



Enrolments and Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada

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SUMMARY

- To accurately understand education spending, enrolment changes must be included.
- For Canada as a whole, the increase in per-student spending in public schools after accounting for the effects of price changes was 30.8% between 2003-04 and 2012-13; from \$9,231 to \$12,070.
- Saskatchewan saw the largest increase in per-student spending in public schools after adjusting for price changes. It experienced a 43.8% increase from \$9,929 in 2003-04 to \$14,282 in 2012-13. Neighbouring Manitoba recorded the smallest increase (14.9%).
- In aggregate, Canada increased education spending in public schools by \$13.8 billion from

2003-04 to 2012-13 more than was necessary to account for enrolment and price changes. If per student spending in public schools had remained constant over this period, the aggregate amount of education spending in public schools in 2012-13 would have been 22.8% lower.

- Such increases in spending need to be considered in the context of the overall finances of each of the provinces. For example, four provinces (British Columbia, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador) would have moved from a deficit position to a surplus in 2012-13 had spending on education in public schools been held constant for the 2003-04 to 2012-13 period (adjusting only for price and enrolment changes).

Introduction

This bulletin is another instalment in an extended series aimed at providing basic information about education spending in Canada. It focuses on the change in per-student education spending in public schools over the last decade (2003-04 to 2012-13). The study has two principal goals. First, it provides basic current and historical data on per-student spending in public schools. Second, it provides some context for understanding the changes observed in the education spending data.

The paper is divided into six short, focused sections. The first shows the increase in total spending on education in public schools by province over the last decade (2003-04 to 2012-13). The second gives enrolment numbers for each of the provinces for public schools over the same period. The next section calculates *per-student* spending in public schools over time, which combines the data from the first two sections. The fourth section then adjusts the data from section three to account for price changes (e.g., inflation). The fifth section presents two contexts within which to consider the increases calculated in the previous sections to help readers understand the totality and magnitude of the education spending increases. The essay ends with a brief conclusion.

I. Total spending on education in public schools

Before discussing the specific education spending measurements, it is worthwhile to reconsider the state of total spending. This essay and the companion pieces in the series focus on spending on education in public schools rather than on alternative measures of either total spending on education or total government spending on education, which may include in-

dependent school spending, depending on the province.

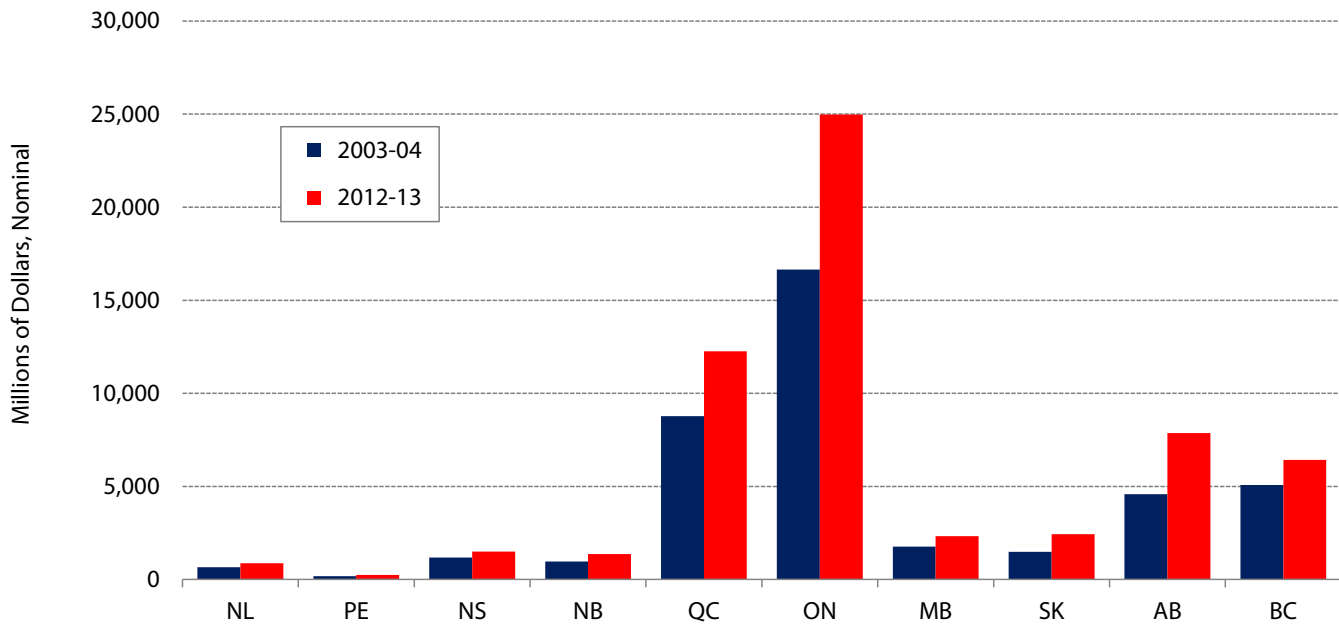
It is important to recognize that there are several important aspects to spending on education in public schools. First, this measure is limited to spending on education in public schools, which is distinct from spending on public *education*. This distinction therefore excludes, for example, government spending on independent schools in Quebec and the four western provinces.¹

Second, the data currently available from Statistics Canada includes a few small categories of revenue and spending that could be considered non-governmental, but which are extremely difficult to remove. Specifically, this essay includes the data from “Fees & Other Private Sources,” which includes rentals and leases, investment revenues, capital fund-sourced revenues, other fees, trust account revenues, inter-school transfers, and adjustments. Thankfully these items represent comparatively little revenue and spending relative to the entire envelope of spending on education in public schools. However, it is important to recognize that the measure relied on for this paper may not be exclusive of a small amount of private spending on education in public schools.

