

Portrait of Health in All Policies in Canada: Integrating Wellbeing into Federal Decision Making – Canada's Quality of Life Framework



CASE SUMMARY

2026

FOREWORD

This publication introduces the Government of Canada's Quality of Life Framework, as an example of a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach. This case summary is part of a series developed by the Canadian Network for Health in All Policies to document the current state and variety of implementation case examples of the HiAP approach in Canada. It is intended for public health and other actors interested in HiAP, and aims to advance knowledge of HiAP, highlight effective practices, and promote the exchange of ideas across Canada.

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KEY MESSAGES

- The Government of Canada adopted the [Quality of Life Framework](#) (hereafter, the Framework) in 2021. Led by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and Statistics Canada, this multisectoral initiative seeks to systematically integrate evidence about the wellbeing of people living in Canada into federal budgeting and decision making by bringing together findings from national data sources that reflect economic, social, and environmental indicators of wellbeing.
- The Framework prompts all federal departments to consider how their policies and programs affect wellbeing indicators, across both health and non-health elements. For example, by analyzing contributions to quality of life by specific initiatives in departments where health is not the primary mandate, such as Canadian Heritage and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, multisectoral contributions to health outcomes, as well as other aspects of wellbeing, have been identified.
- The Framework emphasizes cross-cutting perspectives such as equity and sustainability, and interrelated determinants of health. By applying a whole-of-government perspective, it promotes more integrated and inclusive decision making, consistent with the Health in All Policies approach, emphasizing wellbeing across all sectors.



1 ABOUT THIS SERIES

This case summary is part of a series of cases prepared by the NCCHPP as part of the Canadian Network for Health in All Policies’ (CNHiAP)¹ activities. It is intended to document the diversity of HiAP initiatives in Canada and the state of implementation activities. Promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO), HiAP is an intersectoral approach to policy making that facilitates action on the social determinants of health and the improvement of health, wellbeing and equity. It is based on the recognition that health is primarily determined by factors outside of the health sector, and that, therefore, population health is not only a product of health sector policies and programs but is largely determined by policies in other governmental sectors.

The objective of this project is to create a portrait of HiAP practice in Canada across different jurisdictions. The cases will outline HiAP initiatives, covering their origins, missions, objectives, governance structures, implementation mechanisms, achievements, funding sources, and evaluation frameworks. This series aims to enhance public health professionals’ and decision makers’ understanding of HiAP initiatives in Canada, promote promising practices, and foster connections among actors to strengthen the impact of HiAP on public policy and population health.

BOX 1. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION’S DEFINITION OF THE HIAP APPROACH

“Health in All Policies is an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity. It improves accountability of policy-makers for health impacts at all levels of policy-making. It includes an emphasis on the consequences of public policies on health systems, determinants of health and well-being” (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014, p. 2).

¹ To learn more about the CNHiAP visit: <https://ccnpps-ncchpp.ca/canadian-network-for-health-in-all-policies-cnhiap/>

1.1 Methodology

Case Selection

Three criteria were used for case selection, and the initiatives had to meet all three criteria to be considered. For this project, a HiAP initiative:

1. Fosters intersectoral collaboration and engagement
 - Involves at least two partners from different government sectors and may also involve non-governmental sectors.
 - Aims to break down silos and build new partnerships to coordinate action on the social determinants of health.
2. Promotes health, wellbeing, and equity
 - Incorporates health, wellbeing and equity considerations into policies, programs, and decision-making processes.
 - Implicitly or explicitly focuses on health, wellbeing and equity.
3. Fosters governance structures, mechanisms and processes to facilitate policy coordination
 - Instigates changes in relationships and decision-making processes across sectors and potentially non-governmental organizations from the private, public or third sector.
 - Establishes or enhances governance structures and/or mechanisms for intersectoral collaboration and integration of health, wellbeing and equity considerations.

Since HiAP is an approach rather than a specific model, the focus, composition and structure of HiAP initiatives vary from setting to setting. Therefore, this project aimed to document various HiAP approaches across different cases, including newly established, long-standing, non-governmental organization-led, and traditional government-led initiatives. It also aimed to account for diversity in geographical location, the level at which the HiAP approach is implemented (e.g., federal, provincial, regional, municipal), and the primary focus of the initiative or its target scope (e.g., federal, provincial, regional, municipal). Initiatives involving CNHiAP members were also prioritized.

Documentation

The information for this series was initially gathered through grey literature searches, drawing on publicly available documentation for each respective case. Subsequently, key informants from each case were contacted to confirm the findings and provide any additional data. The data were collected between June and September 2025.

