



NEWS RELEASE

Current federal government has increased per-person debt by 35.3 per cent since 2015, the third highest amount since World War II

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For Immediate Release

VANCOUVER—Prime Minister Trudeau’s government has increased per-person debt by 35.3 per cent since 2015, the third highest amount since World War II, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“While some emergency spending for COVID was necessary, the significant increase in federal debt in recent years means more tax dollars will go towards paying interest and future generations are on the hook for today’s spending,” said Jake Fuss, Associate Director of Fiscal Studies with the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Examining Federal Debt in Canada by Prime Ministers Since Confederation, 2022*.

The study tracks the debt legacies of every Canadian prime minister since Confederation—how much their governments increased or decreased total federal debt (which includes all federal financial liabilities) during their time in office, after accounting for both inflation and population changes.

According to the study, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s government is projected to increase per-person federal debt by more than 35 per cent since taking office in late 2015, increasing federal debt per Canadian from \$34,791 to \$47,070 (inflation adjusted). Moreover, federal debt per Canadian has increased by over 25 per cent from before COVID in 2019 until 2022.

Compare that to post-World War II prime ministers who experienced recessions: only Pierre Trudeau (58.8 per cent) and Brian Mulroney (42.5 per cent) increased per-person debt more than the current government. Prime Ministers Harper and Diefenbaker experienced recessions during their tenures, but increased per-person debt at a much lower rate than Justin Trudeau (11.4 per cent and 5.5 per cent, respectively).

Among all governments, that of Prime Minister Robert Borden, who governed during the First World War and four years of economic downturn, increased per-person debt levels the most (188.1 per cent). Louis St. Laurent’s lowered the federal per-person debt the most (34.3 per cent), even though his tenure included two recessions.

“The federal government should pay more attention to its debt accumulation, particularly as interest rates are expected to continue rising,” Fuss said.

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