In addition, the dataset used includes several categories of spending on education in public schools that are often ignored or purposefully excluded. Specifically, it includes spending on capital—particularly new school construction and renovations to existing schools—as well as contributions to school employee pension plans. The inclusion of these spending categories is particularly important given their rela-

¹ For more information on the state of funding of both public and independent schools in Canada see Clemens, Palacios, Loyer, and Fathers (2014).

Figure 1: Spending on Public Schools



Source: Statistics Canada (2015c).

tive growth in recent years.² The “spending on public schools” dataset is based on Statistics Canada’s “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” (2014).

Table 1 includes data for spending on education in public schools in 2003-04 and 2012-13; figure 1 presents this data graphically. Spending on education in public schools in 2012-13 amounted to \$60.7 billion, an increase of \$19.1 billion, or 45.9%, from 2003-04 when spending on education in public schools was \$41.6 billion.

Provincially, the largest increase in spending on education in public schools (71.8%) occurred in Alberta. Neighbouring British Columbia record-

Table 1: Spending on Public Schools

	2003-04 (\$ mil- lions)	2012-13 (\$ mil- lions)	Nominal change, (\$ mil- lions)	Percentage change
Canada	41,609	60,700	19,091	45.9%
NL	653	868	215	32.9%
PE	173	243	70	40.1%
NS	1,177	1,495	318	27.0%
NB	964	1,368	404	41.9%
QC	8,768	12,253	3,486	39.8%
ON	16,650	24,982	8,332	50.0%
MB	1,771	2,322	551	31.1%
SK	1,478	2,432	954	64.5%
AB	4,579	7,867	3,288	71.8%
BC	5,081	6,425	1,344	26.5%

Source: Statistics Canada (2015c).

² A forthcoming analysis of education spending by Van Pelt et al. will examine this specific issue in more detail.

Table 2: Enrolment in Public Schools, 2003-04 to 2012-13 (number of students)

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Percentage change, 2003-04 to 2012-13
Canada	5,286,949	5,253,442	5,212,533	5,163,824	5,115,188	5,086,549	5,074,669	5,051,760	5,030,315	5,029,009	-4.9%
NL	81,510	79,485	76,806	74,343	72,111	70,641	69,663	68,655	67,827	67,476	-17.2%
PE	22,905	22,395	21,948	21,366	20,811	20,325	19,953	21,162	20,829	20,406	-10.9%
NS	148,514	145,396	142,304	138,661	135,303	133,134	130,550	128,131	125,540	122,643	-17.4%
NB	118,869	117,144	114,819	112,014	110,286	108,405	106,392	104,421	102,579	101,079	-15.0%
QC	1,241,143	1,233,100	1,216,293	1,204,622	1,188,903	1,187,612	1,189,876	1,179,970	1,172,185	1,176,811	-5.2%
ON	2,129,742	2,123,904	2,118,546	2,103,465	2,087,586	2,070,735	2,061,390	2,051,865	2,043,117	2,031,195	-4.6%
MB	186,288	184,353	182,373	180,042	179,322	177,960	177,501	177,678	178,920	179,292	-3.8%
SK	178,932	176,069	174,206	166,498	167,181	164,763	166,003	167,043	168,354	170,318	-4.8%
AB	552,594	550,983	551,739	560,562	559,119	564,051	567,978	573,198	577,758	594,444	7.6%
BC	605,545	596,172	589,388	578,626	571,267	565,875	562,743	557,102	550,748	542,879	-10.3%

Source: Statistics Canada (2014 and 2015b).

ed the smallest increase (26.5%). Half the provinces had increases in excess of 40.0% (table 1).

II. Enrolment in public schools

As a previous essay in this series explained (Van Pelt and Emes, 2015), total spending on education in public schools misses a critical component: enrolment. Any analysis of education spending that ignores enrolment risks materially misrepresenting the reality of that spending. An increase in education spending that is less than the percentage increase in enrolment results in a per-student decrease in spending on education. Conversely, a reduction in education spending that is less than a percentage reduction in enrolment results in a per-student increase in spending. It is, therefore, critical to account for changes in enrolment when analyzing education spending.

Table 2 contains enrolment data for Canada as a whole and for the individual provinces between 2003-04 and 2012-13. Figures 2a to 2d illustrate the provincial enrolment by region over the same period.

