



WOMEN

What's in the budget?

- \$10 million (over 2 years) to address the high number of murdered or missing Aboriginal women. Specific emphasis is being placed on law enforcement and the efficacy of the justice system. This is a new initiative.
- Maternal and Child Health with an international focus on increasing global spending. No funding has been committed to by Canada; instead the government will raise this issue at the G8 summit in June 2010. It is important to note that \$4.5 million has been removed from the budget for international aid. This is a new initiative.
- Minor increase to Universal Child Care Benefits (UCCB) payments for single parent families
- No changes to the transfer payments to provinces and territories.
- Corporate tax cuts that will reduce government revenues by \$20 million over the next 5 years.
- Cuts in federal spending to the tune of \$15 billion over 5 years.
- Commitment to Year 2 stimulus funds including a \$3.2 billion personal income tax relief; \$1.6 billion to strengthen benefits for unemployed; \$1 billion to enhance training opportunities for workers; \$7.7 billion in new stimulus spending; 1.9 billion to post-secondary education. This is not new funding.

What does it mean?

New initiatives in this budget, while important and necessary, do nothing to address the economic reality facing women. The impact of the increase to Universal Child Care Benefit payments will be minimal for single parents.

The renewed stimulus funds are heavily weighted towards infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges and buildings, and neglect important social infrastructure such as education, child care, health and social services. These projects primarily employ construction, trade, transportation workers, 7% of who are women; in engineering, manufacturing, and primary industries, sectors where 22% are women. There does not appear to be any gender equity requirements included in any of these stimulus spending programs.

Without genuine support and financial investment in sectors dominated by women such as education, child care, health and social services, these workers become increasingly vulnerable to the impact of privatization and contracting out.

The negligible impact that post secondary education stimulus funding will have on alleviating the funding crisis, and its impact on affordability and accessibility, has a particular impact on women. Those hardest hit by rising tuition rates and increased contracting out due to underfunding are women, immigrants, workers/students of color

and workers/students with disabilities. The research focus of this government on science and technology disproportionately favors men over women.

The Employment Insurance (EI) program remains intact despite repeated calls for reform. Changes to entrance requirements and benefits levels would have specifically benefitted women who are overrepresented in part time, precarious employment, and jobs typically excluded from the program. Because 70% of all part-time workers are women, and because the hourly wages of women in all employment categories are lower than men's, only about 36% of those receiving regular EI benefits at this time are women.

Corporate tax cuts that will reduce government revenues by \$20 million over the next five years and will serve to reduce the amount of eligible funding available to support our public system, impacting the programs women access and the jobs where they work. Men will be the largest beneficiaries of these cuts as they are disproportionately occupying the highest positions in the corporate/business sector; and where

63% of corporate shares are owned by men.

This budget does nothing to support or augment our public pension system and neglects to extend support to elderly women in retirement.

What would be better choices?

The poverty experienced by women would be significantly alleviated with genuine commitment and investment in First Nations communities; our education and health systems; national child care and early childhood education, long term care, affordable housing and transit strategies.

Stimulus funds allocated toward job creation in female dominated sectors such as health care, education, child care, social services and long term care would immediately stimulate our economy, in addition to significantly benefitting families and communities. Reversal of the corporate tax cuts and their reallocation toward the implementation of a national, affordable child care plan or expanded EI benefits would be an important step towards increasing government support for women.

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

sl/cope491
March 5, 2010