
JUNE 2021

RESEARCH UPDATE





RESEARCH UPDATE

JUNE 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

A Pandemic of Inequalities.....	1
<i>Mayrane Galante</i>	
Long-Term Care and Federalism.....	3
<i>Rebecca Jansen</i>	
Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta.....	5
<i>Hanna Nash</i>	
Taking Stock at the One-Year Mark: The Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Canada.....	7
<i>Laurel Van De Keere</i>	
Reviewing and Restructuring Canada's Immigration Policy and Programs After COVID-19.....	9
<i>Jayme Wong</i>	

Publisher:
Edmonton Social Planning
Council Suite 200, Bassani
Building
10544-106 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 2X6

Prepared and edited by
Jenn Rossiter,
Research Services and Capacity
Building Coordinator

This report is published by the
Edmonton Social Planning Council.
Articles, quotes, and commentaries
reflect the views of the authors and
do not necessarily represent the
official position or policy of the
Edmonton Social Planning Council.

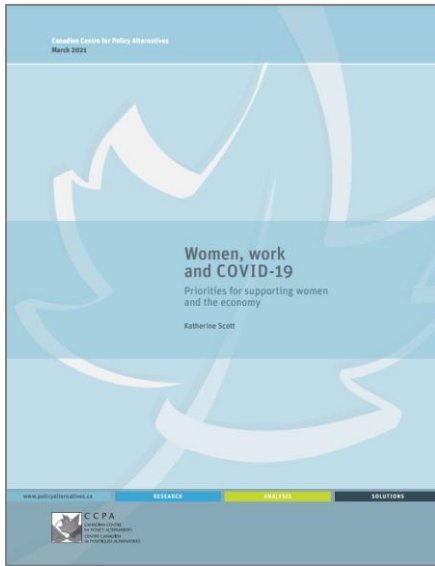


Licensed under a Creative
Commons Attribution-
NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0
International License.

Research Update is a volunteer-driven publication that
strives to provide stakeholders and community members
with up-to-date reviews on recently published social
research reports and publications.

A PANDEMIC OF INEQUALITIES

A review by Mayrane Galante



The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is a non-partisan, independent research institute based in Ontario that focuses on social issues and policies. One of their lead researchers, Katherine Scott, is also the director of Making Women Count, an initiative on gender and public policies. Through an extensive quantitative research project, Scott wrote the report: *Women, Work and COVID-19: Priorities for Supporting Women and the Economy*.

Even though reopening may be happening soon for several provinces, it is not possible to say that Canada has completely overcome COVID-19—not in terms of health risks nor from an economic standpoint. Scott's research analyzed data since spring 2020, focusing on the economic impact that COVID-19 has had on women, with a special focus on those who are marginalized due to their ethnicity, nationality, or cultural background.

The issues covered in this report result from centuries of inequality toward women, exacerbated by COVID-19. For example, in comparison to men, women have been participating in the workforce for a shorter period of time, working fewer hours, and/or earning less. This results from several different reasons. Social norms still play a large role in how women are placed in society—they are expected to be caregivers for the family first and foremost while everything else is secondary, including their careers. Also, because of the overall structure and assumption that women are “always the caregiver,” they tend to occupy positions in the workforce that are directly related with dealing with people: nurses, cashiers, retail, waiters, health care workers, and so on.

This directly affects another finding that, due to the caregiver role women are expected to have for their families, they automatically have fewer hours for paid employment. With the pandemic situation of lockdowns, business closures, and uncertainty surrounding jobs, women have been affected more by reductions in paid hours. The research demonstrates that even though some recovery has been observed in a number of jobs and sectors, women are still falling behind when it comes to economic recovery. Research shows that the unemployment rate for women in the first few months of the pandemic dropped to 68.5%, a level not seen in over 40 years (p. 26).

With school closures and uncertainty regarding when and if classes would return, many mothers faced another challenge of taking responsibility to home-school their children, take care of the family, and maintain a paying job. None of these would be easy on their own, but when added to the stress and concerns of the pandemic it is understandable why things have been harder on women. Another issue highlighted in the report is that women occupy a greater portion of front-line positions, so mothers in these jobs have increased preoccupation in keeping their family safe and worrying about transmitting the virus to their families.

Through her research, Scott demonstrates that economic recovery has not been an equal experience between women and men. This is emphasized when comparing those who are paid minimum wage: by the middle of 2020, men had recovered almost all their work hours whereas women were again falling behind.

