$600 million dollars over the next three years in affordable and sustainable housing in Toronto.

The province will contribute \$42.9 million to the City of Toronto for repairs and retrofits to 26 social housing buildings, with all funds committed by March 31, 2017 and repairs to be completed by March 31, 2018. Over the next three years, the city will receive more than \$130 million in additional funding for social housing repairs.

The province is also:

- investing \$340 million over the next three years for homelessness prevention to help Toronto's most vulnerable residents
- investing \$130 million over the next three years to build and expand affordable housing options for people in Toronto
- as part of Ontario's Fair Housing Plan, unlocking provincial land worth up to \$100 million to build new affordable rental units in the city.

[Link](#)

Ontario passed legislation to keep rental housing affordable and predictable by protecting tenants from unfair rent increases. The *Rental Fairness Act, 2017* expands rent control to all private rental units, including those occupied on or after November 1, 1991. Effective April 20, 2017, landlords cannot raise rents more than the rent increase guideline, which is 1.5 percent in 2017. Any rent increase notices above this amount given on or after April 20 must be reduced to 1.5 percent.

[Link](#)



HOUSING/SENIORS

Ontario has introduced legislation to increase housing affordability for people in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and make public transit more affordable for seniors across the province. The *Budget Measures Act (Housing Price Stability and Ontario Seniors' Public Transit Tax Credit)*, 2017 would:

- implement a 15-percent Non-Resident Speculation Tax (NRST) on non-Canadian citizens, non-permanent residents and non-Canadian corporations buying residential properties in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The NRST would address unsustainable demand in the region, while ensuring Ontario continues to be a place that welcomes all new residents
- enact a new Ontario Seniors' Public Transit Tax Credit that would make public transit more affordable for seniors throughout the province. Starting July 1, 2017, the refundable credit would equal 15 percent of a senior's eligible public transit costs.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

Ontario is making changes to keep defined benefit pension plans healthy and sustainable. Employers will continue to be required to ensure pension funds are appropriately funded and to pay into a reserve to protect benefits for workers and retirees. In addition, employers will be required to make additional contributions should the plan's funded status fall below a certain level. Employers will have greater flexibility in managing their pension contributions, allowing them to plan for their pension costs more easily. There will be no impact on the pensions that retirees now receive as a result of these changes.

Along with new funding requirements, additional measures will protect benefit security for plan members and retirees. The monthly guarantee provided by the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund will be increased by 50 percent, from \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month.

[Link](#)

LABOUR MARKET/MINIMUM WAGE

The province released the *Changing Workplaces Review final report*, an independent review that sought recommendations for legislative changes to the province's *Employment Standards Act and Labour Relations Act*. Government response to the report's recommendations is expected within the month.

[Link](#)

Stemming from the government's review of the changing nature of the modern workplace, the province announced the Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs plan, which includes five key elements:

- raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour
- ensuring that part-time workers receive equal pay for equal work
- increasing minimum vacation entitlements. After five years with a company, an employee will be entitled to at least three weeks of paid vacation each year
- establishing fairer rules for scheduling – rules that give greater certainty to workers while maintaining flexibility for employers
- ensuring that more workers – not just those at large companies – have the right to take up to 10 days of personal emergency leave each year, two of them paid.

In addition, the province will modernize the rules around creating a union. That includes the extension of card-based certification to three vulnerable sectors: temporary workers, building services workers and home and community care workers.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The province announced a \$6 million in additional funding for three years to support mental health services and supports at Ontario's colleges and universities. Part of a broader investment in mental health services across the province announced in the 2017 budget, the government will also:

- expand access to existing psychotherapy services while developing a new province-wide publicly funded psychotherapy program to help people living with conditions such as anxiety and depression
- support up to nine integrated youth service hubs to provide young people with walk-in, one-stop access to mental health and addictions services as well as other health, social and employment supports under one roof
- provide free prescription medications for youth 24 years of age and younger through OHIP+: Children and Youth Pharmacare - the first universal drug program of its kind in Canada.

[Link](#)

Ontario passed the *Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2017*, which will increase protection for survivors of human trafficking and make it easier for survivors to pursue compensation. The Act enables people affected by human trafficking (including people who have been trafficked, or are at risk of being trafficked) to apply for a restraining order to protect themselves or their children from traffickers. It also makes it possible for survivors to sue their traffickers for compensation through civil court in order to help survivors restore and rebuild their lives.

[Link](#)



In passing the *Protecting Patients Act*, Ontario has reinforced its zero tolerance policy on the sexual abuse of patients by any regulated health professional and implemented new programs and policies to keep people healthy.

