



Canada Social Report

# Federal Policy Monitor

April 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/EMPLOYMENT

The federal government announced a Targeted Employment Strategy for Newcomers that will reduce barriers to employment. Three new measures include:

- improved pre-arrival supports to start the foreign credential recognition process before arriving in Canada
- a loan program that will help with the costs of having foreign credentials recognized, such as licensing exams, training, travel and skills upgrading
- a pilot project to test innovative approaches to help newcomers get Canadian work experience.

Budget 2017 proposes to commit \$27.5 million over five years, starting in 2017-18, and \$5.5 million per year thereafter for the strategy.

[Link](#)

#### BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS/INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/YOUTH

Budget 2017 committed \$18.9 million over five years, and ongoing funding of \$5.5 million every four years thereafter, to support Indigenous youth through sport. It includes stable and ongoing funding for the North American Indigenous Games, in support of the commitment to fully address the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

[Link](#)

#### BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS/MENTAL HEALTH

The federal government plans to provide targeted funding of \$5 billion over 10 years to provinces and territories to improve access to mental health services. This investment is aimed at improving access and shortening wait times for mental health support for families, children and youth. These funds complement federal investments announced in Budget 2017 of \$828.2 million over five years for improving Indigenous health. The funding includes an additional \$118.2 million over five years to improve mental health programming specifically for First Nations and Inuit.

[Link](#)

#### EDUCATION

A new Statistics Canada study, *Youth postsecondary attendance by parental income and province of residence*, uses family-level taxation data to provide insights on postsecondary enrollment rates. The percentage of 19 year-olds enrolled in postsecondary education in Canada increased steadily from 2001 to 2014. While there were more youth enrolled in postsecondary education from across the parental income distribution, the increase was somewhat larger among those from the bottom of the distribution. Larger gains were also registered among youth from Ontario, Québec and the Atlantic provinces, compared with youth from Western Canada.

[Link](#)



## EMPLOYMENT

Statistics Canada reported that employment was little changed in March (+19,000 or +0.1 percent), while the unemployment rate rose 0.1 percentage points to 6.7 percent. Compared with 12 months earlier, employment increased by 276,000 (+1.5 percent), mainly in full-time work. Over the same period, the total number of hours worked rose 0.7 percent.

[Link](#)

Statistics Canada reported that the number of regular Employment Insurance (EI) beneficiaries fell by 11,700 (-2.1 percent) to 554,200 in February, similar to the level of June 2016 – just before the administrative changes that took effect last July. (Information on the [2016 EI changes](#) is available on Employment and Social Development Canada's website.)

[Link](#)

## GOVERNANCE

The Parliamentary Budget Officer released *Economic and Fiscal Outlook – April 2017*. It reviews GDP, GDP inflation and nominal GDP rates, and provides debt and debt-to-GDP ratio estimates. Four key issues are discussed: transparency and accessibility to the government's fiscal plan; an assessment of the government's prudent approach to fiscal planning; slow current spending rates on infrastructure projects; and the management of operating expenses.

[Link](#)

## HEALTH

The federal government is investing \$3.1 million over four years for Living Green and Healthy – A Mobile Program for Youth and their Families. The program includes the development of an online tool and mobile app that will encourage Canadians to adopt and sustain healthier behaviours over time. Three funding partners – the Childhood Obesity Foundation, Ayogo Health Inc. and Merck Canada – will develop and disseminate the program with assistance from the Heart and Stroke Foundation. The University of British Columbia will lead on evaluating the impact of the mobile program.

[Link](#)

## HOMELESSNESS

The federal government announced it would invest \$7.9 million in A Way Home: Working Together to End Youth Homelessness. More than 1,300 youth and their families will participate in the project, which will be delivered by a partnership among project representatives, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (York University), the MaRS Centre for Impact Investing, Ontario and Alberta, and dozens of community partners. The Government of Canada's contribution will be delivered through the Skills Link program.

[Link](#)

## HOUSING

The Rental Construction Financing initiative will provide \$2.5 billion in low-cost loans to support the construction of 10,000 new rental housing, relieving pressure in rental markets that are experiencing low vacancy rates and high rents. The initiative will complement commitments made in Budget 2017, which will invest more than \$11.2 billion over 11 years for initiatives designed to build, renew and repair Canada's stock of affordable housing. These investments are made as part of a new National Housing Strategy to be launched later this year.

[Link](#)

Effective May 15, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation will introduce enhancements to its multi-unit mortgage loan insurance. This measure will address the rental needs of Canadians while supporting efforts to expand and preserve the supply of affordable rental housing.

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## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The federal government, the province of BC and the First Nations Leadership Council signed a Reconciliation Charter to formalize their commitment to reduce the number of First Nations children in care, keep families together and support First Nations youth to successfully transition out of care. The Charter further establishes a joint working group including representatives from all three groups to focus on concrete actions such as legislative reform, policy and program development, and create an effective fiscal model to support First Nations child welfare in British Columbia.

[Link](#)

The Government of Canada and the Whitecap Dakota First Nation signed an historic Agreement-in-Principle, a key step on the path to self-government. A final self-government agreement will remove the Whitecap Dakota First Nation from under the Indian Act and ensure the First Nation has greater control over the decisions that affect its community. The control includes how the First Nation will manage its resources, promote and enhance its culture, build on its positive accountability and governance track record, and build on its successes in community and economic development.

[Link](#)

To ensure that First Nation and Inuit students have the same opportunities for success as other Canadian students, Budget 2017 investments will increase funding to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program by \$90 million over two years, beginning in 2017-18. Along with Indigenous partners, the government will also undertake a review of all current federal programs that support Indigenous students who wish to pursue post-secondary education. The purpose of the review will be to ensure that these programs meet the needs of individual students while supporting attendance at, and completion of, a post-secondary degree or other credential.

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## LABOUR MARKET

Statistics Canada released “Annual review of the labour market, 2016” in the *Labour Statistics: Research Papers* series. The review analyzes current labour market trends using a combination of major indicators from the *Labour Force Survey*; the *Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours*; the *Job Vacancy and Wage Survey*; and Employment Insurance statistics.  
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## WOMEN/MENTAL HEALTH

The government announced eight measures to better respond to sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence. These include improved statistical recordkeeping, training for federal and provincial judges, continued funding for victim support programs, improvements to the judicial appointments process to ensure diversity and \$100.9 million over five years to support a Gender-Based Violence Strategy. This strategy will be based on three pillars: prevention, support for survivors and their families, and promotion of responsive legal and justice systems.  
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