Canada is indeed a diverse country, but this does not mean that women and minorities receive equal access to support or recovery efforts. In fact, women who are new Canadians (those who immigrated in the last 10 years), have Indigenous heritage, or are from a minority ethnicity are the ones who have been hit hardest as they often have to settle for low paying jobs, unregistered work, or market niches that are more susceptible to variations than those created by the pandemic. Another point is that even though there was financial support available, many women did not qualify for the support.

These inequities have been around for a long time, but were highlighted by this pandemic. Women need constant support from government and policies to address ongoing issues, and especially those created by COVID-19—such as the unfortunate regress of employment rates. It is necessary that politicians, and those in power, look into research such as this when working on a recovery plan for the Canadian economy in order to address the particular difficulties faced by women.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Scott, K. (2021). *Women, work and COVID-19: Priorities for supporting women and the economy*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/women-work-and-covid19>

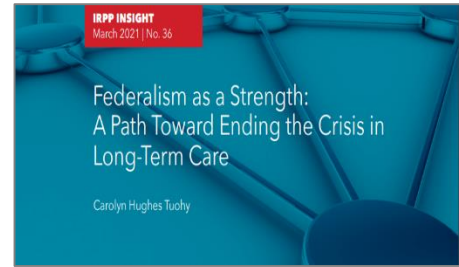
GET TO KNOW OUR VOLUNTEER:

Mayrane is on the fourth year of the BA in Psychology - Applied Emphasis at Concordia University of Edmonton. She is also the VP of Academic for the students' association and team lead of Peer Support. She is passionate about mental health and social change and plans on becoming a therapist.

LONG-TERM CARE AND FEDERALISM

A review by Rebecca Jansen

In the wake of COVID-19, faults within Canada's provincially regulated long-term care facilities became prominent news headlines. As some of us may recall, 80% of Canadian deaths occurred in long-term care facilities during the first eight months of COVID-19 (p. 3). These glaring statistics not only drew public attention to long-neglected issues but reignited calls for an entirely new long-term care system. As author Carolyn Hughes Tuohy advocates, a more substantial role from the federal government may just be the answer to our perils. In her paper *Federalism as a Strength: A Path Toward Ending the Crisis in Long-Term Care*, published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy, Tuohy outlines an augmented federalized long-term care strategy. A professor emeritus of political science at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, her policy-focused approach embodies what she deems a *mosaic* type of reform.



A mosaic reform first requires taking advantage of the current political climate to build on existing models, rather than dismantling them entirely. The author also calls attention to where federal and provincial jurisdictions overlap concurrently, specifically old age security and immigration. Fundamentally rethinking the model of public finance for long-term care to resemble a pension rather than health insurance would be a vital first step. It would allow for a scheme that is more “sustainable, equitable across economic classes and regions, [and] adaptive to demographic change,” while “harness[ing] the fiscal capacity and risk-pooling reach of the federal government” (p. 16). Tuohy suggests creating a Canadian version of long-term care insurance that would be attached to the existing Canada Pension Plan/ Quebec Pension Plan (CPP/ QPP) as a supplementary benefit, funded through employer and employee contributions (p. 17). “But unlike the CPP/QPP, it would be assignable to a qualifying third-party provider of institutional or home care...[where] need would be assessed through existing provincial mechanisms” (p.17).

In addition to federal finance reform, Tuohy also sees immigration reform as a way forward. At present, one-third of long-term support workers in Canada are immigrants (p. 21). Amending immigration policy for health care personnel could expand the workforce and raise national qualification standards. These amendments could theoretically ensure better quality in service and care, relieve chronic workforce shortages, and create a self-regulation regime across the country. Immigration reform could therefore address the various care-related shortcomings of the current long-term care system, while simultaneously preparing for the surge of long-term care beds that will be needed over the next 15 years, as predicted by the Conference Board of Canada (p. 14).

Tuohy also stresses the need for rigorous federal-provincial negotiations to mobilize policy action. As such, fertile ground must be prepared for such talks to occur. Tuohy suggests two routes toward first steps: public pensions (specifically the Department of Finance) and health care providers. Both routes require cross-country consultations and commissions of inquiry. Conveniently, this approach would not require a “separate institutional apparatus” (p. 24), allowing for ease of decision-making and implementation. In addition, holding a commission of inquiry would capitalize on building a high-profile, national strategy consensus, which will keep attention focused on long-term care once COVID-19 passes.