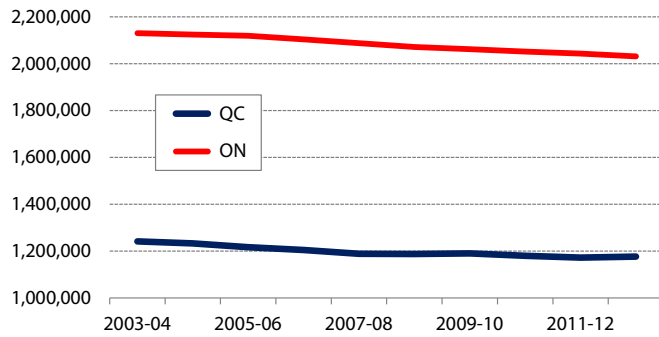
Total enrolment in public schools in Canada declined by 4.9% between 2003-04 and 2012-13, from almost 5.3 million to a little over 5.0 million students. As figures 2a to 2d illustrate, Alberta was the only province to experience an increase in public school enrolment over the entire period (7.6%).³

The other nine provinces all experienced a decline in public school enrolment over the pe-

³ It's important to note, however, that Alberta's enrolment change is consistent with the rest of Canada when calculated as a share of population. Specifically, enrolment-to-population fell by 12.0% in Alberta and by 13.4% in Canada as a whole.

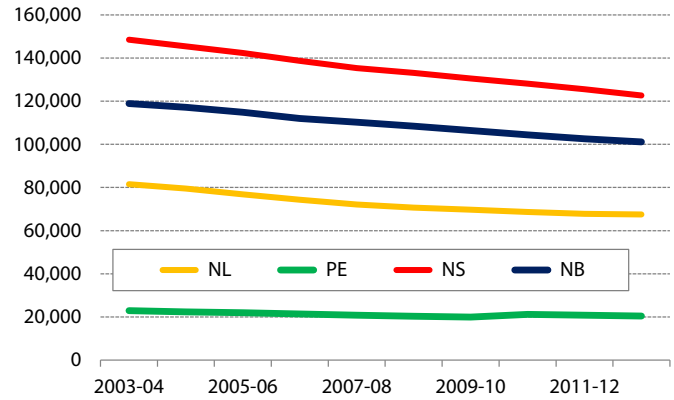
Enrolments and Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada

Figure 2a: Enrolment in Public Schools, Ontario and Quebec (number of students)



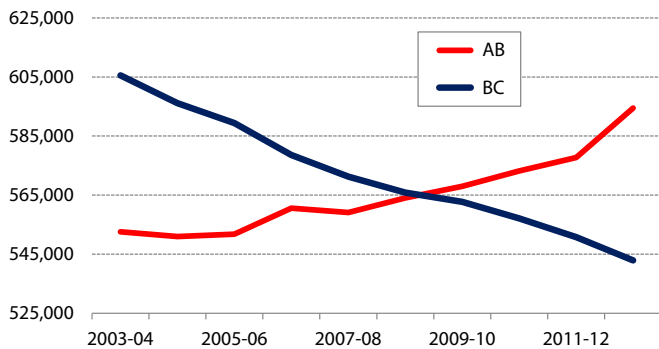
Source: Statistics Canada (2014 and 2015b).

Figure 2c: Enrolment in Public Schools, Atlantic Canada (number of students)



Source: Statistics Canada (2014 and 2015b).

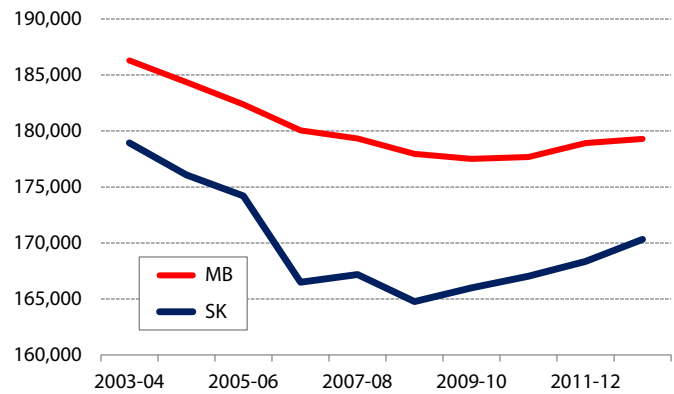
Figure 2b: Enrolment in Public Schools, Alberta and BC (number of students)



Note: Alberta's enrolment change is consistent with the rest of Canada when calculated as a share of population. Specifically, enrolments to population fell by 12.0% in Alberta and by 13.4% in Canada as a whole.

Source: Statistics Canada (2014 and 2015b).

Figure 2d: Enrolment in Public Schools, Manitoba and Saskatchewan (number of students)

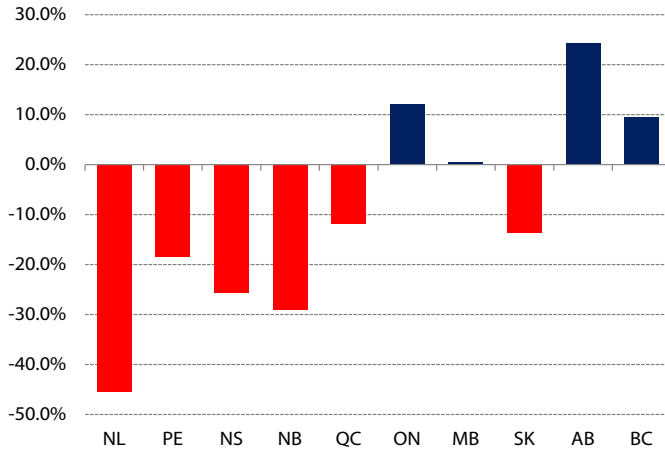


Source: Statistics Canada (2014 and 2015b).

riod. Atlantic Canada saw the largest drops in public school enrolment. The declines ranged from 10.9% in Prince Edward Island to 17.4% in Nova Scotia. Outside of Atlantic Canada, the largest decline in public school enrolment was in British Columbia (10.3%). The other provinces experienced declines of between 3.8% (Manitoba) and 5.2% (Quebec).

