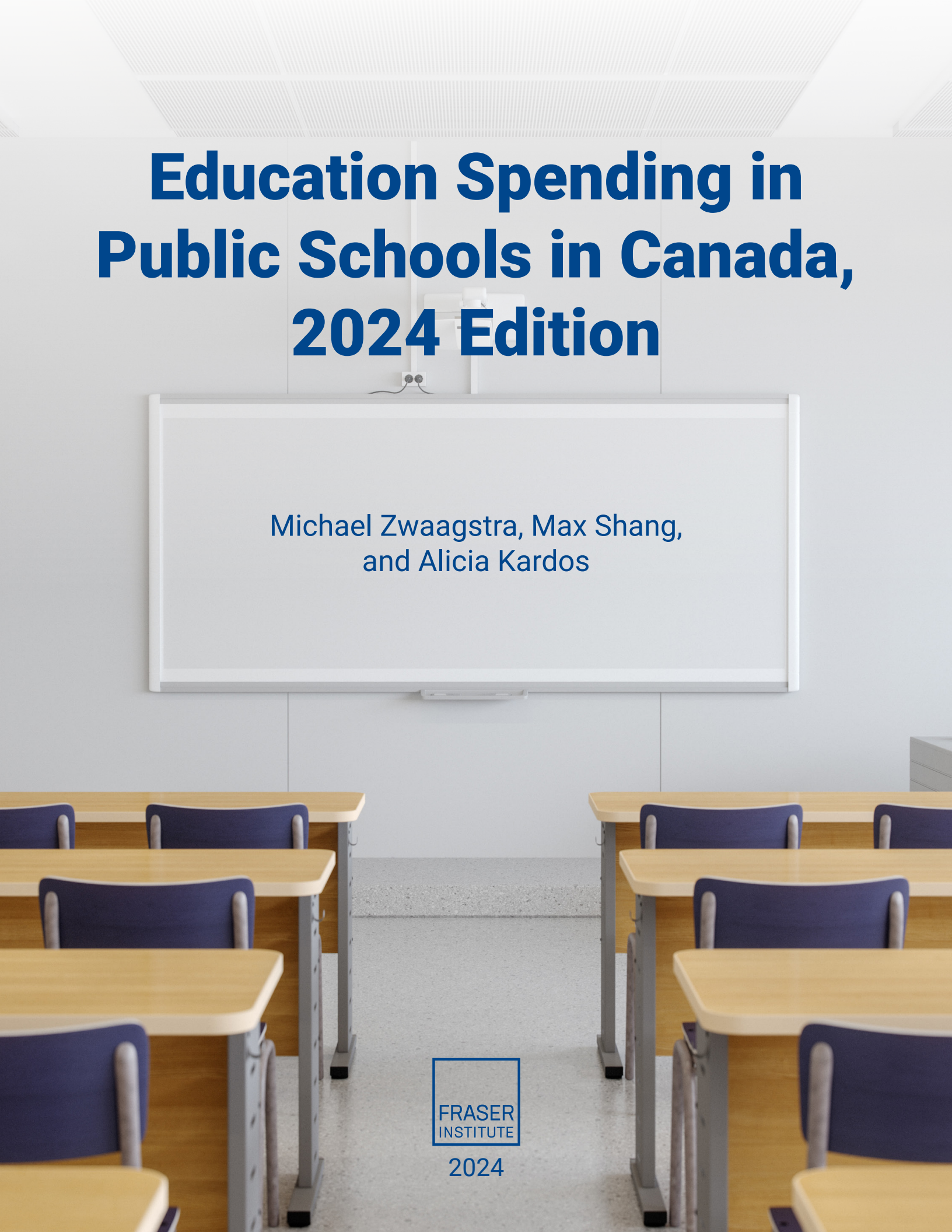
# Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada, 2024 Edition

Michael Zwaagstra, Max Shang,
and Alicia Kardos



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# Contents

# Executive Summary

- Total education spending in public schools over the last 10 years increased from $61.5 billion in 2012/13 to $82.5 billion in 2021/22. This represents an increase in nominal spending of 34.1%.
- Per-student spending adjusted for inflation (price changes) increased by 5.1% nationally from 2012/13 to 2021/22.
- The highest inflation-adjusted, per-student spending increases occurred in the provinces of Quebec (33.7%), Prince Edward Island (21.6%), Nova Scotia (12.3%), and British Columbia (6.7%). The data does not differentiate between temporary spending related to COVID-19—which may have resulted in children returning to classrooms more quickly—and ongoing spending.
- Three provinces saw declines in inflation-adjusted per-student spending—Alberta (–17.2%), Saskatchewan (–14.9%), and Newfoundland & Labrador (–9.8%).
- Quebec had the lowest level of per-student spending in public schools in 2012/13 and now has the highest. Prince Edward Island went from ninth in per-student spending to third highest. On the other hand, Saskatchewan went from the highest in per-student spending to seventh, and Alberta went from third highest to tenth (lowest).
- Even though British Columbia recorded the fourth-highest growth in adjusted per-student spending, it still ranks eighth in per-student spending in Canada.
- Student enrolment across Canada increased by an average of 5.1% from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Three provinces saw a decrease in enrolment: Newfoundland & Labrador (–5.8%), New Brunswick (–1.8%), and Ontario (–0.1%).
- Compensation remains the largest and costliest aspect of education spending and has contributed the largest portion to the growth of total education spending in Canada.

# Introduction

This study aims to provide Canadians with an update on the state of public education in Canada by focusing on a key component—education spending in public schools. We review per-student education spending (inflation-adjusted) for both primary and secondary education (referred to as K–12) over ten years, from 2012/13 to 2021/22. This study looks closely at operational spending in K–12 education with capital expenditure removed.

## History of the study

This study is an update to previous work, including Zwaagstra, Li, and Palacios (2023); Li, Ryan, and Fuss (2022); MacPherson, Emes, and Li (2021); Hill, Li, and Emes (2019, 2021); MacLeod and Emes (2017a, 2017b, 2019); and Clemens, Emes, and Van Pelt (2016). The base year in this study is 2012/13 (earliest year from which data are available from Statistics Canada) and it covers a ten-year reference period.

## Organization of the study

There are two main parts to this paper. First, we review changes in education spending through time, accounting for student enrolment and inflation. Second, we review the components of education spending in Canada—provincially and nationally (national data include both the provinces and the territories)—to develop a better understanding of the composition of spending increases. We conclude with an overview of our findings.

# Education Spending and Enrolment in Public Schools

This part of the study is divided into six sections. First, we review the increase in total education spending on public schools by province and nationally from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Second, we review enrolment in public schools by province and nationally, over the same period. Third, to adjust for changes in enrolment, we calculate spending per student using data from sections 1 and 2. Section 4 adjusts the data for inflation (that is, price changes). Section 5 looks at operational education spending, with capital spending removed, to review the level of education spending in each province aside from spending on physical infrastructure and associated costs. Finally, section 6 reviews what the increase in education spending would have been, if spending increased proportionally to enrolment and inflation only, to provide a clear comparison to the actual increase in spending.

## 1. Education spending on public schools

This section examines total education spending in public schools over the last ten years (2012/13–2021/22). It is important to note that this measure is limited to spending on public schools rather than public education. As a result, government spending on independent schools in Quebec and the four Western provinces is excluded. Second, Statistics Canada's currently available data include some small categories of revenue and spending that could be considered non-governmental and are difficult to remove. Specifically, "Fees & Other Private Sources" is included in the data series used in this study. This category includes rentals and leases, investment revenues, revenues from capital funds, other fees, revenues from trust accounts, inter-school transfers, and adjustments. These items represent a comparatively small amount of revenue and spending relative to the entire envelope of spending on public schools but it is important to note that the measure relied on for this study may include small amounts of private revenue and spending.

In addition, the dataset used in this study includes several categories of spending on public schools that are often ignored or purposefully excluded, such as spending on capital (mainly new school construction and/or renovations) and contributions to teachers' pension plans. The definition of education spending used for this dataset is the following: "public elementary and secondary education expenditures" less "direct government expenditures on public education by the Department of National Defence", "federal school expenditures", and "special education expenditures on public education" (Statistics Canada, 2023c).

**Table 1** reviews education spending in public schools from 2012/13 to 2021/22. **Figure 1** illustrates the increase in education spending over the same period by province. In total, education spending in Canada increased from $61.5 billion in 2012/13 to $82.5 billion in 2021/22, a 34.1% increase in nominal spending, or $20.9 billion. While Ontario has the highest spending in dollar terms, Quebec saw the largest percentage increase in nominal spending at 71.0%. Prince Edward Island (54.8%) and Nova Scotia (39.6%) followed behind with the second- and third-highest increase in nominal spending. Every other province also saw an increase in education spending from 2012/13 to 2021/22.

