

Public and private spending on elementary and secondary schools, 2021/2022

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Tuesday, February 20, 2024

In 2021/2022, Canadian elementary and secondary schools encountered a challenging period following the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. During that year, consumer inflation [accelerated to its fastest pace in four decades](#). For public and private schools in Canada, this translated to increasing costs in areas such as transportation, facility maintenance, information technology equipment and educational materials. However, when accounting for the impact of inflation and the significant rise in costs, overall expenditures on public and private schools declined in real terms by 1.9% to \$89.7 billion in 2021/2022.

Spending on public education falls across all provinces and territories except Prince Edward Island

Total expenditures for public elementary and secondary education in Canada decreased by 2.8% from the previous year to \$73.7 billion in 2021/2022. Among provinces and territories, decreases ranged from 9.9% in Newfoundland and Labrador to 0.8% in New Brunswick. While overall expenditures have declined during this timeframe, spending was 2.1% higher than pre-pandemic levels observed in 2019/2020.

In 2020/2021, public school expenditures in Canada saw a notable increase in part because of special funding injections from the federal government through the [Safe Return to Class Fund](#). Provinces used the funding to create new learning spaces, adapt to health and safety requirements, implement digital course content and technological support, and address staffing and transportation needs. As these targeted payments from the fund concluded, expenditures contracted in 2021/2022, approaching pre-pandemic levels.

Prince Edward Island was the only province that incurred an increase in public school expenditures in 2021/2022. This rise was attributable in part to special allocations that were made in anticipation of a new collective employment agreement for the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation, which increased wages by 1.8%. In 2021/2022, Prince Edward Island experienced a 1.8% increase in total salaries and wages and was the only province that did not see a decline in this spending category.

Local revenues decline amid education property tax alterations

Local taxation has continued to represent a smaller proportion of the total funding for education, marking its fifth consecutive annual decline in 2021/2022. Over the year, local taxation accounted for approximately one-fifth (20.1%) of total revenues for public elementary and secondary schools. With the exception of British Columbia, all provinces and territories that generated revenue from local taxation experienced a decline in 2021/2022.

Quebec continues to maintain record levels of capital project funding

In 2021/2022, Quebec reached a record high in capital spending, encompassing expenditures in areas such as new school construction, major renovations, site improvements and equipment purchases. Expenditures in this category rose to \$2.9 billion, which was 49.4% higher than the average annual amount invested by the province over the five-year period preceding the 2021/2022 year. This followed the release of the 2021-2031 Quebec Infrastructure Plan, which announced nearly \$20.9 billion to be allocated to the school network.

In 2021/2022, Ontario also increased funding for capital projects (+4.8%) through the new [Capital Priorities Program](#). Continued increases in capital spending in Ontario are also expected in 2022/2023, as announced in "[2023 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review: Building a Strong Ontario Together](#)."



Did you know we have a mobile app?

Get timely access to data right at your fingertips by downloading the [StatsCAN app](#), available for free on the [App Store](#) and on [Google Play](#).

Note to readers

Public school board finance data are derived from [Financial Information of Elementary and Secondary Schools](#). The objective of this annual survey is to collect financial information on school boards and districts across Canada.

These financial statistics are collected from every province and territory—with the exception of Nunavut, where data are estimated—and are converted into a standard classification.

Data for this survey are not available at the school board and district levels.

As a result of the elimination of the Survey of Financial Statistics of Private Elementary and Secondary Schools, data on funding for private elementary and secondary education have been estimated for the 2006/2007 reference period and onward, based on changes to private institutions' enrollment.

All of the financial figures are in constant 2021/2022 dollars adjusted for inflation, unless otherwise noted.

Caution should be taken when comparing provinces and territories directly, since provinces and territories have different funding formulas, structures and fiscal periods.

Available tables: [37-10-0063-01](#) to [37-10-0067-01](#) .

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3119](#) and [3140](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).