



Canada Social Report

Federal Policy Monitor

March 2015



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

Statistics Canada released the microdata file for the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). APS is a national survey on the social and economic conditions of Aboriginal people (First Nations people living off reserve, Métis and Inuit) ages 6 and older. Its purpose is to identify the needs of Aboriginal people and focus on issues such as education, employment, health, language, income, housing and mobility. The initial results from the 2012 APS on education and employment were released in *The Daily* on November 25, 2013.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150324/dq150324-eng.pdf>

Statistics Canada released a report entitled *School mobility and educational outcomes of off-reserve First Nations students, 2012*. Based on data from the 2012 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, it found that off-reserve First Nations students who had changed schools once, outside of a regular academic progression, were more likely to have repeated a grade than those who had not changed schools or who had one regular academic progression move. This finding held even when other variables such as age, sex, household income, living arrangements and rural/ population centre residence were taken into account.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150331/dq150331-eng.pdf>

CHILDREN

The Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) released *How Much Does the Federal Government Spend on Child Care and Who Benefits?* The report examines federal spending on child care and estimates the fiscal impact of recent announcements to enhance the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) and the Child Care Expense Deduction (CCED). PBO found that the value of child care benefits grew from \$0.6 billion in 2004-05 to approximately \$3.3 billion in 2013-2014. The sum amounted to three-fifths (59 percent) of what Canadian families were spending on child care in 2013-14. Families with young children (less than age 13) spending money on child care received two-thirds (66 percent) of these benefits. The remaining 34 percent was distributed to families with no child care expenses and families with older children. As a share of households' aggregate child care expenses, federal benefits represented an estimated 42 percent and 24.7 percent, respectively.

The federal government announced enhancements to the UCCB and CCED in October 2014. If Parliament approves these proposed enhancements, PBO estimates the fiscal impact of federal child care policies will increase to nearly \$7.7 billion from the 2013-14 value of \$3.3 billion. By 2017-18, it will grow to roughly \$7.9 billion. These proposals would also change the allocation of benefits. In 2015, 49 percent of these benefits would go to families with child care expenses and young children, and the remaining 51 percent to families with no child care expenses and families with older children. Because families with young children spend more on child care, but will receive roughly half (49 percent) of the federal child care benefits in 2015-16, their share will only cover 67 percent of the amount they will spend on child care. Conversely, benefits



that families with older children will receive from the government in 2015-16 will represent nearly eight times the amount they will spend on child care.

The report also presents a distributional analysis and includes the impact the proposed repeal of the Child Tax Credit will have on the value of federal child care benefits.

http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Child_Care_EN.pdf

COMMUNITIES

The federal government will spend \$631,204 over two years for the Northwest Territories Department of Justice Community Justice Division. The funding will support the Community Justice Program, which works with partners to provide restorative justice services and crime reduction activities. The program also assists community justice committees in 13 communities across the Territories to manage diversion programs, reintegration support for offenders and on-the-land programs for youth.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=947649&tp=1>

DISABILITY

Statistics Canada released the results of its 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability. It includes information on education, employment, income, use of assistive devices and public transportation. The report also details the incidence of disabilities:

- In 2012, almost 14 percent of the Canadian population ages 15 years or older – 3.8 million individuals – reported a difficulty or impairment due to a long-term condition or health problem that limited their daily activities.
- Women (15 percent) reported a slightly higher prevalence of disability than did men (13 percent). Disabilities related to pain (10 percent), flexibility (8 percent) and mobility (7 percent) were the most common, while more than three-quarters of persons with disabilities reported being affected by more than one type.
- The prevalence of disability increased with age. The average age of onset was the early 40s. About 13 percent of persons with disabilities who were of working age (15 to 64 years) reported that they had been born with their disability.
- A global severity score that takes into account all disability types, the level of difficulty and the frequency of the activity limitation was developed to better analyze the situation faced by persons with disabilities. To make the global severity score easier to use, severity classes were established. About one-quarter of Canadians with disabilities were classified as having a very severe disability.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150313/dq150313-eng.pdf>

