



Canada Social Report

Federal Policy Monitor

March 2017



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

Social policy-related areas highlighted in Budget 2017 include:

- placing an emphasis on innovation and job creation
- changes to Labour Market Agreements
- announcements of funding for affordable housing
- working toward gender equality
- focusing health care spending on home care and mental health
- improving access to early learning child care and affordable housing
- advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples
- creating greater efficiencies in the tax system and eliminating measures that disproportionately benefit the wealthy.

[Link](#)

For further Budget analysis, see [The 2017 Farewell Budget](#).

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS/CHILDREN

Budget 2017 proposes to invest \$7 billion over 10 years, starting in 2018-19, to support and create more high-quality, flexible, fully inclusive and affordable child care spaces across the country. A portion of this investment will be dedicated to improving access to culturally appropriate early learning and child care programs for Indigenous children living on and off reserve. Of this investment, \$95 million will go towards closing data gaps to better understand what child care looks like in Canada and track progress. \$100 million will fund Early Learning and Child Care Innovation. These investments are in addition to the initial investment of \$500 million in Budget 2016 for early learning and child care, including \$100 million for Indigenous early learning and child care.

[Link](#)

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS/EMPLOYMENT

Budget 2017 built on Budget 2016's commitment to make post-secondary education more affordable, including for adult learners looking for new skills. The federal government is expanding eligibility for Canada Student Grants for students attending school part-time and students with children. Together, these changes are expected to make an additional 23,000 students eligible for Canada Student Grants and Loans each year. A new pilot project will test more new approaches to make it easier for adult learners to qualify for Canada Student Grants and Loans.

The government will further support unemployed adults who are retraining by making better use of existing EI flexibilities so that they can enroll and train without fear of losing the benefits they need to support themselves and their families.



Ottawa will also significantly boost federal employment support to provinces and territories by \$2.7 billion over six years.

[Link](#)

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS/YOUTH/EMPLOYMENT

The Youth Employment Strategy (YES) is the federal government's commitment to help youth make a successful transition to the workplace. YES helps youth between the ages of 15 and 30 get the information and gain the skills, job experience and abilities they need to make a successful transition to the workforce. YES includes Skills Link, Career Focus and Summer Work Experience, and is delivered by 11 federal departments. To further expand employment opportunities for young Canadians, Budget 2017 proposes to provide an additional \$395.5 million to YES over three years, starting in 2017-18.

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DEMOGRAPHICS

Using data from the 2001 Census and the 2011 National Household Survey, a new Statistics Canada study entitled, *Aboriginal seniors in population centres in Canada*, found that the number of Aboriginal people 65 years and over more than doubled from 2001 to 2011 to 82,690.

In 2011, more than half (52 percent or 43,130) of Aboriginal seniors were living in population centres. This was a notable change from 2001 when most Aboriginal seniors lived in rural or reserve communities. A population centre is an area with a population of at least 1,000 persons and no fewer than 400 persons per square kilometre.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

Statistics Canada released new tables from the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program. This edition includes information on elementary and secondary school teachers, participation rates in education, working students and labour market transitions.

[Link](#)

EMPLOYMENT

Statistics Canada reported that employment was little changed in February (+15,000 or +0.1 percent). An increase in the number of people working full time offset a decline in the number of people working part time. With fewer people searching for work, the unemployment rate declined by 0.2 percentage points to 6.6 percent, matching the rate observed in January 2015 and the lowest since October 2008. In the 12 months to February, employment rose by 288,000 (+1.6 percent), with most of the gains occurring since July 2016. This coincided with stronger economic growth in the second half of 2016.

[Link](#)

EMPLOYMENT/INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

According to a new Statistics Canada report, *Aboriginal people living*

off-reserve and the labour market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2007-2015, Canada's Aboriginal population has historically had lower labour force participation and employment rates, and a higher unemployment rate, than the non-Aboriginal population.

These trends were exacerbated during the economic downturn of 2008-09. According to key labour market indicators, Aboriginal people were affected more severely, and for a longer duration, by the recent recession than non-Aboriginals. However, their employment and participation rates recovered between 2010 and 2012, reaching pre-recession levels and remaining that way until 2014. While the unemployment rates of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people decreased between 2010 and 2014, neither returned to pre-recession levels.

The period 2014-15 saw some deterioration in employment, unemployment and participation rates for the Aboriginal population – both in absolute and relative terms. This deterioration was concentrated among certain segments of the Aboriginal population, notably women and First Nations people. Geographically, it was concentrated in Alberta and Québec.

