

FEDERAL BUDGET

CUPE

2010

Non-Profit Community Social Services

Canada's non-profit community social services sector, and the thousands of people that rely on the sector's quality public services, were under pressure long before the recession hit. The economic collapse has only served to make a bad situation much worse. More than a decade of government funding cuts had forced the sector to rely heavily on other funding sources including private and corporate donations, and fundraising activities.

But those funding sources have been dwindling or disappearing altogether in the wake of the recession. Many social services agencies have had to cut or roll back much needed programs and layoff front-line staff. Some agencies are considering closing their doors altogether. This trend is occurring at a time when the demand for social services programs and supports are on the rise due to increased unemployment and the added pressures that brings to families and communities.

Youth and women's shelters, food banks, housing and employment services, homeless shelters, supports for recent immigrants, and HIV/AIDS service agencies, to name a few, provide valuable programs and services in communities across Canada. Social services need to be adequately funded by governments, especially in times of economic downturn when increasing numbers of Canadians come to rely upon this important sector of the economy.

Federal budget 2010 provides no relief to the non-profit community social services sector, the increasing numbers of

Canadians who rely on social services, or the front-line workers. There is no increased funding for social services under the Canada Social Transfer (CST). The CST is a federal transfer to the provinces and territories to support, among other things, social assistance and social services. The budget does provide some funding to help Canadians make their homes more energy efficient. There are also improvements to the Universal Child Care Benefit, First Nations Child and Family Services, and the Food Mail Program for people living in isolated northern communities. However, together these new initiatives will do little to redress the problems of access to affordable social housing, homelessness, and poverty in Canada.

Poverty and Inequality –

What's in the Budget?

Federal budget 2010 provides a very minor tax move to increase child care benefit payments for single mothers. It improves the Universal Child Care Benefit so single parents receive comparable tax treatment to single-earner two-parent families. The new changes will mean up to \$168 in tax relief for single parents with one child under the age of six in 2010. The estimated cost is \$5 million in 2010–11 and \$5 million in 2011–12.

Fifty three million dollars over two years will be provided to First Nations child and family services in order to prevent family breakdown. The budget commits \$45 million over two years to the Food Mail Program to provide people living in isolated Northern

communities with greater access to affordable healthy food.

What does it mean?

The small measures announced in the budget are welcomed. But much more needs to be done to eradicate poverty in Canada. Even before the recession hit, over 3 million Canadians, including 600 thousand children, lived in poverty. This budget does nothing to help remedy this embarrassing social problem.

Many of our social programs designed to provide redress to poverty are inadequate. For example, social assistance incomes are so low that many recipients cannot afford to pay for healthy food, rent and clothing. Again, federal budget 2010 fails to address the problem of inadequate social assistance incomes at a time when increasing numbers of Canadians are forced to rely on social assistance to provide for themselves and their children.

What would be better choices?

Canadians want a Canada without poverty. Doing so would involve considerable federal government investment in affordable housing, social services, and income security. Better choices to eradicate poverty in Canada would also involve the following measures:

- Create a \$1 billion Economic Recovery Fund to support public non-profit social service agencies providing front-line services.
- Establish a \$2 billion federal transfer to help the provinces achieve their poverty reduction goals, and work with all levels of government and consult Canadians to develop a pan-Canadian strategy to solve poverty.
- A commitment to reduce the number of Canadians who are hungry by half within two years.
- A commitment to cut the poverty rate by 25% by 2015, and by 75% within a decade.

- In two years, ensure that every Canadian has an income that reaches at least 75% of the poverty line.
- Immediately increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement for low-income seniors by 15.0%, or about \$100 a month, to ensure that no senior citizen lives below the poverty line.
- Increase the Canada Child Tax Benefit to \$5,000 per child.
- Establish an \$11 federal minimum wage indexed to inflation.

Social Housing –

What's in the Budget?

The budget announces funding for social housing construction and repairs that were first made public in the 2009 federal budget. Budget 2010 provides no new monies. The budget allocates \$80 million new dollars under the EcoEnergy Retrofit to help Canadians make their homes more energy efficient.

What does it mean?

The federal government has a responsibility to ensure that all Canadians have access to affordable housing. But clearly the Harper government continues to shirk that responsibility. Of the \$242.8 million promised under the Federal Housing Initiative, zero dollars have been delivered. And a mere \$53.8 million of the \$1.475 billion announced in the 2009 federal budget has been distributed. In the meantime, hundreds of thousands of Canadians still have nowhere to live; millions are forced to live in unaffordable, crowded, and substandard housing; and more than one in four households are on the verge of homelessness.

An increasing number of Canadians cannot afford the high costs associated with renting or owning a home due to rising prices. In fact, one and a half million Canadian households spend more than 50% of their

income on housing. It is clear that Canadians need increased federal support for affordable housing.

What would be better choices?

To solve the problems of homelessness and inadequate housing, the federal government needs to implement the following priorities:

- A commitment to end all homelessness in Canada within eight years.
- A commitment to reduce by half those Canadians who pay more than 50% of their income on housing by 2015.
- A new National Housing Program, as proposed in Bill C-304, to provide multi-year targeted funding for social housing.
- An additional \$2 billion to current and promised affordable housing investments.
- Use housing rehabilitation and construction projects to provide training, apprenticeship, and employment opportunities.

For more information, visit <http://cupe.ca/budget>

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