It is worth noting that both Saskatchewan and Manitoba saw their public school enrolment trends reverse (figure 2d). While enrolment declined overall in both provinces during the period examined (2003-04 to 2012-13), both began seeing their public school enrolment increase towards the end of the period: Saskatchewan in 2009-10 and Manitoba in 2010-11.

Figure 3: Change in School-Aged Population, By Province (1990-2013)



Sources: Statistics Canada (2014, 2015b, 2015d).

The public school enrolment declines between 2003-04 and 2012-13 are generally due to a combination of a school-age population that is growing slowly, or even shrinking (depending on the province), and the transition of students to independent schools⁴ and homeschooling.⁵ Figure 3 illustrates the percentage change in the number of school-aged children (ages 5 to 17) by province between 1990 and 2013. Only four provinces recorded an increase in the number of school-aged residents: Ontario (12.2%), Manitoba (0.5%), Alberta (24.3%) and British Columbia (9.5%). In the six remaining provinces, the absolute number of school-aged children dropped over this period.

As a whole, Canada experienced a modest increase of 1.5% in the number school-aged children over this period. Critically, their share rel-

⁴ For more information on independent schools in Canada, see Clemens, Palacios, Loyer, and Fathers (2014).

⁵ For more on homeschooling in Canada, see Van Pelt (2015).

ative to the country's total population declined from 17.8% in 1990 to 14.2% in 2013.

III. Per-student spending in public schools

The decline in public school enrolment in nine of the 10 provinces for 2003-04 to 2012-13 means that the per-student increases in spending are larger than the simple aggregated spending increases presented in section I. The reverse is true of Alberta, which experienced an increase in public school enrolment. Table 3 and figure 4 present data on per-student spending in public schools between 2003-04 and 2012-13.

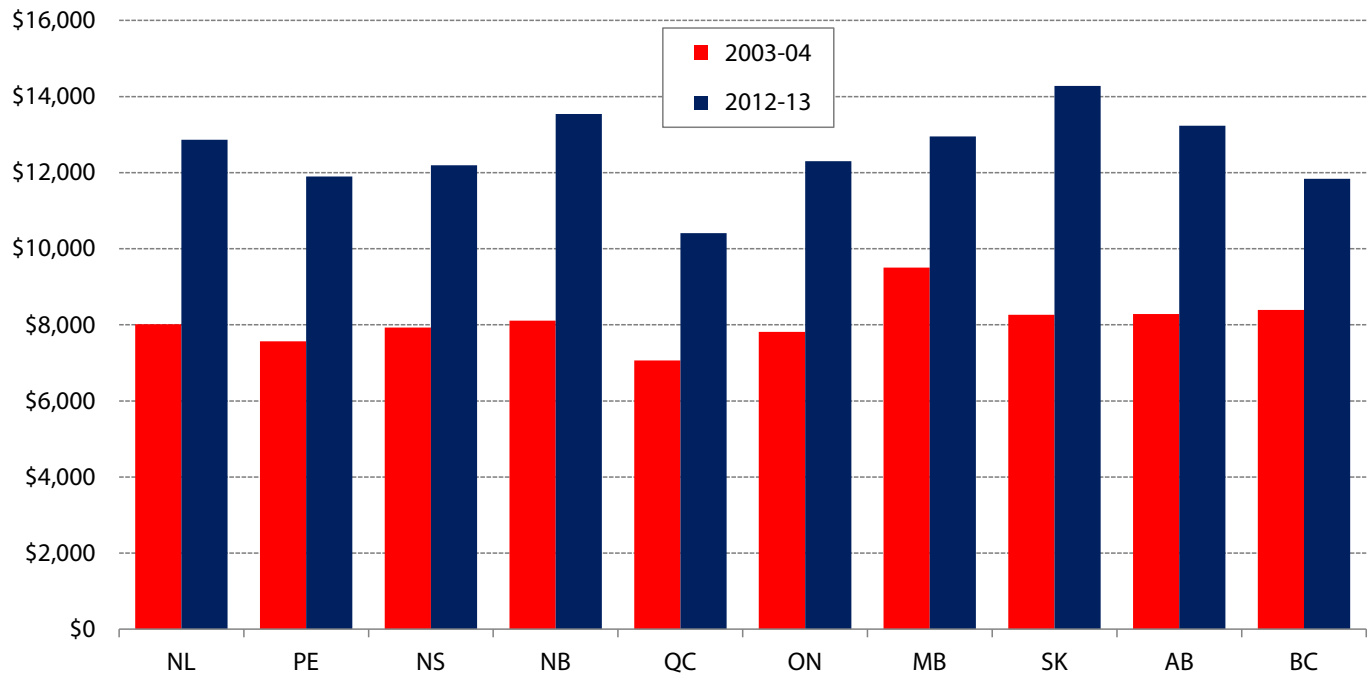
Canada as a whole recorded a 53.4% increase in per-student spending in public schools between 2003-04 and 2012-13. This is higher than the noted increase in aggregate spending of 45.9% over the same period because of the influence of a declining student enrolment. Spending per student in public schools increased from \$7,870 in 2003-04 to \$12,070 in 2012-13 (table 3 and figure 4).