[Link](#)

SOCIAL ECONOMY

Ontario is supporting social enterprises by launching two programs that will help them access capital, training and expertise:

- [ONE Social Enterprise Partnerships](#) is a new initiative designed to help social enterprises access business supports through the [Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs \(ONE\)](#), including regionally-focused training, mentorship and business fundamentals to start and grow their businesses
- the second round of the [Social Enterprise Demonstration Fund](#), which will provide funding to not-for-profit organizations with expertise in supporting social enterprises. These organizations will use the funding to support financially sustainable and scalable social enterprises. The fund will address key challenges faced by social enterprises, such as access to capital and the resources they need to get their ventures off the ground.

[Link](#)

Manitoba

HOMELESSNESS

The Governments of Canada and Manitoba have launched a two-year pilot project to help people who are at risk of becoming homeless find stable and safe housing. The Housing First Rent Supplement program will provide up to \$250 per month in a rental subsidy for at least 48 vulnerable families and individuals in Brandon who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. More than \$307,000 will be invested in this initiative over the next two years through the federal-provincial Investment in Affordable Housing agreement. The program will be delivered by the Manitoba Metis Federation Southwest Region Inc. It will select eligible recipients, connect them with community supports and move toward greater independence.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The government has awarded a contract to Virgo Planning and Evaluation Incorporated to assist the province in developing a provincial mental health and addictions strategy. Virgo Planning and Evaluation Inc. is expected to design an evidence-based mental health and addictions strategic plan focused on improving access to services and the coordination of resources. The strategy will look across the lifespan, looking at the needs of children, youth and adults for both mental health and addictions services.

[Link](#)

Saskatchewan

HEALTH/WOMEN

Women who struggle with postpartum depression and anxiety, or feelings of loss following a miscarriage, stillbirth or death of a newborn, now have easier access to help. Women are referred to the Maternal Wellness Program by public health nurses, who screen them for depression and anxiety at the postnatal visit.

[Link](#)

Alberta

CHILDREN

Proposed legislation would improve transparency and accountability by ensuring every death in the child-intervention system is investigated by the Child and Youth Advocate.

[Link](#)

COMMUNITIES/LITERACY

Budget 2017 is providing \$50 million this year to improve access and services at libraries. The decision strengthens support for rural library services by increasing funding for regional library systems boards and maintaining funding for rural Internet connectivity.

[Link](#)

EMPLOYMENT

The Alberta government is investing \$10 million over the next two years to support 11 new Integrated Training programs. This investment will help an estimated 1,100 unemployed or underemployed Albertans to update their skills.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

As part of its commitment to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Government of Alberta has established a Family Information Liaison Unit with \$1.5 million in funding from the federal government. The unit is intended to be a single point of contact where experienced front-line staff can provide families with information about the justice system and legal processes as well as specific updates about criminal investigations, court proceedings or fatality inquiries involving their loved ones. The team can also link families with Elders, spiritual support and counselling.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/LABOUR MARKET

The Alberta government is funding a pre-apprenticeship program to help Indigenous people pursue careers in the construction trades. A grant of \$500,000 will go toward the Trade Winds to Success Training Society's 16-week pre-apprenticeship program. It offers classroom and hands-on instruction to students pursuing careers as carpenters, electricians, ironworkers, millwrights, plumbers, steam/pipefitters, welders or insulators.



The program also incorporates Indigenous cultural practices, such as Elder mentorship and a daily smudge ceremony.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

If passed, the *Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017* would change the way rebates are paid to Albertans so that families are no longer asked to repay amounts if a death in the household changes their eligibility for the program. If the legislation is passed, the government will make similar changes to the Alberta Child Benefit and the Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit (AFETC) programs so that families do not have to pay back benefits as a result of a death in the household. The government will also waive the recovery of the carbon levy rebate, Alberta Child Benefit and AFETC payments received between January 1 and June 30, 2017 for households whose eligibility changed due to a death.

[Link](#)

LABOUR MARKET

Proposed amendments to Alberta's Employment Standards Code and Labour Relations Code would support family-friendly workplaces and bring Alberta's standards into alignment with the rest of Canada. The *Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act* would adjust policies that include maternity, paternity and compassion care leave.

[Link](#)

LITERACY

The province is increasing funding by \$900,000 to a total of more than \$18 million for the Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) to support the delivery of adult foundational learning opportunities in communities across Alberta. Through CALP, more than 125 organizations deliver adult learning opportunities in 600 communities province-wide.

[Link](#)

British Columbia

No updates this month.

Yukon Territory

No updates this month.

Northwest Territories

HEALTH/INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Health Canada recently announced that expecting mothers covered by the Federal Non-Insured Health Benefits program who have to travel outside of their home community to give birth will be supported by one non-medical escort. In response, the Department of Health and Social Services will extend this benefit to residents eligible under the Métis Health Benefits Policy and to non-Indigenous mothers.

[Link](#)

Nunavut

No updates this month.