




Canada Social Report

# Federal Policy Monitor

October 2013



CANADA SOCIAL REPORT



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.

#### ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

As Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories move toward the devolution transfer date of April 1, 2014, the Territorial government announced changes to its organizational structure to accommodate the delivery of devolved land and resource programs and services.

<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1380656903902/1380656945310>

Introduction of Bill C-9, the *First Nations Elections Act*, aimed at addressing issues with the current election system under the Indian Act by extending the terms of office for chiefs and councils, introducing a more robust nomination process, adding penalties for defined offences and fraudulent activities, and raising the possibility for common election days among several First Nations.

<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1383061296885/1383061356548>

#### COMMUNITIES

The *Increasing Offenders' Accountability for Victims Act* came into force on October 24, 2013. This legislation doubles the victim surcharge that offenders must pay and ensures that the surcharge is automatically applied in all cases. With the coming into force of these amendments to the Criminal Code, the victim surcharge will be 30 percent of any fine imposed or, where no fine is imposed, \$100 for a summary conviction offence and \$200 for an indictable offence. The surcharge, which is imposed on offenders at the time of sentencing, is collected and retained by the provincial or territorial government where an offender is sentenced, and is used to help fund services for victims of crime. Those who cannot pay the surcharge will be able to discharge it by participating in a fine option program or through alternative mechanisms, where possible.

[Link](#)

#### EMPLOYMENT

Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, September 2013, reported employment was little changed in September as employment and the working-age population grew at a similar pace. The unemployment rate declined 0.2 percentage points to 6.9 percent as fewer youths searched for work. Employment was up 1.2 percent (212,000) compared with 12 months earlier. Since September 2012, the number of hours worked rose by 0.8 percent, as part-time employment grew at a faster pace than full-time work.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/131011/dq131011-eng.pdf>

#### GOVERNANCE

Release of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's *Expenditure Monitor: 2013-14 Q1*.

[http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Expenditure\\_Monitor\\_2013-14Q1\\_EN.pdf](http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Expenditure_Monitor_2013-14Q1_EN.pdf)

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development published "OECD Principles for Independent Fiscal Institutions." The document proposes 22 principles for Independent Fiscal Institutions (fiscal councils



and parliamentary budget offices) under nine headings:

- local ownership
- independence and non-partisanship
- mandate
- resources
- relationship with the legislature
- access to information
- transparency
- communication
- external evaluation.

[Link](#)

The Information Officer of Canada's annual report calls for leadership on the part of the government and federal institutions, increased funding to handle access to information requests and a modernization of the 30-year old Access to Information Act, including extending the legislation to Parliament.

[Link](#)

## HOUSING

The New Housing Price Index (NHPI) rose 0.1% in August, following a 0.2 percent increase in July. On a year-over-year basis, the NHPI rose 1.8 percent in the 12 months to August, following similar annual increases over the previous three months.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/131010/dq131010-eng.pdf>

## HOMELESSNESS

Announcement of \$119 million per year over five years, ending in March 2019, for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy using a Housing First approach. This represents nearly \$600 million in total new funding. Housing First means first and foremost a place to live for homeless persons, and then providing the necessary supports (e.g. for mental health problems) to help these individuals stabilize their lives and recover as best as possible. Housing First is effective in reducing chronic homelessness while alleviating pressure on other shelter, health and judicial services.

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## SENIORS

Announcement of \$2,000,000 for projects to help reduce social isolation.

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At the annual meeting of Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors, members discussed the need to exchange information and best practices on healthy aging that will benefit seniors across the country. Manitoba and New Brunswick have agreed to lead this

process. As co-leads of the Seniors' Working Group subcommittee for the Council of the Federation, the Ministers of Alberta and Saskatchewan will consult with the Premiers Health Care Innovation Working Group co-chairs to help coordinate the priorities of the seniors' subcommittee.

[http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/wp-content/uploads/PT-Final-Communi-qu%C3%A9\\_-EN-FR.pdf](http://news.exec.gov.nt.ca/wp-content/uploads/PT-Final-Communi-qu%C3%A9_-EN-FR.pdf)

## THRONE SPEECH

Social policy-related highlights include the federal government's plans to:

### Employment and education

- implement the Canada Job Grant
- take further steps to see that those traditionally under-represented in the workforce, including people with disabilities, youth, and Aboriginal Canadians, find the job training they need
- work with provinces and territories on a new generation of labour market agreements to more effectively connect Canadians with disabilities to employers and in-demand jobs
- redirect federal investments in youth employment to provide real-life work experience in high-demand fields
- continue working with First Nations to develop stronger, more effective and more accountable on-reserve education systems
- improve credential recognition and enable the free movement of skilled workers across provincial borders
- ensure that Canadians are aware of the opportunities offered by the skilled trades and assist apprentices with the cost of training
- complete reforms to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to ensure that Canadians always have the first chance at available jobs
- create the conditions for new and better jobs for Canadians across all sectors of the economy.

### Health

- work with the provinces and territories to further strengthen food inspection regimes
- consult with parents to improve the way nutritional information is presented on food labels
- introduce new patient safety legislation to help identify potentially dangerous drugs and ensure the quick recall of unsafe drugs. This will include new powers to require reporting of adverse drug reactions
- build on the caregiver tax credit by working with employers to better accommodate employees caring for older family members
- help seniors quickly access information about programs and services they need and use in their communities
- make adoption more affordable for families



- renew investments in health research to tackle the growing onset of dementia, and related illnesses
- prevent employers and insurance companies from discriminating on the basis of genetic testing
- collaborate with injury prevention organizations to reduce the injury rate in Canada
- work with the provinces and territories and with the private and not-for-profit sectors to encourage young Canadians to be more physically active.

#### Community

- re-introduce and pass the *Respect for Communities Act* to ensure that parents have a say before drug injection sites open in their communities
- expand the National Anti-Drug Strategy to address the growing problem of prescription drug abuse
- close loopholes that allow for the feeding of addiction under the guise of treatment
- act on the opportunities presented by social finance and the successful National Call for Concepts for Social Finance
- build on the successful Housing First approach and its renewed Homelessness Partnering Strategy to help house vulnerable Canadians
- introduce legislation giving police and prosecutors new tools to effectively address cyberbullying that involves criminal invasion of privacy, intimidation and personal abuse. This legislation would create a new criminal offence prohibiting the nonconsensual distribution of intimate images
- renew its efforts to address the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

[http://speech.gc.ca/sites/sft/files/SFT-EN\\_2013\\_c.pdf](http://speech.gc.ca/sites/sft/files/SFT-EN_2013_c.pdf)