

FPT Ministerial Report

Date: September 5, 2019

Title: Meeting of Forum of Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers Responsible for Social Services (MRSS) Meeting, April 23-24, 2019

Originating Department(s): Family Services

Participants: Ministers and/or their delegates from all provinces and territories, except Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador, were in attendance.¹ The federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Minister Duclos), and the federal Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility (Minister Qualtrough) were in attendance on April 23 and on April 24 respectively.

The Nunavut delegation included the Minister of Family Services, the Deputy Minister, and a Senior Policy Analyst.

Items of Discussion & Nunavut Position(s):

Poverty Reduction

PT Ministers met prior to the FPT meeting to discuss the federal Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), the Market Basket Measure (MBM), and food security. PT Ministers provided updates on poverty reduction initiatives in their respective jurisdictions.

The Minister of Family Services spoke about the Government of Nunavut's approach to poverty reduction, including the Roundtable on Poverty Reduction and *Makimaniq II, a Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction*. The Minister spoke about the income assistance reforms the department has undertaken to strengthen incentives to work and increase support for singles.

Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy

During the FPT Meeting, Minister Duclos provided an overview of PRS and highlighted the co-ordination and consultation process with PTs, Indigenous organizations and experts. Minister Duclos provided an update on the recent commitment in Budget 2019 to pass legislation that would entrench Canada's Official Poverty Line and the National Advisory Council on Poverty into law.

PT Ministers outlined their comments and concerns to the Federal Minister, which included:

- Concerns about whether PRS will create direct economic and social outcomes,
- The MBM is an imperfect measure of poverty. It needs to include additional elements to measure the effectiveness of the PRS. The importance of including the territories in the MBM was highlighted. Minister Duclos acknowledged that the MBM needs to be improved; and

¹ Prince Edward Island delegates participated via teleconference

- Federal measures such as tax credits and employment insurance need to be more widely accessible.

Ministers agreed to direct the FPT Poverty Advisory Committee (PAC) to continue making progress on its current work plan and sharing information and best practices.

National School Food Program

Minister Duclos provided an overview of the National School Food Program, a new federal initiative announced in Budget 2019.

Ministers identified and discussed potential implementation challenges with the federal including:

- Food and schools are not under the mandate of most PT Social Services Departments. Internal coordination with other departments (such as Education) would be required;
- Program design must address geographical issues, like the remoteness of communities in the North;
- Freshness of food is a key element in order to contribute to children's health; and
- The program requires a coordinated effort among jurisdictions and should consider existing community-based initiatives and encourage the participation of other stakeholders.

Ministers agreed that federal officials will engage with PT officials, including those from departments of Education, to identify existing initiatives and to determine how to implement the new program.

Homelessness

Minister Duclos provided an update on "*Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy*," launched on April 1, 2019. Reaching Home is part of Canada's National Housing Strategy, designed to support vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable and affordable housing. The federal government plans to work with communities to develop and deliver data-driven decision making at the local level, and give communities greater flexibility to address local priorities.

Minister Duclos invited PT Ministers to provide guidance on the implementation of the new strategy, and explore opportunities for strengthening coordination on homelessness programming. PT Ministers² expressed support for the strategy, but indicated the need to look at regional challenges and ensure an effective implementation of the strategy.

FPT Data-Sharing

PT Ministers met prior to the FPT meeting to discuss the importance of FPT data sharing. Ministers from the territories highlighted their capacity issues, which has influenced the gathering of data.

² Excluding Quebec, which is negotiating a separate Canada-Quebec agreement

At the FPT meeting, PT Ministers raised the issue of the need to access federal data (records of employment, child benefits etc.). It was also noted that there are legal and privacy issues related to the exchange of information amongst FPT jurisdictions. Minister Duclos highlighted the federal government's openness to work with PTs on data exchanges and to address the legal or confidentiality challenges.