It should be noted that education spending may reflect provincial governments' reactions to COVID-19; this includes how quickly each province acted to get students back into classrooms, which may have incurred additional precautionary spending. The data in this report does not differentiate between between temporary spending related to COVID-19 and ongoing operational and capital spending in public schools.

**Table 1: Spending ($ millions) on public schools, 2012/13, 2021/22**

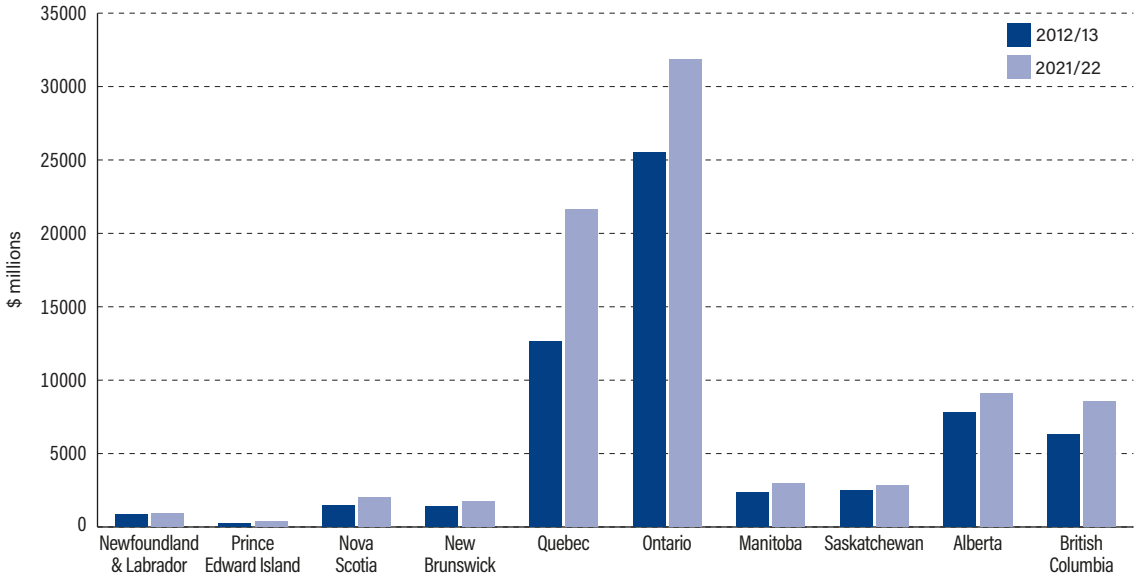
| | 2012/13 | 2021/22 | 2012/13–2021/22 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Nominal change | % change |
| Canada | 61,529 | 82,482 | 20,953 | 34.1% |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 876 | 909 | 33 | 3.8% |
| Prince Edward Island | 229 | 354 | 125 | 54.8% |
| Nova Scotia | 1,438 | 2,008 | 569 | 39.6% |
| New Brunswick | 1,383 | 1,704 | 321 | 23.2% |
| Quebec | 12,660 | 21,653 | 8,993 | 71.0% |
| Ontario | 25,535 | 31,855 | 6,320 | 24.7% |
| Manitoba | 2,335 | 2,955 | 619 | 26.5% |
| Saskatchewan | 2,477 | 2,799 | 322 | 13.0% |
| Alberta | 7,775 | 9,066 | 1,292 | 16.6% |
| British Columbia | 6,320 | 8,547 | 2,227 | 35.2% |

Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a.

## 2. Enrolment in public schools

As noted by Van Pelt and Emes (2015), an analysis of spending on public schools is incomplete without consideration of enrolment. Any analysis of education spending that ignores enrolment risks materially misrepresenting the reality of education spending. An increase in aggregate

**Figure 1: Spending ($ millions) on public schools, by province, 2012/13 and 2021/22**




Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a.

education spending that is less than the increase in enrolment results in a decrease in spending per student on education. Alternatively, a reduction in education spending that is less than a reduction in enrolment results in an increase in per-student spending. It is therefore critical to consider changes in enrolment when reviewing education spending.

**Table 2** shows enrolment in public schools across provinces and nationally, from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Nationally, enrolment increased by 3.6% from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Three provinces saw a decrease in enrolment: Newfoundland & Labrador decreased by 5.8%, New Brunswick by 1.8%, and Ontario by a nominal 0.1%. Manitoba had the smallest increase in enrolment among provinces with growth of only 1.8%. On the other hand, public-school enrolment in Alberta increased by 14.2% from 2012/13 to 2021/22, the biggest increase of any province. Saskatchewan saw the second highest increase during this time, at 8.4%. Quebec also experienced a notable increase (5.9%).

## 3. Spending per student in public schools

An increase in total enrolment in public schools means that the increase in per-student spending is lower than the simple aggregated spending presented previously. To account for changes in enrolment, it is useful to assess per-student spending. **Table 3** presents per-student spending across provinces and nationally, from 2012/13 to 2021/22. **Figure 2** illustrates spending per student by province in 2012/13 and 2021/22.

**Table 2: Enrolment (number of students) in public schools, 2012/13–2021/22**

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 5,047,059 | 5,048,529 | 5,052,069 | 5,068,404 | 5,117,265 | 5,159,952 | 5,212,884 | 5,255,418 | 5,181,507 | 5,230,002 | 3.6% |
| NL | 67,476 | 67,293 | 67,167 | 66,654 | 66,183 | 65,283 | 64,617 | 63,993 | 62,982 | 63,537 | –5.8% |
| PE | 20,406 | 20,133 | 19,938 | 19,713 | 20,007 | 20,187 | 20,361 | 20,733 | 20,643 | 21,063 | 3.2% |
| NS | 122,643 | 121,026 | 119,382 | 118,152 | 118,566 | 118,962 | 120,603 | 123,237 | 121,599 | 125,124 | 2.0% |
| NB | 101,079 | 99,921 | 98,904 | 97,911 | 97,842 | 97,755 | 97,896 | 98,964 | 97,263 | 99,246 | –1.8% |
| QC | 1,176,849 | 1,183,485 | 1,187,103 | 1,196,667 | 1,210,677 | 1,216,803 | 1,231,062 | 1,234,263 | 1,234,041 | 1,246,335 | 5.9% |
| ON | 2,031,195 | 2,015,385 | 2,003,238 | 1,993,431 | 2,006,700 | 2,020,245 | 2,040,480 | 2,056,059 | 2,025,261 | 2,028,690 | –0.1% |
| MB | 179,292 | 179,109 | 179,736 | 181,023 | 183,015 | 184,710 | 186,519 | 187,893 | 179,877 | 182,535 | 1.8% |
| SK | 169,728 | 171,987 | 174,747 | 177,081 | 180,651 | 182,655 | 183,972 | 186,066 | 181,506 | 183,966 | 8.4% |
| AB | 591,399 | 608,166 | 625,680 | 640,872 | 652,272 | 665,877 | 673,788 | 683,280 | 664,911 | 675,504 | 14.2% |
| BC | 564,528 | 558,984 | 552,786 | 553,374 | 557,625 | 563,241 | 568,980 | 576,000 | 568,281 | 578,799 | 2.5% |

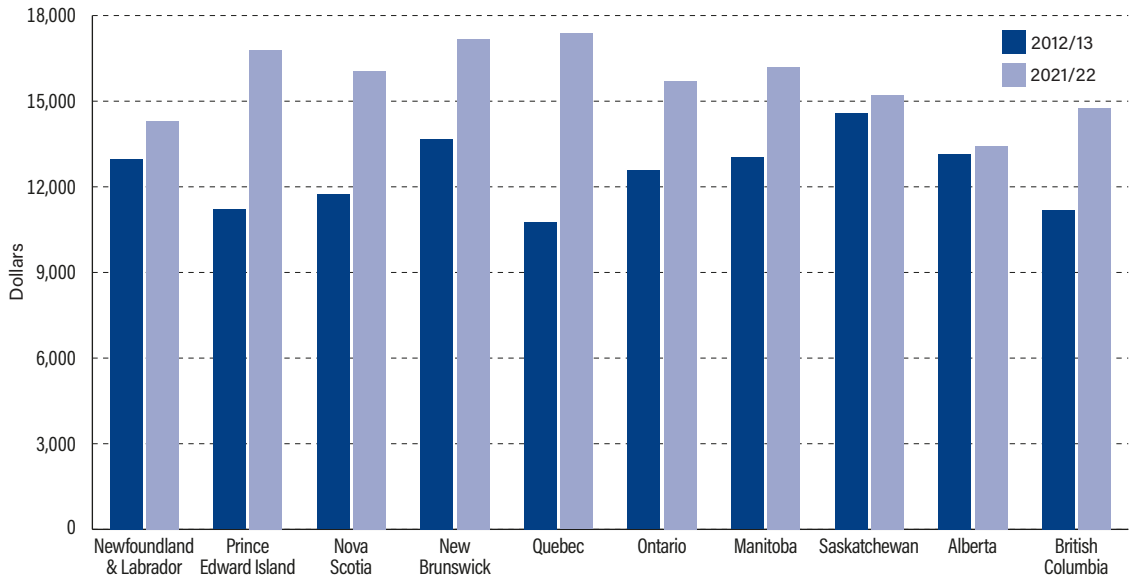
Source: Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2320b.