Ultimately, to see effective change, federal and provincial governments, along with public and private providers, need to work together—which will be no easy feat. Tuohy offers a collective but pragmatic approach, exploiting the strengths of federalism while providing techniques to

mitigate potential weaknesses. She addresses issues of responsibility, reflects on comparative systems used abroad, and offers clear and practical steps forward. What remains to be seen is the time needed to see positive change on the front lines. Policy reforms take time; how do we mitigate safety risks and provide better quality of care in the meantime, especially in the wake of COVID-19?

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Tuohy, C. H. (2021). *Federalism as a strength: A path toward ending the crisis in long-term care*. IRPP Insight (No. 36). Institute for Research on Public Policy. https://centre.irpp.org/research-studies/federalism-as-a-strength-a-path-toward-ending-the-crisis-in-long-term-care/?mc_cid=75a9683844&mc_eid=4a6bf13a01#study-tab-text

GET TO KNOW OUR VOLUNTEER:

Rebecca Jansen is currently a graduate student at the University of Alberta studying Educational Policy Studies specializing in Adult, Community and Higher Ed. With over ten years of experience as an adult and community educator, her primary research focus is on embodied learning, indigenization, and policy reform to realign power imbalances within social institutions that impact local communities.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE IN ALBERTA

A review by Hanna Nash

An Examination of Regulatory and Other Measures to Support Quality Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta



A DISCUSSION PAPER
Prepared for the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care
and The Muttart Foundation
by
Jane Beach
November 2020

In Jane Beach's paper, *An Examination of Regulatory and Other Measures to Support Quality Early Learning and Child Care in Alberta*, the author examines the history and future state of Alberta's early learning and child care (ELCC) approaches in light of provincial legislation tabled in November 2008.

Commissioned by the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care and The Muttart Foundation, Beach's paper highlights where improvements can be made in the areas of child care, daycare, and preschool (child care programs before kindergarten) and explains why changes are necessary to Alberta's approach to ELCC. Beach is an early childhood education and care researcher and policy consultant, based in Victoria, British Columbia with 25 years of experience in national and international studies on early child care.

Beach makes the argument that ELCC in Alberta is a fundamental pillar in our province's continual development and ability to raise a healthy society. Beach demonstrates that support for ELCC is now internationally recognized as a contributing factor to local economic progress—advocating for gender equality by allowing mothers to rejoin the work force and assisting in the development of young children. The report focuses on five key areas that have led to Alberta's ELCC development so far and areas to continue improvements to best support quality programs for the benefit of the province, now and in the future. Beach examines:

- the history of Alberta's involvement in early child care programs,
- the accessibility and quality of programs,
- the regulatory measures that are now in place,
- a case study on Norway's approach to ELCC, and
- the responsibility of stakeholders in sustaining quality programming and pushing for improvements through open discussions and dialogue to seek a variety of perspectives.

In Canada, the responsibility of ELCC rests primarily on provinces and territories. Although federal funding is part of the structure of childhood development programs, the creation of programming and standards rests with each province and territory. This has undoubtedly contributed to a nation of mixed standards and outcomes, with some provinces having greater involvement in ELCC and others participating only when compulsory. Additionally, for-profit versus publicly-run ELCC centres often have different standards and financial costs to parents. Within Alberta, mixed structures exist with many ELCC centres belonging to private stakeholders, yet, in Jasper, Drayton Valley, and Beaumont, the local municipalities run ELCC centres (p. 6).

Beach's report is a comprehensive review of child care in Alberta. The author closely examines the contributing factors (both monitored and neglected by the provincial government) that impact the health, safety, and education of young children along with the financial outcomes ELCC centres have on families. The report provides a revealing look into the attitudes toward ELCC that exist within Alberta, and its changing values.

Though Beach's paper is thoroughly researched, it does not look into the actual outcomes of standards that Alberta implemented so much as the factors that impact quality due to a lack of available information. Too often, when governments consider ELCC, availability and affordability rather than influences of standards (such as the qualifications of staff, number of children per centre, outdoor and indoor environments, and curriculum, if any, that the ELCC centre offers) are at the forefront of discussions (p. 30). Data to explore the results of previously determined standards would be helpful to shape how new standards should be created for the province, and why.