Ministers agreed to direct the FPT Social Development Research and Information Committee (SDRI) to examine current data sharing processes and identify potential areas for improvement.

Social Innovation/Social Finance

Prior to the FPT Meeting, PT Ministers met to discuss the Social Finance Fund and its Investment and Readiness Stream. PT Ministers agreed that they required more information from the federal government.

At the FPT Meeting, Minister Duclos provided an update on the establishment of the Fund and its Investment and Readiness Stream. The initiative is intended to help charitable, non-profit and other social purpose organizations access new financing, and help connect them with private investors looking to invest in projects driving positive social and environmental change.

PT Ministers welcomed this initiative while recognizing that jurisdictions may understand and approach this issue differently. PT Ministers also noted that leveraging resources with the private sector is key; likewise, private investments (e.g. from local organizations) should be encouraged in a model that ensures returns of investments.

PT Ministers requested further clarification on how the funding will be allocated and how it may be accessed by PTs.

Ministers agreed to direct the Social Innovation Working Group to pursue further collaboration with PTs, to identify investment-ready projects that could potentially be funded, and to look at tools to measure impacts.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

PT Ministers met prior to the FPT meeting and agreed that more information is required from the federal government regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

At the FPT meeting, Minister Duclos provided an overview of the topic. In 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There are 17 sustainable development goals covering a number of social, environmental and economic development issues. Minister Duclos invited PTs to work together to identify opportunities to support Canada's commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda and to advance key social development issues.

PT Ministers inquired about what specific types of engagement are being proposed by the federal government. PT Ministers suggested that community-based initiatives and the participation of the private sector should be considered.

Ministers agreed to direct officials to explore, within the Social Services Forum, opportunities that may support Canada's commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda.

Accessibility and Disability Supports

PT ministers met prior to the FPT meeting and discussed the work of the Open Forum on Accessibility. Ministers approved the recommendation that the Open Forum continue to operate as an informal committee within the MRSS Forum via the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (PwDAC).

At the FPT Meeting, Minister Qualtrough provided an update on Bill C-81, the proposed *Accessible Canada Act: An Act to Ensure a Barrier-Free Canada*, and discussed the creation of the Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization (CASDO). CASDO will provide opportunities for FPT collaboration on accessibility, create seamless experiences for person with disabilities, and will help avoid duplication of services.

Minister Qaultrough also provided an update on federal disability initiatives and supports, including recent commitments from Budget 2019, the recent visit of the UN Special Rapporteur, the upcoming Disability Summit in May 2019, and the upcoming conference on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in June 2019.

PT Ministers presented a slide deck to Minister Qualtrough highlighting the challenges in supporting persons with disabilities as well as noting the advances in accessibility from various PT jurisdictions.

Ministers discussed the importance of creating employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, the need to better transition those with autism to the workforce, the need to simplify the disability tax credit to make it less onerous to apply and qualify for, and the need to increase the number of individuals applying for a Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP).

Ministers agreed to discuss common priorities and potential areas for collaboration at their next meeting, after the PT DM's thematic meeting on disability in fall 2019.

Indigenous Children and Youth in Care (ICYC), and Jordan's Principle (PT Ministers)

PT Ministers discussed the federal government's refusal to meet with PTs to discuss Bill C-92 without inviting their drafting partners, the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and Metis National Council. While PT Ministers indicated that they supported the principles within the legislation, Ministers discussed their concerns about potential

gaps in services, and implications that the federal legislation would have on existing PT legislation and practice.

The Minister of Family Services spoke to the Government of Nunavut's concerns regarding Bill C-92, including whether the federal legislation will impose changes, standards or principles that are already addressed in *Nunavut's Child and Family Services Act*, which was crafted in cooperation with Inuit stakeholders. The Minister noted that consultations with the Government of Nunavut are critical for the federal government to understand the implications of the Bill, the realities of service provision in the North, and the challenges Nunavut faces in delivering services.