All of the provinces, including Alberta, recorded increases in per-student spending in public schools over this period (figure 4). The largest increase occurred in Saskatchewan, where per-student spending in public schools went from \$8,262 in 2003-04 to \$14,282 in 2012-13, an increase of 72.9% (table 3). In fact, Saskatchewan now has the highest level of per-student spending in public schools among the provinces.

All but three provinces (Quebec, Manitoba, and British Columbia) recorded increases in per-student spending in public schools of over 50.0%. Manitoba's increase was the smallest: 36.2%. The data show that all of the provinces introduced marked increases in spending per student in public schools over this period.

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Figure 4: Per-Student Spending in Public Schools by Province (\$)



Source: Statistics Canada (2014, 2015b, 2015c).

Table 3: Per-Student Spending in Public Schools, 2003-04 to 2012-13 (\$)

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Percentage change
Canada	7,870	8,440	8,910	9,466	9,986	10,628	11,153	11,601	11,846	12,070	53.4%
NL	8,015	9,268	8,445	8,821	10,105	10,953	12,612	12,491	12,755	12,866	60.5%
PE	7,566	7,724	7,674	8,484	8,971	10,102	12,015	11,373	11,318	11,899	57.3%
NS	7,928	8,318	8,964	9,706	10,216	10,867	11,510	11,955	12,031	12,191	53.8%
NB	8,113	8,742	9,283	9,914	10,339	11,396	11,952	13,053	13,181	13,538	66.9%
QC	7,064	7,336	7,723	8,051	8,892	9,191	9,446	9,880	10,199	10,412	47.4%
ON	7,818	8,664	9,190	9,600	10,010	10,651	11,316	11,946	12,117	12,299	57.3%
MB	9,507	9,633	9,975	10,241	10,672	11,188	11,571	11,894	12,150	12,950	36.2%
SK	8,262	8,702	9,141	9,526	9,821	10,545	11,643	11,821	13,106	14,282	72.9%
AB	8,286	8,724	9,371	11,043	11,034	12,367	13,231	13,535	13,497	13,234	59.7%
BC	8,391	8,914	9,346	9,939	10,679	11,204	11,035	11,094	11,418	11,836	41.1%

Source: Statistics Canada (2014, 2015b, 2015c).

IV. Accounting for price changes

Left out from the analysis thus far is one important factor: the influence of changing prices. Price changes refers to changes in prices that affect the real or effective value of money. Simply put, governments could be spending more in nominal dollars on education over time, but if these increases are less than inflation, the real or effective level of spending could be decreasing. The reason for this seemingly counter-intuitive result is that inflation erodes the value of money by making the goods and services purchased more expensive. This section recalculates the increases in per student spending in public schools adjusting for inflation over the period in each of the provinces. Table 4 and figure 5 present the recalculated numbers.

For Canada as a whole, once changes in prices are accounted for, per-student spending in public schools increased 30.8% between 2003-04 and 2012-13 (dropping from a 53.4% increase when inflation is not factored in, as in table 3). In dollar terms, the inflation-adjusted increase rises from \$9,231 to \$12,070 (in 2013 dollars).

The largest inflation-adjusted increase in per-student spending in public schools was in Saskatchewan, which experienced a 43.8% increase from \$9,929 in 2003-04 to \$14,282 in 2012-13 (figure 5). The smallest inflation-adjusted increase was recorded in neighbouring Manitoba (14.9%).

The percentage increases in per-student spending in public schools in table 4 are all less than the increases calculated in table 3, which did not include the effect of inflation on spending. Despite that, all 10 provinces did record increases in inflation-adjusted per-student spending in public schools over this period.

V: The spending increases in context

The range of inflation-adjusted increases in per-student spending in public schools (from 14.9% to 43.8%) appears fairly large (table 4). However, there is no context within which to gauge the actual size of the increases. This section gives two contexts to provide some understanding of the magnitude of the increases in per-student spending in public schools.

