



Canada Social Report
Federal Policy Monitor
April 2013



The [Caledon Institute of Social Policy](#) regularly scans for the release of federal government policies and programs that impact areas of interest, including income security, disabilities, health, housing, poverty reduction, recreation, seniors and youth.

Monitors can be searched on the Canada Social Report website by date and category.

ABORIGINALS

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and the President of the Métis National Council (MNC) renewed the 2008 Métis Nation Protocol and signed a new Governance and Financial Accountability Accord. The Protocol establishes a process for Canada and the Métis Nation to conduct discussions on key issues and objectives including jurisdictional issues related to federal and provincial responsibilities, access to benefits and settlements by Métis veterans, and economic development.

The Governance and Financial Accountability Accord identifies five major priorities:

- the completion of the MNC General Assembly Governance Resolution from December 2010
- completing the development of common standards for Métis Nation Registries
- a move toward more flexible funding agreements and reduced administrative burden
- continuing to strengthen national policy support for Métis economic development and participation in major development projects
- similar to the new *First Nations Financial Transparency Act*, the Accord will ensure the public disclosure of audited consolidated financial statements and schedules of remuneration, to strengthen the transparency and accountability of the Métis National Council's fiscal arrangement.

<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1367263803477/1367263872186>

DISABILITY

\$4,500,000 from the federal Opportunities Fund to the BC Centre for Ability to help people with disabilities connect with job opportunities or return to school. Through educational and work experience experiences, the 535 project participants will develop skills and receive financial assistance for tuition fees, transportation and day care costs for the duration of the project.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

The Governments of Canada and Ontario and Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on First Nation education. NAN is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty No. 5 – an area covering two-thirds of the province. Communities in NAN include more than 7,000 First Nation students (K-12) attending either band-operated schools or provincially-funded schools. The agreement identifies five priority areas: improving student services, embedding the curriculum with First Nation elements, improving governance and administration, increasing the participation of First Nation staff and Elders and boosting parent participation.

[Link](#)



Launch of a national Call for Concepts to identify organizations interested in forming a pan-Canadian network focused on improving the literacy and essential skills of Canadians.

[Link](#)

Family doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and family medicine residents in more than 4,200 rural communities across Canada can now apply for Canada Student Loan forgiveness.

[Link](#)

The low- and middle-income thresholds used to assess eligibility for Canada Student Grants and part-time Canada Student Loans and Grants have been adjusted, allowing more students to qualify for financial assistance. The change will come into effect August 1, 2013.

[Link](#)

EMPLOYMENT

The government is introducing legislative, regulatory and administrative changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) that will:

- require employers to pay temporary foreign workers at the prevailing wage by removing the existing wage flexibility
- temporarily suspend the Accelerated Labour Market Opinion process
- increase the Government's authority to suspend and revoke work permits and Labour Market Opinions (LMOs) if the program is being misused
- add questions to employer LMO applications to ensure that the TFWP is not used to facilitate the outsourcing of Canadian jobs
- ensure employers who rely on temporary foreign workers have a firm plan in place to transition to a Canadian workforce over time through the LMO process
- introduce fees for employers for the processing of LMOs and increase the fees for work permits
- identify English and French as the only languages that can be used as a job requirement.

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and other primary agricultural occupations will be subject to the reform that will increase the Government's authority to suspend and revoke work permits and LMOs if they are being misused. However, they will be unaffected by the remaining reforms as there are proven acute labour shortages in this industry and the unfilled jobs are temporary.

[Link](#)

GOVERNANCE

Launch of the new Social Security Tribunal, an appeals body for decisions on Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security. The Tribunal is a single decision-making body that consolidates the

work previously done by four separate HRSDC tribunals. Its purpose is to eliminate confusion about the appeal process, while ensuring continued access to administrative justice for appellants.

[Link](#)

The Canada Social Transfer (CST) will reach a record high level of \$12.2 billion this fiscal year. The CST will grow at three percent per year, from \$11.9 billion in 2012-3 to \$13.7 billion in 2017-18 in support of post-secondary education, social assistance and social services, child care, early childhood development and early learning.

[Link](#)

Relaunch of the federal government's Open Data Portal. A series of roundtables are being held across the country with the Open Data community, focusing on the features and content users would like to see on the Portal which is set to launch later this year. In the last year, 273,000 datasets from 22 departments and agencies have been released and are available to upload through the Government Open Data Portal. The next generation Portal will use an open source platform and feature improved search capabilities and interactive tools.

The internet link to this item is no longer operational.