PT Ministers expressed concern about federal spending on Jordan's Principle without knowing how much money is allocated to each jurisdiction, where it is being spent, and potential expectations of the PTs.

Ministers agreed to request an emergency teleconference with the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada to discuss their concerns regarding the impact of the legislation on their jurisdictions. Ministers agreed that if the teleconference is not scheduled in a timely manner, a joint letter outlining their concerns will be sent.

The Minister of Family Services noted that she would be speaking to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples on April 30 2019, to outline the Government of Nunavut's concerns regarding Bill C-92. Ministers expressed their support of this appearance.

Next Steps:

Nunavut will continue to participate at the officials' level through various Social Services working groups, including the Indigenous Children in Care working group, and the Poverty Advisory Committee and the Jordan's Principle working group. Nunavut will work to stay apprised of details concerning the federal child and family services legislation, Jordan's Principle and the Inuit-Specific Child First Initiative, and the federal poverty reduction strategy.

Attachments: FPT Communiqué

FPT Ministerial Report to the Legislative Assembly

Minister

Deputy Minister

News Release

For Immediate Release

Federal, provincial and territorial ministers work together to improve outcomes for Canadians

Ministers commit to advancing social services to remove barriers

April 24, 2019**Saskatoon, Saskatchewan****Employment and Social Development Canada**

Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services* met to share information, discuss common priorities and work together to address key social policy issues. Ministers reviewed the significant achievements by all jurisdictions while acknowledging more work needs to be done so all Canadians can benefit from an inclusive and prosperous Canada.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and the Honourable Paul Merriman, Saskatchewan Minister of Social Services. Ministers discussed pressing issues, including poverty reduction, homelessness and food insecurity. They agreed that solutions must be flexible, holistic, and consider the diversity of needs throughout the country while respecting jurisdictional roles and responsibilities.

Ministers also discussed the importance of data sharing, as well as opportunities to collaborate to advance social innovation and social finance initiatives that can help address community challenges and that build on current federal, provincial and territorial approaches. As well, the federal government signaled its interest to consult with responsible ministries in the provinces and territories towards the creation of a national school food program and provided an overview of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how it may align with the priorities and work of the provinces and territories.

Prior to the meeting, the Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Indigenous Services, joined federal, provincial and territorial ministers to hear from national Indigenous leaders on their perspectives on a number of social services priorities, including improving outcomes for Indigenous children and youth in care, homelessness and best practices and opportunities for social innovation.

On the second day of the meeting, the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, federal Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, discussed accessibility and disability supports with provinces and territories and how they could further collaborate to support persons with disabilities with a goal of creating a more inclusive, accessible and barrier-free Canada.

Quotes

"I am pleased that the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for social services continue to regularly meet and work together. Thanks to these collaborative efforts, fewer Canadians than ever are living in poverty and more are joining the middle class. However, we know there is much more to do. That is why we remain committed to working with all partners to build a diverse, prosperous and truly inclusive country where all Canadians can realize their full potential."

– The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

"It was an honour to welcome my federal, provincial and territorial colleagues to Saskatchewan. The meeting was a valuable opportunity to continue our collaborative work on issues impacting children, families and individuals in our communities, especially those who are most vulnerable. Together, we are making progress on issues such as poverty reduction, accessibility and disability supports, and social innovation. More work is needed, and we look forward to continuing our joint efforts to meet the diverse needs across the country and improve the lives of Canadians."

– The Honourable Paul Merriman, Saskatchewan Minister of Social Services

"Today's commitment to collaboration is an important step forward in ensuring a truly accessible Canada. We all

have a role to play when it comes to creating seamlessly accessible experiences for persons with disabilities. I look forward to working with my provincial and territorial colleagues to build on our shared momentum and to work towards the broader vision of an inclusive and barrier-free Canada.”
– The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility

*Due to recent and upcoming elections, there were no representatives from Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador at the meeting.

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