

Many families left out of pre-election budget [CA] ^[1]

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See text below.

EXCERPTS

The Harper government wants you to believe that average families are squarely at the centre of their budget spending this year.

Before you celebrate this "something for everyone" approach to politics, consider this: A striking number of Canadians actually won't benefit from much of what is promised in this budget.

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Why? Revenue Canada statistics show people with incomes of less than \$30,000 make up 99 per cent of those who pay no taxes & 7.3 million tax filers. Tax credits don't reach people who don't pay taxes.

The only income "relief" for this group of voters goes to people who earn more than \$3,000 but less than \$9,500 in a year (or a family that earns less than \$14,500).

The good news is that these people get a \$500 benefit. The bad news is, that's the only help on the horizon & a measure designed to help encourage those on welfare to join the ranks of the "working poor" offers \$1.37 a day.

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Two recent polls, conducted by The Strategic Council and Environics Research, show that tax cuts are widely viewed as yesterday's answer to yesterday's problems.

Canadians see strong economic growth and bulging federal coffers. Sure they'll take a tax cut, but they view social spending as a higher priority to meet today's challenges.

A whopping 86 per cent of Canadians told Environics Research they think government should take concrete action to reduce Canada's growing income gap. And they know exactly what they want, for themselves and for society at large.

The new message Canadians are sending their politicians is very clearly about affordability. It's about better access to services, not tax cuts. Most say a few more dollars in the pocket ranks way down the wish list.

They want assistance with the things they need but can't control: basics like child care, the skyrocketing costs of tuition for skills development and upgrading, housing and transit.

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The basics need to be there for everyone. Tax cuts can't buy affordable, accessible services for all.

Nor can strong economic growth and robust markets, by themselves, do the job. The only way is when governments, all governments, get involved, through direct investment.

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This budget may be celebrated as a masterful spin document, but in terms of substance its biggest failure is that it refuses to address, head on, one of the most pressing issues of our era: growing inequities in an era of incredible affluence.

It barely addresses the 15 per cent of Canadian families raising their children on less than \$30,000.

It has no answer for persistent and deepening poverty among our First Nations and aboriginal peoples. A year from now we will still be faced with these challenges, but will we have a surplus to deal with them?

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We can do better. With \$35 billion in surplus "mad money" we should have done better. It's time to demand better.

Region: Canada ^[2]

Tags: budget ^[3]

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