2 ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S INITIATIVE

2.1 Origin and Objectives

Since 2021, the Government of Canada has applied a HiAP approach through the implementation of the [Quality of Life Framework for Canada](#) (hereafter, the Framework). Led by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and Statistics Canada, this multisectoral² initiative seeks to integrate evidence about the wellbeing³ of people living in Canada into federal budgeting and decision making in a more systematic way, by bringing together national data sources that reflect economic, social, and environmental indicators of wellbeing. The Framework prompts all federal departments to assess how their policies and programs impact health and wellbeing indicators (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024). By taking a holistic approach and prioritizing fairness, inclusion, sustainability and resilience, this federal initiative has the potential to effectively align and coordinate actions across sectors in pursuit of a shared vision of improving the quality of life of people living in Canada. It also strengthens evidence-based decision making, enabling the federal government to identify emerging priorities and build on past efforts to advance population wellbeing (Department of Finance Canada, 2021). More specifically, the Framework has filled important wellbeing data gaps and has enabled the integration of quality of life considerations in government-wide processes.

The development of the Framework began in 2019 when the Prime Minister tasked the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance with the goal of better integrating quality of life measurements into federal budgeting and decision making. This mandate was established to ensure that government actions take into account a broad range of metrics, rather than relying solely on traditional economic indicators. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted that what matters most to people living in Canada is not always easily quantifiable in economic or financial terms. The pandemic brought attention to several key quality of life issues, including mental health, social connection, employment, access to childcare, and long-standing inequalities (Department of Finance Canada, 2021).

The introduction of the Framework also aligned with global "beyond GDP"⁴ efforts, reflecting the growing awareness that traditional economic indicators do not capture the full picture of societal wellbeing. In response, there is a growing emphasis on incorporating broader social and environmental measures. Many countries are increasingly adopting metrics that go "Beyond GDP" and monitor wellbeing in multidimensional ways. The Framework was inspired in part by international

² For the purposes of this case, the term "multisectoral" will be used consistently, although the terms "multisectoral" and "intersectoral" are often used interchangeably to describe actions involving multiple sectors to improve health, equity, and wellbeing (WHO, 2023).

³ Quality of life or wellbeing can be defined as "the wealth and comfort of individuals, communities and society based on factors that are important to people's lives" (WHO, 2024, p. 40).

⁴ Gross domestic product (GDP): "GDP has been historically considered a standard indicator of the national performance of a country. "Beyond GDP" refers to moving from measuring national progress with solely economic measures to including social, cultural and environmental factors for a holistic representation of quality of life and well-being of a country" (WHO, 2024, p. 40).

leaders in quality of life such as New Zealand and Scotland.⁵ The Framework also draws inspiration from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Better Life Index, which serves as a tool for globally benchmarking progress on wellbeing indicators.

The Framework was officially launched in 2021 and embedded into federal budgeting and decision making after a comprehensive consultation and engagement process. Initial development was led by the Department of Finance Canada and Statistics Canada, supported by over 20 federal departments and agencies, including Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, and Justice Canada, as well as engagement with provincial and territorial officials, national Indigenous organizations, and subject matter experts from both domestic and international contexts, highlighting a collaborative co-development approach (WHO, 2024).

The primary goal of this initiative is to enhance quality of life for people living in Canada by integrating wellbeing measures into federal budgeting and decision making, guiding decisions across various sectors. One of the ways this is being achieved is through quality of life analyses in annual federal budget proposals. Each budget proposal that a federal department or agency submits to Finance Canada during the annual budget cycle must characterize the expected positive impacts of its proposal on quality of life, based on the domains and indicators in the Quality of Life Framework. A budget impact report summarizing the quality of life analyses from successful proposals has been published within the annual budget since 2021.

Data for wellbeing indicators are also regularly and publicly reported (WHO, 2024). Launched by Statistics Canada in 2022, the [Quality of Life Hub](#) offers open access to the latest metadata, data and analysis on the 91 quality of life indicators that make up the Framework (Statistics Canada, 2025a).

