



Canada Social Report
Provincial/Territorial
Policy Monitor

June 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 of June 1, 2017, families will benefit from an increased income threshold under the provincial Child Care Subsidy Program. The threshold is being adjusted for the first time since 2007, rising from \$27,500 to \$32,000. More families will be eligible for a full Child Care Subsidy, others will see a reduction in their parental contribution and some families that were previously ineligible will now receive a partial subsidy.

[Link](#)

HEALTH

The province released a Chronic Disease Action Plan that focuses on prevention, self-management, treatment and care. Initiatives include:

- launching the BETTER program to provide one-on-one lifestyle coaching
- expanding the HealthLine to include the services of registered dietitians
- expanding Remote Patient Monitoring programs
- increasing the use of Telehealth in community-based offices and clinics
- launching a new Chronic Disease Registry.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The provincial government released a five-year mental health and addictions plan. It sets out short-, medium- and long-term goals to ensure implementation of 54 recommendations contained in *Towards Recovery: A Vision for a Renewed Mental Health and Addictions System for Newfoundland and Labrador*.

Plan [Link](#)

Release [Link](#)

MINIMUM WAGE

The minimum wage was raised by 25 cents to \$10.75 on April 1, 2017, with an additional increase of 25 cents to \$11 to take effect on October 1, 2017. These increases will bring Newfoundland and Labrador's minimum wage rate in line with other Atlantic Provinces.

[Link](#)

New Brunswick

DISABILITY

The province released a report on providing support for people with disabilities. Based on stakeholder feedback from a Family Plan summit in March, it recognizes that people with disabilities experience disadvantages in the areas of education, training and employment.

[Link](#)



HEALTH

The provincial government and the New Brunswick Medical Society have established a new model for family medicine meant to provide patients with enhanced access to family physicians. Known as Family Medicine New Brunswick, the model is a team-based approach. Physicians will have their own rosters of patients, but will also provide a service to all patients of doctors on their team. This model is intended to improve access to physicians, including during evening and weekend hours.

[Link](#)

SENIORS

The Seniors Health, Well-Being and Home Safety Review will be available in all regions of the province in the coming months. The 90-minute review is done by a trained individual who has met the Department of Social Development's criteria. During the review, seniors learn about programs in their community that can help them in their daily lives. It is voluntary, and interested people ages 65 and over may wish to have a relative or friend present during the home visit.

[Link](#)

Nova Scotia

No updates this month.

Prince Edward Island

No updates this month.

Québec

CHILDREN

The province announced a \$40 million child care subsidy. Following the adoption of the 2017-2018 budgetary rules for subsidized child care services, these services will be able to prepare more children for successful entry into school. Funding allocations include:

- \$9 million to improve direct service scales to improve service quality (staff training and purchase of educational and recreational materials)
- \$4 million to support actions to facilitate the transition of 4-year-olds to school
- \$2 million to assess and improve the quality of child care
- \$1 million to strengthen the quality of home child care
- \$2.3 million to index non-salary expenditures to reflect the cost of living
- \$10 million to improve the preparation time for complete and nutritious meals.

To make educational child care more accessible to children with special needs:

- changes in the funding of child care services with specific clientele to avoid being affected by a potentially lower attendance rate
- \$9 million to support the integration of children with disabilities
- \$3 million in the grant to improve interventions for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

[Link](#)

DISABILITY

The *Office des personnes handicapées du Québec* released four reports detailing the effectiveness of provincial legislation to reduce barriers to social participation for persons with disabilities. The reports conclude that many barriers have been addressed since the policy's implementation in 2012, but that more remains to be done. The four reports make 67 recommendations for action to be taken over the next two years, including:

- intensifying the development of hybrid residential housing models in order to reduce the number of people with disabilities under the age of 65 in residential and long-term care centres
- improving access to public transport, developing adapted transportation services and improving driver training
- strengthening accessibility requirements for all new buildings as well as access to existing buildings where services are provided to the public
- reducing the gap between the needs and services provided in the home for all eligible persons with disabilities regardless of age, disability and place of residence
- making government documents, websites and services more accessible to people with disabilities.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

Up to 100 new full-time, 4-year-old kindergarten classes will be opened in September 2017 for children living in disadvantaged areas. This will bring the total for such classes to 288. The province will also be adjusting the curriculum to 4- and 5-year-olds to include letter recognition activities.

