



Canada Social Report

Federal Policy Monitor

November 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.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The federal government released the annual *Update of Economic and Fiscal Projections*. It reviews job creation efforts, economic developments and confirms the government's plan to:

- increase the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) for children under the age of 6. Under the proposed changes, parents would receive a benefit of \$160 per month for each child under the age of 6 – up from \$100 per month – as of January 1, 2015. In a single year, a parent would receive up to \$1,920 per child.
- expand the UCCB to children ages 6 through 17. Under the expanded benefit, parents would receive \$60 per month, as of January 1, 2015, for children ages 6 through 17. In a single year, a parent would receive up to \$720 per child. The enhanced UCCB will replace the existing Child Tax Credit for the 2015 and subsequent taxation years.
- introduce the Family Tax Cut. This federal non-refundable tax credit will allow a spouse to transfer up to \$50,000 of taxable income to a spouse in a lower tax bracket. Effective as of the 2014 taxation year, the credit would provide tax relief to couples with minor children, up to a maximum of \$2,000.
- increase the Child Care Expense Deduction dollar limits by \$1,000, effective for the 2015 taxation year. The maximum amounts that can be claimed would increase to \$8,000 from \$7,000 for children under age 7, to \$5,000 from \$4,000 for children ages 7 through 16 (and infirm dependent children over age 16), and to \$11,000 from \$10,000 for children who are eligible for the Disability Tax Credit.

<http://www.budget.gc.ca/efp-peb/2014/pub/toc-tdm-eng.html>

DEMOGRAPHICS

Statistics Canada reports that about half of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP) is generated in the six census metropolitan areas (CMAs) with populations of one million or more: Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa-Gatineau. Traditionally, Statistics Canada has produced estimates of GDP nationally and by province, but not at the metropolitan level. With growing interest in measuring the dynamics of metropolitan economies, new experimental estimates of GDP by CMAs have been developed. The new estimates reveal that, as with population, economic activity in Canada is predominately concentrated in cities. While accounting for 69 percent of Canada's population in 2009, CMAs generated about 72 percent of Canadian GDP. Almost all the CMAs from Manitoba west (eight of nine) increased their GDP share, while a minority of CMAs from Ontario east (nine of 24) gained GDP share.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/141110/dq141110-eng.pdf>

Statistics Canada releases the November 2014 edition of *Canadian Megatrends*, a new series about the trends that have shaped the country's society and economy. This edition examines changing fertility rates and



childbearing patterns for Canadian women.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/141113/dq141113-eng.pdf>

DISABILITY

The federal government allocated \$427,626 for a new online financial planning initiative for people with disabilities. The project will supply financial information to Canadians with disabilities, their families and caregivers. It will also encourage expanded relationships with financial institutions and financial planners. Plan Institute for Citizenship and Disability and Prosper Canada are partnering with the government in this initiative.

[Link](#)

EMPLOYMENT

Statistics Canada's *Labour Force Survey* reported that employment rose for the second consecutive month, up 43,000 in October. As a result, the unemployment rate fell 0.3 percentage points to 6.5 percent, the lowest rate since November 2008.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/141107/dq141107-eng.pdf>

The government announced the completion of the Inuit Learning and Development project, an initiative that prepares Inuit for potential future employment in Nunavut's public service. The program was operated in partnership with the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. Over the past 16 months, the project offered 12 Inuit training and four 4-month full-time work assignments in the Government of Canada, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. This project is in addition to an investment of \$27 million over five years that the federal government has made to expand adult basic education in the North. More than 60 programs were offered in 2012-13 to 800 adult learners. http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=904199&_ga=1.34997027.320606308.1413467287

Statistics Canada reported that the number of people receiving regular Employment Insurance benefits in September was 494,400, little changed from the previous month. Compared with September 2013, the number of beneficiaries decreased by 18,000 or 3.5 percent.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/141120/dq141120-eng.pdf>

GOVERNANCE

The Parliamentary Budget Officer released a letter outlining the recommendations associated with four of its recently-published reports – *Employment Insurance Account*, *Balanced Budget Legislation*, *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* and *Fiscal Sustainability Report*.

http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/2014-11-03_FINA_Notes_and_Tables_EN.pdf

The Parliamentary Budget Officer released *Supplementary Estimates (B) 2014-15*. In brief:

- The Government is asking parliamentarians for \$2.9 billion to implement the spending plan outlined in Budget 2014.
- The funding requested in these Supplementary Estimates is well below the historical average, reflecting ongoing spending restraint. As well, while unspent money among departments and agencies remain above their historical average, they did fall in 2013-14, resulting in less money being "re-requested" from one year to the next.
- The Government has never explained why lapses remain above their historical average, what factors explain its projection that lapses will fall, or the operational consequences when the Government fails to spend billions of dollars provided to it by Parliament.
- "Social Affairs" would receive the largest increase in new money, linked to a \$785 million increase in National Defence's Defence Capability Element Production program, which is primarily responsible for maintaining the capacity and readiness of the Canadian Forces.

http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Supplementary_Estimates_B_2014-15_EN.pdf

The Auditor General's *Fall 2014 Report* focused on seven areas of government activity and programs: access to mental health services for veterans, the Nutrition North Canada program, the preservation of the documentary heritage of the Government of Canada, responding to the onset of international humanitarian crises, support for combatting transnational crime, managing the Integrated Relocation Program contract and support to the automotive sector. Social policy-related findings include:

Food security

- Overall, the Auditor General found that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada has not verified whether the northern retailers pass on the full subsidy to consumers.