**Table 3: Per-student spending ($2022) in public schools, 2012/13–2021/22**

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 12,191 | 12,481 | 12,763 | 13,140 | 13,315 | 13,798 | 14,070 | 13,793 | 15,239 | 15,771 | 29.4% |
| NL | 12,981 | 12,909 | 13,185 | 13,560 | 13,521 | 12,992 | 12,742 | 15,374 | 15,008 | 14,307 | 10.2% |
| PE | 11,203 | 12,231 | 12,492 | 12,429 | 12,621 | 13,752 | 14,008 | 14,141 | 15,096 | 16,800 | 50.0% |
| NS | 11,727 | 12,167 | 12,834 | 13,133 | 13,135 | 14,726 | 14,910 | 15,014 | 16,873 | 16,045 | 36.8% |
| NB | 13,680 | 13,294 | 13,830 | 14,419 | 14,768 | 15,000 | 15,486 | 15,416 | 15,785 | 17,172 | 25.5% |
| QC | 10,758 | 11,132 | 11,375 | 11,180 | 11,544 | 12,430 | 12,887 | 13,228 | 16,265 | 17,374 | 61.5% |
| ON | 12,572 | 13,050 | 13,357 | 13,655 | 13,894 | 14,394 | 14,821 | 13,961 | 15,072 | 15,702 | 24.9% |
| MB | 13,024 | 13,872 | 14,210 | 14,528 | 14,734 | 14,815 | 15,434 | 15,237 | 16,203 | 16,186 | 24.3% |
| SK | 14,597 | 14,895 | 14,837 | 16,130 | 15,427 | 16,037 | 14,192 | 14,011 | 15,087 | 15,216 | 4.2% |
| AB | 13,146 | 13,172 | 13,317 | 14,551 | 14,456 | 13,923 | 13,636 | 12,902 | 13,464 | 13,421 | 2.1% |
| BC | 11,195 | 10,874 | 11,162 | 11,809 | 11,879 | 12,641 | 13,219 | 13,733 | 14,601 | 14,767 | 31.9% |

Source: Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2320b, 2024a.

**Figure 2: Spending ($2022) per student on public schools by province, 2012/13 and 2021/22**




Sources: Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a.

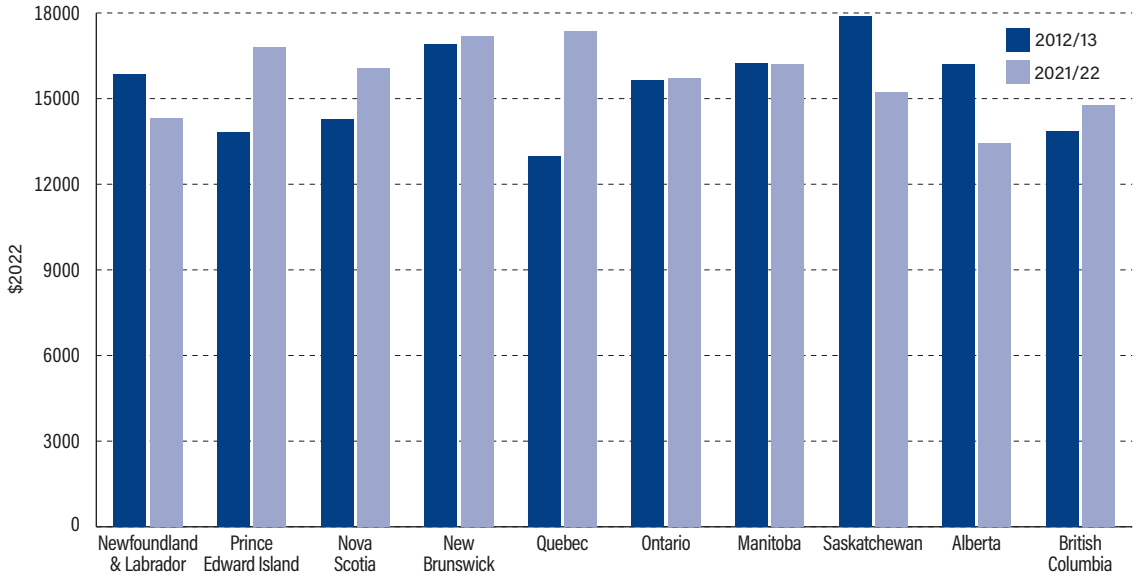
In total, Canada saw an increase in per-student spending of 29.4%. This is lower than the initially reported increase of 34.1% in aggregate spending because total enrolment increased by 3.6%. All provinces recorded increases in per-student spending in public schools from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Quebec saw the highest increase over this period, from $10,758 to $17,374, an increase of 61.5%. Prince Edward Island saw the next-highest increase in per-student spending: spending rose from $11,203 to $16,800, or 50.0%, over the period. Several other provinces also saw a marked increase, including Nova Scotia (36.8%), British Columbia (31.9%), New Brunswick (25.5%), Ontario (24.9%), and Manitoba (24.3%). Newfoundland & Labrador increased its per-student spending by 10.2%. Saskatchewan (4.2%) and Alberta (2.1%) recorded the smallest increases in per-student spending.

## 4. Accounting for inflation

To avoid overstating changes in spending (or possibly understating them), it is important to factor in inflation. Inflation is the change in the general price level through time that affects the real or effective value of money. As a result, governments could well be spending more in nominal dollars on education over time but, if these increases were less than inflation, the real or effective level of spending would decrease. The reason for this seemingly counterintuitive result is that inflation erodes the value of money by making goods and services more expensive.

This section recalculates per-student spending, adjusting for inflation (measured in real $2022). **Figure 3** and **table 4** present the recalculated numbers. Per-student spending adjusted for inflation (price changes) increased by 5.1% nationally from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Put another way, after accounting for the effects of enrolment and price changes, Canada saw an increase in spending of $761 per student over this time frame. The province of Quebec saw the highest percentage increase at 33.7%, or an additional $4,380 per student. The largest increase in per-student, inflation-adjusted spending in Quebec took place between the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years. Direct government expenditures on services to public school boards increased by 331% from $0.5 billion to $2.0 billion. This might be the result of expenditures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, capital spending in Quebec also increased significantly in 2020/21, although the province experienced modest growth (5.9% growth in student enrolment between 2012/13 and 2021/22) compared to Alberta (14.2% growth) or Saskatchewan (8.4%) over the same period.

**Figure 3: Spending ($2022) per student on public schools, adjusted for price changes, by province, 2012/13 and 2021/22**




Sources: Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b.

There were also marked increases in inflation-adjusted, per-student spending in Prince Edward Island (21.6%), Nova Scotia (12.3%), and British Columbia (6.7%). New Brunswick (1.5% increase) and Ontario (0.5% increase) went up nominally, but were essentially flat. Manitoba saw a slight decline (–0.2%). Three provinces saw a significant decrease in inflation-adjusted, per-student spending: Alberta saw a decrease of 17.2%, Saskatchewan a decrease of 14.9%, and Newfoundland & Labrador a decrease of 9.8% from 2012/13 to 2021/22.

