



The Social Union Framework

MAKING IT HAPPEN

A Framework to Improve the Social Union for Canadians (which has come to be known as the Social Union Framework Agreement) was signed by the Prime Minister and Canada's Premiers, except for the Premier of Québec, on February 4, 1999. The agreement guides intergovernmental cooperation on social policy in our country.

According to the federal government's Social Union web site: The "**social union**" initiative is the umbrella under which governments are concentrating their efforts to renew and modernize Canadian social policy. It focuses on the pan-Canadian dimension of health and social policy systems, the linkages between the social and economic unions, and the recognition that reform is best achieved in partnership among provinces, territories and the Government of Canada.

THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THE SOCIAL UNION IS:

- to reform and renew Canada's system of social services and to reassure Canadians that their pan-Canadian social programs are strong and secure. In working to build a strong social union, the Government of Canada and the provinces and territories reached a broad consensus that the first priorities should be children in poverty and persons with disabilities.

SOCIAL UNION INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- National Child Benefit
- National Children's Agenda
- Early Childhood Education
- Benefits and Services for Persons with Disabilities

FUNDING MECHANISMS

The Social Union Framework Agreement includes discussion of the two main funding mechanisms through which the federal government supports health and social programs:

Social Transfers to Provinces And Territories

The use of the federal spending power under the Constitution has been essential to the development of Canada's social union. An important use of the spending power by the Government of Canada has been to transfer money to the provincial and territorial governments. These transfers support the delivery of social programs and services by provinces and territories in order to promote equality of opportunity and mobility for all Canadians and to pursue Canada-wide objectives. Conditional social transfers have enabled governments to introduce new and innovative social programs, such as Medicare, and to ensure that they are available to all Canadians.

Direct Federal Spending

Another use of the federal spending power is making transfers to individuals and to organizations in order to promote equality of opportunity, mobility, and other Canada-wide objectives.

It should be emphasized that the Social Union is predicated on a collaborative relationship between the federal and provincial/territorial governments and that new national initiatives in areas such as health care and social services require support from a majority of provincial governments.

Sources

- www.socialunion.gc.ca
- www.sufa-review.ca



Citizens For Mental Health is a national project of the Canadian Mental Health Association