

Ontario Isn't Everything: The Shocking State of Quebec's Debt

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Right off the bat, allow me to clarify one thing: I live in Ontario. For any Ontarian interested or involved in politics, this simple sentence screams "Kathleen Wynne," the 2014 provincial election, and her Party's horrible mismanagement of Provincial finances - the province's debt currently sitting at [just under \\$281 billion](#). With [thirty eight percent of Canada's population](#), that makes each [Ontarian's share approximately \\$20 600](#). This is real, it's happening now, and the province at stake is Canada's largest, in terms of population; many, many people outside of Ontario have at least heard of its fiscal mismanagement. Owing to this bias, it is with a tremendous effort that I will not be talking about Ontario's debt in this essay. Instead, I will focusing on the province next to it, land of the Fleur de Lys, copious amounts of maple syrup, and another enormous debt: Quebec.

What I find to be one of the most irresponsible financially-related government actions within Canada is not necessarily the specific actions that specific provinces take to try to decrease their debt, but the idea that Ontario, because it is the biggest, or Alberta, because it has oil, seem to be the most financially talked about provinces within this Nation. The fact that Quebec's Gross Debt as a percentage of GDP [surpasses that of the Federal Government](#), therefore surpassing Ontario's, is so completely eclipsed by Ontario and Alberta's shadows is unacceptable.

It is an appalling lack of awareness concerning a debt that in [2012-2013 represented a staggering 49% of Quebec's GDP](#) that really hits me as an irresponsible means of communicating Canada's debt problem. To put things a little more into perspective, it is generally agreed upon that the "tipping point" of a county's economic stability is when its [Debt-to-GDP ratio hits the one hundred percent mark](#). In 2013, Ontario experienced its highest Debt-to-GDP Ratio in history, [at 37.4%](#). Greece, a country well-known for its current economic problems, had a Debt-to-GDP Ratio that sat at an astonishing [175.1% in 2013](#). Shedding some light on relatively unpleasant history, if Quebec were separate, assumingly taking on its share of the federal budget, its Debt-to-GDP Ratio would sit at [82.9%](#), placing it at the same [level of indebtedness](#) as some of the most indebted countries in the world.

In recent news, on March 29th, 2015, Liberal Premier of Quebec Philippe Couillard, has stated that the province pays 11 billion dollars per year on debt alone. In his own words, ["every day, it's \\$30 million — \\$30 million yesterday, \\$30 million today and \\$30 million tomorrow — before a single dollar can go into our schools and hospitals."](#) That's the shock and disappointment one can expect from past spending that is both irresponsible and unaccounted for. Unimaginably, this province has managed to accumulate such a large debt even with [some of the highest taxes in the country](#), a GST of 5% and a PST of 9.975%.

Moving away from numbers and statistics, one last point I would like to outline is Quebec's ties with France and French culture. Historically, France has been known as a country in which many of its citizens rely quite heavily on government aid. For example, the Caisse d'allocations familiales (CAF), an institution into which the government pours approximately [79 billion Euros](#) towards social aid to families, students, or young citizens. Clearly, Quebec does not have access to that kind of money, however, this does not stop its government from spending unhealthy amounts of [money it does not have](#) towards social programs like the one above.

Related to this unrelenting "tradition" to stick close to its French roots, one of the first things I would re-evaluate as Premier would be to alleviate the incredible amount of social programs that are causing the Quebec government to borrow so much, skyrocketing its debt. Perhaps take the money saved to promote spending on the schools and hospitals that are missing out. Furthermore, finding methods to increase awareness concerning Quebec's debt and how it was left to uncontrollably soar, would be another great starting point in fighting against its looming debt crisis. This extends to building an awareness of how each and every one of Canada's provinces spend their money, not a select few due to popularity. There needs to be a focus on recognizing the very real and ever-present debt problem together, responsibly, and as Canadians, not as provinces separated by distance and nothing more.

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