EDUCATION

The government announced that it allocated \$24 million over four years to allow Pathways to expand its activities across the country and continue helping at-risk youth living in low-income communities stay in school and get the education they need to succeed both now and in the future. Pathways is a community-based program that partners with governments, social welfare agencies, community organizations, the private sector and volunteers to provide youth with tutoring, mentoring and financial assistance. Approximately 5,000 students currently receive support from Pathways, while more than 2,200 have graduated from the program to date.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=3&nid=956239&crtr.tp1D=1>

EMPLOYMENT

Statistics Canada reported that employment was unchanged in February, while the unemployment rate rose by 0.2 percentage points to 6.8 percent as more people searched for work. In the 12 months to February, employment increased by 130,000 (+0.7 percent) with most of the growth in the second half of the period. Compared with February 2014, full-time employment rose by 121,000 (+0.8 percent), while there was little change in part-time work. Over the same period, the total number of hours worked was up slightly (+0.2 percent).

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150313/dq150313-eng.pdf>

Statistics Canada stated that Canadian businesses reported 233,000 job vacancies in December, up 30,000 compared with 12 months earlier. For every job vacancy, there were 5.0 unemployed people, down from 6.2 in December 2013. This decline in the ratio was the result of both fewer unemployed people and more job vacancies.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150317/dq150317-eng.pdf>

FAMILIES

Two projects, one each in Ontario and Quebec, will receive funding under the Supporting Families Experiencing Separation and Divorce Initiative (SFI). Established as a five-year initiative in 2009, SFI has been extended until March 2017. Its goal is to make it easier for families to gain access to the family justice system and to encourage compliance with financial support, custody and access obligations. Funding is provided to non-government organizations for public legal education and information projects, and for professional training projects. In addition, SFI contributes \$15.5 million annually to provincial and territorial governments for the development and delivery of family justice services such as mediation.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=953039&tp=1>

FOOD SECURITY

Statistics Canada released a report detailing food insecurity in Canada. About 1.1 million Canadian households experienced food insecurity in



2011-12, meaning that they did not have the variety or the quantity of food they needed, because of a lack of money. The proportion of food insecure households remained relatively stable from 2007 to 2012, at about 8 percent. Food insecurity was more common among adults (8 percent) than children (5 percent) in Canada each year from 2007 to 2012.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150325/dq150325-eng.pdf>

GOVERNANCE

The community of Déline [Day-lee-nay] is the first community in the Northwest Territories with its own Aboriginal self-government agreement. After implementing legislation is passed, the Final Self-Government Agreement will create a new government, the Déline Got'ine Government, and bring together the authorities, programs and services of the Charter Community Government, the Déline Land Corporation, the Déline Financial Corporation and the Déline First Nation Band. This will allow the self-government arrangements of the Agreement to meet the unique needs of Déline, give the Sahtu Dene and Metis of Déline more control over the decisions that affect their day-to-day lives and cover responsibilities in the areas of culture, language, education, social services, program delivery, governing structures, Déline First Nation citizenship, elections and local government services.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=950719&tp=1>

The Parliamentary Budget Officer released *The Government Expenditure Plan and Main Estimates for 2015-16*. In brief:

- This spending plan is the first in seven years in which Government projects will coincide with a balanced budget
- The plan outlines \$241.6 billion in spending (that is, “budgetary authorities”), as well as a \$1.0 billion increase in federal loans, investments and advances (i.e., “nonbudgetary” authorities).
- “Budgetary” allocations have received most scrutiny from Parliamentarians in the past, given the Government’s strategy to reduce spending growth to balance the federal budget. However, their growth has lagged the expansion of government loans, investments and advances. “Nonbudgetary” amounts requiring authorization have increased by an average annual rate of 11 percent since 2000-01, almost 7 percentage points faster than the rate of growth of the overall economy
- As has been the case for several years, the largest increase in spending is linked to the Government’s single largest program, the Canada Health Transfer (+\$1.9 billion, +6.0 percent).
- Overall, when looking at Government spending through the Treasury Board Secretariat’s “Whole of Government” policy framework, the composition of federal spending is largely unchanged in 2015-16 compared to previous years. “Economic” priorities continue to receive more than two-thirds of total spending, followed by “Social” spending