Mental Health

- The Auditor General concludes that Veterans Affairs is not adequately facilitating timely access to mental health services.

Governance

- Library and Archives Canada was not acquiring all the archival records it should from federal institutions, nor does it have a corporate digital strategy for the preservation of digital data.

http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201411_e_39950.html



HEALTH

Announcement of the passage of Vanessa's Law (the *Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act*). The Act will permit the government to:

- recall unsafe products
- impose penalties for unsafe products, including jail time and new fines of up to \$5 million per day instead of the current \$5,000
- provide the courts with discretion to impose stronger fines if violations were caused intentionally
- compel drug companies to revise labels to clearly reflect health risk information in plain language, including updates for health warnings for children
- compel drug companies to do further testing on a product, including when issues are identified with certain at-risk populations such as children
- enhance surveillance by requiring mandatory adverse drug reaction reporting by healthcare institutions
- require new transparency for Health Canada's regulatory decisions about drug authorizations, both positive and negative
- require information about authorized Canadian clinical trials to be posted on a public registry
- better define confidential business information and disclose such information about a product if it may pose a serious risk to Canadians.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=2&nid=900969&crtr.tp1D=1>

The federal government announced new and expanded mental health initiatives for Veterans, serving military members and their families. A \$200 million investment will fund the establishment of a major new Operational Stress Injury clinic in Halifax and additional satellite clinics opening in St. John's, Chicoutimi, Pembroke, Brockville, Kelowna, Victoria and Montreal to speed access to mental health services for those with mental health injuries. These initiatives were developed by the Department of National Defence, Veterans Affairs Canada and Health Canada.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=907399>

Statistics Canada released a report on the mental health of members of the Canadian Armed Forces using 2013 data sources. It concluded that about one in six Regular Force members (16.5 percent) reported symptoms consistent with at least one of five selected mental disorders in the 12 months prior to being surveyed. The five disorders measured by the Canadian Forces Mental Health Survey were: major depressive episode, post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and alcohol abuse or dependence. Depression was the most

common disorder, with 8.0 percent of Regular Force members reporting symptoms in the 12 months before the survey.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/141125/dq141125-eng.pdf>

The Government of Canada is allocating \$5 million to the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) to mobilize and promote the uptake of research to better address the health and wellness of Canadian Forces personnel, Veterans, and their families. A matching \$5 million is being made available by private donors through the True Patriot Love Foundation to support direct research and targeted programming designed to improve the mental health and well-being of this population. CIMVHR's activities will be delivered in all provinces across Canada, through their network of more than 30 partner universities. The impact of the work developed through this joint initiative has the potential to benefit all Canadians, and most especially those who work in similarly stressful occupations on a daily basis.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=index&crtr.page=1&nid=907689>

HOUSING

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation released *2014 Canadian Housing Observer*, its detailed annual review on the state of housing in Canada. In addition to a feature article on recent trends in housing conditions and core housing need, the Observer provides a detailed examination of demographic influences on housing demand, housing finance, housing markets, sustainable housing, as well as key developments in newcomers' housing. The publication also offers access to online statistical information on housing conditions from national, regional and local perspectives.

<http://www.cmhc.ca/observer/>

INCOME SECURITY

Statistics Canada reported that Canada's top 1 percent of tax filers saw their share of total income fall to a six-year low in 2012. The top 1 percent held 10.3 percent of total income in 2012, down from 10.6 percent in 2011, and well below the historical peak of 12.1 percent reached in 2006. The share of the top 5 percent of tax filers declined from 25.1 percent in 2006 to 23.6 percent in 2012, while the share of the top 10 percent of tax filers fell from 36.1 percent to 34.9 percent during the same period. The six-year period between 2006 and 2012 also marked, for the first time since 1982, a prolonged period in which the total income shares of the bottom 90 percent, 95 percent and 99 percent of Canadian tax filers rose or stabilized.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/141118/dq141118-eng.pdf>



RECREATION

The federal government announced a three-year partnership with Royal Bank of Canada and ParticipACTION to help deliver the RBC Learn to Play project, a national program aimed at improving physical literacy among Canada's children and youth.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=908559>

SENIORS

The federal government announced the redesign of the Canadian Retirement Income Calculator (CRIC). CRIC is an online tool that offers retirement income information, including information on the Old Age Security pension and Canada Pension Plan retirement benefits.

<http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/services/pensions/cric.shtml>

The National Seniors Council releases the *Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors*. It provides a summary of consultation findings as well as promising practices to help address this social problem.

http://www.seniorscouncil.gc.ca/eng/research_publications/social_isolation/page00.shtml

TAXES

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) has developed an online tool – the Ready Reckoner – a to estimate the potential revenue impacts to the federal treasury that would arise from adjusting various federal tax rates, credits, and brackets during the 2014 calendar year.

Tool: <http://www.readyreckoner.ca/>

User guide: http://pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Ready_Reckoner_Guide_EN.pdf

WOMEN

Release of the *Report on Equality Rights of Women*, a national portrait of how adult women are faring in Canadian society compared to adult men. Based on data collected by Statistics Canada in a number of surveys conducted between 2005 and 2011, the report charts well-being across seven dimensions: economic well being; education; employment; health; housing; justice and safety; and political and social inclusion. Women fare better in educational outcomes, but less well in average income, levels of employment, feelings of safety and discrimination.

[http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.](http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=2&nid=906389&crtr.tp1D=1)

[page=2&nid=906389&crtr.tp1D=1](http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=2&nid=906389&crtr.tp1D=1)