

# The Canada social transfer and the deconstruction of pan - Canadian social policy <sup>[1]</sup>

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Excerpts from introduction:

This paper sets federal funding for health care to the side and instead puts intergovernmental arrangements as it relates to the Canada Social Transfer—postsecondary education, social assistance, social services and (since 2000) early childhood development, learning and child care—

under the spotlight. McIntosh (2004 pg. 38) refers to the CST as "what's left over", an accurate assessment given the post 1996 privileging of federal health transfers over other social policy areas. The Parliamentary Budget Office (2011 pg. 16) projects that between 2010/11 and 2025/26

federal contributions through the CST will cover only about 10 per cent of the cost provinces incur in running their postsecondary education, social assistance and social services programs—a significant reduction from the 50 per cent federal share that contributed to building the Canadian welfare state.

Despite evidence that lack of income and inadequate early learning, education and training contribute as much—and sometimes more—to health outcomes than the 'illness' system, there has been almost no stakeholder and media attention paid to provincial social programs beyond health care. Post 1996 provincial governments appear to have been left on their own to bear the cost of human capital development for their citizens, with each responding according to their priorities and the resources available once their health care costs have been met. The federal government takes minimal responsibility, generally regarding social programs beyond health care as a provincial responsibility. They, as well as provincial governments and Canadians at large appear to have fallen prey to 'collective forgetting' about the historic role that the Government of Canada used to play in transferring money to provinces to support social programs beyond health care. Even the 2012 Québec student protest over tuition increases did not raise the impact of the 1996 federal transfer

cutbacks on provincial postsecondary education resources. A recent report for the Government of Ontario on ways to get Ontario back to fiscal balance actually suggested eliminating the Canada Social Transfer, replacing federal transfers with tax points (Drummond 2012). If this were to happen a federal role in provincial social programs beyond health would completely disappear.

**Region:** Canada <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** federal programs <sup>[3]</sup>

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