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GOVERNANCE

The Government's Expenditure Plan and Main Estimates for 2017-18 outline \$257.9 billion in total budgetary spending authorities, which represents an increase of approximately \$7.8 billion (+3.1 percent) in comparison to the total budgetary authorities outlined in the Main Estimates 2016-17, and an increase of \$751 million when compared to Estimates to date in 2016-17. Of this amount, \$102.1 billion relates to authorities to be voted by Parliament.

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HEALTH

The Auditor General of Canada reported that the Department of Health has not been providing nurses and other health care personnel with the support they need to care for Nunavummiut.

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The federal government and the province of Québec agreed to new targeted federal funding over 10 years for investments in home care and mental health care. Over the next 10 years, the federal government will provide Québec with an additional \$2.52 billion in funds targeted to support initiatives in home care and mental health. The two governments will discuss indicators and mechanisms for reporting to citizens that reflect the principle of asymmetrical federalism as recognized in 2004.

[Link](#)

The federal government and the province of Ontario announced that, over the next 10 years, the federal government will provide Ontario with an additional \$4.2 billion:



- \$2.3 billion for better home care including addressing critical home care infrastructure requirements
- \$1.9 billion in support of mental health initiatives.

The two governments will develop performance indicators and mechanisms for annual reporting to citizens, as well as a detailed plan on how these funds will be spent, over and above existing programming.

[Link](#)

The federal government and the province of Alberta announced that, over the next 10 years, the federal government will provide Alberta with an additional \$1.3 billion:

- \$703.2 million for better home care including addressing critical home care infrastructure requirements
- \$586.0 million in support of mental health initiatives.

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Regulations have been established that will require drug companies experiencing shortages and discontinuances to publicly report them. Drug manufacturers are now required to report on DrugShortagesCanada.ca:

- an anticipated drug shortage
- a discontinuation of a drug six months in advance
- any previously unreported shortage within five days of learning about it.

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The federal government announced the launch of Sit Kicker. Sit Kicker is a nationwide initiative to encourage Canadians who work in office settings to reduce sedentary behaviour and “kick the sit” out of their work habits by shifting workplace culture towards more stand-friendly physical work environments. The Public Health Agency of Canada is providing \$1.2 million over two years in funding to Public Inc. to implement the Sit Kicker initiative in up to 1,500 workplaces across Canada.

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INCOME SECURITY

Statistics Canada reported that, in January, 567,900 people received Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, little changed from the previous month (-1,900 or -0.3 percent). Provincially, Alberta recorded the largest decrease in beneficiaries in January (-6.2 percent). Smaller declines occurred in Saskatchewan (-1.9 percent) and Newfoundland and Labrador (-1.1 percent). Conversely, the number of beneficiaries increased in Québec (+2.8 percent), Manitoba (+1.5 percent) and Prince Edward Island (+1.1 percent). It was little changed in the remaining provinces. In the

12 months to January, the number of EI beneficiaries in Canada was up by 20,300 or 3.7 percent, largely as a result of increases in Alberta.

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The federal and Ontario governments and the seven Williams Treaties First Nations agreed to work together toward a shared and just resolution of a longstanding treaty-related dispute – the Alderville litigation. Canada and Ontario have also recognized the pre-existing treaty harvesting rights of the Williams Treaties First Nations’ members to hunt, trap, fish and gather for food, social and ceremonial purposes in certain areas covered by pre-Confederation treaties.

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/LITERACY

The federal government has been partnering with the Martin Family Initiative to support innovative teaching focused on early literacy in First Nations schools. In 2015, two pilot programs were shown to increase Grade 3 literacy levels from 13 to 81 percent. Following that success, Budget 2016 invested \$30 million over five years to support the growth of the model school network to 20 schools by 2020.

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MENTAL HEALTH

In 2015, almost three-quarters (72.4 percent) of Canadians ages 12 or older reported that their mental health was excellent or very good. An additional 21.7 percent of Canadians reported their mental health was good, while 5.9 percent said that their mental health was fair or poor. New data from Statistics Canada’s *2015 Canadian Community Health Survey* provide insight into how Canadians perceive various aspects of their own well-being including mental health, life satisfaction and daily life stress.

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WOMEN

Statistics Canada reported that more than 80 percent of women in Canada ages 25 to 54 participated in the labour market in 2015, compared with just over 20 percent in 1950. A smaller proportion of men participated in the labour market in 2015 (90.9 percent) than in 1950 (97.1 percent). While the gender gap in labour force participation rates decreased from 75.5 percentage points in 1950 to 8.9 percentage points in 2015, it did not disappear. These findings are taken from “Women and paid work,” a chapter of *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report*.

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