**Table 4: Spending ($2022) per student in public schools, adjusted for price changes, 2012/13–2021/22**

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 15,010 | 15,073 | 15,243 | 15,474 | 15,439 | 15,639 | 15,643 | 15,223 | 16,272 | 15,771 | 5.1% |
| NL | 15,856 | 15,473 | 15,730 | 15,750 | 15,334 | 14,499 | 14,078 | 16,948 | 15,962 | 14,307 | –9.8% |
| PE | 13,812 | 14,835 | 15,246 | 14,995 | 14,952 | 15,922 | 16,029 | 16,181 | 16,439 | 16,800 | 21.6% |
| NS | 14,292 | 14,576 | 15,315 | 15,481 | 15,307 | 16,794 | 16,731 | 16,800 | 18,143 | 16,045 | 12.3% |
| NB | 16,917 | 16,202 | 16,774 | 17,107 | 17,121 | 17,026 | 17,281 | 17,165 | 16,932 | 17,172 | 1.5% |
| QC | 12,994 | 13,261 | 13,409 | 13,085 | 13,372 | 14,164 | 14,384 | 14,643 | 17,351 | 17,374 | 33.7% |
| ON | 15,628 | 15,848 | 16,031 | 16,098 | 16,106 | 16,302 | 16,481 | 15,424 | 16,092 | 15,702 | 0.5% |
| MB | 16,221 | 16,961 | 17,168 | 17,334 | 17,296 | 16,963 | 17,285 | 16,977 | 17,481 | 16,186 | –0.2% |
| SK | 17,871 | 17,812 | 17,457 | 18,778 | 17,665 | 17,950 | 15,612 | 15,326 | 16,079 | 15,216 | –14.9% |
| AB | 16,206 | 15,832 | 15,827 | 17,102 | 16,730 | 15,736 | 15,141 | 14,168 | 14,329 | 13,421 | –17.2% |
| BC | 13,840 | 13,307 | 13,512 | 14,038 | 13,827 | 14,324 | 14,638 | 15,092 | 15,610 | 14,767 | 6.7% |

Source: Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2320b, 2024a.

While nationally per-student spending increased in table 3, this did not account for inflation. After adjusting for changes in enrolment and price levels, per-student spending still increased nationally. Notably, table 3 showed nominal per-student spending in Ontario increasing by 24.9%. However, table 4 shows that per-student spending in Ontario only increased by 0.5% once we account for inflation. For other provinces that had nominal increases in per-student spending, the percentage increases in table 4 are less than those in table 3 because table 3 did not account for the effects of inflation. It is notable, however, that, after adjusting for changes in enrolment and price levels, per-student spending still increased in six of the 10 provinces.

## 5. Education spending excluding capital expenditure

Capital spending on education accounts for the construction of new schools and any upgrades to existing school facilities, plus the associated debt. Some provinces incur higher capital expenses as a result of increasing enrolment, as they build new schools to accommodate new students. For this reason, this study reviews per-student education spending with capital removed—that is, per-student operational education spending— to give a clearer picture of the day-to-day costs such as compensation for teachers and staff, without the cost of building or renovating schools.

**Table 5** presents inflation-adjusted per-student operational spending, with capital spending removed, across provinces and nationally, from 2012/13 to 2021/22. **Figure 4** illustrates inflation-adjusted operational spending per student, with capital spending removed, by province in 2012/13 and 2021/22. In total, Canada saw an increase in per-student, inflation-adjusted operational spending of 3.1% between 2012/13 and 2021/22, or $434 per student (in 2022 dollars). After excluding capital spending, Prince Edward Island's spending has increased at a higher percentage than the other nine provinces, at 30.6% over this time period, or $3,940 per student. Quebec came in second at 26.9%, or $3,124 per student. Four provinces' inflation-adjusted, per-student operational spending decreased over this time period: Alberta decreased by 17.9%, Saskatchewan by 8.6%, Newfoundland & Labrador by 5.1%, and Ontario by 0.1%.

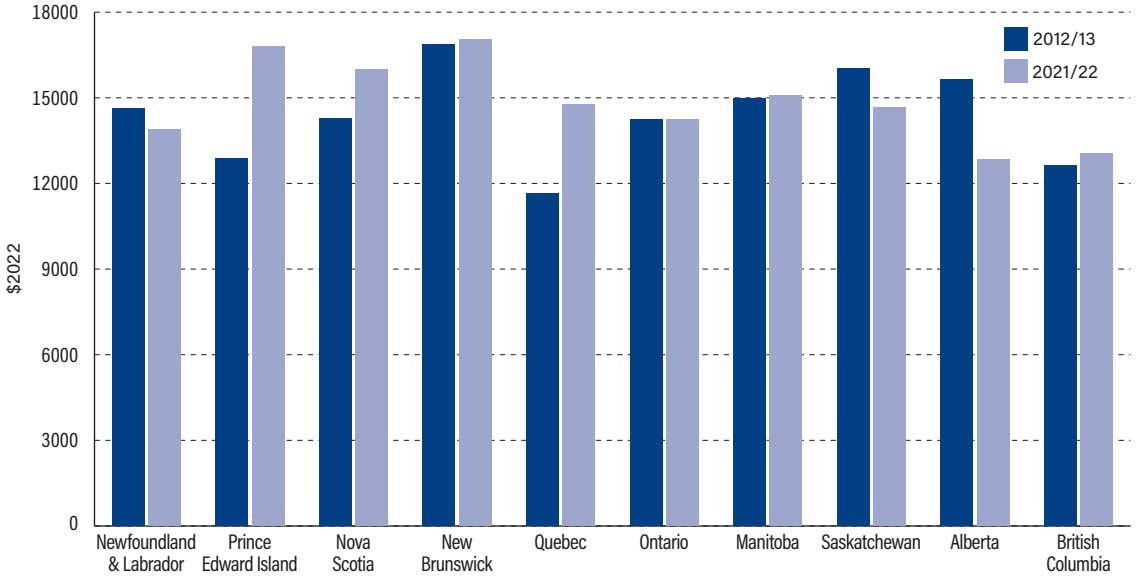
**Table 5: Operational spending ($2022) per student in public schools, adjusted for price changes, 2012/13–2021/22**

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | % change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 13,805 | 13,838 | 1w4,022 | 14,105 | 14,070 | 14,300 | 14,257 | 13,860 | 14,696 | 14,239 | 3.1% |
| NL | 14,642 | 13,991 | 14,310 | 14,415 | 14,033 | 13,990 | 13,529 | 16,017 | 14,933 | 13,889 | –5.1% |
| PE | 12,860 | 14,835 | 15,246 | 14,995 | 14,952 | 15,922 | 16,029 | 16,181 | 16,439 | 16,800 | 30.6% |
| NS | 14,262 | 14,470 | 15,204 | 15,387 | 15,205 | 16,707 | 16,680 | 16,749 | 18,095 | 16,009 | 12.2% |
| NB | 16,857 | 16,131 | 16,708 | 17,009 | 17,038 | 16,944 | 17,197 | 17,096 | 16,828 | 17,049 | 1.1% |
| QC | 11,635 | 11,896 | 11,928 | 11,707 | 12,024 | 12,587 | 12,567 | 12,688 | 14,725 | 14,759 | 26.9% |
| ON | 14,233 | 14,406 | 14,687 | 14,793 | 14,657 | 14,911 | 14,886 | 14,106 | 14,650 | 14,224 | –0.1% |
| MB | 14,986 | 15,241 | 15,512 | 15,809 | 15,922 | 15,794 | 15,749 | 15,465 | 16,183 | 15,079 | 0.6% |
| SK | 16,029 | 15,890 | 15,970 | 15,822 | 15,622 | 15,202 | 15,103 | 14,757 | 15,466 | 14,644 | –8.6% |
| AB | 15,654 | 15,282 | 15,077 | 15,134 | 14,886 | 14,545 | 14,271 | 13,339 | 13,544 | 12,854 | –17.9% |
| BC | 12,646 | 12,216 | 12,547 | 13,186 | 12,907 | 13,247 | 13,387 | 13,382 | 13,789 | 13,034 | 3.1% |

Source: Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2320b, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c.

After capital spending has been excluded, the percentage increase from 2012/13 to 2021/22 in operational spending for Prince Edward Island is 9.0 percentage points higher than the spending shown in table 4; for Saskatchewan it is 6.3 percentage points higher, for Manitoba it is 0.8 percentage points higher, and for Newfoundland & Labrador, 4.7 percentage points higher. This indicates that operational spending is increasing more quickly than capital spending in these four provinces. Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland & Labrador, Alberta, British

**Figure 4: Operational spending ($2022) per student in public schools, adjusted for price changes, by province, 2012/13 and 2021/22**




Note: Operational spending excludes capital expenditures.

Sources: Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c.

Columbia, and Ontario experienced a smaller percentage increase in spending after capital spending was excluded, suggesting that the increase in per-student capital spending was faster than the increase in per-student operational spending from 2012/13 to 2021/22 for those six provinces.

## 6. The increases in total spending in context

The changes in total inflation-adjusted, per-student education spending across the provinces are quite mixed, ranging from a decrease of 17.2% in Alberta to an increase of 33.7% in Quebec (table 4). It is important to provide context to determine how large or small the changes actually are. To do so, this section compares actual education spending to the spending expected when inflation and changes in enrolment are taken into account. This analysis is based on a counterfactual assumption wherein education spending is calculated for 2021/22 based on the per-student level observed in 2012/13, adjusted for changes in enrolment and inflation. In other words, this section compares actual aggregate spending on public schools in 2021/22 with what the total spending would have been if the levels of inflation-adjusted, per-student spending on public schools remained constant from 2012/13 to 2021/22.