[Link](#)

POVERTY REDUCTION

The province will spend \$4.1 million from the *Fonds québécois d'initiatives sociales* to offer six-month extensions to regional and local anti-poverty and social exclusion projects currently underway.

[Link](#)

WOMEN

The province introduced the "Strategy for equality between women and men." Designed to have achieved parity by 2021, the government



pledged \$80 million over five years in order to:

- mobilize women and men so that together they can advance equality among themselves, in all circles and in all regions
- reduce persistent and worrying inequalities between women and men
- act with all women, especially with immigrant, elderly women, women with disabilities and those living in poverty.

Developed by the Women’s Secretariat, in collaboration with 20 government departments and agencies, the strategy lists 59 new or improved actions, including:

- the introduction of a framework law to ensure that equality between women and men is at the heart of governmental concerns and priorities
- support for activities aimed at the mobilization and participation of men as allies in achieving gender equality
- the creation of a Québec equality index to monitor trends and support decision-making within the government of Québec.

[Link](#)

YOUTH

The province’s Youth Secretariat will provide \$300,000 over three years to the *Regroupement des jeunes chambers de commerce du Québec* for the Regional Caravan of Entrepreneurship tour. The tour takes place over four weekends during which young entrepreneurs present and launch a start-up project with support from a team of business specialists. The tour is part of the province’s 2016-21 Youth Action Strategy.

[Link](#)

Ontario

Children

The Ontario government announced that it is investing \$1.6 billion to build 45,000 new licensed child care spaces. It will focus on schools in 2017 and expand to other public spaces and communities across Ontario over the next five years. The province also released its [Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework and Expansion Plan](#).

[Link](#)

The province announced details of the new Ontario Autism Program. It will ensure consistent service delivery and allow for flexibility and choice based on each child’s needs. Key components include a single point of access, family-centred decision making and a direct funding option.

[Link](#)

CHILDREN/YOUTH

The federal government and the Ontario government [reached a bilateral agreement that reaffirms their commitment to children’s development](#)

[and future well-being and supports the unique early learning and child care needs of Ontario](#). The three-year bilateral agreement will allocate \$435 million for Ontario investments towards increasing the accessibility and affordability of high-quality licensed child care and quality early learning opportunities.

[Link](#)

The province passed the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, making changes to how Ontario provides services to children and youth in need of protection. It puts young people at the centre of decisions about their care; supports more accountable, responsive and accessible child and youth services; and strengthens oversight for children’s aid societies and licensed residential services.

[Link](#)

COMMUNITIES

The province passed the *Anti-Racism Act, 2017*. The legislation:

- establishes the Anti-Racism Directorate in legislation to ensure its sustainability
- requires the continuation and regular review of a multi-year anti-racism strategy, ensuring the sustainability and accountability of the government’s anti-racism work
- mandates a review of the anti-racism strategy at least every five years, in consultation with the public and community partners
- enables the government to implement race data collection and an anti-racism impact assessment tool, to help identify, remedy or prevent inequitable racial impacts of policies and programs.

[Link](#)

Ontario announced a new grant program the Multicultural Community Capacity Grant Program. This initiative will support community projects that advance diversity and reduce barriers to inclusion, while providing opportunities for newcomers and ethno-cultural communities to participate fully in the civic, cultural, social and economic life of Ontario.

[Link](#)

DISABILITY

Ontario launched a new strategy to connect more people with disabilities to rewarding jobs and more employers to new talent to help grow their businesses. [Access Talent: Ontario’s Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities](#) will help increase employment for people with disabilities and connect businesses to talent by:

- supporting the development and employment goals of students and young people, including the launch of a new pilot through the Ontario Disability Support Program to provide individualized and coordinated services and supports



- engaging employers as partners and champions through an online platform that will connect businesses, people with disabilities, and the public to share advice and lessons learned
- streamlining employment and training services to better meet the needs of job seekers and employers through the introduction of a new Supported Employment program at Employment Ontario
- establishing the government as an accessibility leader by raising awareness and changing attitudes through public education.