The Federal Court has ruled that the statutory mandate of the Parliamentary Budget Officer includes estimating the financial cost of any proposal that relates to a matter over which Parliament has jurisdiction when requested to do so by a member of the Senate or House of Commons.

<http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/en/news?filter-news-all=View+All>

Three departments covered by the Auditor General's audit – Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada – have maintained or increased their capacity to evaluate their programs over the last four years. They have put in place strategies to measure ongoing performance and are collecting some performance information for most programs. The audit also found that weaknesses continue to limit the contribution of program evaluation to decision-making in the government. (Chapter 1: Status Report on Evaluating the Effectiveness of Programs).

[Link](#)

HEALTH

Canada Health Transfer (CHT) will be set at \$30.3 billion in 2013-14. The CHT will grow at 6 percent per year, from \$28.6 billion in 2012-13 to a projected \$37.7 billion in 2017-18, exceeding the current growth rate of provincial health care spending. Starting in 2017-18, the CHT will grow in line with a three-year moving average of nominal GDP growth, with funding guaranteed to increase by at least 3 percent per year.

<http://www.budget.gc.ca/2014/docs/plan/ch4-2-eng.html>



Health Canada released the second cycle of the Canadian Health Measures Survey (CMHS) – the first was released in August 2010. Led by Statistics Canada in partnership with Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, CMHS is an ongoing national survey. It presents comprehensive data on the exposure of the Canadian population to environmental chemicals, such as bisphenol A and lead, and is the first to include data for children ages 3 to 5.

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/contaminants/human-humaine/chms-ecms-eng.php>

Announcement of two new mental health initiatives for Canadian Armed Forces personnel. The Telemental Health Network and the Virtual Reality Initiative Bravemind were developed through \$11.4 million reallocated to the care of ill and injured military personnel in 2012.

[Link](#)

The federal government is partnering with the Canadian Red Cross and Respect Group Inc. to create an online educational workshop to raise awareness about relationship violence and to promote healthy relationships among young Canadians ages 14 to 18.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-eng.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=2&nid=736989&crtr.tp1D=1>

The Auditor General's report found that the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research have each undertaken activities to prevent and control diabetes, but these activities have been uncoordinated. The Public Health Agency of Canada has received \$18 million per year since 2005 to lead work with its federal partners, provinces, territories and other stakeholders to promote diabetes prevention and control. In 2010-11, Health Canada received \$55 million to fund the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research funded close to \$44 million in diabetes research. Each organization has spent millions and undertaken initiatives in isolation of each other, resulting in fragmented efforts and limited progress.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-eng.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=3&nid=736839&crtr.tp1D=1>

HOUSING

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports that housing starts were trending at 189,742 units in March. The trend is a six-month moving average of the monthly seasonally adjusted annual rates (SAAR) of housing starts. The standalone monthly SAAR was 184,028 units in March, up from 183,207 in February. The SAAR of urban starts decreased by 2.7 percent in March to 157,217 units, led by a 6.6 percent decline in single urban starts to 60,558 units. Multiple urban starts remained relatively unchanged at 96,659 units in March.

<http://www.schl.ca/en/corp/nero/here/2013/2013-04-09-0816.cfm>

INCOME SECURITY

The Auditor's Report concluded that although Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has worked to minimize losses associated with Employment Insurance income benefit overpayments, the Department may be missing opportunities to cost-effectively identify and recover tens of millions of dollars more in overpayments each year. In 2011-12, the Department processed 2.9 million claims and paid out \$16.1 billion in benefits. (See Chapter 9: Employment Insurance Overpayments - Human Resources and Skills Development Canada http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/par_l_oag-_201304_09_e_38194.html)

Veterans Affairs Canada is making changes to deliver increased benefits to traditional veterans. Once in effect, disability benefits paid under the Pension Act will no longer be deducted from War Veterans Allowance (WVA) benefits. The change in how the War Veterans Allowance is calculated is expected to help:

- 3,000 Veterans and survivors who may now qualify for monthly WVA benefit payments, including 700 who are expected to gain access to related benefits (treatment and Veterans Independence Program services) for the first time
- more than 2,000 veterans in long-term care who will receive a higher subsidy toward their accommodation and meals fees
- 200 veterans and survivors who will receive increased payments.

[Link](#)

YOUTH

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection launches a new website – Needhelpnow.ca – to help Canadian teens deal with online bullying and sexual exploitation. The web site shows users how to stop the online distribution of sexual images.

<https://protectchildren.ca/app/en/>