Listed below are some of the sources of information and related finding aids that are useful for current Canadian public policy research and analysis, with an emphasis on government sources.

Outline: Academic Research / Government Sources and Finding Aids / Citing Government and Legal Sources

ACADEMIC RESEARCH:

Academic research published in many formats, but primarily journals, is an important source of information for policy analysts and a good starting point.

Some notable policy journals: Canadian Public Policy, Policy Options, Canadian Public Administration, Policy & Society, Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis, Evidence & Policy, etc.
Any public policy issue also has many relevant issue-specific journals as well.

Databases Recommended to access these journals and others: Lexis/Nexis, ProQuest, Science Direct, America History & Life, Sage Journals Online, Taylor & Francis, Wiley Interscience, SocINDEX, Google Scholar.

Lexis/Nexis Academic:
- special feature of this database is its collection of Canadian Legal Reviews

ProQuest:
- includes about a dozen different databases covering academic journal articles, news sources, magazines, research reports, etc. with a great deal of Canadian content.

Research Reports from Think Tanks and Research Institutes:

Good quality academic research is also produced by “think tanks” and research institutes although care has to be taken to evaluate these carefully for undue bias.

Organizations that study public policy issues and publish research come in many forms: Some are non-profit, non-partisan, independent research organizations. Some are funded by public donations, by government, or by a small group of wealthy corporations. Check the “About” page on their web site, their stated mandate, etc. and above all evaluate the research.

Check for:
- fair coverage of the issues; bias (may be stated or not)
- what are assumptions starting from? (may be stated or not)
- language & logic (black and white statements? illogical conclusions? etc.)
- evidence used? references cited? based on quality sources?
- qualities of good research - or just opinion based on ideology?

Whether you use their arguments or not in your final recommendation, it is important to pay attention to the different points of view on the policy issue.

Some of the most well-known Canadian think tanks/research institutes involved in social and economic issues such as healthcare:

Atlantic Institute for Market Studies
Atlantic Provinces Economic Council
C.D. Howe Institute
Caledon Institute on Social Policy
Canada West Foundation
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
Canadian Council on Social Development
Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)
Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) - includes 13 institutes
Canadian Policy Research Networks
Conference Board of Canada
Council of Canadians
Fraser Institute
Frontier Centre for Public Policy
GPI Atlantic
Health Council of Canada
Institute for Public Economics
Institute for Research on Public Policy
Institute of Health Economics
Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen’s University
Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation
Parkland Institute
Policy Research Initiative (now called Policy Horizons Canada)
Public Policy Forum

When a desired report is not available free online, check the library catalogue.

**Research by Stakeholders:**

A thorough policy analysis will include an understanding of the issues from all sides involved and especially those likely to be impacted, an estimate of their reactions to the policy, and how to address their likely criticisms. Stakeholders can be professional associations, patients’ rights groups, social justice and women’s groups, etc. Research and input from them can be found in news sources, interviews, on web sites, reports,
transcripts of verbal testimony and briefs submitted to government committees, task forces, or other government consultations, letters to the editor, etc. Extra effort may be required to seek these viewpoints. They do not generally get the media attention wealthy corporations and business interests do and they do not generally have the means to lobby government as directly and forcefully.

**Registry of Lobbyists (Federal)** http://www.ocl-cal.gc.ca/
- maintained by the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying
- Lobbyist Registration Act requires those who get paid to lobby the government to register
- searchable Registry allows you to see who some of the stakeholders are on an issue
- search for the subject of the lobbying activity
- see “Useful Links” for links to provincial lobbyist registries where they exist.

**Public Opinion Polls:**

Not a highly respected form of research, but widely used. In the past, governments used polls to test policy options. In 2006, the results of all government-commissioned polls were required to be made public. Since then, observers have noted that they tend to be phrased to confirm approval for the government’s existing policy instead; more of a form of advertising than information-gathering.

**Public Opinion Research Reports** http://www.porr-rrop.gc.ca/index-e.html
- a database of summaries of Government-commissioned public opinion polls, with contact information for access to the full report, required under Access to Info. Act.
- does not include opinion polls conducted internally by government departments.