Since Beach's report was published in November 2020, Alberta's provincial government has released a new child care act, in February 2021, for the purposes of licensing, inspecting, and monitoring child care programs.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Beach, J. (2020). *An examination of regulatory and other measures to support quality early learning and child care in Alberta*. Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care.
<https://www.ecelc.ca/publications-archive/rzxkjnn83rlps2rvf7riw5fzwxocov-fdw8b-mzbkl-xlh5j>

GET TO KNOW OUR VOLUNTEER:

Hanna Nash enjoys ballet performances and other live theatre, as well as outdoor sports, and travelling to new countries. Hanna is interested in sharing information and knowledge to Edmonton's diverse communities.

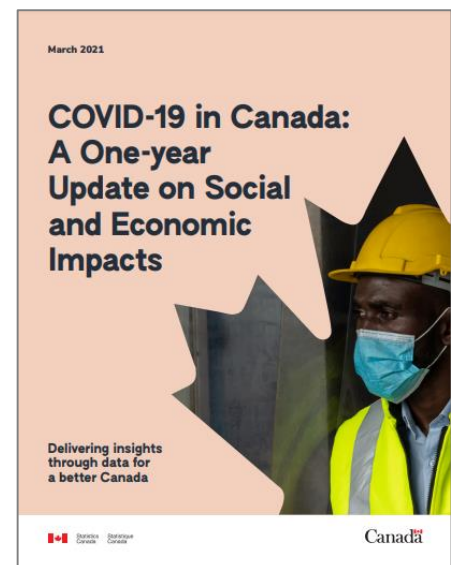
TAKING STOCK AT THE ONE-YEAR MARK: THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19 IN CANADA

A review by Laurel Van De Keere

The year-in-review report *COVID-19 in Canada: A One-Year Update on Social and Economic Impacts* was published by Statistics Canada in March 2021 using statistical information provided by Canadian citizens, businesses, governments, and other institutions. The report provides a snapshot of the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians one year after the country first entered lockdown in March 2020, and points the reader to the Statistics Canada website to obtain more detailed information through an analysis series, dashboards, and the Canadian Statistical Geospatial Explorer. Report findings are organized and presented in four broad themes: the ongoing response to COVID-19, indirect health impacts, social and economic inequalities, and recovery efforts.

Canadians' Continued Response to COVID-19

The report begins by pointing out that one year into the pandemic, the majority of Canadians were continuing to abide by public health best practices such as physical distancing, mask wearing, and self-isolating following possible exposures. However, vaccine hesitancy increased over the same period, with young adults, those having completed grade 13 or less, and Black and other visible minority Canadians being less likely to get a vaccine. The report notes that vaccination is critical to protecting essential health care workers, among whom visible minority groups are overrepresented, and to protecting Canadian workers with limited opportunities to work from home—such as those working in social services, education, and retail; the majority of whom are female.



Health Impacts

In addition to increased mortality rates among seniors, young males, and Black and other visible minority groups in urban centres, Canadians experienced a number of indirect health impacts from COVID-19. As part of the pandemic response, many non-urgent medical procedures were cancelled across Canada, including disruptions to cancer screenings, which the report suggests may lead to increases in cancer rates and deaths. Self-reported perception of mental health decreased among all types of Canadians with the onset of pandemic restrictions, notably among youth and working-age populations, but improved during periods of eased restrictions and school re-openings. Most health care workers reported worsening mental health and stress levels compared to prior to the pandemic. Calls to police services in response to shoplifting, break and entering, vehicle theft, and assaults all declined compared to the year prior, giving way to an increasing proportion of mental health-related calls for wellness checks, emotional crises, and domestic disturbances.

Social and Economic Impacts

The report draws from assorted Statistics Canada data to illustrate the uneven nature of COVID-19's social and economic impacts, both during and following the pandemic. On average, COVID-19 posed a greater risk to Indigenous and other visible minority groups due to higher rates of

underlying health conditions. At the time of publishing, these groups were also experiencing higher levels of unemployment, financial difficulties, and representation in low-wage jobs, making it more difficult to meet basic household financial commitments than before the pandemic. Young Canadians were also particularly hard hit by job losses and increased barriers to enrolment in education and training. While returns-to-work following the easing of restrictions were the highest amongst professions with work from home capacity (such as finance, insurance, education, and professional, scientific, and technical industries), sustained work interruptions continued to disproportionately impact financially vulnerable families and low-wage workers, worsening pre-existing earnings inequalities. In many cases, impacts on these groups had widened pre-pandemic inequalities, threatening the possibility of an inclusive recovery.