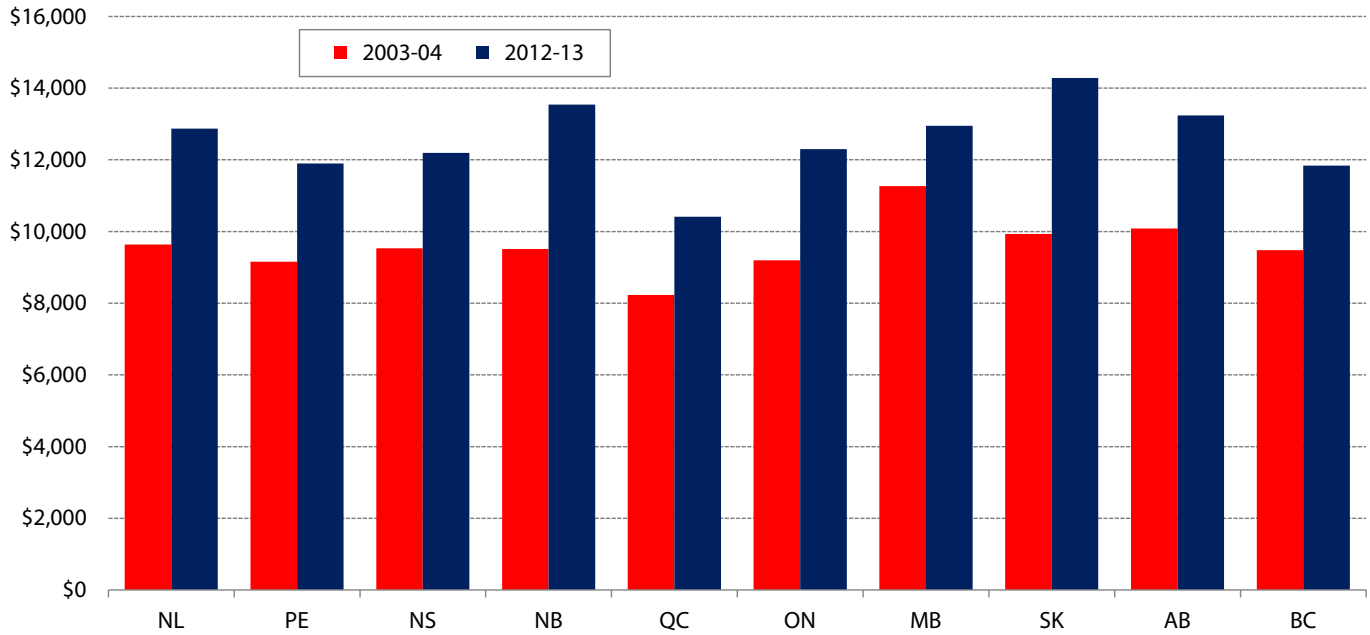
Comparing actual and constant per-student spending

The first context is counterfactual. It calculates total education spending for 2012-13 based on the per-student level observed in 2003-04 adjusted for changes in enrolment and inflation. In other words, it compares the actual aggregate spending of all provinces in 2012-13 on public schools with what the spending would have been, in total, if the per-student spending levels (in public schools) remained constant (adjusted for inflation) based on their 2003-04 values. Table 5 contains the calculations for both the actual and the adjusted spending, and shows the difference between the two. Figure 6 illustrates the two sets of per-student spending levels in public schools by province. Note that the data presented is in aggregate rather than on a per-student basis since the calculations take into account changes in enrolment.

In aggregate, Canada increased education spending in public schools by \$13.8 billion more between 2003-04 and 2012-13 than was necessary to account for enrolment and price changes (table 5). If per-student spending in public schools had remained constant over this period, the aggregate amount of education spending in public schools in 2012-13 would have been 22.8% lower.

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Figure 5: Per-Student Spending in Public Schools, Adjusted for Price Changes (\$ 2013)



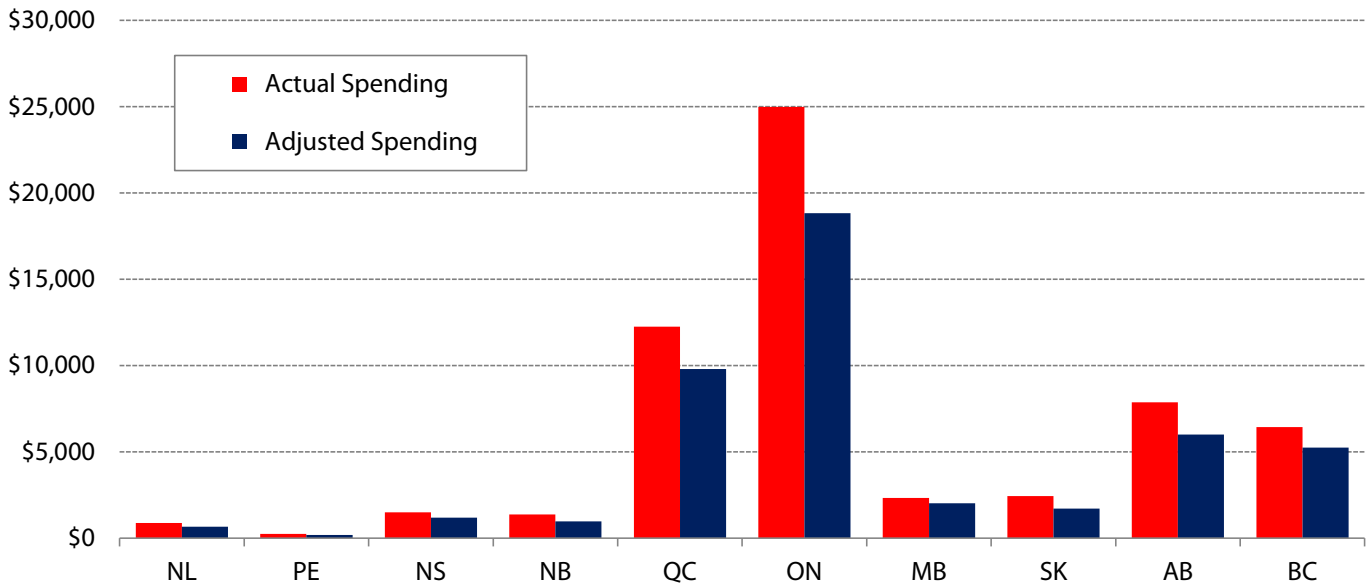
Source: Statistics Canada (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