[Link](#)

The province announced new supports and resources for adults with developmental disabilities, including:

- hiring more Developmental Services Ontario staff, who help people with developmental disabilities find services and supports in their community
- expanding the Adult Protective Service Worker program which matches adults who have a developmental disability and live on their own with a worker. The worker helps the individual with their everyday living needs, access community resources, and set and achieve goals
- increasing access to clinical professionals and specialized services at home and in the community for people with an exceptional dual diagnosis or complex behavioural and medical needs
- partnering with the Ontario Disability Employment Network to better coordinate work experience services and increase capacity across developmental service agencies, Employment Supports service providers, school boards and employers.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

Ontario is partnering with eCampusOntario to develop and provide free and low-cost digital textbooks to students. The Ontario Open Textbooks Initiative will focus on Ontario-specific content in areas where the most significant impact and cost savings for students can be realized, including high-enrollment first-year courses, French language content, content for Indigenous studies, trades and technical skills content, and content for new Canadians.

[Link](#)

The province announced a new education plan to support rural and Northern students and communities. Specific initiatives include:

- overhauling the process that school boards use to review schools for potential closure
- providing a new Rural and Northern Education Fund to offer students programming, such as French immersion, arts education and guidance

counselling

- supporting cooperation between school board, including planning and building joint-use schools
- continuing to invest in broadband speed, special education supports and experiential learning opportunities for rural and Northern students.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

The province is implementing a new framework for targeted benefit multi-employer pension plans that will help ensure these plans are sustainable over the long term. The new framework will replace the time-limited funding regulations currently in place for specified Ontario multi-employer pension plans.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The governments of the Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation, Canada and Ontario announced the final settlement of a flooding dispute that has been outstanding for more than 145 years. The negotiated settlement grants the First Nation with \$77 million in financial compensation to resolve the claim and provides for a flooding easement.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/EDUCATION

Ontario is providing more support for Aboriginal Institutes to help them expand their capacity as a distinct and complementary pillar of Ontario's postsecondary education system. Aboriginal Institutes partner with colleges and universities to offer degree programs, apprenticeship programs, certificate programs and diplomas in culturally appropriate and safe learning environments.

Many Indigenous students face unique financial and other barriers to postsecondary education and training. Ontario is working with Indigenous partners to implement an Indigenous Education Strategy to increase Indigenous peoples' access, participation and success in postsecondary education and training.

[Link](#)

LABOUR MARKET

Ontario will supply free reading, writing, math and digital skills training to an additional 80,000 adult learners over four years. This \$185 million commitment doubles the province's current investment in essential skills training. Fifteen percent of working-age adults in Ontario have difficulty understanding calculations, reading instructions or working with a computer. This new investment will help more people get the training and skills they need to pursue employment and educational goals in a changing economy.

[Link](#)



MENTAL HEALTH

Ontario is increasing its efforts to deal with the national opioid crisis by adding new front-line addiction and mental health workers in every community in the province and distributing 80,000 additional naloxone kits per year to front-line organizations.

[Link](#)

Manitoba

HEALTH

The Manitoba government is acting on the findings of studies of the province's health care system and will establish a provincial health organization to improve patient care and provide coordinated clinical and business support to the province's regional health authorities. To be named Shared Health Services Manitoba, the new agency's goals will be to streamline the province's health care system and develop a first-ever provincial clinical and preventive services plan.

[Link](#)

Saskatchewan

MINIMUM WAGE

The minimum wage in Saskatchewan will increase to \$10.96 an hour, from \$10.72 an hour, on October 1, 2017. There are approximately 49,900 minimum wage and low-wage earners in the province. The majority are women (62 percent in 2016) and youth ages 15-19 (35 percent). Nearly 70 percent of low-wage earners work in retail or accommodation and food services.

[Link](#)

Alberta

DEMOGRAPHICS

The province has developed a comprehensive French Policy aimed at improving government supports in French for its diverse and fast-growing French-speaking population.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

The province is eliminating instructional and bus charges for tens of thousands of students and requiring approval for other increases. The new School Fees and Costs Regulation and the School Transportation Regulation remove the ability of school boards to charge for textbooks, workbooks, printing, photocopying and paper as well as bus fees for students living 2.4 kilometres or more from their designated school. Busing fees have also been eliminated for special needs students and kindergarten students travelling home over the noon hour. Students who live 2.4 kilometres or more from their designated school and take municipal transit will pay only the difference between provincial transportation funding and the cost of a municipal transit pass.

