



Canada Social Report

Federal Policy Monitor

September 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.

CHILDREN

The federal government announced a three-year bilateral agreement reaffirming its commitment and support of the unique early learning and child care needs of Nunavut. The agreement allocates \$7 million over three years. Investments will focus on early learning and child care programs and services.

[Link](#)

Statistics Canada reported that, according to the *2014 General Social Survey on Victimization*, the proportion of Canadians who self-reported having experienced childhood physical abuse was lower among those born between 1980 and 1999 than it was for people born between 1940 and 1979. Self-reported data on childhood abuse are different from police-reported data, because they include incidents that may not have been reported to police and child protection services.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION

Statistics Canada reported that, in general, the tuition fees associated with postsecondary degree programs increased in 2017-18. The actual cost that students pay depends on their program of study and the grants and assistance they may receive. Tuition for undergraduate programs for Canadian full-time students was, on average, \$6,571 in 2017-18, up 3.1 percent from the previous academic year. The average cost for graduate programs was \$6,907, a 1.8 percent increase over 2016-17.

[Link](#)

The Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) is a \$2-billion initiative designed to modernize research and commercialization facilities at Canadian universities, colleges and polytechnics. Through the program, the Government of Canada is partnering with the provinces and territories to fund projects that:

- improve the scale or quality of facilities for research and innovation, including spaces for the commercialization of research
- improve the scale or quality of facilities for specialized training at colleges focused on industry needs
- improve the environmental sustainability of research and innovation-related facilities at universities and colleges.

SIF supports up to 50 percent of a project's eligible costs. The remaining funding comes from other partners, such as provincial and territorial governments, and the institutions themselves.

[Link](#)

New tables from the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program are now available, providing insights on the school-aged population and elementary and secondary education in Canada. This edition includes information on the school-aged population living on low income, results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA),



education finances, apprenticeships and educational attainment of the Canadian population.

Tables reveal that in Canada in 2015, 15 percent of youth ages 5 to 19 were in low income families. For 5- to 19-year-olds living in lone-parent families, this proportion was almost double at 28 percent.

[Link](#)

EDUCATION/EMPLOYMENT

The federal government announced that \$515 million will be made available to support the work of more than 4,000 researchers at 71 institutions across Canada. This is Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada's largest annual investment, and assists researchers by offering financial support through scholarships, fellowships, research supplements and equipment grants. The funds will support scientists, engineers and graduate students working in a variety of disciplines such as astronomy, chemistry, biology, mathematics, medicine and physics.

[Link](#)

EMPLOYMENT

Through the Innovation and Skills Plan, the Government is supporting the growth of Canadian companies by encouraging the public and private sectors to collaborate in bringing more early-stage research to market. Specifically, the Government is:

- investing \$1.4 billion in new financing for clean technology providers
- investing \$1.2 billion in the [Strategic Innovation Fund](#) and \$950 million in the [Innovation Superclusters Initiative](#) to increase business investment in research and development, which accelerates innovation and creates highly-skilled jobs
- providing Canadian companies with faster access to top talent from all around the world, under the [Global Skills Strategy](#), to support the scale up of high-growth companies and keep the jobs they create in Canada
- investing \$125 million to launch the [Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy](#)
- creating the conditions for big-data analytics to drive innovation and job creation.

[Link](#)

In July, 536,600 people received regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, up 6,800 (+1.3 percent) from June. This is the first increase in the number of beneficiaries in eight months. The increase reflects a reduction in the waiting period to receive EI benefits from two weeks to one week, effective January 1, 2017, which disproportionately affected occupations in educational services in July.

[Link](#)

HEALTH

In September 2016, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) to provide a cost estimate of implementing a national Pharmacare program. The Committee provided the program's framework, including the inclusive list of drugs to be covered by Pharmacare based on Québec's formulary, eligibility requirements, co-payment levels and eligibility requirements for co-payment exemptions.

Of the \$28.5 billion in estimated pharmaceutical expenses in 2015-16, \$24.6 billion would be eligible for a national Pharmacare program. These are costs currently incurred by governments (\$11.9 billion), private insurance plans (\$9.0 billion) and patients (\$3.6 billion).

Report Link: [Federal Cost of a National Pharmacare Program](#)
Release Link

HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH

Unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, heavy drinking and illicit drug use, are risk factors for chronic disease. More than one-third of Canadians age 12 or older (around 11 million people) reported one or more of these unhealthy behaviours, according to new data from the 2016 Canadian Community Health Survey. Half of 18-to-34 year olds (50.3 percent) reported at least one of these unhealthy behaviours. While Canadian youth ages 12 to 17 are below the legal age for buying alcohol and cigarettes, 10.1 percent reported one of the three unhealthy behaviours.