Table 4: Per-Student Spending in Public Schools, Adjusted for Price Changes, 2003-04 to 2012-13 (\$ 2013)

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	Percentage change
Canada	9,231	9,687	10,029	10,426	10,747	11,408	11,756	11,881	11,953	12,070	30.8%
NL	9,636	10,853	9,717	10,004	11,140	12,043	13,536	12,964	12,971	12,866	33.5%
PE	9,153	9,062	8,802	9,560	9,772	11,023	12,869	11,835	11,544	11,899	30.0%
NS	9,532	9,732	10,279	10,923	11,159	11,891	12,328	12,335	12,175	12,191	27.9%
NB	9,513	10,012	10,456	10,956	11,234	12,350	12,684	13,380	13,289	13,538	42.3%
QC	8,227	8,351	8,646	8,875	9,602	9,863	10,014	10,164	10,275	10,412	26.6%
ON	9,193	9,969	10,390	10,658	10,867	11,522	11,947	12,235	12,237	12,299	33.8%
MB	11,266	11,114	11,287	11,359	11,576	12,060	12,376	12,356	12,423	12,950	14.9%
SK	9,929	10,232	10,532	10,672	10,652	11,319	12,330	12,180	13,296	14,282	43.8%
AB	10,086	10,403	10,757	12,073	11,697	13,120	13,900	13,880	13,689	13,234	31.2%
BC	9,478	9,871	10,176	10,634	11,192	11,742	11,413	11,208	11,409	11,836	24.9%

Source: Statistics Canada (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

Figure 6: Comparing Actual and Adjusted Spending in Public Schools, 2012-13 (\$ Millions)



Source: Statistics Canada (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

Table 5: Comparing Actual and Adjusted Spending in Public Schools, 2012-13 (\$ Millions)

	Actual spending	Adjusted spending	Difference	Percent difference
Canada	60,700	46,856	-13,844	-22.8%
NL	868	651	-217	-25.0%
PE	243	187	-56	-22.9%
NS	1,495	1,176	-319	-21.3%
NB	1,368	968	-401	-29.3%
QC	12,253	9,798	-2,456	-20.0%
ON	24,982	18,833	-6,149	-24.6%
MB	2,322	2,014	-307	-13.2%
SK	2,432	1,704	-728	-29.9%
AB	7,867	5,997	-1,870	-23.8%
BC	6,425	5,251	-1,175	-18.3%

Source: Statistics Canada (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

Saskatchewan recorded the largest difference between the actual spending on education in public schools and what would have been required to account for price and enrolment changes. Specifically, in 2012-13 Saskatchewan spent \$728 million more on public schools than was necessary once inflation and enrolment changes are taken into account (table 5). Put differently, spending on education in public schools in Saskatchewan would have been 29.9% lower had the province limited the increase to account for inflation and enrolment changes only.

Manitoba recorded the smallest difference between actual spending on education in public schools and what was necessary to account for inflation and enrolment changes. The \$307 million represents a difference of 13.2%. Only one other province, British Columbia (18.3%), re-

corded a spending difference less than 20.0% (table 5).

The differences between the actual spending on education in public schools in 2012-13 versus what would have been the case had the jurisdictions shown greater restraint emphasizes the large increases in education spending in public schools implemented over the last decade.

Fiscal balance and additional education spending

An alternative method by which put the magnitude of the increase in education spending on education in public schools in context is to compare it to the province's fiscal balance (surplus or deficit). This is not to say that a province's particular fiscal balance is solely the function of changes to education spending. Rather, this comparison is a reminder that every spending choice has consequences within the fiscal framework of a province's budget. Like any economic actor, provincial governments must make choices about how and where to spend the resources available to them. The marked increases in education spending in public schools noted throughout this study mean that governments must limit other spending, raise more revenues, borrow more money, or implement some combination of the three in order to meet the added demands on their resources.

For each province, table 6 shows the 2012-13 government deficit or surplus, the increase in spending on education in public schools beyond the level required to account for price and enrolment changes (from table 5), and the difference between the two. The final column compares the increase in education spending with the province's deficit or surplus as a method by which to put the size of the in-

Table 6: Comparing Increases in Education Spending and Fiscal Balance, 2012-13

	Actual deficit/surplus (\$ millions)	Extra increase in education spending (\$ millions)*	Adjusted deficit/surplus (\$ millions)	Increase in education spending as a share of the 2012-13 deficit/surplus
Provincial Total	-17,110	13,844	-3,266	80.9%
NL	-195	217	22	111.3%
PE	-79	56	-23	70.7%
NS	-304	319	15	105.0%
NB	-508	401	-107	79.0%
QC	-1,600	2,456	856	153.5%
ON	-9,220	6,149	-3,071	66.7%
MB	-580	307	-273	53.0%
SK	58	728	786	-1256.1%
AB	-2,842	1,870	-972	65.8%
BC	-1,152	1,175	23	102.0%

