

# Canada needs a national suicide prevention strategy

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Canada needs a national suicide prevention strategy, and it should be included in the 2017 federal budget, argues an editorial in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

In particular, the strategy should target youth and indigenous people, groups with high [suicide rates](#). Suicide is the second leading cause of death in youth between 15 and 24 years of age. The rates for indigenous populations are staggeringly high; for example, in Nunatsiavut in northern Labrador, suicide rates are 25 times the national average and 10 times the national average in Nunavut.

The national Inuit political association, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), has developed an evidence-based [suicide prevention](#) strategy to address the crisis, but the entire country needs a comprehensive national strategy.

"Substantial evidence exists to guide the creation of a strong suicide prevention strategy in Canada," writes Laura Eggertson, with Dr. Kirsten Patrick, Deputy Editor, *CMAJ*. "It is noteworthy that the incumbent government, when in Opposition, called for such a strategy."

The World Health Organization has also urged countries to develop national strategies to prevent this preventable cause of death. In the 21 countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development that introduced government-led suicide prevention programs, suicide rates declined, especially in young people and older persons.

The authors suggest that a national strategy should be included in the upcoming Canadian [federal budget](#).

"The 2017 budget must pledge the means to developing a national suicide prevention strategy, starting with funds to create a centre of expertise that will engage with leading indigenous organizations, such as ITK and the Assembly of First Nations, and build on existing strategies such as Quebec's, to address the needs of communities and plan the broader infrastructure that is required to address properly what has become a national public health crisis."

**More information:** *Canadian Medical Association Journal*,  
[www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.160935](http://www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.160935)

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