In 2016, 49.5 percent of those who reported their mental health as 'fair' or 'poor' had at least one of these unhealthy behaviours, compared with 35.9 percent of those who reported 'very good' or 'excellent' mental health.

[Link](#)

HEALTH/SENIORS

Statistics Canada's latest edition of *Health Reports 2017* focuses on seniors at nutritional risk. It found that such individuals were 60 percent more likely to die prematurely and 20 percent more likely to be hospitalized compared with seniors who were not at risk. The findings are from an analysis of the *2008-09 Canadian Community Health Survey – Healthy Aging*.

[Link](#)

HOUSING

The federal government launched the Student Challenge for Affordable Rental Housing, which is part of the federal government's Affordable Rental Innovation Fund. Students can work individually or create a team, the goal is to rethink and revolutionize the affordable rental housing sector. Cash prizes of \$10,000 will be awarded to winning submissions.



In addition, winners may be eligible for funding to help transform their innovative concept into a tangible project.

[Link](#)

INCOME SECURITY

The Canada Employment Insurance Commission announced that the Employment Insurance premium rate for 2018 is \$1.66 per \$100 of insurable earnings for 2018. This represents a 3-cent increase for employees over the 2017 rate, and 4-cent increase for employers who pay 1.4 times the employee rate. The Commission also announced program changes for a number of groups, including the self-employed.

[Link](#)

A Statistics Canada study, *Chronic Low Income Among Immigrants in Canada and its Communities*, provides new evidence on the incidence of chronic low income among immigrants age 25 or older during the 2000s as well as variations across 29 Canadian cities and regions. Chronic low income is defined as having a family income under a low income cut-off for five or more consecutive years. The study finds that the share of immigrants living in chronic low income increased from 15.8 percent in 2000 to 16.3 percent in 2004, but then declined to 12.3 percent by 2012. Among the comparison group, which is composed primarily of persons born in Canada, the share living in chronic low-income declined from 6.1 percent in 2000 to 3.7 percent in 2012.

[Link](#)

Statistics Canada released data from the 2016 Census that presents incomes of Canadians as measured in 2015 and looks at trends over the 2005-to-2015 period. During that 10-year span, the median total income of Canadian households rose from \$63,457 in 2005 to \$70,336 in 2015, a 10.8 percent increase.

Led by growth in resource-rich provinces, median income rose 10.8 percent in Canada from 2005 to 2015, compared with 9.2 percent growth in the previous decade and a decline of 1.8 percent the decade before that. This growth was not distributed evenly across Canada. Resource-based provinces and regions had the highest income growth, led by Nunavut and Saskatchewan. Median income growth was slowest in Ontario and Québec, the two provinces with the largest populations and significant manufacturing activity.

[Link](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES/EMPLOYMENT

The federal government announced funding for the project *Going the Distance: Engaging the Hospitality Sector in Aboriginal Literacy and Essential Skills Training Development*, which will help Indigenous people improve their essential skills. The Further Education Society of Alberta, a non-profit organization that works to build the literacy and essential skills of learners, will partner with 15 employment service providers in British Columbia and Alberta to help 330 Indigenous job seekers improve their

skills to prepare for and get jobs in the tourism and hospitality industry. The Society will work with at least seven employers to customize training that meets on-the-job expectations to ensure that participants have a smooth transition into employment.

[Link](#)

LABOUR MARKET

Statistics Canada's August 2017 Labour Force Survey reported that employment was little changed in August (+22,000 or +0.1 percent). The unemployment rate declined by 0.1 percentage points to 6.2 percent, matching the most recent low of October 2008, the month prior to the 2008-09 labour-market downturn. In the 12 months to August, employment rose by 374,000 (+2.1 percent), with gains in both full-time (+213,000 or +1.5 percent) and part-time work (+161,000 or +4.6 percent). Over this period, the number of hours worked increased by 2.2 percent.

[Link](#)

WOMEN

The inaugural meeting of the Gender Equality Network Canada was held in Toronto. The network, made up of 150 women leaders from a variety of sectors, organizations and communities across the country, will address systemic barriers to gender equality in Canada. Its leaders have been nominated for their efforts at the local level to advance gender equality with women, girls and gender non-conforming people. The Canadian Women's Foundation has been granted \$1.3 million to advance this effort. This initiative is part of an investment of more than \$18 million by the federal government to support organizations and engage women leaders across the country.

[Link](#)