**Table 6** presents the actual and counterfactual (adjusted) spending in public schools for 2021/22, as well as the difference between these two values. The first column shows the actual level of spending on public schools. The second column, "Adjusted spending", shows spending based on the counterfactual assumption, or what total education spending on public schools in 2021/22 would have been had the inflation-adjusted, per-student spending levels been maintained from the 2012/13 base year. **Figure 5** illustrates the comparison across provinces.

**Table 6: Actual and adjusted spending ($ millions) on public schools, 2021/22**

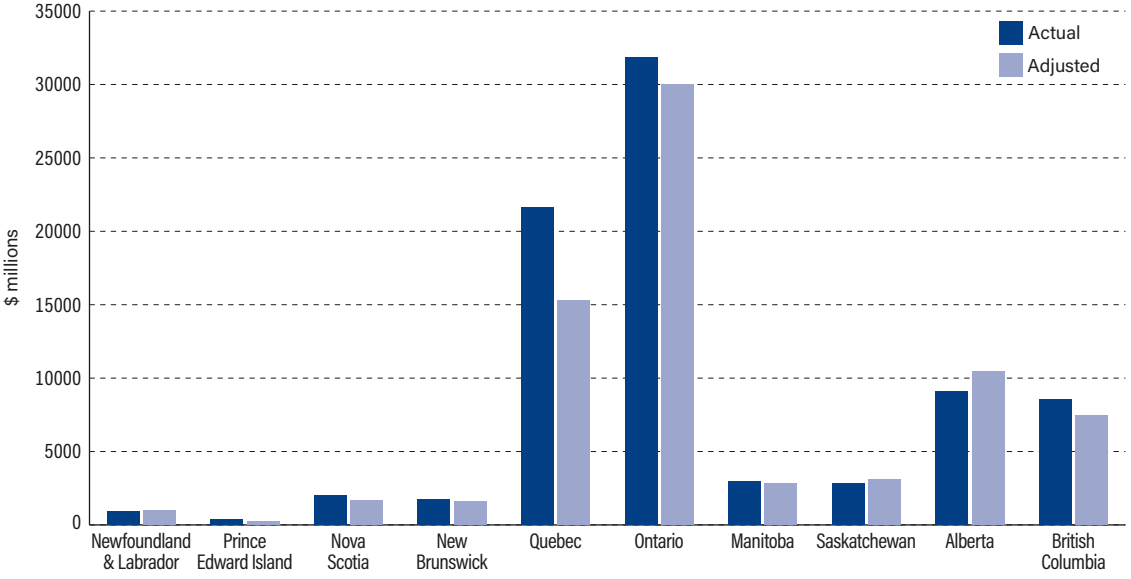
| | Actual spending | Adjusted spending | Difference | % difference |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 82,482 | 74,185 | −8,297 | −10.1% |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 909 | 963 | 54 | 6.0% |
| Prince Edward Island | 354 | 272 | −81 | −23.0% |
| Nova Scotia | 2,008 | 1,683 | −324 | −16.2% |
| New Brunswick | 1,704 | 1,578 | −126 | −7.4% |
| Quebec | 21,653 | 15,295 | −6,359 | −29.4% |
| Ontario | 31,855 | 29,985 | −1,870 | −5.9% |
| Manitoba | 2,955 | 2,806 | −148 | −5.0% |
| Saskatchewan | 2,799 | 3,130 | 330 | 11.8% |
| Alberta | 9,066 | 10,431 | 1,365 | 15.1% |
| British Columbia | 8,547 | 7,486 | −1,060 | −12.4% |

Source: Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b.

Nationally, between 2012/13 and 2021/22, total education spending exceeded the amount required to account for changes in enrolment and inflation by $8.3 billion. In percentage terms, if inflation-adjusted, per-student spending had remained constant over this period, actual spending in public schools in 2021/22 would have been 10.1% lower.

Provincially, Quebec's actual spending was the highest of any province relative to what would have been required to adjust for changes in enrolment and inflation: the province spent 29.4% ($6.4 billion) more in 2021/22. Quebec's inflation-adjusted per-student spending increased significantly in 2020/21 and remained high in 2021/22. Seven other provinces had increases in education spending that exceeded what would have been required to offset the effects of inflation and enrolment changes: Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario,

**Figure 5: Actual and adjusted spending ($ millions) on public schools, by province, 2021/22**




Sources: Statistics Canada, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b.

Manitoba, and British Columbia. However, the remaining three provinces increased education spending by an amount that was less than what was required to offset inflation and enrolment changes. If inflation-adjusted per-student spending had remained constant over the last ten years (2012/13–2021/22) in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Newfoundland & Labrador, actual spending on public schools by these provinces would have been higher.

# Understanding the Increases in Education Spending

This section extends the analysis of education spending in Canada to provide a more comprehensive review of the components of spending, provincially and nationally, from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Our analysis of education spending is based on data provided to Statistics Canada by provincial governments. While Statistics Canada's data tables are an excellent resource for understanding education spending, there are weaknesses in the underlying provincially provided data. One key challenge stems from the data definitions, which are established by the provinces themselves and not by Statistics Canada. Definitional differences among provinces and changes to spending categories over time can affect the quality of the data.

After consultation with Statistics Canada, the authors developed three aggregated categories of education spending that offer the most reasonable balance between the possible variation in definitions among provinces, among other issues, and our aim to analyze changes within the categories of educational spending. The three aggregated categories of education spending are Compensation, Capital, and Other.

**Compensation** includes the salaries, wages, and benefits of all school staff and direct contributions to the teachers' pension funds. Employers' pension contributions for non-teaching staff are included in "fringe benefits". **Capital** includes expenditures to buy a new asset or extend the life of an existing asset—constructing new buildings, expanding existing facilities, or making renovations—and debt charges on such spending. **Other** covers all other expenditures, including direct spending by the provincial government, supply and services, fees and contractual services, and other miscellaneous expenditures.

**Table 7** shows the dollar value of aggregate education spending in public schools in Canada by spending category, the growth in spending for each category, and the contribution of each to total growth in spending from 2012/13 to 2021/22.

### *Compensation*

An overwhelming proportion of the increase was spent on compensation, the costs for which grew from $45.6 billion in 2012/13 to $58.4 billion in 2021/22, an increase of $12.8 billion or 28.0%. The increase in compensation costs represents 61.0% of the total increase of $21.0 billion in education spending in public schools between 2012/13 and 2021/22. It is important to understand how each of the three sub-categories contributed to the overall increase in spending on compensation.

**Table 7: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in Canada, 2012/13–2021/22**

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 45,588 | 74.1 | 58,363 | 70.8 | 12,775 | 61.0 | 28.0 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 36,736 | 59.7 | 46,590 | 56.5 | 9,855 | 47.0 | 26.8 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 5,460 | 8.9 | 7,849 | 9.5 | 2,389 | 11.4 | 43.8 |
| *Pensions* | 3,393 | 5.5 | 3,924 | 4.8 | 531 | 2.5 | 15.7 |
| Capital | 4,940 | 8.0 | 8,010 | 9.7 | 3,070 | 14.7 | 62.1 |
| Other | 11,001 | 17.9 | 16,109 | 19.5 | 5,108 | 24.4 | 46.4 |
| Total | 61,529 | | 82,482 | | 20,953 | | 34.1 |

Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

**Salaries and wages** accounted for the largest share of growth in compensation spending at 47.0%. This spending category increased from $36.7 billion in 2012/13 to over $45.6 billion in 2021/22, an increase of 26.8%. As a share of total education spending in public schools, salaries and wages decreased slightly from 59.7% in 2012/13 to 56.5% in 2021/22.

**Fringe benefits** rose from $5.5 billion in 2012/13 to $7.8 billion in 2021/22, a 43.8% increase. The increase in fringe benefits explains 11.4% of the overall increase in total education spending. The cost of fringe benefits as a share of total education spending in public schools increased from 8.9% in 2012/13 to 9.5% in 2021/22.

**Pension costs** increased over this time period as well, rising from $3.4 billion in 2012/13 to $3.9 billion in 2021/22, a 15.7% increase. This increase explains 42.24% of the overall increase in spending. Pension costs as a share of total education spending on public schools decreased slightly, from 5.5% in 2012/13 to 4.8% in 2021/22.

### *Capital spending*

Capital spending increased from $4.9 billion in 2012/13 to $8.0 billion in 2021/22, a 62.1% increase. Capital spending represents 14.7% ($3.1 billion) of the overall increase in education spending ($21.0 billion) in public schools (table 7, col. 6). As a share of total education spending in public schools, capital spending rose from 8.0% in 2012/13 to 9.7% in 2021/22.

