

The myth of gender neutrality ^[1]

The budget is a policy document, especially where gender is concerned

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EXCERPTS.

Show me a budget that is "gender neutral" and I'll show you a budget that omits or slights women's concerns.

Despite significant gains, women in New Brunswick and across Canada still face inequalities - sometimes worsening inequalities - in employment, income, health, family responsibilities, experience of violence, access to justice and access to power.

Government budgets - which are key policy and values statements for all governments - have an impact, positive or negative, on the level of equality between women and men. To ensure that they at least don't make matters worse, budgets must be "gender aware."

...

Recent tax changes in Canada and the province have shifted more of the tax burden from higher income families to low and middle income families. The changes have sometimes favoured couples, and disadvantaged lone parent families or singles. They've sometimes worsened the existing gender gap in after-tax income.

This shift was not always done deliberately. Unequal outcomes can be an outcome of blindness to - some would say our chronic lack of concern for - the role of gender and the effects of inequality between the sexes.

Finally, there are areas of spending that affect women's rights, women's participation in society and women's safety, that must be protected.

Quality child care services are, first and foremost, a right of every child, but they are also necessary for parents' labour force participation and economic well being.

...

Equality must become part of the government's core business. Effective policy-making begins with detailed information and a commitment to fair outcomes for citizens. From the prevalence of sexual and physical violence to income and earnings gaps, we face a long list of gender disparities to overcome.

The chronic under-representation of women in government makes the systematic consideration of gender and other diversity all the more crucial for sound decision-making.

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