**Other sources for opinion polls:**
Some large polling firms post summaries of their poll results on their web sites. (See for example: Environics, EKOS Research Associates, Angus Reid, Harris Decima, Ipsos-Reid, Léger Marketing, Compas Inc.) MtA Libraries don’t subscribe to any polling databases, so full details may not be available to us, but highlights or key findings are often also reported in the media, as are results of polls conducted by media sources themselves. Search news databases in ProQuest, Lexis/Nexis, etc.

**GOVERNMENT SOURCES:**

“Government policy” is a Library of Congress cataloguing term to describe these documents, but it is not often used on actual government documents or web sites. Policy is announced in news releases, statements, speeches, draft papers, discussion papers, action plans, strategic plans, departmental reports and many other types of documents. A government’s polices are also evident in its policy instruments, such as programs, grants, subsidies, transfers, incentives, taxes, tariffs, etc.

Library catalogue subject headings include:
Besides the many ordinary policy documents, a researcher can’t ignore the special studies that government commissions to review policy and policy options, and to make recommendations: e.g. Reports of Royal Commissions, Commissions of Inquiry, Task Forces, Special (ad hoc) parliamentary committees, and occasional other special studies. There have been several on health. A researcher would come across references to them in a thorough search of the academic literature. These collections provide access:

**Index to Federal Royal Commissions:**
http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/indexcommissions/index-e.html

**Commissions of Inquiry:**
- listed by topic and commissioner

**Budget documents:**  http://www.fin.gc.ca/access/budinfo-eng.asp
- presented annually by the Minister of Finance in the House of Commons. Federal and provincial Department of Finance web sites have budget documents: the Budget, Budget in Brief, Budget Speech, Budget Plan (technical document), Fact Sheets, Economic and Fiscal Update and other related documents.

**Estimates:**  http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/est-pre/index-eng.asp
- includes annual Main Estimates (spending plan), and more detailed for each department: Reports on Plans and Priorities and Departmental Performance Reports

**Public Accounts:**  http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/txt/72-eng.html
- the audited financial statements of the government
- provincial equivalents usually at the Dept. of Finance site

Standing committees of Parliament and provincial legislatures are supposed to oversee spending by reviewing the Estimates (aka Public Accounts committees) and can call Ministers to answer questions
- see committee transcripts in parl.gc.ca and equivalent provincial legislature sites

**Departmental Annual Reports:**
- provincial -- report on activities, statistics, revenue and expenditures, etc.
- federal reports replaced by Departmental Performance Reports (see Estimates above)

**Auditor General’s Reports:**
http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/admin_e_41.html
- federal and provincial; provide an independent audit of federal government spending after the fact
Parliamentary Budget Officer’s (PBO) Reports:  
- provides independent analysis of the government’s finances and proposals

Strategic Plans:  
- all departments, federal and provincial, generally have a Strategic Plan, often also more specific “Action Plans”, “Roadmaps”, etc. outlining their policy priorities  
- should be based on the department’s policy analysis

Departmental Research Papers:  
- federal and provincial departments have researchers on staff to do strategic policy research, e.g. Health Canada, Applied Research and Analysis Directorate, Dept. of Finance, Economic Studies and Policy Analysis Division, etc. which publish research papers regularly on many issues

Consultations:  
- the federal and provincial governments and their departments and agencies use a variety of consultations with the public to test policy ideas, including discussion papers, online surveys, draft guidelines or frameworks, pre-budget consultations, etc.  
- notice is posted on federal department web sites under “Public Consultations”  
- provinces usually post these notices on their home page

Consulting with Canadians  
- federal site that allows you to search for most federal consultations by subject, title, department, current, past, etc.

