



Canada Social Report

Federal Policy Monitor

March 2014



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

Nineteen more First Nations have signed the First Nations Land Management Regime framework agreement. By doing so, they can begin the process of opting out of 34 land-related sections of the *Indian Act* and assume greater control over their reserve land and resources.
<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=820569>

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada will begin posting the summaries of audits conducted on recipients of federal funds.
<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=833669>

CHILDREN

The Auditor General determined that the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services and the Health and Social Services Authorities are not adequately meeting their key responsibilities to protect and ensure the well-being of children.
http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/mr_20140304_e_39103.html

The Auditor General reported that the Nunavut Department of Family Services has made unsatisfactory progress against government commitments in response to the 2011 Auditor General's Report on Children, Youth and Family Programs and Services in Nunavut. While improvements in staffing and training are noted, serious gaps remain in ensuring compliance with child protection standards, maintaining basic information about children in care and engaging Nunavummiut in the development of strategies to keep children and youth safe.
http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/mr_20140318_e_39124.html

DISABILITY

New Brunswick signed a memorandum of understanding on a new generation of Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities.
[LINK](#)

EDUCATION

\$88 million to support 102 new and renewed Canada Research Chairs at 33 post-secondary institutions across the country.
<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&ctrlr=2&nid=831109&ctrlr.tp1D=1>

EMPLOYMENT

Parliamentary Budget Office releases *Labour Market Assessment 2014*. Overall, the PBO found that most labour market indicators remain below trend, although continue to recover from the 2008-09 recession. The weakness in the labour market is also reflected in the modest growth in wages and compensation over the recovery. In an attempt to explain the continued weakness in the labour market, PBO examined indicators of labour shortages and skills mismatches but found little evidence in support of a national labour shortage or skills mismatch in Canada.
http://pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Labour_Note_EN.pdf



Statistics Canada *Labour Force Survey February 2014* reports little change in employment that month, and the unemployment rate remained at 7.0 percent. There has been little overall employment growth in Canada since August 2013. Compared with 12 months earlier, employment increased by 95,000 (+0.5 percent) and the unemployment rate was unchanged. Over the same period, the number of hours worked rose 0.7 percent.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/140307/dq140307-eng.pdf>

Statistics Canada reported that in January 2014, 502,500 people received regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, down 1.9 percent (-9,900) from the previous month. This decline follows a period of relative stability in the number of EI beneficiaries that began in May 2013. Québec, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island experienced reductions in the number of people receiving regular EI benefits in January. There was little or no change in the other provinces.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/140320/dq140320-eng.pdf>

Statistics Canada reported that average weekly earnings of non-farm payroll employees were \$925 in January, virtually unchanged from the previous month. On a year-over-year basis, weekly earnings increased 3.0 percent. The 3.0 percent increase in weekly earnings during the 12 months to January reflected a number of factors, including wage growth, changes in the composition of employment by industry, occupation and level of job experience, as well as average hours worked per week. Non-farm payroll employees worked an average of 32.9 hours per week in January, down from 33.0 hours in December. On a year-over-year basis, the average hours worked was unchanged.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/140331/dq140331-eng.pdf>

Manitoba has signed an agreement in principle with the federal government on the Canada Jobs Grant.

[Link](#)

Prince Edward Island has signed an agreement in principle with the federal government on the Canada Jobs Grant.

[Link](#)

Northwest Territories has signed an agreement in principle with the federal government on the Canada Jobs Grant.

[Link](#)

Alberta has signed an agreement in principle with the federal government on the Canada Jobs Grant.

[Link](#)

New Brunswick has signed an agreement in principle with the federal government on the Canada Jobs Grant.

[Link](#)

Saskatchewan has signed a memorandum of understanding with the federal government on the Canada Jobs Grant.

[Link](#)

British Columbia signed a Canada Jobs Grant implementation agreement with the federal government. The Canada Job Grant will be delivered through the new Canada-British Columbia Job Fund (formerly known as a labour market agreement).