### *Other spending*

Other spending recorded a significant increase in spending on public schools over this time period at 46.4%. As a share of total education spending, it slightly increased from 17.9% in 2012/13 to 19.5% in 2021/22. Tables 8 to 13 provide more details about spending on pensions, fringe benefits, and capital investments in aggregate, both provincially and nationally.

## Spending on pensions

**Table 8** contains the dollar value for contributions to teachers' pensions made by seven of the ten provincial governments in Canada, as well as the total contribution by these provincial governments, from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Among the provinces for which data were available, Nova Scotia saw the fastest growth in contributions to teachers' pensions from 2012/13 to 2021/22, at 65.2%. Saskatchewan had the second highest growth in this category, at 34.0%, followed by Quebec at 23.9%.

**Table 8: Spending ($ millions) on teachers' pensions, 2012/13–2021/22**

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | Change | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 3,393 | 3,594 | 3,772 | 3,913 | 4,013 | 4,145 | 4,056 | 4,034 | 3,899 | 3,924 | 531 | | 15.7 |
| NL | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| PE | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| NS | 60 | 61 | 64 | 72 | 82 | 91 | 92 | 94 | 91 | 100 | 39 | 7.4 | 65.2 |
| NB | 153 | 55 | 68 | 78 | 80 | 85 | 87 | 86 | 86 | 89 | –65 | –12.2 | –42.3 |
| QC | 602 | 769 | 792 | 769 | 776 | 864 | 751 | 817 | 732 | 746 | 144 | 27.1 | 23.9 |
| ON | 1,396 | 1,466 | 1,531 | 1,601 | 1,643 | 1,666 | 1,678 | 1,570 | 1,607 | 1,609 | 214 | 40.3 | 15.3 |
| MB | 152 | 160 | 167 | 183 | 189 | 192 | 195 | 197 | 123 | 139 | –13 | –2.5 | –8.8 |
| SK | 279 | 274 | 302 | 337 | 361 | 361 | 370 | 381 | 376 | 374 | 95 | 17.9 | 34.0 |
| AB | 750 | 808 | 848 | 873 | 882 | 885 | 883 | 888 | 884 | 868 | 117 | 22.1 | 15.6 |
| BC | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |

Note: "n/a" means that data is not available for a specific reference period.
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a.

**Table 9** shows the annual growth in government contributions to teachers' pensions for Canada and the provinces. Across Canada, pension spending grew by 1.7% annually, on average, between 2012/13 and 2021/22. In line with total growth over the period, Nova Scotia experienced

**Table 9: Average annual growth (%) in spending on teachers' pensions, 2012/13–2021/22**

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | % growth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | n/a | 5.9 | 5.0 | 3.7 | 2.6 | 3.3 | –2.2 | –0.5 | –3.3 | 0.6 | 1.7 |
| NL | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| PE | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| NS | n/a | 1.4 | 4.9 | 12.9 | 13.5 | 11.2 | 0.7 | 1.9 | –3.3 | 9.9 | 5.9 |
| NB | n/a | –63.8 | 22.1 | 15.4 | 1.8 | 7.0 | 1.5 | –0.7 | 0.3 | 2.7 | –1.5 |
| QC | n/a | 27.9 | 3.0 | –2.9 | 0.9 | 11.4 | –13.1 | 8.8 | –10.3 | 1.8 | 3.0 |
| ON | n/a | 5.1 | 4.4 | 4.6 | 2.7 | 1.4 | 0.7 | –6.4 | 2.3 | 0.1 | 1.7 |
| MB | n/a | 5.1 | 4.3 | 9.4 | 3.7 | 1.1 | 1.8 | 1.3 | –37.6 | 12.8 | 0.2 |
| SK | n/a | –1.8 | 10.3 | 11.3 | 7.3 | 0.0 | 2.3 | 3.2 | –1.5 | –0.4 | 3.4 |
| AB | n/a | 7.7 | 5.0 | 2.9 | 0.9 | 0.4 | –0.2 | 0.5 | –0.4 | –1.9 | 1.7- |
| BC | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |

Note: "n/a" means that data is not available for a specific reference period.
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a.

the highest average annual growth in contributions to teachers' pensions at 5.9%. Saskatchewan saw the second highest average annual growth at 3.4%. All provinces with available data, other than New Brunswick, experienced positive average annual growth in spending on teacher pensions from 2012/13 to 2021/22.

## Spending on fringe benefits

The growth in fringe benefits exceeded aggregate growth for total spending, at 43.8%. As shown in **table 10**, this represents an increase from $5.5 billion (2012/13) to $7.8 billion (2021/22), or $2.4 billion in additional spending. In nominal dollars, Ontario saw the largest increase in spending ($1.1 billion), followed by Quebec ($462 million), Alberta ($257 million), and British Columbia ($240 million) from 2012/13 to 2021/22. These four provinces accounted for 87.1% of the total increase in spending on fringe benefits in public schools in Canada; Ontario alone accounted for nearly half of the total increase in spending on fringe benefits. All ten provinces saw an increase in nominal spending on fringe benefits from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Nova Scotia had the highest percentage growth (184.1%) in spending on fringe benefits from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Newfoundland & Labrador had the lowest growth rate at 15.4%.

**Table 10: Spending ($ millions) on fringe benefits, 2012/13–2021/22**

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | Change | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 5,460 | 5,786 | 5,955 | 6,163 | 6,219 | 6,714 | 7,069 | 7,271 | 7,653 | 7,849 | 2,389 | | 43.8 |
| NL | 85 | 85 | 83 | 93 | 95 | 98 | 101 | 213 | 98 | 98 | 13 | 0.5 | 15.4 |
| PE | 30 | 34 | 33 | 34 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 38 | 41 | 43 | 13 | 0.5 | 42.1 |
| NS | 89 | 91 | 100 | 112 | 93 | 233 | 233 | 241 | 246 | 254 | 165 | 6.9 | 184.1 |
| NB | 59 | 62 | 63 | 63 | 74 | 78 | 82 | 86 | 86 | 90 | 31 | 1.3 | 51.9 |
| QC | 859 | 889 | 920 | 917 | 959 | 1,016 | 1,072 | 1,124 | 1,264 | 1,321 | 462 | 19.3 | 53.8 |
| ON | 2,224 | 2,417 | 2,462 | 2,551 | 2,610 | 2,822 | 3,060 | 3,038 | 3,281 | 3,343 | 1,120 | 46.9 | 50.3 |
| MB | 126 | 130 | 135 | 144 | 144 | 147 | 152 | 152 | 167 | 174 | 47 | 2.0 | 37.6 |
| SK | 122 | 128 | 132 | 130 | 131 | 131 | 137 | 140 | 160 | 149 | 27 | 1.1 | 22.1 |
| AB | 943 | 1,016 | 1,056 | 1,106 | 1,114 | 1,142 | 1,140 | 1,137 | 1,161 | 1,200 | 257 | 10.8 | 27.2 |
| BC | 874 | 882 | 923 | 964 | 914 | 965 | 1,000 | 1,045 | 1,089 | 1,114 | 240 | 10.1 | 27.5 |

Source: Statistics Canada, 2024c.

As shown in **table 11**, spending on fringe benefits nationally has grown consistently year over year, with the highest growth in 2017/18 at 8.0%. On a year-by-year basis, 2021/22 saw an increase of 2.6% in overall spending on fringe benefits in Canada. All provinces except Saskatchewan saw a year-over-year increase in spending on fringe benefits in 2021/22; New Brunswick had the highest growth in fringe benefits that year at 4.6%. Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, and Alberta all saw a year-over-year growth rate in spending on fringe benefits that exceeded the national average in 2021/22.

## Capital spending

Capital spending has been increasing in public schools nationally: this category of spending increased from $4.9 billion in 2012/13 to $8.0 billion in 2021/22, an increase of 62.1% (**table 12**). Quebec saw the largest increase in nominal dollars over the time period at $1.9 billion. Ontario saw the second-largest increase in nominal dollars at $720 million. The smallest nominal dollar increase over the period was in Nova Scotia, with an increase of $1.0 million.

