



Canada Social Report

Federal Policy Monitor

July 2016



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.

DISABILITY

Statistics Canada released data from the Canadian Survey on Disability 2012. The information summarizes the prevalence of four disability categories and their impact on educational attainment, employment, income and the need for daily assistance. The four categories related to mobility, flexibility, dexterity and pain. In all cases, an estimated two-thirds of adults with these types of disabilities reported some level of unmet need with respect to the help they required in their daily activities.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

The annual meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada examined a range of issues including Indigenous education, the development of global competencies, the sustainability of provincial and territorial post-secondary education and milestone transitions for students, such as high school to post-secondary. Discussions about Indigenous education focused on how to improve outcomes and address the educational achievement gap for First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners. Definitions of global competencies – the skills that students of all ages require, including literacy and numeracy – were also discussed.

[Link](#)

Beginning August 1, Canada Student Grant amounts will increase by 50 percent for the 2016-17 school year, affecting more than 350,000 students. The grants will increase from \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year for full-time students from low-income families; from \$800 to \$1,200 per year for students from middle-income families; and from \$1,200 to \$1,800 per year for part-time students from low-income families. Additionally, beginning November 1, the federal government will ease the rules on its Repayment Assistance Plan by ensuring that no borrower will be required to make any repayment until he or she is earning at least \$25,000 per year.

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EMPLOYMENT

Statistics Canada reported that employment was unchanged in June (0.0 percent). The unemployment rate declined 0.1 percentage points to 6.8 percent, as the number of people searching for work edged down. In the second quarter of 2016, employment was little changed (+11,000 or +0.1 percent). This was the smallest quarterly change in employment in two years.

[Link](#)

According to Statistics Canada, in May 2016, 544,900 people received regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, up slightly (+4,800 or +0.9 percent) from the previous month.



Provincially, Alberta (+12.1 percent) recorded the largest increase in beneficiaries in May. Smaller gains occurred in Newfoundland and Labrador (+2.9 percent) and BC (+1.8 percent). The number of beneficiaries decreased in the remaining provinces, including PEI (-4.4 percent), Québec (-2.3 percent), Manitoba (-1.7 percent), New Brunswick (-1.6 percent) and Saskatchewan (-1.0 percent).

In the 12 months to May, the number of EI beneficiaries in Canada was up by 12,800 or 2.4 percent.

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HOMELESSNESS

Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH) will receive \$1.8 million in funding over three years through the Innovative Solutions to Homelessness stream of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). The funds will help CAEH to implement their innovative training and technical assistance initiative. The training program, complete with online tools and curriculum, is designed to help HPS-designated communities implement and operate Housing First programs. The project builds on work completed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and will use a “train the trainer” model, through which community experts will be recruited and trained as consultants.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

Statistics Canada reported that the median after-tax income of Canadian economic families and persons not in an economic family was \$55,600 in 2014, up 2.6 percent from 2013. The median after-tax income of economic families of two or more people rose 2.4 percent from 2013 to \$75,700 in 2014, while for persons not in an economic family, the median was virtually unchanged at \$29,100.

[Link](#)

Statistics Canada reported that Calgary had the highest median total family income (before tax) of all census metropolitan areas (CMAs) in Canada in 2014 at \$104,530. Calgary was followed by Edmonton (\$101,470) and Ottawa-Gatineau (\$97,760), according to data derived from personal income tax returns. These CMAs have occupied the top three positions since 2009. At the national level, median total family income rose 1.1 percent from 2013 to 2014. Median total family income grew in all CMAs, except Ottawa-Gatineau (-0.9 percent), Saguenay (-0.7 percent) and Greater Sudbury (-0.4 percent). Sherbrooke and Thunder Bay were unchanged.

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Membership in registered pension plans (RPPs) in Canada totalled 6,257,000 people in 2014, an increase of 72,000 or 1.2 percent over 2013. Membership in public sector pension plans rose 0.9 percent to 3,213,000, while the number of members in private sector plans

increased 1.4 percent to 3,044,000. The public sector accounted for 51.3 percent of total RPP membership.

Male membership reached its highest level since 1982 at over 3,144,000, while female membership hit a new all-time high, surpassing 3,100,000 for the first time.

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The Government of Canada will lift the 2 percent funding cap for First Nations programs and establish a new fiscal relationship that gives First Nations communities sufficient, predictable and sustained funding to ensure the overall well-being of First Nations. The MOU will start a collaborative process for Canada and First Nations to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing fiscal framework, and develop proposals and recommendations for the design of a new fiscal relationship. A Joint Committee will examine the current fiscal arrangements to identify areas and elements of the current relationship that are impeding progress in moving towards a nation to nation relationship. The Committee will make recommendations by December 31, 2017.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/FOOD SECURITY

Beginning October 1, 2016, the Nutrition North Canada (NNC) program will be expanded to an additional 37 isolated northern communities. This expansion is the result of updates to the community eligibility criteria, and is part of the Budget 2016 commitment to provide an additional \$64.5 million to the NNC program over five years, beginning in 2016-17 and \$13.8 million per year ongoing starting in 2021.

[Link](#)

LABOUR MARKET

Using administrative data, a new Statistics Canada study tracked workers who were ages 35 to 44 in 2001 and recorded their transitions into post-secondary education institutions during the 2001 to 2011 period. The study found that adult male and female workers who were laid off during the 2008-09 recession were two to four percentage points more likely than other adult male and female workers to enroll in post-secondary education in the year of the layoff or in the following year.

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Average weekly earnings of non-farm payroll employees were \$956 in May, little changed (+0.2 percent) from the previous month. Compared with 12 months earlier, average weekly earnings increased 0.9 percent. Non-farm payroll employees worked an average of 32.8 hours per week in May, little changed from April and down from an average of 33.0 hours in May 2015.

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MENTAL HEALTH/INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami released the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy that sets out a series of actions and interventions to address the high number of deaths by suicide among Inuit. The strategy promotes a shared understanding of the context and underlying risk factors for suicide in Inuit communities and guides policy at the regional and national levels through evidence-based approaches to suicide prevention. To support the strategy's implementation, Health Canada announced \$9 million for Inuit-specific approaches to improving mental wellness.

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WOMEN

As of July 1, 2016, the federal government has restored the eligibility of advocacy activities for funding within projects supported by the Women's Program at Status of Women Canada. Advocacy activities directed at federal, provincial/territorial or municipal governments had been declared ineligible for funding consideration in 2007.

[Link](#)

WOMEN/INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The federal government released details of a two-stage process to eliminate known sex-based discrimination in the Indian Act. As part of the first stage, the Government of Canada will work with Indigenous peoples to discuss the structure of engagements with Indigenous organizations to work towards legislative amendments to the Indian registration provisions of the Indian Act. These legislative changes will allow for immediate response to the specific facts in the Descheneaux decision, which must be in place by February 3, 2017, as well as other known sex-based discrimination in Indian registration under the Indian Act. Stage two will provide an opportunity for Indigenous peoples to jointly design a process to examine the broader and systemic issues related to Indian registration and membership, citizenship and identity for First Nations, Métis and non-status Indians.

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