News Releases/Speeches/Statements:  
- policy announcements are often made public first through a media event  
- each provincial and federal department/ministry site has a “News” section (may be called “Media Room” or “News Room”)  

News Link: Canada News Centre  http://news.gc.ca  
- lists news releases, media advisories, speeches and statements from all federal departments and agencies  
- has dedicated search engine just for news items  
- links to the equivalent “News” pages on provincial web sites

Government Advertising activities are reported in an Annual Report at the PWGSC site:  

Major Finding Aids:  

Government of Canada official web site  http://canada.gc.ca
- has a search engine covering all federal government sites
- select “Help” to see the Advanced Search screen
- Search button on top menu bar applies search engine to the departmental site viewed
- “Publications” tab within each government department site
- use Site Maps to find major databases or other collections on a site
- can also use Google search, limiting to site:gc.ca or more specific departmental URL

**Official Provincial Web Sites:**
- link to official provincial government sites from “About Government” tab in Canada.gc.ca
- standard URL format:  http://www.gov.ns.ca except for NB, the only officially bilingual province: http://gnb.ca

**Federal Publications Catalogue:**  [http://publications.gc.ca](http://publications.gc.ca)
- Depository program lists and provides access to as many publications as possible
- DSP provides archived copies of online documents with stable URLs

**Provincial/Territorial Publications Catalogues:**
- legislative assembly libraries have a mandate to collect provincial government documents and link to online documents when possible through either their library catalogues or publications lists.
- the major university libraries in each province provide access to important provincial government documents through their library catalogues

**AMICUS, Library and Archives Canada Catalogue:**  [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/amicus/index-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/amicus/index-e.html)
- union catalogue of LAC holdings and those of over 1,000 Canadian libraries

**Federal Publication Locator:**  [http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/fed/index-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/fed/index-e.html)
- a subset of AMICUS limited to federal government publications

**Library Catalogue, Mt Allison R.P. Bell Library:**  The library is a full depository library for federal government documents. Links provided to many online documents.

**Canadian Research Index (on ProQuest):**
- indexes selected government reports of “research value”, from all levels of government.
Some links provided to online content; if not available search the MtA. library catalogue (for federal and Maritime sources) and the appropriate provincial/territorial sources or Google for others.

**Filing an Access to Information Request:**
- for government information not made public
- identify the exact information needed and the department responsible
- contact the designated ATI person and confirm the information you want to see is not already published and available or expected to be published
- attempt to get the information informally
- check the list of completed requests to see if it has been requested before and denied
- since 2011, all federal departments and agencies are required to post summaries of the completed access to information requests on their web sites and maintain them there for at least two years
- fees ($5.00 fee per request currently being waived)
- keep all copies of correspondence; if you do not get a response or adequate response in the designated timeframe (30 days, but they can request extensions) you can get assistance from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.


*Sources of Federal Government and Employee Information* lists the type of information kept by each federal department and contact information. Use to confirm the correct source and contact for requesting information through the Access to Information Act.

*Access to Information Act and Privacy Act Bulletin* summarizes federal court cases and statistics of requests made under the Acts. (Lists the exemptions that applied.)

**Provincial/Territorial Access to Information:** Each province and territory has similar Access to Information legislation.

**Offices of the Information and Privacy Commissioners:**
- each should link to information on filing requests
- most have directories like *Info Source* with contact information for making ATI requests from each department
- fees apply in some provinces and vary
- may be called “freedom of information” or “right to information”

**Parliamentary Documents:** [http://www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca)

Provincial and Territorial Legislatures:
- what is said in Parliament/Legislative Assemblies (debates and committees) can be a good indication of policy agendas of the government and opposition parties.

**Speech from the Throne:** Highlights policy initiatives and priorities for the new session of Parliament. This and the response from the opposition parties are the first items at the opening of the parliamentary/legislative assembly session; contained in Debates/Hansard. Some provinces list these separately.

