

Liberal Budget Fails to Really “Put People First”

OTTAWA, 27 February 2018 – The 2018 federal budget is not aimed at benefiting working Canadians or retirees, despite the Liberal government’s claim that the budget “puts people first.”

“The finance minister says he will seek ‘feedback’ from Canadian pensioners and take an ‘evidence-based’ approach to retirement security. What more evidence does he need than the thousands of retirees from companies like Stelco and Sears, whose deferred wages were stolen by creditors through archaic laws protecting companies facing restructuring or bankruptcy?” said Ken Neumann, United Steelworkers (USW) National Director.

“The Liberals’ parental leave provisions are overshadowed by a low wage-replacement benefit through Employment Insurance,” Neumann added. “Leave must include benefits that support being away from a job with real pay. What is needed to advance women’s participation in the labour force is a universal, affordable child-care program instead of just more child-care spaces.”

Neumann said USW members in the forestry sector welcome the small step of a \$191-million fund over five years to support trade cases involving softwood lumber (under the World Trade Organization and the NAFTA dispute-settlement mechanism). However, the budget is an over-cautious attempt at appeasing business interests that favour lower spending and deficit reduction, while holding back on stimulus spending that would create jobs and provide confidence in uncertain times, he said.

The budget has no comprehensive, meaningful plan to protect workers and create good jobs with higher wages, Neumann said.

“This is a timid budget, as if the Liberal government is afraid to assert an economic blueprint that will benefit working men and women, a growing number of whom work as many as three jobs just to make ends meet. It is more style than substance, more rhetoric than reality,” he said.

“There is not enough that is bold or progressive about the government’s plans for 2018-19, including no real change to end corporate tax evasion,” said Neumann. “Are the Liberals holding back in anticipation of an election year when they can buy support for another four years?”

The United Steelworkers would have welcomed a commitment to rebuilding critical industries such as steel and aluminum, threatened by unfair tariffs from the United States despite the reality that they are part of an integrated marketplace for these products.

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