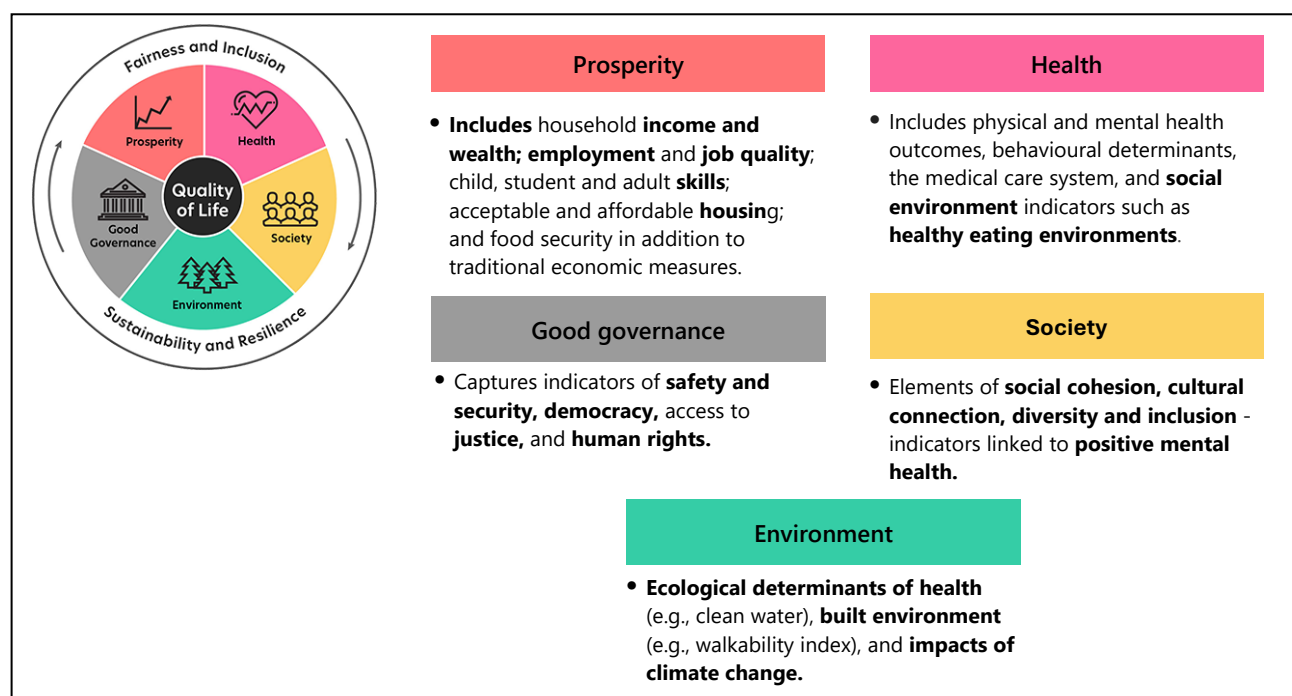
The Framework employs fairness and inclusion as a fundamental lens, aiming to capture outcomes and considerations for marginalized populations, including through the use of disaggregated data. The application of Sex and Gender Based Analysis Plus (SGBA Plus) can also support this lens. The Framework is a whole-of-government tool composed of five domains well aligned with evidence on what matters for wellbeing and the views of people living in Canada (Department of Finance Canada, 2021):

- Prosperity
- Health
- Environment
- Society
- Good governance

⁵ To learn more about these wellbeing initiatives, as well as those in Finland and Wales, see the NCCHPP report [Whole-of-Government Wellbeing Approaches: A Comparative Analysis of Four Central Government Initiatives](#).

The Framework reflects numerous social determinants of health, including housing, employment, income, food security, climate change, sense of belonging, and access to services. It is composed of 91 indicators used to monitor wellbeing across these different facets (WHO, 2024). A few indicators are still in development, and the Framework is intended to be evergreen, with reviews every two years. It also builds upon previous initiatives by the Government of Canada related to quality of life, such as Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy (in support of the Sustainable Development Goals), the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the Canadian Gender Budgeting Act, among others (Department of Finance Canada, 2021). Figure 1 illustrates the composition of the Framework in relation to the determinants of health, and Table 1 presents examples of indicators for each domain.

Figure 1 Quality of Life Framework in relation to determinants of health



Note: Adapted from *Infosheet: Quality of Life Framework for Canada* by Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, 2025b)

Table 1 Quality of Life Framework: examples of indicators by domain

Domain	Examples of indicators
Prosperity	<p>Income and growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Household income ● Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita <p>Employment and job quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employment ● Job security and gig work <p>Skills and opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) ● Adult Skills <p>Economic security and deprivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core housing need ● Poverty
Health	<p>Healthy people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Health-adjusted life expectancy ● Perceived mental health ● Perceived health <p>Healthy care systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timely access to a primary care provider ● Unmet needs for health care ● Unmet needs for mental health care
Environment	<p>Environment and people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Air quality ● Drinking water ● Active living environments <p>Ecological integrity and environmental stewardship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greenhouse gas emissions ● Conserved areas
Society	<p>Culture and identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sense of belonging to Canada ● Indigenous languages <p>Social cohesion and connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sense of belonging to local community ● Loneliness <p>Time use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Satisfaction with time use

Table 1 Quality of Life Framework: examples of indicators by domain (continued)

Domain	Examples of indicators
Good governance	<p>Safety and security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceptions of neighbourhood safety after dark ● Childhood maltreatment <p>Democracy and Institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Confidence in institutions ● Indigenous self-determination <p>Justice and human rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discrimination and unfair treatment ● Confidence in access to fair and equal justice

Note: Data from the *Quality of Life Hub* by Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, 2025a).

