

SOCIAL UNION FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Annual Report to the Ministerial Council on Social Policy Renewal

on

Residency-based Mobility Barriers

February, 2000

INTRODUCTION

- At their meeting in December 1997, First Ministers directed that work begin under the auspices of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Council on Social Policy Renewal (the Ministerial Council) to develop a framework agreement on Canada's social union. This agreement was to define a new partnership approach between governments in the planning and managing of Canada's social union. First Ministers (with the exception of the Premier of Quebec) signed the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) on February 4, 1999.
- Participating governments are responsible for ensuring that the commitments made in the SUFA are implemented in their jurisdictions. At the intergovernmental level, the Ministerial Council is leading the implementation of the SUFA. Throughout the past year, British Columbia has been represented on the Ministerial Council by the Honourable Andrew Petter, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations. On April 10, 2000, Premier Dosanjh announced that the Honourable Joy K. MacPhail, Deputy Premier and Minister of Labour, would assume these responsibilities.
- The SUFA is based upon a mutual respect between orders of government and a willingness to work more closely together to meet the needs of Canadians. One such need is for all Canadians to have access to essential social programs and services of reasonably comparable quality wherever they live or move in Canada. The mobility provisions of Section 2 of the SUFA are intended to address that need.

- Section 2 of the SUFA provides:

All governments believe that the freedom of movement of Canadians to pursue opportunities anywhere in Canada is an essential element of Canadian citizenship.

Governments will ensure that no new barriers to mobility are created in new social policy initiatives.

Governments will eliminate, within three years, any residency-based policies or practices which constrain access to post-secondary education, training, health and social services and social assistance unless they can be demonstrated to be reasonable and consistent with the principles of the Social Union Framework.

Accordingly, sector Ministers will submit annual reports to the Ministerial Council identifying residency-based barriers to access and providing action plans to eliminate them.

Governments are also committed to ensure, by July 1, 2001, full compliance with the mobility provisions of the Agreement on Internal Trade by all entities subject to those provisions, including the requirements for mutual recognition of occupational qualifications and for eliminating residency requirements for access to employment opportunities.

- British Columbia herewith submits its first annual mobility report to the Ministerial Council. This report indicates the progress made to date in identifying and eliminating residency-based barriers as described in section 2 of the SUFA.
- It should be noted that the provisions relating to the Agreement on Internal Trade are being implemented under the auspices of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers and are therefore not addressed in this report.

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA ACTION PLAN

- Over the past year, implementation of British Columbia's SUFA obligations has been co-ordinated by the Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat (IGRS).
- IGRS has established a Social Policy Reference Group of officials from ministries having policies and practices which may be impacted by SUFA. The current membership of the Reference Group includes representatives from the following agencies:

- Ministry of Finance
 - Ministry for Children and Families
 - Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security (also responsible for housing policy)
 - Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
 - Ministry of Women's Equality
 - Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs
 - Ministry of Health
 - Government Policy and Communications Office
- With regard to the SUFA mobility provisions, the above ministries have been asked to review all of their policies, programs and practices to determine:
 - Whether there are any residency-based policies or practices in place
 - Whether any such policies or practices have the effect of constraining access to programs as described in the SUFA (i.e. whether they constitute barriers to mobility)
 - Whether such policies and practices can be demonstrated to be reasonable and consistent with the principles of the SUFA as a whole
 - Whether there are any plans in place to eliminate barriers which do not meet the test of reasonableness and consistency with SUFA principles

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- British Columbia is committed to fulfilling its mobility commitments under the SUFA by February 2002.
- The initial identification of residency-based policies and practices in British Columbia in the program areas identified in section 2 of the SUFA is now nearing completion. Attached to this report is a chart outlining the status of the mobility review by Ministry.
- Ministries are reviewing those policies and practices identified to determine whether they have the effect of limiting mobility and whether they are reasonable and consistent with SUFA principles. During this phase of the review, British Columbia is developing guidelines for determining whether a policy or practice may be considered reasonable.
- As the mobility review process moves ahead, British Columbia will give consideration to the impact of the mobility provisions in the SUFA as they relate to Aboriginal people moving off-reserve.

BARRIERS REMOVED:

- Over the last year, the B.C. government has made a decision to eliminate two residency-based barriers.
 - The Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology is modifying its policy on Student Loans to make loans available to B.C. students studying at post-secondary institutions outside of the Province. Previously, B.C. students studying out of province could not receive a loan unless the program was unavailable in B.C., was oversubscribed, or was in the French language.
 - On the recommendation of the Native Economic Development Advisory Board, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is in the process of removing the residency study requirement for bursaries under the First Citizens' Fund. This policy change will allow B.C. Aboriginal students who study at recognized post-secondary institutions outside of the province to become eligible for bursaries.

CONCLUSIONS:

- No barriers have been identified in programs administered by the Ministries of Women's Equality, Children and Families, and Finance.
- The Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology is assisting student mobility by making loans available to B.C. students studying at post-secondary institutions outside of the province.
- The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs will be assisting B.C. Aboriginal students by removing residency restrictions on bursaries for post-secondary students studying outside of the province.
- Reviews are ongoing in the Ministries of Health and Social Development and Economic Security. It has been concluded that residency-based requirements identified by the Ministry of Health for hospital and physician services do not constitute barriers because of reciprocal billing arrangements with other jurisdictions.

STATUS OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA MOBILITY REVIEW:

MINISTRY	STATUS OF REVIEW
Aboriginal Affairs	One barrier identified and eliminated - restriction on bursaries for Aboriginal students studying at post-secondary institutions outside of the province
Advanced Education, Training and Technology	One barrier identified and eliminated - restriction on student loans for B.C. students studying at post-secondary institutions out of province
Children and Families	No barriers reported
Finance	No barriers reported
Health	Residency-based requirement has been identified for hospital and physician services covered by the Canada Health Act - offset by reciprocal billing arrangements with other jurisdictions Review of other policies is ongoing
Social Development and Economic Security (including Housing)	Review ongoing
Women's Equality	No barriers reported