- at close to 20 percent, “Government” affairs 10 percent and “International” policy areas 3 percent.

http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Mains_2015-16_EN.pdf

The Finance Department released *The Fiscal Monitor*, which reports a budgetary surplus of \$2.2 billion in January 2015. Revenues increased by \$0.4 billion, or 1.5 percent, reflecting a rise in personal income tax revenues, offset in part by a decrease in non-resident income tax revenues. Program expenses grew by \$0.7 billion, or 3.4 percent, reflecting increases in major transfers to persons and direct program expenses. Public debt charges decreased by \$0.3 billion, or 13.9 percent, largely reflecting a lower average effective interest rate on bonds.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=4&nid=956309&crtr.tp1D=1>

HEALTH

The federal government announced a package of financial assistance to help cover the urgent and ongoing healthcare needs of Thalidomide survivors. The package includes:

- an immediate tax-free, lump sum payment of \$125,000 to each survivor to help cover urgent health care needs
- a commitment of up to \$168 million for ongoing medical assistance to survivors. This financial support will be delivered by a third party based on survivors’ individual needs throughout the course of their lifetime
- the establishment of extraordinary medical assistance fund to which survivors can apply for assistance with extraordinary health support costs.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=945369>

The federal government announced an investment of more than \$32 million over three years to strengthen access to services in Nunavut in the areas of mental wellness, chronic disease and children’s oral health and reduce reliance on out-of-territory health systems and medical travel.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=952199>

Treasury Board and the Public Service Alliance of Canada announced they will work together on their commitment to improving psychological health and safety in the federal workplace. A Joint Task Force will identify ways to better communicate the issues of mental health challenges in the workplace, review practices from other jurisdictions, review the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace and identify how its objectives shall best be achieved within the Public Service.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&crtr.page=3&nid=956409&crtr.tp1D=1>



HOMELESSNESS

Through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta received more than \$1.6 million to purchase and renovate a building that will provide permanent supportive housing for 21 people with mental health issues. Through the HPS, the Government of Canada works with other levels of government, communities and organizations to develop and invest in local solutions to combat homelessness. The Government recently announced the renewal of the HPS with an investment of nearly \$600 million in funding over five years, until March 2019.

[Link](#)

HOUSING

The federal government is providing approximately \$745,000 over three years to support the Canadian Home Builders' Association's Get it in Writing! campaign. The campaign helps consumers and legitimate businesses protect themselves from unscrupulous contractors in the construction industry who are operating through the underground economy.

<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?mthd=tp&ctr.page=2&nid=944319&ctr.tp1D=1>

INCOME SECURITY

The Parliamentary Budget Officer released *The Family Tax Cut*, (FTC) a summary of the likely impact of the federal government's new income splitting measure. The report states that the FTC benefits about 2 million households, or 15 percent of the Canadian total. Middle and middle-high income households benefit most because they are more likely to have a family income and income tax structure conducive to FTC gains. Further, the PBO projects that the FTC results in a small net reduction in the labour supply of about 7,000 full-time equivalents and a \$90 million decline in labour income. These net effects represent less than 0.04 percent of the total hours of labour supplied and less than 0.01 percent of total employment income.

http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/files/files/Family_Tax_Cut_EN.pdf

SENIORS

The federal government issues a call for proposals for pan-Canadian projects funded through the New Horizons for Seniors Program will be launched in mid-May 2015 and be open for six weeks. Successful projects will focus exclusively on addressing social isolation among seniors and will be funded between \$150,000 and \$750,000, over a period of up to three years.

[Link](#)