Recovery

By March 2021, economic activity remained lower than pre-pandemic levels based on indicators in nearly every sector, despite the assistance provided by a variety of emergency response supports. As a demographic group, young females were the least likely to have returned to pre-pandemic employment levels, with workers in lower paying service industries such as accommodation, food services, arts, entertainment, and recreation also remaining severely affected. Productivity levels rose in more digitally-intensive industries compared to pre-pandemic levels. The report notes that by March 2021, it remained unclear whether many of these changes would be temporary or permanent, but suggests that immigration and investments in automation, robotics, infrastructure, and sustainable technologies may be cornerstones to economic recovery in Canada.

Discussion

Statistics Canada's report distills a wealth of statistical information about COVID-19's current and possible future impacts on Canadians in a textually and visually-accessible format. Due to the breadth of topics covered, at times the report glazes over important trends, such as the pandemic's impacts on Canadians experiencing homelessness, recent immigrants, or Canadians with substance dependences. To its credit, while not covered in the report, some of the resources referenced throughout the report do link to further data that paints a broader picture of important trends left out for the sake of brevity.

One useful feature of the report is a series of questions woven throughout; for example, "to what extent will the adoption of new business technologies [such as automation] affect workers?" (p. 43) and "will investment in new [environmental and clean technology products] provide reasonable stimulus for job and income growth?" (p. 47). These questions may serve as a useful tool to encourage personal or group reflection, or to identify possible areas for further research.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Statistics Canada. (2021). *COVID-19 in Canada: A one-year update on social and economic impacts*. <http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2021001-eng.pdf?st=VI542iPE>

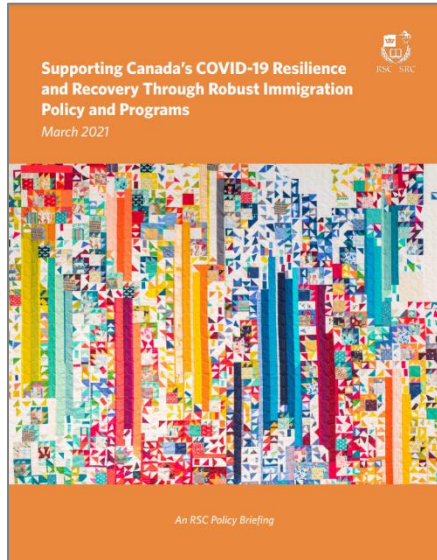
GET TO KNOW OUR VOLUNTEER:

Laurel Van De Keere holds a Master of Arts degree in International Development Studies and has spent the last decade developing strategic policy for the provincial and federal governments. She is passionate about personal wellness and human rights, supporting various global and local initiatives related to these causes.

REVIEWING AND RESTRUCTURING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY AND PROGRAMS AFTER COVID-19

A review by Jayme Wong

Supporting Canada's COVID-19 Resilience and Recovery Through Robust Immigration Policy and Programs is a report written by Victoria Esses, Jean McRae, Naomi Alboim, Natalya Brown, Chris Friesen, Leah Hamilton, Aurélie Lacassagne, Audrey Macklin, and Margaret Walton-Roberts. The policy briefing was issued by the Royal Society of Canada in March, 2021.



The report compares immigration policy and the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees under two contexts: pre-pandemic and mid-pandemic. While COVID-19 prompted this investigation, the authors suggest that a detailed look into Canada's immigration policy and programs has been a long time coming: "The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed some of the strengths of Canada's immigration system, as well as some of the fault lines that have been developing and have deepened over the last few years" (p. 6). While Esses et al. frequently praise Canada for being a world leader in welcoming immigrants and refugees, the authors also suggest that there is room for growth in areas, such as the definition of "family" under family reunification policies.

Esses et al. focus on immigration policy in several contexts: immigration levels plan, economic immigration, family reunification, refugees, Francophone immigration, regionalization, the two-step immigration process, international students, temporary foreign workers and agricultural workers, refugee claimants, and migrant detention. Similarly, the briefing looks at the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in relation to the underutilization of immigrants' skills, health care workers, public attitudes, and the settlement sector. While the report serves as a robust and thorough look into Canadian immigration practices pre- and mid-pandemic, the authors note that their recommendations for action are limited by the scope of the briefing; topics such as border security, inadmissibility, and enforcement are not discussed.

