

Labour, women's groups slam federal budget [CA-NB] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS Labour and women's groups are condemning Tuesday's federal budget for not doing enough to help workers, provide more daycare spaces and combat pay inequity. "To be honest, I think they missed the boat on employment insurance," Michel Boudreau, president of the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, said Wednesday. "Tax cuts will not help the economy." ... Three prominent women's groups in New Brunswick were also unhappy with the budget. Jody Dallaire, executive director of the New Brunswick Child Care Coalition, said she deplores the lack of funding to build a child-care system. "Everyone agrees that the government must invest during the economic downturn," she said. "But government refuses to meet the economic needs of women by investing in child care ... which will help women and their families participate in the economy." Dallaire said the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and UNICEF place Canada last among industrialized nations when it comes to availability and public funding of child-care services. Huberte Gautreau, chairwoman of the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity, said the budget did the opposite of what her organization has been requesting. "Instead of passing proactive legislation to ensure pay equity, as we have demanded for many years, it proposes to reduce accountability of employees under federal jurisdiction by making pay equity part of collective agreements and excluding it from any possibility of legal action," she said. Gautreau also said Ottawa is planning to pass legislation that would limit annual pay increases in the public sector at a time when women are still catching up for years of discriminatory pay practices. "Our government representatives should use our tax dollars to ensure that the recession will not create additional inequalities," said Michele Caron, chairwoman of Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick, in a news release. "Unfortunately, the budget indicates that the federal government considers women's economic needs as less important (by) backing off on pay equity, lack of investment in social infrastructures such as daycare facilities, planned reduction of federal transfers to New Brunswick (and) no reduction in the number of hours required for employment insurance benefits," she said. - reprinted from The Daily Gleaner

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