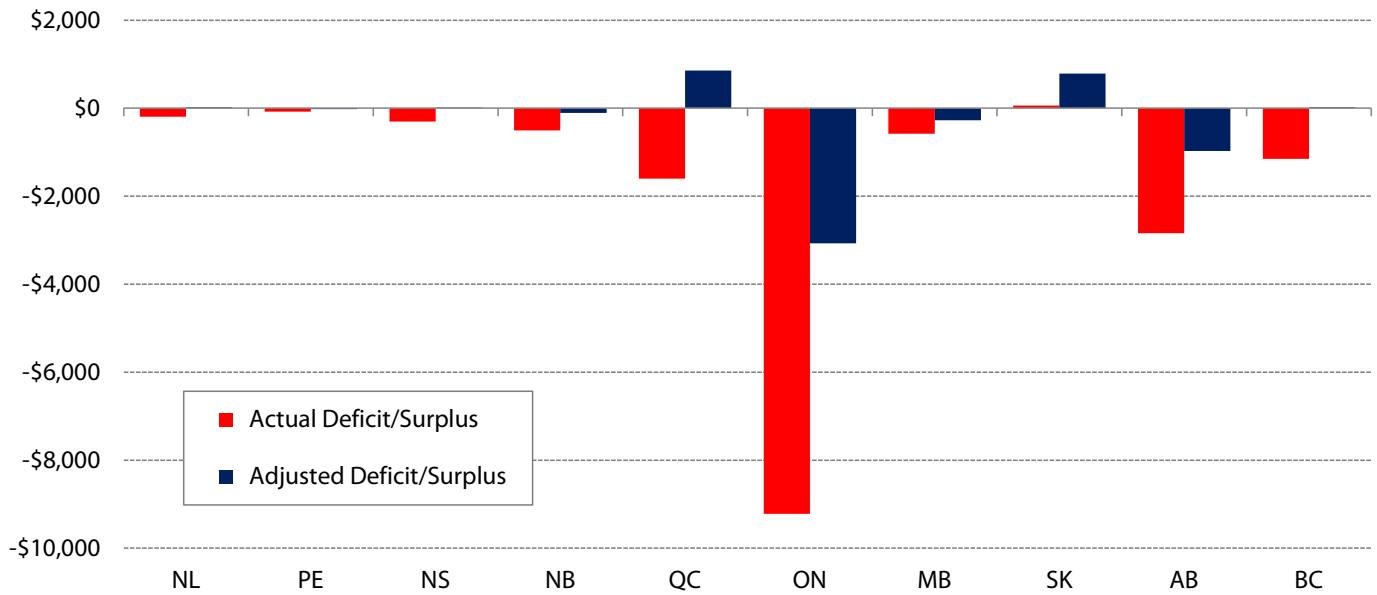
*Compared to 2003/04 spending.

Source: Canada (2014); Statistics Canada (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

crease in spending on education in public schools in context.

Figure 7 illustrates the comparative results. It shows the 2012-13 deficit or surplus and what the deficit or surplus would have been had the increase in spending on education in public schools between 2003-04 and 2012-13 been held to account for only price and enrolment changes (table 6). In other words, the second bar in figure 7 shows the deficit or surplus for each of the provinces assuming the increase in spending on education in public schools was limited to price and enrolment changes rather than allowing for real increases in per-student spending.

Figure 7: Actual vs. Adjusted Provincial Deficit/Surplus, 2012-13 (\$ Millions)



Source: Canada (2014); Statistics Canada (2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

There are a number of striking results in table 6 and figure 7. First, had spending on public education in schools been held constant for the 2003-04 to 2012-13 period except for price and enrolment changes, four provinces (British Columbia, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland & Labrador) would have moved from a deficit position to a surplus in 2012-13. Second, Saskatchewan would have moved from what was essentially a balanced budget (\$58 million surplus) to a large surplus of \$786 million.

Third, and finally, the remaining five provinces (Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island) all would have materially reduced their 2012-13 deficits had education spending increases on public schools been constrained to reflect only price and enrolment changes. Specifically, the deficits would have been reduced from between 53.0% (Manitoba) to 79.0% (New Brunswick). Indeed, if Canada as

a whole is assessed, the total aggregated deficit of the provinces would have been reduced by 80.9% in 2012-13 had increases in education spending been constrained to reflect only inflation and changes in enrolment.

VI. Conclusion

It is clear from the data presented that in the 2003-04 to 2012-13 period, every province in Canada increased education spending beyond what was required to account for price and enrolment changes. These increases in real per-student spending have come at a cost, as is illustrated by their size compared to the deficits or small surpluses that the provinces recorded in 2012-13. The next step in the analysis is to provide additional details about the nature of the spending increases and to begin examining the outcomes achieved in the respective education systems. After all, spending increases that

secure better outcomes are a wholly different proposition than simply spending more money for the same results.

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Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the W. Garfield Weston Foundation for its generous support for the Barbara Mitchell Centre for Improvement in Education. They also thank the anonymous reviewers for their comments, suggestions, and insights. Any remaining errors or oversights are the sole responsibility of the authors. As the researchers have worked independently, the views and conclusions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect those of the Board of Directors of the Fraser Institute, the staff, or supporters.



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ISSN 2291-8620

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