Two major features of the briefing's recommendations rely on public engagement and participation in the development of immigration policies. These actions include:

- "A public education program on immigration (to promote an informed public), followed by a comprehensive review [...] to engage Canadians in a discussion of the future of immigration to Canada....
- "Public campaigns and civic engagement program expansion to promote positive attitudes toward immigrants, refugees, and immigration among established Canadians and to promote smaller jurisdictions to newcomers" (p. 7).

It is significant that the briefing's suggestions are aimed at changing Canada's immigration policies at a political *and* a societal level. While the authors note that public perceptions on immigration have changed over time, with most Canadians viewing immigrants and immigration positively, unconscious biases still exist, especially within the health care sector. "Local workforce hierarchies

are also imbued with culturally and politically charged issues of identity, difference, and inequality. The intersectional relevance of these distinctions in the field of health work, which represents a deeply intimate body of work, is immense” (p. 20). COVID-19 has only exacerbated the issue as economic and social uncertainty and insecurity continue to affect Canadians, causing some to view immigrants as a threat to resources. Therefore, it is extremely important to include education and conversation within recommendations to restructure Canada’s immigration policies and programs.

The briefing’s recommendations imply that viewing immigrants simply as numbers is wrong—and COVID-19 proved this to be true. Due to the pandemic, only 184,370 newcomers were admitted to Canada in 2020 (p. 27). Canada’s previous 2020–2022 immigration plan was to slowly increase the number of immigrants admitted into the country every year: 341,000 in 2020, 351,000 in 2021 and 361,000 in 2022 (p. 27). While increasing newcomer quotas annually is optimistic, the pandemic has revealed the issues that will arise if policies are not in place to motivate newcomers to stay. Limited settlement and integration services, hostility from Canadians, failure to recognize foreign credentials, and lack of language-appropriate resources for public health and safety announcements are just some of the reasons why Canada’s immigration policies and programs need to change if steady population growth is the goal. The briefing’s recommendations are realistic, but they are only attainable if the public and government work together to build a society that is welcoming to newcomers and empathetic to immigrants’ unique struggles. The future of Canada’s immigration policy relies on restructuring from the lessons learned during COVID-19.

PUBLICATION SOURCE:

Esses, V., McRae, J., Alboim, N., Brown, N., Friesen, C., Hamilton, L., Lacassagne, A., Macklin, A., & Walton-Roberts, M. (2021). *Supporting Canada’s COVID-19 resilience and recovery through robust immigration policy and programs*. Royal Society of Canada. <https://rsc-src.ca/en/covid-19-policy-briefing/supporting-canada%E2%80%99s-covid-19-resilience-and-recovery-through-robust>



GET TO KNOW OUR VOLUNTEER:

Jayme Wong graduated from the University of Lethbridge in 2014 with a BA in English and Philosophy, and more recently graduated from the University of Alberta in 2020 with an MA in English and Film Studies. She currently works at a local non-profit, the Learning Centre Literacy Association.

Through our research, analysis, and engagement, we hope to create a community in which all people are full and valued participants.

ABOUT

The Edmonton Social Planning Council is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. Our focus is social research, particularly in the areas of low-income and poverty.

We are dedicated to encouraging the adoption of equitable social policy, supporting the work of other organizations who are striving to improve the lives of Edmontonians, and educating the public regarding the social issues that impact them on a daily basis.

OUR STAFF

Susan Morrissey, Executive Director

Rowan El-Bialy, Strategic Research Coordinator

Jenn Rossiter, Research Services & Capacity Building Coordinator / Volunteer Coordinator

Sydney Sheloff, Research Officer

Brett Lambert, Community Engagement Coordinator

Justine Basilan, Executive Assistant

DONATE

Your donation helps us do our work. It keeps our social research current and comprehensive; allows us to take on bigger projects and make a greater impact in the community, strengthens our voice—your voice—and the voices of those who lack the opportunity to speak for themselves.

To donate please go to:

<https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/donate/>

BECOME A MEMBER

The strength of our voice is dependent upon the support of people and organizations concerned about social issues—people like you. By getting involved with the Edmonton Social Planning Council, you add your voice to our message of positive social development and policy change.

To become a member, visit:

<https://edmontonsocialplanning.ca/membership/>

Interested in volunteering? Email jennr@edmontonsocialplanning.ca



JUNE 2021

RESEARCH UPDATE

FOLLOW US ON:



edmontonsocialplanning.ca



facebook.com/edmontonspc



instagram.com/edmontonspc/



twitter.com/edmontonspc



youtube.com/user/edmontonspc/



ca.linkedin.com/company/edmonton-social-planning-council