

## Alberta Budget 2015-2018

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### Executive Summary

The Government of Alberta released its budget for the period of 2015-2018 on October 2015. The new budget primarily focuses on the labour market, with an increase of about 43% in the funding of the Ministry of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour (JSTL).<sup>i</sup> Additionally, support for the non-profit sector, through the ministries of Human Services and Culture and Tourism have also been prioritized. However, there is no explicit mention of settlement programming and services in the Alberta budget. This brief will examine the settlement and integration policy promises made during the provincial election by exploring gaps in the budget and key areas such as employment and community supports.

### Employment

JSTL has listed several priorities in its 2015-2018 Business Plan which are expected to positively impact the settlement sector. JSTL seeks to improve the participation of underrepresented groups in Alberta's labour market, utilize targeted attraction and retention strategies, and finally, fortify the recognition of credentials obtained outside the province. To evaluate success in attracting and retaining newcomers, JSTL will measure the amount of principal economic applicants that select Alberta as their destination. Additionally, they will track how many nominees from the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) choose to live and work in Alberta one year after obtaining Permanent Resident status.<sup>ii</sup>

The Workforce Strategies line of the JSTL budget, which includes settlement, integration and labour market services and programs, will increase by 45%.<sup>iii</sup> In the following years, from 2016 – 2018, the budget will see a gradual increase each year at 18% and 6%.<sup>iv</sup> While the JSTL Business Plan did not indicate which specific programs will see the increase, the budget expansion will be welcomed by the settlement and integration sector.

### Community Supports

The Human Services Ministry was one of the top four ministries to receive the largest share of the budget,<sup>v</sup> highlighting the provincial objective of strengthening community-government collaboration to improve quality of life in Alberta. This is showcased through the fulfillment of the election promise of increasing the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) budget by \$25 million,<sup>vi</sup> which is a 32% increase from the previous year.<sup>vii</sup> Additionally, Employment and Income Support in this Ministry also received a slight increase by 6% this year, which is accompanied by the priority of supporting vulnerable populations, including immigrants, in finding and maintaining employment.<sup>viii</sup>

Childcare is also under the purview of Human Services.<sup>ix</sup> The election policy promise of investing in childcare<sup>x</sup> has been met, with \$279 million allocated for 2015-16 to increase the quality, quantity and affordability of these services.<sup>xi</sup> Newcomers are expected to benefit from this budget, as economical and accessible childcare will promote language development for both parents, as they are able to attend training,<sup>xii</sup> and children, who will be exposed to an English-speaking environment.

While Human Services is a key ministry involved in settlement and integration, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism also seeks to partner with the non-profit sector to reinforce the sector's capacity and community initiatives. The Ministry will measure this outcome by tracking application of learnings from facilitation service offerings, such as the [Board Development](#) and [Community Development](#) programs. While the Community and Volunteer Support Services line is expected to decrease by 7% this year, there will be an increase by 34% the following year.<sup>xiii</sup>

This Ministry also oversees the Francophone Secretariat. This line will see steady funding at \$1.3 million for each year during 2016-2018. However, the Ministry outlined the priority initiative of implementing the "2013-18 Canada-Alberta Agreement on French Language Services Action Plan".<sup>xiv</sup> While the Plan has not been made available to the public, this shows potential benefit to Francophone newcomer serving agencies.

## For Further Inquiry

There are several areas which the budget did not explicitly address; namely language training, mental health and the Canada-Alberta Intergrated Services Program (ISP). All are key components to the successful integration of newcomers, with the ISP coordinating federal-provincial government efforts in supporting immigrant serving agencies.<sup>xv</sup> Consequently, the settlement and integration sector will benefit from further exploration in these areas.

### *Language Training*

Despite election promises of increasing hours of funded English language training to women, children and seniors,<sup>xvi</sup> the budget made no mention of ESL/ELL. Since the provincial government seeks to collaborate with the federal government on this issue, it could be the case that this promise is delivered in the new fiscal year.

### *Mental Health*

While \$10 million is budgeted each year from 2016-2018 for mental health,<sup>xvii</sup> it remains unclear as to whether this funding will be available to or benefit the refugee and newcomer population.

### *ISP*

No mention of the Canada-Alberta Intergrated Services Program (ISP) in the budget. Perhaps the settlement sector will receive an update on this program through the federal government.

## Conclusion

While there are no specific references to settlement programming in the 2015-2018 provincial budget, funding has been increased in JSTL and Human Services, two ministries which work closely with the settlement sector. While the funding varies within the lines of Culture and Tourism, the outlook is also positive for the Francophone immigrant serving agencies and agencies who wish to build their capacity at the organizational level. Additionally, the budgets and business plans of Human Services and Culture and Tourism indicate a willingness of the provincial government to collaborate with and strengthen the non-profit sector. Further analysis should be conducted once the new provincial and federal budgets are developed next year.

## References

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- <sup>i</sup> Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations. "CCVO's Alberta Budget Analysis 2015-16". November 2015. <http://www.calgarycvo.org/sample-budget-table/>.
- <sup>ii</sup> Canada. Alberta. Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance. *Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour Business Plan 2015-18*. 2015. <http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/budget2015-october/jobs-skills-training-and-labour.pdf>.
- <sup>iii</sup> Alberta. *Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour Business Plan 2015-18*.
- <sup>iv</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>v</sup> Alberta, *Budget 2015*.
- <sup>vi</sup> Hemstock, Caroline. "2015 Alberta Election." *Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies*, April 2015. <http://aaisa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/AAISA-Research-Bulletin-AB-Elections-20152.pdf>.
- <sup>vii</sup> Canada. Alberta. Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance. *Human Services Business Plan 2015-18*. 2015. <http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/budget2015-october/human-services.pdf>.
- <sup>viii</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>ix</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>x</sup> Hemstock, "2015 Alberta Election."
- <sup>xi</sup> Alberta, *Budget 2015*.
- <sup>xii</sup> Moorthi, Gayatri. *Alberta Integration Summit Report*. Calgary: Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies, 2014. <http://aaisa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Alberta-Provincial-Summit-English-Report-SrtV5-FINALRG.compressed.pdf>.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Canada. Alberta. Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance. *Culture and Tourism Business Plan 2015-18*. 2015. <http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/budget2015-october/culture-and-tourism.pdf>.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xv</sup> Canada. Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Evaluation of the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) Appendix C: Alternative delivery models*. 2011. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/English/resources/evaluation/isap/2011/appendixC.asp>.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Hemstock, "2015 Alberta Election."
- <sup>xvii</sup> Alberta, *Budget 2015*.