Newfoundland & Labrador and Saskatchewan both saw a decrease in capital spending from 2012/13 to 2021/22: in Newfoundland & Labrador, capital spending fell by $41.0 million (–60.4%)

### Table 11: Average annual growth (%) in spending on fringe benefits, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | % growth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | n/a | 6.0 | 2.9 | 3.5 | 0.9 | 8.0 | 5.3 | 2.9 | 5.3 | 2.6 | 4.1 |
| NL | n/a | 0.7 | –2.6 | 12.3 | 1.2 | 4.1 | 2.2 | 111.4 | –54.0 | 0.1 | 8.4 |
| PE | n/a | 11.7 | –2.0 | 2.6 | –0.1 | 2.6 | 3.2 | 7.5 | 8.0 | 3.1 | 4.1 |
| NS | n/a | 2.2 | 9.4 | 11.9 | –17.1 | 151.4 | 0.0 | 3.4 | 2.1 | 3.2 | 18.5 |
| NB | n/a | 4.0 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 16.1 | 5.4 | 6.0 | 4.9 | –0.1 | 4.6 | 4.8 |
| QC | n/a | 3.6 | 3.4 | –0.3 | 4.6 | 5.9 | 5.5 | 4.9 | 12.4 | 4.5 | 4.9 |
| ON | n/a | 8.7 | 1.9 | 3.6 | 2.3 | 8.1 | 8.4 | –0.7 | 8.0 | 1.9 | 4.7 |
| MB | n/a | 3.2 | 3.7 | 6.6 | 0.1 | 1.8 | 3.8 | –0.01 | 9.98 | 3.74 | 3.7 |
| SK | n/a | 4.9 | 3.0 | –1.4 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 4.4 | 1.9 | 14.0 | –6.6 | 2.4 |
| AB | n/a | 7.8 | 3.9 | 4.7 | 0.8 | 2.5 | -0.1 | -0.3 | 2.0 | 3.4 | 2.7 |
| BC | n/a | 0.8 | 4.7 | 4.5 | –5.2 | 5.6 | 3.6 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 2.3 | 2.8 |

Note: "n/a" means that data is not available for a specific reference period.
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024c.

### Table 12: Capital spending ($ millions), 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | Change | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 4,940 | 5,164 | 5,165 | 5,891 | 6,042 | 6,095 | 6,496 | 6,489 | 7,647 | 8,010 | 3,070 | | 62.1 |
| NL | 67 | 83 | 80 | 77 | 76 | 30 | 32 | 54 | 61 | 27 | –41 | –1.3 | –60.4 |
| PE | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| NS | 3 | 11 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 0.0 | 49.4 |
| NB | 5 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 7 | 0.2 | 147.9 |
| QC | 1,324 | 1,356 | 1,492 | 1,409 | 1,408 | 1,684 | 2,004 | 2,179 | 3,038 | 3,258 | 1,934 | 63.0 | 146.1 |
| ON | 2,278 | 2,394 | 2,243 | 2,206 | 2,509 | 2,481 | 2,926 | 2,452 | 2,737 | 2,998 | 720 | 23.4 | 31.6 |
| MB | 178 | 252 | 246 | 231 | 214 | 189 | 256 | 255 | 216 | 202 | 24 | 0.8 | 13.6 |
| SK | 255 | 276 | 221 | 450 | 322 | 448 | 85 | 97 | 104 | 105 | –150 | –4.9 | –58.8 |
| AB | 265 | 279 | 395 | 1,073 | 1,039 | 701 | 528 | 516 | 491 | 383 | 118 | 3.9 | 44.7 |
| BC | 545 | 498 | 441 | 397 | 441 | 535 | 642 | 896 | 968 | 1,003 | 458 | 14.9 | 84.1 |

Note: Data for Prince Edward Island are not reported because the underlying values are too small.
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024c.

and in Saskatchewan, by $150 million (58.8%). In this category, Saskatchewan adjusted to a lower spending level after a period of higher spending that began in 2012/13. Saskatchewan had the second-highest growth in enrolment of any province over this time period, while enrolment in Newfoundland & Labrador decreased. Newfoundland & Labrador's percentage increase in per-student, inflation-adjusted spending was the third-lowest of any province over this time period. In other words, the $41.0 million decline in Newfoundland & Labrador's capital spending suggests the significant increases in its overall education spending can be explained by operational expenditures and not infrastructure —in fact, 126.9% of the province's increase in spending over this time period was on compensation alone (table A1).

On average, capital spending for Canada has grown by 5.7% annually since 2012/13 (**table 13**). Ontario saw decreases in capital spending in four of the ten years observed: 2014/15, 2015/16, 2017/18, and 2019/20 and, next to Manitoba at 3.1%, had the smallest average annual increase in capital spending of only 3.6%, which was below the national average (5.7%) among all provinces from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Only Newfoundland & Labrador had an average annual decline (–1.5%) in capital spending over this time period.

There is a high degree of variability in the annual growth rates both among provinces and within each province over time. Each province has experienced a decline in capital spending in

**Table 13: Average annual growth (%) in capital spending, 2012/13–2021/22**

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | % growth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | n/a | 4.5 | 0.0 | 14.0 | 2.6 | 0.9 | 6.6 | –0.1 | 17.8 | 4.8 | 5.7 |
| NL | n/a | 24.1 | –3.9 | –4.1 | –0.9 | –60.8 | 7.8 | 68.4 | 12.7 | –56.4 | –1.5 |
| PE | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| NS | n/a | 255.7 | 4.1 | –15.7 | 10.8 | –13.4 | –38.9 | 0.0 | –1.6 | –17.0 | 20.4 |
| NB | n/a | 17.7 | –6.9 | 49.3 | –12.9 | 1.1 | 4.3 | –17.3 | 54.9 | 28.9 | 13.2 |
| QC | n/a | 2.4 | 10.0 | –5.6 | 0.0 | 19.6 | 19.0 | 8.8 | 39.4 | 7.2 | 11.2 |
| ON | n/a | 5.1 | –6.3 | –1.7 | 13.8 | –1.1 | 18.0 | –16.2 | 11.6 | 9.6 | 3.6 |
| MB | n/a | 41.7 | –2.2 | –6.1 | –7.4 | –11.9 | 35.5 | –0.3 | –15.1 | –6.7 | 3.1 |
| SK | n/a | 8.2 | –20.1 | 103.6 | –28.3 | 39.1 | –81.0 | 13.6 | 7.9 | 0.8 | 4.9 |
| AB | n/a | 5.3 | 41.8 | 171.6 | –3.2 | –32.5 | –24.7 | –2.3 | –4.9 | –21.9 | 14.4 |
| BC | n/a | –8.6 | –11.5 | –10.0 | 11.1 | 21.5 | 20.0 | 39.5 | 8.0 | 3.7 | 8.2 |

Note: Data for Prince Edward Island are not reported because the underlying values are too small; "n/a" means that data is not available for a specific reference period..
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024c.

at least one year between 2012/13 and 2021/22, and yet many have seen significant growth in other years. Nova Scotia shows the greatest variability across years, with an annual growth of 255.7% in 2013/14, and a decrease of 38.9% in 2018/19.

## Summary

There were substantial changes in the ranks of various provinces for per-student (inflation-adjusted) spending on public education between 2012/13 and 2021/22. In 2012/13, Alberta had the third highest per-student spending among the ten provinces. Ten years later, the province ranked last in the same category. Similarly, Saskatchewan shifted from the highest per-student spender in the country to the seventh highest spender from 2012/13 to 2021/22. By contrast, Quebec went from the lowest per-student spender to the highest (adjusted for inflation) over the ten-year period. Three of the Atlantic provinces have relatively high per-student spending in 2021/22 as well. Prince Edward Island climbed from the second-lowest per-student spender in 2012/13 to the third-highest per-student spender in 2021/22. Nova Scotia moved up from the seventh highest per-student spender to fifth highest and New Brunswick held on to its spot as the second highest per-student spender in 2012/13 to fourth highest in 2021/22. Interestingly, Newfoundland & Labrador went from fifth highest per-student spender to ninth highest during the same time period.

Similar results are observed in the operational spending category, once capital spending was removed. In 2012/13, Saskatchewan ranked second and Alberta, third on operational (inflation-adjusted) spending per-student. Nearly a decade later, Saskatchewan ranked sixth and Alberta, tenth—that is, last—in this category. Nova Scotia rose from sixth position in 2012/13 to third highest in 2021/22 while New Brunswick was the highest per-student operational spender in 2012/13 and stayed the highest in 2021/22. Prince Edward Island climbed from eighth in 2012/13 to second highest, while Newfoundland & Labrador declined slightly from fifth to eighth.

# Conclusion

It is clear from the data presented that from 2012/13 to 2021/22 inflation-adjusted per-student education spending in public schools has increased nationally and in seven of the ten provinces. Only Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Newfoundland & Labrador saw decreases in their inflation-adjusted per-student spending over the ten-year period. Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, Ontario, and British Columbia all increased education spending in public schools beyond what was required to account for enrolment and price changes from 2012/13 to 2021/22. Our results indicate that compensation remains the largest and costliest aspect of education spending and has contributed the largest portion to the growth in total education spending in Canada. Capital spending has also increased over the years and has grown as a share of overall spending.