[Link](#)

Ontario signed three labour market agreements with the federal government: the Canada-Ontario Job Fund Agreement (formerly known as Labour Market Agreements), the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities and a renewal of the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers program, a federal-provincial/territorial cost-shared initiative that provides unemployed older workers in eligible communities with training to re-enter the workforce.

[Link](#)

GOVERNANCE

Granting of Royal Assent of *Northwest Territories Devolution Act* (Bill C-15) – the final step in the legislative process that will allow the implementation of the *Northwest Territories Devolution Act* and the devolution of province-like powers to the Government of the Northwest Territories, effective April 1, 2014.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=829019>

HEALTH

Funding was announced for the Pallium Foundation of Canada for “Building the Future of Palliative Care Together,” an initiative which aims to strengthen the community of clinicians, caregivers, educators, administrators, volunteers, citizens and other partners. The Pallium Foundation will equip more front-line health care providers with the skills and knowledge they need to care for people with life-threatening conditions. This is expected to enhance the reach of palliative care across rural, remote and urban settings, including Aboriginal peoples.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&ctr:page=2&nid=822539&crtr:tp1D=1>

Announcement of the expansion of health-related tax relief:

- exemption of acupuncturists’ and naturopathic doctors’ professional services from the GST/HST
- expansion of the list of eligible expenses under the Medical Expense Tax Credit to include costs associated with service animals specially trained to assist individuals with severe diabetes, such as diabetes alert dogs
- provision of further tax recognition for costs associated with eligible specially designed medical therapies and training by:

- expansion of the current GST/HST exemption for training that



is specially designed to help individuals cope with a disorder or disability to also exempt services of designing such training, such as developing a training plan

- inclusion of amounts paid for the design of an individualized therapy plan as an eligible expense for income tax purposes under the Medical Expense Tax Credit

- addition of eyewear specially designed to electronically enhance the vision of individuals with vision impairment that is supplied on the order of a physician or other specified health professional to the list of GST/HST-free (zero-rated) medical and assistive devices.

<http://www.fin.gc.ca/n14/14-040-eng.asp>

Release of *Tuberculosis Prevention and Control in Canada: A Federal Framework for Action*. This framework sets out the federal commitments to address tuberculosis (TB) in populations most at risk in Canada: Aboriginal peoples and foreign-born individuals from countries with a high rate of TB.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tbpc-latb/pubs/tpc-pct/assets/pdf/tpc-pcta-eng.pdf>

INCOME SECURITY

The government has approved a joint recommendation from the Public Service Health Care Plan Partners Committee regarding contribution rates and eligibility requirements for retired federal employees as well as benefit enhancements for all Plan members under the Public Service Health Care Plan. Effective April 1, 2015, retired members' cost sharing will gradually be increased from 75:25 (employer/retired member) to 50:50 over a four-year period. Low-income retired members will not be affected. With certain exemptions, new retired members will require a total of six years or more of pensionable service to be eligible as a retired member under the Public Service Health Care Plan.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=2&nid=829319&crtr.tp1D=1>

The government will provide eligible Veterans, survivors or dependents with voluntary compensation for Earnings Loss, Canadian Forces Income Support and War Veterans Allowance benefits dating back to May 29, 2012. This measure is meant to cover the gap between the government's decision to end the disability pension offset and the day the decision came into effect. Changes to the way Earnings Loss and Canadian Forces Income Support benefits are calculated came into effect on October 1, 2012, and a similar change to the War Veterans Allowance calculation came into effect on October 1, 2013, at a total cost of \$273.1 million over five years. These changes also mean improved services for Canadian Veterans, including approximately 560 additional Veterans now having access to the Veterans Independence Program for snow clearing, grass cutting and home cleaning services. The compensation announced will be made through a one-time payment to more than 5,000 eligible individuals, including Veterans, survivors or dependents. Changes are

subject to Parliamentary approval of the *Budget Implementation Act 2014*.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=3&nid=831669&crtr.tp1D=1>

SENIORS

The federal government is providing \$33.4 million to fund 1,770 community-based projects across Canada. Since 2006, the NHSP has funded more than 13,000 projects in hundreds of communities across Canada.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=2&nid=826829&crtr.tp1D=1>