

PEI Budget 2018-19: How Does It Measure Up?

The Prince Edward Island government released its 2018-19 budget on April 6, 2018. Though CUPE members have cause to celebrate in some respects, the budget falls short of the recommendations CUPE PEI submitted in February 2018. To read the submission in its entirety, head to <https://bit.ly/2Ho2V0X>.

Increase Support for Newcomers

Recommendation #1: Increase investments in Education, Healthcare and Emergency Services to hire additional workers and provide training.



Partially met

Building on last year's investment of \$2.8 million for 45 new teaching positions and 38 new education assistants, this year's budget commits 25 new frontline positions to support students in the classroom, including education assistants and English as an Additional Language teacher supports, as well as 32 new education assistant positions to support students with special needs. There are no increased supports for health and emergency services workers.

Labour Law Reform

Recommendation #2: Undertake a thorough review of PEI's *Employment Standards Act* and *Labour Act*



Not met

Recommendation #3: Increase minimum wage to \$15/hour.



Not met

There is currently a growing movement across several Canadian provinces to push back against precarious work that maintains workers in poverty, and to increase minimum wage to \$15/hour. The government of PEI decided to steer clear of these progressive measures that could have helped minimum wage workers make ends meet, as well as strengthened unionized workers' rights through a *Labour Act* reform.

Long-Term Care/Healthcare

Recommendation #4: Increase funding for additional long-term care beds and acute care beds in the public sector to alleviate pressure in healthcare.



Partially met

The government proudly announced 100 new long-term care beds. However, when reading the fine print, there are many issues with this announcement. The new beds are spread out over two years; 50 the first year, and 50 the second year. This means that there are only 50 guaranteed beds, given that 2018 is a provincial election year. In addition, these beds are reserved for private long-term care facility. The government is maintaining a defective policy of subsidizing private sector beds, instead of creating new ones.

Recommendation #5: Increase staffing levels accordingly



Not met

Pharmacare

Recommendation #6: Invest in Health PEI's Pharmacare program to cover Islanders' entire prescription medication costs.



Partially met

The 2018-19 budget calls for additional support to this program, by adding new drugs to the formulary and adding \$1 million to the Hepatitis C program. Though improving the program is important, it is still a long way off from universal Pharmacare for all Islanders.

Seniors

Recommendation #7: Commit additional funding for senior housing units to supplement the federal grant and ensure equity in the number of new units across the province.



Partially met

Like the long-term care beds announcement, the government announced a commitment over two years of \$17 million to build and sustain affordable housing

supply, provide rent supports and reduce chronic homelessness. However, this only means \$8.5 million for 2018-19. The government also announced the construction of 50 new housing units through federal funding, but the units are not earmarked for seniors.

Childcare

Recommendation #8: Invest in a universal system of public and not-for-profit child care, allowing free daycare for low-income families and an affordable daily cost of \$10 a day per child for all other families.



Partially met

Though the government still has not committed to universal child care for low-income families and a low daily cost for other families, they have recognized that there are barriers to accessing child care. They are creating 400 new child care spaces and increasing subsidies by \$1.2 million.

Recommendation #9: Provide decent work for child care workers by improving wages, benefits and working conditions.



Partially met

The Budget 2018-19 promises increase in wages grid for early years centres as of July 1, 2018. They also commit to a review process later in the year.

For more information about PEI's 2018-19 budget, visit:

- Budget highlights: <https://bit.ly/2EAEI9Z>
- Budget address: <https://bit.ly/2Hnopus>
- Budget estimates of revenue and expenditures: <https://bit.ly/2qmxmMz>

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