

# Health-Care Costs For Typical Canadian Family Estimated At Nearly \$13,000 This Year

VANCOUVER: A typical Canadian family of four will pay \$12,935 for health care in 2018, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

"Health care in Canada isn't free—Canadians actually pay a substantial amount for public health care through their taxes, even if they don't pay directly for medical services," said Bacchus Barua, associate director of health policy studies at the Fraser Institute and co-author of The Price of Public Health Care Insurance, 2018.

Most Canadians are unaware of the true cost of health care because they never see a bill for medical services and may only pay a small public health insurance "premium" tax (in provinces that impose them).

And because general government revenue—not a dedicated tax—funds health care, it's difficult for Canadians to decipher how many of their tax dollars go to our public health-care system.

Using data from Statistics Canada and the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the study estimates that the average Canadian family (two parents, two children) with a household income of \$138,008 will pay \$12,935 for public health care this year.

After adjusting for inflation, that's an increase of 68.5 per cent since 1997, the first year estimates could be calculated.

For single Canadians, health-care costs more than doubled over that same time period—from \$2,115 (in 2018 dollars) to \$4,640 this year.

Across the income spectrum, Canadian families pay vastly different amounts for health care. For example, the 10 per cent of Canadian families with the lowest incomes (earning \$14,885 per household, on average) will pay \$496 for health care in 2018, while families among the top 10 per cent of income earners (earning a household income of \$291,364 on average) will pay \$38,903.

"It's important for Canadians



to understand how much they pay for our public health-care system so they can better decide whether or not they get good value for their tax dollars," Barua said.

The Fraser Institute is an independent Canadian public policy research and educational organi-

zation with offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal and ties to a global network of think-tanks in 87 countries. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for Canadians, their families and future generations by studying, measuring and broadly

communicating the effects of government policies, entrepreneurship and choice on their well-being. To protect the Institute's independence, it does not accept grants from governments or contracts for research. - Globe NewsWire.

## Toronto Debating Whether To Sue Over Slashing Of Council

TORONTO: Debate is raging at Toronto City Hall as local politicians weighed whether to wage a legal battle against the Ontario government over a controversial bill that would cut city council nearly in half just months before the fall municipal election.

Premier Doug Ford stunned both politicians and residents last week when he announced that he planned to reduce the number of council seats in the city to 25 from 47 while leaving council makeup in other major urban centres untouched.

The Progressive Conservative premier has said trimming coun-

cil ranks would streamline the decision-making process and save Toronto taxpayers \$25 million in councillor and staff salaries.

Speaking in the legislature Monday, Ford said he campaigned on reducing the size and cost of government so this move should come as no surprise.

"I talked to tens of thousands of people across this province, I talked to thousands of people in Toronto, and every single person I spoke to in Toronto said that city hall is dysfunctional," Ford said.

"We don't believe in bigger government. We don't believe in more politicians or more bureaucracy.

We're going to make sure the City of Toronto finally runs more efficiently." He also highlighted other potential benefits to reducing the number of council seats.

"I can assure you that when we have 25 councillors, it's going to be 500,000 less sheets of paper. I'm protecting the environment. I'm protecting trees," he said.

One city councillor and long-time Ford ally suggested there may be another motive for the move.

"There's going to be less left-leaning politicians in the City of Toronto and that means it's a great thing and it's a great day for the taxpayer," Coun. Giorgio Mammo-

liti said in a news conference.

While Mammoliti and a handful of likeminded councillors showed their support for the bill at the provincial legislature, their peers at city hall discussed their options to oppose the plan, which many have said was foisted on them unexpectedly after the city had already ruled against a similar proposal.

Municipal staff have suggested they could not make all the necessary changes in time for the Oct. 22 election, though Ontario's municipal affairs minister said he had reached out to them and is confident they can work out any "transitional issues."

Mayor John Tory kept the door open to mounting a court challenge against the province's plan, saying he supports a motion tabled at city hall Monday that would see the city examine legal options to stall Ford's proposed changes.

Scholars and lawyers have said that one of the ways to delay Ford's plan from taking effect during the current campaign is to mount a legal challenge.

Tory said he's open to "examining and pursuing" all legal options against the act. "It's one of those cases that's difficult for us because of the broad powers the province has over municipalities."

## EpiPen Shortage Sparks Call For Urgent Action

TORONTO: Repeated shortages of the life-saving EpiPen has "moved from an inconvenience to a concern," says Food Allergy Canada.

The national advocacy group was among those alarmed by yet another announcement from Pfizer that its epinephrine auto-injector is in short supply, with executive director Jennifer Gerdtz saying the latest shortfall comes just when it's needed most.

"The month of August ... is a key peak demand time for our audience given that it's back-to-school," says Gerdtz, noting that many schools request students have an extra EpiPen onsite as a backup.

The drug giant said Monday that it expects its EpiPen auto-injector will be in "very limited" supply in Canadian pharmacies in August, and that new stock likely won't be available until the end of that month.

The EpiPen auto-injector delivers 0.3 mg of epinephrine and is intended for those who weigh 30 kilograms or more (approximately 66 pounds or more). That could include patients as young as eight or nine years old, especially since most allergists graduate young patients from the EpiPen Jr \_ which delivers 0.15 mg epinephrine and is intended for children 15 to 30 kg (or 33 to 66 pounds) \_ once they hit 25 kilograms, says Barrie, Ont., allergist David Fisher.

Fisher says there have been supply issues in Canada for most of 2018. It's been so bad, he's heard of doctors discussing workarounds, such as letting patients have two EpiPen Jr's if the larger-dose injector is not available. He adds that's not ideal, because the needle length is made for a child. "It has happened from time to time," says Fisher, also president of the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. "No one has really looked into this as a viable alternative because normally it

does not happen. Normally, it should not happen."

Supply is also currently low for the EpiPen Jr, but stocks are being managed across the country and Pfizer says it "continues to be available and allocated at a national level." Fisher says that's in large part due to Health Canada's "preventative allocation approach," in which pharmacies have been instructed to be judicious about how many they dispense at a time.

Although more EpiPens are expected in September, there were no assurances the supply would remain stable: "There will be stock in September for September. As for October, (we) don't know."

"We're now at the point where we say: You know what? It's time to get some answers.... We need clarity on the root cause of the issue. What are the steps that are being taken and what's the time frame to resolution?"

Christina Antoniou, a spokeswoman for Pfizer Canada Inc., says the shortage is the result of "manufacturing delays."

"Stock that was scheduled to be shipped in early August is currently being inspected, which has caused a delay," she said by phone from Montreal.

EpiPen products expire on the last day of the month indicated on the package, so those with an August expiry date are good until Aug. 31.

Health Canada says anyone who has an anaphylactic reaction but has only an expired EpiPen should use the expired product and immediately call 911.

While those already managing allergies have recently expired EpiPens to use in a pinch, Fisher worried about new patients who may have nothing. There are no alternative auto-injectors available in Canada. Some 2.7 million Canadians have food allergies. Pic: Intropin/Wiki.

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