2.2 Governance and Implementation

The development and implementation of the Framework have been led by central agencies of the federal government (WHO, 2024).

The Department of Finance Canada initially led the development of the initiative and provided strategic leadership for integration into federal budgeting. An Assistant Deputy Ministers’ (ADM) Committee on Wellbeing Budgeting, provided strategic oversight for the development of the Framework. This committee, composed of representatives from key federal departments, worked to strengthen interdepartmental collaboration to advance multidimensional, inclusive and long-term thinking related to quality of life and to ensure policy coherence across other federal frameworks. To aid the ADM Committee, three dedicated subcommittees focused on specific technical and equity-related priorities (WHO, 2024):

- Indicators and Data Subcommittee
- Sustainability and Resilience Subcommittee, and
- Indigenous Engagement Subcommittee.

These subcommittees aimed to enable diverse perspectives and in-depth discussions to inform senior decision makers, ensuring meaningful data development, inclusive engagement, and policy coherence across sectors.

Since late 2021, the Treasury Board Secretariat has been leading efforts to refine and strengthen the Framework and advance its implementation within federal processes. This includes integrating the Framework into the federal government’s guidance for departmental reporting to Parliament and integrating quality of life considerations in Cabinet decision making, performance measurement, and evaluation.

Statistics Canada also plays a crucial role in this initiative through its Quality of Life Statistics Program. This program is responsible for ensuring the quality, integrity, and disaggregation of much of the data used in the Framework, as well as for defining and maintaining the indicators and the [Quality of Life Hub](#), which is maintained as a ‘one stop shop’ providing up-to-date data and metadata on each of the Framework’s 91 indicators, along with any analysis on these topics that is available. As the Hub matures, it is providing more and more tools to allow users to access and manipulate disaggregated data, including mapping tools and visual trend lines where available to make data more easily accessible for the Hub’s growing community of users.

The current governance structure centres on a Director General Committee on Quality of Life Measurement and Implementation. There is also an ADM group that meets regularly to share updates and discuss issues of interest. These groups are presently co-chaired by the Treasury Board Secretariat and Statistics Canada.

After the 2021 federal election, mandate letters included a whole-of-government commitment, directing all ministers to apply quality of life indicators in federal decision making. The Framework is intended to guide a range of government functions, such as planning (e.g., setting priorities based on emerging trends), informing decisions (e.g., taking into account impacts on diverse aspects of quality of life), and reporting on progress (e.g., publishing dashboards that illustrate changes in wellbeing indicators).

Additionally, various processes have been established to integrate the Framework into federal operations (WHO, 2024):

- **Budget cycle:** Analysis of quality of life is now a key component of the budget proposal review process. Departments are required to identify how proposed initiatives align with the Framework’s indicators, articulating contributions to quality of life.
- **Policy design and impacts:** Departments use the Framework’s indicators to frame how their core responsibilities and new initiatives contribute broadly to the quality of life for people living in Canada.
- **Performance monitoring:** Departments are encouraged to align their outcome reporting with the Framework’s indicators, facilitating more consistent monitoring across the government.

Multiple tools have also been created to facilitate the implementation of the Framework across departments (WHO, 2024):

- **Guidance for budget proposals:** Assists policy teams in identifying how their proposals align with quality-of-life indicators.
- **Guidance for departmental plans and departmental results reports:** Assists departments in incorporating quality of life impacts into these documents, explaining how their core responsibilities contribute to quality of life.
- **Guidance for departmental results frameworks:** Assists departments in aligning their departmental performance measurement with their contributions to quality of life.

- **Internal training, resources, and presentations:** Enhances understanding and encourages adoption of the Framework throughout government. For example, an introductory video on the Quality of Life Framework is available as a regular, self-directed offering for federal public servants through the Canada School of Public Service.
- **Quality of Life Hub** (public dashboard): Launched by Statistics Canada in 2022, this hub offers open access to the latest metadata, data and analysis on the 91 quality of life indicators that make up the Framework. It is regularly updated with new visual products and datasets, offering users an interactive and detailed view of these indicators over time. It includes data from a variety of sources, including key household surveys, the census, and administrative datasets where applicable.