**Debates (Hansard):** All provinces/territories have these online (except NB)
- search for topic or speaker, and pay attention to opposition critics’ speeches e.g. health critic
List of Members of the Opposition (federal) and their areas of responsibility:
http://www.parl.gc.ca/ParlInfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MinistryMembers.aspx
- provincial equivalents exist in some cases

Committee Meeting Transcripts and Reports:
- see how issues are framed and argued by members and stakeholders and other policy
groups called to testify about issues under study or proposed bills
- committee meeting transcripts, expert witness testimony and committee reports
(some very important research done here on policy issues)

Bills:  - policy changes may require changes to laws
- as the proposed law (bill) goes through the process of introduction and debate in the
House of Commons and Senate, merits of the bill and related issues are discussed (2\textsuperscript{nd}
reading usually has most debate)
- often referred to committee where further study and possibly testimony by invited
stakeholders reveal problems or opposition to the proposed bill

LEGISInfo
- see LEGISInfo to see at what stage a bill is and for links to key debates, relevant
committee transcripts, legislative summaries and related information

Library of Parliament Research Publications
- brief issue papers, backgrounders, and legislative summaries on policy issues
- some provinces have equivalents, but these are not always available to the public

Laws, Regulations and Case Law Judgments:

CANLII:  http://www.canlii.org/
- by the Canadian Legal Information Institute
- provides free access and search engine for federal and provincial legal sources including
Gazettes, Official Laws and Regulations, and to case law from Courts, Boards and
Tribunals.

Canadian Case Law Online:
http://rc.lsuc.on.ca/library/research_law_ca_cases.htm
- by the Law Society of Upper Canada
- links to individual case law sites, including some provincial sources not in CanLII

Lexis/Nexis:
- select from A-Z list of databases on library homepage
- select “International Legal” or Browse Sources: “Cases”, or ”Boards, Panels and
Tribunals”, etc.
Statistics:

Statistics Canada Publications and Data: http://statcan.gc.ca
- the official statistical agency of the federal government (also mandated to provide provincial breakdowns of Census and other survey data)
- have many researchers on staff publishing economic analysis papers and research papers based on the data collected
- search web site by subject or search engine or search selected portions of the site
- key publications: Canadian Social Trends, Canadian Economic Observer are also indexed in ProQuest
- CANSIM: Statistics Canada’s largest database (over 43 million times series)
- contains Census data, other StatCan survey data, and some from other sources
- “External links” link to provincial official government statistic sites

Provincial government equivalents, where they exist:

Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI): http://www.cihi.ca
- independent nonprofit funded by federal and provincial governments
- adds more statistical data to what CANSIM and Health Canada provide

Departmental Annual Reports:
- besides budget details, these can be a good source for statistics on services, etc.

Library Catalogue: Use subject term: “Statistics” with keyword(s) for the issue

For international comparisons and compliance with international agreements:

OECD Statistics and Reports: http://www.oecd.org
- 34 member countries – hundreds of publications/year
- statistical standards followed to ensure comparability
- see United Nations and other international organizations for broader comparisons

International Agreements:
- Canada has signed NAFTA, WTO agreements and over 30 bilateral trade agreements which can have significant impacts on domestic policy

Political Party Platforms and Election Speeches:
- platform documents and election “promises” covered by the media before elections are expected to indicate each party’s policy priorities
- major federal and New Brunswick party platforms are available in print and are accessible through the MtA library catalogue. These often disappear from party web sites after an election. They may be found, in whole or in part, through secondary sources or
by searching AMICUS or university library catalogues. See party web sites for policy materials posted.

Registered federal parties are listed at the Elections Canada site:
- provides links to the official party web sites
- links to provincial equivalents

CITING GOVERNMENT AND LEGAL SOURCES:

Canadian Government Publications: A Citation Guide
By McGill University Libraries

Citing Canadian Government Documents - Chicago Style
By Simon Fraser University Library
http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/gov-docs-chicago

How to Cite Statistics Canada Products
By Statistics Canada

Legal Citation
By Queen’s University Law Library
http://library.queensu.ca/law/lederman/legalcitation

For assistance using government resources, please contact Anita Cannon, Government Documents Librarian at acannon@mta.ca or Room M11 in the library.

Feb. 2012
R.P. Bell Library
A. Cannon