

Five things feminists would like to see in Wednesday's federal budget ^[1]

Author: Smith, Joanna

Source: CTV News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 19 Mar 2017

AVAILABILITY

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OTTAWA -- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has made gender equality a priority for his Liberal government, arguing it makes good economic sense.

"We know that when women are included and given the same opportunities as men ... it's a critical way that we can actually add tremendous growth to our economy," Labour Minister Patty Hajdu said in a recent interview.

Feminists are hoping the federal budget will show them the money behind this sentiment. Here are five things they would like to see:

Gender-based analysis

Finance Minister Bill Morneau promised to put the federal budget through a gender-based analysis and publish the results. Gender-based analysis looks at how a certain measure might affect men and women, or boys and girls, in different ways, along with taking age, income, culture, ethnicity and other factors into account. The analysis this year is expected to include a look at the gender impact on some of the big themes in the budget, but will mainly set the stage for a more in-depth process next year.

Child care

The scarcity and high cost of child care is viewed as one of the biggest barriers to women entering the workforce or taking full-time jobs that allow them to reach their full earning -- and spending -- potential. Child care advocates have been told to expect a long-term funding commitment in the budget, with the money coming from the social infrastructure fund that has nearly \$22 billion to spend over the next decade. Social Development Minister Jean-Yves Duclos is in talks with provincial and territorial governments over a national early learning and child care multilateral framework, with bilateral deals to follow. Advocates also want to see investments in other areas of what is known as the "care economy," such as support for those looking after aging parents, to help lessen the burden of unpaid labour.

Ending violence against women

Status of Women Minister Maryam Monsef is expected to unveil a federal gender-based violence strategy in the coming weeks, but many want to see the money to back it up now. This would also include more funding for programs aimed at reducing violence against indigenous women and girls, rather than waiting for the results of the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. Asked about this, Monsef said she could not speculate on what is in the budget, but added: "Gender equality is a core priority and I know that a great deal of work has gone into developing this strategy." Many advocates are also pushing for a national action plan, which would involve the federal government co-ordinating efforts with provincial and territorial governments to ensure more comparable access to support and services across the country.

Pay equity

The Liberal government has promised to bring in proactive pay equity legislation -- to ensure that people who do work of equal value get equal compensation -- by the end of next year. Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu, who chairs the House of Commons committee on the status of women, said there are things she would like to see the Liberal government do to start getting ready for that now, such as funding the work needed to examine the positions in the federal government to set a benchmark for where pay would need to increase. "They can do that without legislation and I would argue they should," she said.

Global poverty

The Liberal government has promised to bring a feminist lens to international aid. Trudeau talked up the importance of empowering women and girls in developing countries during his first trip to Africa as prime minister last November and his government recently pledged \$650 million over three years for sexual and reproductive health projects around the world. Still, humanitarian aid groups were disappointed to learn the money comes from the existing development assistance spending envelope, which is not expected to see much of

an increase in the 2017 budget. "Canada can do more to translate its value for gender equality into reality in women's lives," said Margaret Capelazo, the gender adviser for CARE Canada.

-reprinted from CTV News

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