# Appendix: Allocation of Spending by Province

### Table A1: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in Newfoundland & Labrador, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 657 | 76.5 | 708 | 78.7 | 51 | 126.9 | 7.8 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 572 | 66.6 | 610 | 67.8 | 38 | 94.3 | 6.6 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 85 | 9.9 | 98 | 10.9 | 13 | 32.5 | 15.4 |
| *Pensions* | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Capital | 67 | 7.8 | 27 | 2.9 | –41 | –100.6 | –60.4 |
| Other | 135 | 15.7 | 165 | 18.3 | 30 | 73.7 | 22.0 |
| Total | 859 | | 899 | | 40 | | 4.7 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

### Table A2: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in Prince Edward Island, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 172 | 75.9 | 260 | 74.5 | 88 | 71.8 | 51.4 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 142 | 62.6 | 218 | 62.2 | 76 | 61.5 | 53.4 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 30 | 13.3 | 43 | 12.2 | 13 | 10.3 | 42.1 |
| *Pensions* | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Capital | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Other | 39 | 17.2 | 89 | 25.5 | 50 | 41.0 | 129.8 |
| Total | 227 | | 350 | | 123 | | 54.3 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

## Table A3: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in Nova Scotia, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 1,021 | 72.6 | 1,496 | 75.9 | 475 | 84.4 | 46.6 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 871 | 61.9 | 1,142 | 58.0 | 271 | 48.2 | 31.2 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 89 | 6.4 | 254 | 12.9 | 165 | 29.2 | 184.1 |
| *Pensions* | 60 | 4 | 100 | 5.1 | 39 | 7.0 | 65.2 |
| Capital | 3 | 0.2 | 5 | 0.2 | 1 | 0.3 | 49.4 |
| Other | 383 | 27.2 | 469 | 23.8 | 86 | 15.3 | 22.6 |
| Total | 1,407 | | 1,970 | | 563 | | 40.1 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

## Table A4: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in New Brunswick, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 968 | 70.0 | 1,148 | 67.3 | 180 | 55.8 | 18.5 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 755 | 54.6 | 969 | 56.9 | 214 | 66.4 | 28.3 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 59 | 4.3 | 90 | 5.3 | 31 | 9.6 | 51.9 |
| *Pensions* | 153 | 11 | 89 | 5.2 | –65 | –20.2 | –42.3 |
| Capital | 5 | 0.4 | 12 | 0.7 | 7 | 2.3 | 147.9 |
| Other | 410 | 29.6 | 544 | 31.9 | 135 | 41.9 | 32.9 |
| Total | 1,383 | | 1,704 | | 321 | | 23.2 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

## Table A5: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in Quebec, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 8,846 | 69.9 | 12,803 | 59.1 | 3,957 | 44.0 | 44.7 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 7,386 | 58.3 | 10,737 | 49.6 | 3,351 | 37.3 | 45.4 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 859 | 6.8 | 1,321 | 6.1 | 462 | 5.1 | 53.8 |
| *Pensions* | 602 | 5 | 746 | 3.4 | 144 | 1.6 | 23.9 |
| Capital | 1,324 | 10.5 | 3,258 | 15.0 | 1,934 | 21.5 | 146.1 |
| Other | 2,490 | 19.7 | 5,592 | 25.8 | 3,102 | 34.5 | 124.6 |
| Total | 12,660 | | 21,653 | | 8,993 | | 71.0 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

## Table A6: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in Ontario, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 19,570 | 76.6 | 24,218 | 76.0 | 4,649 | 73.6 | 23.8 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 15,950 | 62.5 | 19,265 | 60.5 | 3,315 | 52.5 | 20.8 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 2,224 | 8.7 | 3,343 | 10.5 | 1,120 | 17.7 | 50.3 |
| *Pensions* | 1,396 | 5 | 1,609 | 5.1 | 214 | 3.4 | 15.3 |
| Capital | 2,278 | 8.9 | 2,998 | 9.4 | 720 | 11.4 | 31.6 |
| Other | 3,687 | 14.4 | 4,639 | 14.6 | 952 | 15.1 | 25.8 |
| Total | 25,535 | | 31,855 | | 6,320 | | 24.7 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

## Table A7: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in Manitoba, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 1,809 | 77.5 | 2,310 | 78.2 | 501 | 80.9 | 27.7 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 1,531 | 65.6 | 1,998 | 67.6 | 467 | 75.4 | 30.5 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 126 | 5.4 | 174 | 5.9 | 47 | 7.7 | 37.6 |
| *Pensions* | 152 | 7 | 139 | 4.7 | –13 | –2.2 | –8.8 |
| Capital | 178 | 7.6 | 202 | 6.8 | 24 | 3.9 | 13.6 |
| Other | 348 | 14.9 | 442 | 15.0 | 94 | 15.2 | 27.1 |
| Total | 2,335 | | 2,955 | | 619 | | 26.5 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

## Table A8: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in Saskatchewan, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 1,749 | 70.6 | 2,141 | 76.5 | 392 | 121.9 | 22.4 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 1,348 | 54.4 | 1,618 | 57.8 | 270 | 84.0 | 20.0 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 122 | 4.9 | 149 | 5.3 | 27 | 8.4 | 22.1 |
| *Pensions* | 279 | 11 | 374 | 13.4 | 95 | 29.5 | 34.0 |
| Capital | 255 | 10.3 | 105 | 3.8 | –150 | –46.7 | -58.8 |
| Other | 473 | 19.1 | 553 | 19.7 | 80 | 24.8 | 16.9 |
| Total | 2,477 | | 2,799 | | 322 | | 13.0 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

## Table A9: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in Alberta, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 5,955 | 76.6 | 7,061 | 77.9 | 1,106 | 85.6 | 18.6 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 4,262 | 54.8 | 4,994 | 55.1 | 732 | 56.7 | 17.2 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 943 | 12.1 | 1,200 | 13.2 | 257 | 19.9 | 27.2 |
| *Pensions* | 750 | 10 | 868 | 9.6 | 117 | 9.1 | 15.6 |
| Capital | 265 | 3.4 | 383 | 4.2 | 118 | 9.2 | 44.7 |
| Other | 1,555 | 20.0 | 1,622 | 17.9 | 67 | 5.2 | 4.3 |
| Total | 7,775 | | 9,066 | | 1,292 | | 16.6 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

## Table A10: Allocation of spending ($ millions) on education in British Columbia, 2012/13–2021/22

| | 2012/13 | | 2021/22 | | 2012/13–2021/22 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Spending ($ millions) | Share of total (%) | Spending ($ millions | Share of total (%) | Change {$ millions} | Share of change (%) | Growth (%) |
| Compensation | 4,504 | 71.3 | 5,777 | 67.6 | 1,273 | 57.2 | 28.3 |
| *Salaries & Wages* | 3,630 | 57.4 | 4,453 | 52.1 | 823 | 37.0 | 22.7 |
| *Fringe Benefits* | 874 | 13.8 | 1,114 | 13.0 | 240 | 10.8 | 27.5 |
| *Pensions* | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Capital | 545 | 9 | 1,003 | 11.7 | 458 | 20.6 | 84.1 |
| Other | 1,271 | 20 | 1,767 | 20.7 | 495 | 22.2 | 39.0 |
| Total | 6,320 | | 8,547 | | 2,227 | | 35.2 |

Note: The total value may not match the value in table 1 as a result of a lack of details on "Special education expenditures on public education" and "Private elementary and secondary school expenditures".
Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a, 2024c.

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## About the Authors

**Michael Zwaagstra** is a public high-school teacher and senior fellow of the Fraser Institute. He received his Bachelor of Education and Master of Education from the University of Manitoba and Master of Arts in Theological Studies from Liberty University in Virginia. He is the author of *A Sage on the Stage: Common Sense Reflections on Teaching and Learning*, and co-author of *What's Wrong with Our Schools and How We Can Fix Them*. He is a frequent author of education policy research and newspaper columns across Canada. His research mainly focuses on curricula, teaching instruction, and public education. Mr. Zwaagstra's research and commentary have been featured in radio, television, and newspapers across the country.

**Max Shang** is an Economist at the Fraser Institute. Prior to joining the Institute, he worked for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as a statistician and the University of Guelph as senior research associate. His past research has been published in leading peer-reviewed academic journals including *Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics* and *Computational Statistics*. While studying for his Ph.D., he developed two more efficient statistical methods for calculating insurance premiums. He holds a Ph.D. in Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics from the University of Guelph.

**Alicia Kardos** is a research intern at the Fraser Institute. She is pursuing a B.A. in Economics and Public Policy from the University of Toronto. Since joining the institute, Alicia has focused on education and health policy contributing to various blog posts and research papers.

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