In addition, ministerial approval is now required for fees increasing by more than five percent year-over-year.

[Link](#)

GOVERNANCE

Non-profit groups have been provided greater access to provincial funding to improve service delivery through an expanded and streamlined Community Grants programs. The [Enhanced Capacity Advancement Program](#) has been expanded to provide up to \$225,000 per year for three years to assist organizations with a primary mandate to build nonprofit sector capacity and strengthen volunteerism. Nonprofits may also be eligible for funding to improve their sustainability.

[Link](#)

HOMELESSNESS

The government is investing \$750,000 to improve health outcomes for Calgary's most vulnerable population. The funding will go to the Calgary Recovery Services Task Force over three years to improve coordination between agencies and help individuals get quicker access to a range of health supports, including mental health and substance use treatment. The task force is a collaboration of 26 representatives from homeless-serving agencies, government and community partners.

[Link](#)

HOUSING

Alberta announced a new Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy to assist more than 110,000 Albertans live in government-supported affordable housing. Developed with input from 1,800 tenants and housing providers, it is based on three principles:

- piloting mixed-income models that allow tenants to pay an adjusted rent should their incomes increase (previously, tenants were evicted if their incomes rose above a set amount)
- increasing the asset limit for tenants in affordable housing from \$7,000 to \$25,000
- giving graduates of Housing First, a program that helps those facing homelessness, more opportunities to move into permanent housing.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/LABOUR MARKET

There are 48 First Nations and eight Metis Settlements in Alberta. As part of the government's Climate Leadership Plan, seven new programs are being launched to help these communities invest in local renewable projects, energy-efficiency audits and training for jobs in a low-carbon economy. The initiatives were developed to meet the needs of Indigenous communities and to support the priorities of the Climate Leadership Plan: reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating jobs, diversifying the economy and increasing community health and well-being.

[Link](#)



MENTAL HEALTH

The province is investing \$25.8 million over three years to improve mental health resources for post-secondary students.

[Link](#)

British Columbia

No updates this month.

Yukon Territory

DEMOGRAPHICS

Amendments to the *Human Rights Act and the Vital Statistics Act* were granted assent after they were passed by the Yukon Legislative Assembly. Amendments to the *Human Rights Act* make it illegal to discriminate against a person on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression.

[Link](#)

Northwest Territories

DISABILITY

The territorial government has begun a disability review to document existing resources and to identify program and service gaps, and opportunities for improvement. Based on the results of the review, it will develop a strategic framework and a five-year action plan. As a first step, it will publish an updated inventory of existing GNWT programs and services.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

The Northwest Territories Child Benefit will be increased to provide additional financial support to more low- to modest-income families with children. The income threshold to receive the benefit will be increased to \$80,000, offering greater financial support to more than 2,200 families. A family with three children under 6 whose annual income is \$45,000 would have received \$136.05 per year before the changes. With the enhanced benefit, that same family will now receive \$1,397.90, an increase of \$1,261.85.

The enhanced Northwest Territories Child Benefit will continue to be non-taxable, and will not be counted as income in the calculation of income assistance benefits. The improved NWT Child Benefit will take effect in July.

[Link](#)

Nunavut

INCOME SECURITY

A first phase of reforms to the Income Assistance Program will come into effect on July 1, 2017.

The benefits affected by these improvements include:

- Liquid Asset Exemption: allows clients to save some money and still qualify for income assistance
- Earned Income Exemption: clients will be able to earn more money – e.g., through part-time employment, and continue to qualify for income assistance benefits
- Disabilities Allowance: eligible clients living with disabilities will receive an increase to their disability allowance.

[Link](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The Government of Nunavut, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the Royal Canadian Mounted Police “V Division” and Isaksimagit Inuusirmi Katujjiqatigiit Embrace Life Council jointly released Inuusivut Anninaqtuq, a five-year Nunavut Suicide Prevention Strategy Action Plan.

The plan defines commitments, outcomes and actions for 2017-2022. Program funding for suicide prevention initiatives was also announced to further build on community-led action and priorities.

In support of Inuusivut Anninaqtuq, Facebook announced the integration of Health Canada’s national toll-free First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line into its online wellness hub and suicide prevention strategy.

[Link](#)