2.3 Achievements

Several examples of outcomes related to the Framework, and relevant to HiAP, can be found in Table 2.

Table 2 Quality of Life Framework: Achievements

Outcomes	Examples
<p>The Framework’s integration into the government’s budget process, enabling quality of life considerations in budget-related decision making and reporting.</p>	<p>For the completion of budget proposals, departments are required to identify an initiative’s expected impacts in terms of quality of life indicators.</p> <p>The expected impacts on quality of life for each funded budget initiative are publicly reported in federal budget impact reports.</p>
<p>Intersectoral alignment between departments, with enhanced considerations of health by non-health sectors.</p>	<p>As part of the budget process, departmental plans and departmental results reports, non-health departments frequently refer to indicators from the health domain, highlighting opportunities for collaboration across sectors. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance Canada, with Public Safety Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, received funding from the federal government’s 2023 budget for a disaster insurance program to improve affordable coverage for natural disasters. The quality of life analysis highlighted impacts across prosperity, health, environment, and good governance, including self-rated mental health. • Canadian Heritage received funding from the federal government’s 2023 budget to build a safer, more accountable sports system for at-risk groups. While this investment’s quality of life analysis focuses on the societal domain, the initiative also supports self-rated mental health, overall health, and physical activity. • Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada received funding from the federal government’s 2024 budget to address food insecurity, especially in northern, Indigenous, and rural communities. The quality of life analysis linked the initiative to improved healthy eating (health domain) and potential impacts on non-communicable diseases.

Table 2 Quality of Life Framework: Achievements (continued)

Outcomes	Examples
Strengthened relationships between different federal departments	<p>The multisectoral process enabled departments to find common ground with others, identify partnership opportunities to advance shared objectives, present their initiatives and perspectives, and expand their networks. For example:</p> <p>The Public Health Agency of Canada conducted joint knowledge mobilization activities with non-health departments, such as a panel presentation at the WHO’s 10th Global Conference on Health Promotion in December 2021 and a workshop on wellbeing budgeting as part of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education Conference in May 2022.</p>

Note: Data from Compendium Report on Multisectoral Actions for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health Conditions: Country Case Studies by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) and from Measuring What Matters: Towards a Quality of Life Strategy for Canada by the Department of Finance of Canada (Department of Finance Canada, 2021).

2.4 Evolution of the Framework

The Framework is designed as an “evergreen” tool, intended to be adapted based on evolving data, public policy needs and feedback. The initial goals of the Quality of Life Statistics Program were to develop definitions of quality of life indicators (including measurement methodology), find appropriate data sources, and create the Quality of Life Hub. On the implementation side, initial goals were to implement the Framework in the budget process, followed by other aspects of the policy cycle.

In 2024, Statistics Canada conducted a [review of the Quality of Life Framework and its indicators](#), involving input from its network of data users and producers. The review highlighted substantial progress since its launch. Most indicators are now defined, the Quality of Life Hub has been established and is increasingly used by policy makers, and improvements in data frequency and disaggregation have enhanced policy relevance. Recommendations included adopting proposed updates to headline indicators, indicator names, and definitions, and endorsing the high-level work plan outlined in the review (Statistics Canada, 2025c). Moving forward, priorities include ensuring the continued relevance of the indicators, maintaining the Hub as a central and authoritative resource for integrated wellbeing data, and sustaining the analysis and dissemination of insights on the quality of life of people living in Canada.

Statistics Canada reviews will take place every two years with an aim to ensure that the Framework and its indicators remain relevant and impactful over time (Statistics Canada, 2025d). The 2026-27 review will focus on the needs of external data users as a key group which creates the social license for the Quality of Life Statistics Program (which includes statistical leadership of the Framework and the Quality of Life Hub). This focus is timely for this project as it seeks to improve the relevance of the Framework and its indicators for Indigenous-led organizations and communities, academics, other levels of government, and not-for-profits (Statistics Canada, 2025c).

Statistics Canada also plans to conduct an evaluation of the Quality of Life Statistics Program in 2026-27 (Statistics Canada, 2025e).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Quality of Life Framework initiative marks an important shift in federal decision-making and reporting of how those decisions impact the lives of people living in Canada.
- The collaboration across government departments to develop the Framework, its governance mechanisms, and supporting tools serve as a strong example of key principles of HiAP, notably the benefits of leadership at all levels.
- The Framework offers a common language and structure for diverse departments to align initiatives with a multi-dimensional view of wellbeing.

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Portrait of Health in All Policies Approaches in Canada: Integrating Wellbeing into Federal Decisions – Canada's Quality of Life Framework

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