



## Federal budget 2008 and Gender Analysis

### What's in the budget?

The Budget, along with the fall economic and fiscal update, ignores the real needs of Canadian women. Indeed the word women is mentioned only 6 times in the budget compared to 119 times for corporation.

The “center piece” of the budget is the tax free saving account (TFSA). This is a gift for the wealthy. Most women will not be able to take advantage of this program. Of the 11million women who filed taxes in 2005 41% paid no taxes. Women working full time earn on average \$39,200 per year, which is only 70.5% of what men working full time earn. This figure is even worse for women of colour and Aboriginal women. A \$5,000/year “opportunity” to save is meaningless. Statistics Canada data shows that most women cannot save under existing Savings programs. The new TFSA is not designed to meet women’s needs. Indeed it takes revenue away from the federal treasury that could otherwise be used.

The conservative governments choices to use surplus on huge tax cuts, debt reduction and a guaranteed annual increase for military/security spending mean there is less money for the federal government to provide the needed public services which women are calling for.

Senior women are among the most poor in Canada. The budget answers their needs by saying they can go to work and earn up to \$3,500 before their GIS is reduced. These women don't want work, they need a living wage. This at a time when the income splitting provisions ensure that wealthy

retirees get more. The conservative governments priorities are clear.

The conservative government budget did nothing to address the coverage and amount of benefits paid under the EI program. The maternity/parental benefits need improvement. The budget will mean making improvements extremely hard by capping any premium increases. The \$2 billion commitment for the EI fund is a rainy day funds not one that allows program enhancements.

A gender analysis of the budget is totally missing. Addressing the wage gap between men and women is missing.

### What does the budget mean?

This budget means very little to working women and senior women. It's yet another missed opportunity to implement and improve the programs and services women are calling for. The conservative government has instead pandered to corporations, the wealthy and the military. It means no improvement to women's lives.

### What would be better choices?

Canadian women and their families need leadership from the federal government and public policy that delivers a commitment to women's equality.

The better choice for women is to address the wage gap between men and women. We need updated pay equity legislation that ensures the process is dealt with on a timely basis. The current legislation means

decades in court before a conclusion is seen. This is costly, time consuming and extremely frustrating. Often by the time a case winds its way through the system many of the women affected by the case are dead. The need for meaningful pay equity system is as strong as ever. In 2005, women working full time for a full year earned on average \$39,200 or 70.5% as much as men. Much of this difference is due to systemic discrimination. Pay equity helps eliminate poverty. Child poverty can be addressed, in large part, by ensuring that women/mothers have a living wage.

The current conservative government stripped funding from women's organizations for research and advocacy work to support women's equality by amending the terms and conditions for funding and closing regional offices of Status of Women Canada. The ability to monitor the federal governments programs and policies for gender is essential work which is now severely limited. We needed the budget to increase SWC operating budget by \$50million, reopen the regional

offices and increase the funding for women's organizations that provide research and advocate for women's interests.

Working women continue to demand accessible, affordable not for profit child care. The cost for the program would cost a fraction of the tax cuts given by the conservative government.

Eligibility for and improved maternity and parental benefits under EI. The amount of money available to mothers under the EI program is insufficient to keep women and their families from poverty while at home on the birth of and first year of a child's life.

Senior women deserve financial security in retirement. Improving the Old Age Security is a better choice than sending poor elderly women out to work.

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February 28, 2008