

Federal budget leaves women behind, professor says [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS According to a new report by a Queen's law professor, the 2009 federal budget is leaving women financially vulnerable. In her report *Budget 2009: Designed to Leave Women Behind—Again*, professor Kathleen Lahey explains how the federal budget is unequal. The federal budget allocates \$8 billion each year for the next two years to be spent on infrastructure, but Lahey said this will do little to help Canadian women. Only seven per cent of construction workers and those in the trades and transportation are women; only 22 per cent of engineers are women; only 21 per cent of workers in the primary industries are women and only 31 per cent of workers in manufacturing are women. The report also states that "none of this infrastructure spending will be allocated to building new childcare facilities, which are needed to enable women on the economic margins to enter paid work, or to funding the costs of running childcare facilities—even though these would also be 'infrastructure' spending. ... Lahey included in her report an analysis of infrastructure spending; corporate income tax; home renovation and home buyers' tax credits; employment insurance; personal income tax exemptions and brackets; working income tax benefit; Canada child tax benefit; and business income tax measures. "The current government is reinforcing the gender gap," Lahey said told the Journal in an interview. "The key concern is that the Department of Finance does not seem to be aware that women's incomes and lives are very different to men's." This means women are facing difficult choices in order to stay financially afloat. "If women can't make it on their own earnings, they can go on social support, or they may reconsider relationships," she said. "Divorce rates are going down. How many women are not being treated very well? This creates a situation where women are inherently more dependent on somebody else." "Virtually every item in the budget is going to disproportionately benefit men." Lahey said the income gap between Canadian men and women is one aspect contributing to an overall gender gap. In measuring the income gap as a global Canadian statistic—by what women receive in total income—the wage gap is huge, Lahey said. "Women's incomes still have not risen to 70 per cent of men's. The United Nations recently reported that Canada—that used to be considered the most gender equal country—was ranked number 83 on the UN Gender Disparity Index. This is the bottom half of 157 countries. Ten years ago we were still seeing the gender gap closing." Lahey said that today, the gender gap is especially problematic for women as they try to survive the financial recession. ... - reprinted from The Queen's Journal

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