On July 1, 2017, Canada celebrated 150 years of Confederation. Yet, despite the progress that has been achieved since 1867, many of the same public policy challenges that faced the Canada of yesteryear continue to impact the Canada of today. At the same time, policymakers are faced with new challenges influenced by social, environmental, technological, and economic change. These longstanding and emerging public policy issues are explored in this year’s issue of the Queen’s Policy Review, which we hope will inform, and encourage reflection and discussion among policy wonks.

This year’s issue opens with an exploration of the continuing challenges faced by some of Canada’s most marginalized voices. For Canada’s Indigenous peoples, the Canadian Sesquicentennial also marked more than 150 years of colonization and a celebration that overlooked the presence of Indigenous communities long before this period. Due to this legacy, Canada’s Indigenous peoples were one of the last groups to receive the vote, with those on reserves not allowed to vote until 1960, and remain one of the groups with the lowest voter turnout. Joshua Shapiro’s briefing note discusses some of these challenges and poses options to improve the political participation of Canada’s Indigenous peoples. While strides have been made to recognize and protect the rights of Canada’s LGBTQ+ community, Leanne Letourneau demonstrates how Quebec’s conceptualization of domestic violence excludes and renders different lesbian experiences invisible despite lesbians’ inclusion as vulnerable population in Quebec’s Action Plan on Domestic Violence.

On the economic front, the changing nature of work and low economic growth in Canada has resulted in increased employment insecurity and income inequality which is making more and more people vulnerable, and unable to make ends meet or save for the future. Dajean Lacasse highlights these issues in her analysis of the federal government’s proposed reforms to the Canada Pension Plan, and the implications for workers and the middle class once they reach retirement. Robert Catherall also explores similar issues in his examination of the socio-economic, health and legal impact of increasingly precarious employment and housing on those living in Vancouver. Just as shifts in the economy can effect labour and housing, Don Couturier highlights the vulnerability and socio-economic impact of relying on resource extraction in his examination of the precarious financial landscape in the Northwest Territories, offering recommendations to ensure the territory’s long-term economic development and sustainability that includes working with Indigenous governments and technological innovation.

Advancements in technology have played a central role in Canada’s development and will certainly continue to shape Canada’s future. Just as the railway drove Confederation forward linking Canada’s regions and people with one another, new forms of technology are becoming increasingly integrated in people’s everyday lives which can be seen more and more in the realm of healthcare. In their respective papers, Molly Graham, Melanie McPhail, and Scarlett Kelly each explore the impact and potential uses of emerging technology in transforming health care and improving patient outcomes. In her paper, Molly Graham examines the broader economic, environmental and cultural security benefits of telehealth in Canada’s northern and remote communities. Just as telehealth
technology can connect people in different regions with each other, social media has done the same and has become so pervasive in everyday life to be able to influence policymaking and deliver healthcare services. Melanie McPhail examines the role of patient advocacy groups and their use of social media platforms to implement changes in health policy related to Lyme disease, while Scarlett Kelly explores the possibilities of using social media to inform physician-patient communications in order to improve the quality of online health information and health outcomes. In addition to technology, climate change is a key policy action area for Canada and can influence health outcomes. Nicole Spence’s paper on emergency health management demonstrates how climate change-induced natural disasters are intimately tied to public health outcomes and health inequities.

Between producing this year’s journal and organizing a special policy conference around the Canadian Sesquicentennial, it has been a busy and rewarding year for the Queen’s Policy Review. On behalf of the Queen’s Policy Review team, we would like to thank all the authors who submitted papers, and the editors and faculty of the School of Policy Studies for their time and assistance throughout the year. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the School of Policy Studies with whose support the “Canada at 150” policy conference was possible. Thank you to all that presented and attended, and made it a great success. A special thanks to our faculty moderators, and our keynote speakers, Frank Graves and Victor Rabinovitch.

Finally, on behalf of the Queens’ Policy Review team and the Master of Public Administration class of 2017, we would like to dedicate this year’s issue to the memory of our professor, David Elder, whose enthusiasm and commitment to the School of Policy Studies and its students was truly inspirational and will be sorely missed. We will carry your lessons throughout our careers.