

SUBMISSION
To Standing Committee on Finance
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by
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The new Liberal government has made promises that are music to the ears of many Canadian caregivers and family members. I can only applaud the new attention given to the realities Canadians face as they struggle to earn enough to feed the family, despite challenging economic times.

It looks like this government listens and much of what is being said seems to me the right focus. Now is a time to invest. Things are rough but this is when we show our mettle and our priorities. We can't put some basic things on hold and among them, we can't put children's needs on hold. I am grateful for the new Canada child benefit being promised and for the promised tax reductions for the middle class.

I applaud the goal of 'investing in people' because key to any vibrant and successful society is the citizens not just for their jobs and earning capabilities but also for their spirit, their mutual support, their creativity and resilience. It is wonderful that your government has set the tone with welcoming Syrian refugees. A government that focuses only on job creation misses an important element of what makes people thrive. The new estimates of economic situations, beyond GDP to indices of wellbeing, happiness, of and environmental sustainability matter. New attention to unpaid labor that has always buoyed up the economy matters.

So I am happy to hear that you are investing in people with the new caregiver benefits, the new parental leave benefits because time tending someone who needs care is not a holiday but vital work. It saves government billions if the state is not required to fund all care of the young, sick, handicapped and frail elderly in institutional settings. If we enable it in the home, and at informal and flexible locations the public prefers, then we mobilize care labor, give it dignity, work with families to ensure all thrive.

I applaud also the desire to stimulate growth and we must be careful to include in that definition the core resource to do so- people. We need enough taxpayers to maintain the tax base, enough to pay the EI and pension premiums, enough to fund the schools and enable universal free medical care, all of which outstanding social programs are part of what makes Canada stand out in the world. If these programs are struggling it is not because the design was flawed. The design simply assumed a population that was self-renewing each generation and we have fallen below that birth rate. We need an economic

plan that values children, encourages those who want children to have them, and helps them fund some of the care.

In a democracy we also need to foster choice in all its breadth. It would be inconsistent to fund care of the young but only one care style, just as it would be counter the public will to fund eldercare or care of the handicapped in one type of location only. The public that wants tolerance and respect for its choices about gay rights, abortion, public or private schooling, that is blind to race or religion or gender and respects all people, wants a government that also provides a range of lifestyle options. Those who provide care of a child at home, or with a sitter, nanny, parent, grandparent, or at a daycare all deserve equal recognition from the finance department. Every child is of equal value and has a right to equal benefit under the law. So I applaud your move to universalize more child benefits and hope that policy can expand to value all maternity and even to provide a birth benefit, without conditions of paid employment status of the parent.

Those who take care of a frail senior or handicapped family member and who give up income to do this deserve some recognition not just recognition for use of a formal care setting.

I am very grateful that your government will return the long form census. As a long time researcher on care issues it has been important to have a reliable source of information collected by such a survey and it was frustrating when we lost it. In 1995 at Beijing all member United Nations,, including Canada, promised to tally unpaid labor and Canada by this long form census embarked on keeping that promise.

The questions were a first for Canada and revealed a huge component of the economy previously invisible. The data helped open the eyes of legislators to the reality of responsibilities beyond the paid job and of the genuine challenges of the career-family balance for Canadian households. Yet when we lost that long form census, the General Household Survey that replaced it did not even ask the question about unpaid labor at all. So we lost a lot and it is very exciting to get it back. I applaud this for all researchers but also because the public needs to be able to tell you what challenges they have so that you can create laws and social policy that accommodate those diverse obligations.

I am very grateful you are going to pro-actively inform people of benefits through the tax system to which they are entitled even if they did not know about them. That is a groundbreaking promise and such a relief. Really. There are so many people whose first language is not English or whose second language is not math, who are overwhelmed easily by tax forms and who are not sure how even to find out about what categories they fit into tax wise. The very people least able to access benefits because of such hurdles are the ones who can't afford to hire professional advisors either. Many wonderful tax plans and programs have been set up in Canada and yet the uptake on them is low precisely because nobody told people what they are entitled to. I am grateful a caring government will now tell them.

The Honorable Minister's expertise on pensions is acknowledged and a resource for this ministry. For many years Canadian seniors have struggled with the risk of poverty, particularly of women who live longer than men and whose paid work history has often been interrupted by care obligations. Enabling pension splitting has been helpful to many couples and has been enormously popular in the polls. However, widowed and single seniors still risk poverty and this can be tied rather closely to the lack of recognition of care roles. The idea of a homemaker's pension has been promoted at many times in our history and it is time to consider it again for it would give dignity and practical recognition to those who for years tended the young or sick, saving health care system dollars for the state. Such a pension would not be a handout or charity but the recognition of a grateful nation for work done.

In the meantime I am grateful for the proposed changes to the CPP that this government is suggesting, including returning the retirement age to 65.

This new government has a youthful feel to it, an aura of coolness and attention to the young. I applaud the Prime Minister's taking on the mantle of minister of youth and of the plan to have a youth advisory council of those aged 16-24. I have taught thousands of high school students and am so grateful their needs are being recognized for they are different needs than even a generation ago. Now student debt is so high it delays ability to even consider moving out of the parental home, marriage or having a family. Now with the Internet, the location of a job is less structured and work from home, telecommuting and brand new types of jobs have created a challenging set of options and pressures. Young people have to be prepared for such a tech savvy world but also recognized for their ongoing need for personal interactions and actual people who care about them.

To invest in people is to recognize this dilemma and to have as much faith in our youth as we expect them to have in themselves. We need adequate transfer payments to the provinces so they can fund schools more generously, fund universities to keep tuition way down and to provide many opportunities for qualified students to get bursaries and scholarships, not just loans. This is an investment in people and in our economy that will pay off well for the nation. Well educated students become graduates who earn a lot and pay more tax. They are more likely to be contributors to the community with their investment in its social fabric and they will enrich our productivity in the long run, nationally and internationally with innovations. To not fund youth well was a huge mistake. To fund it well is a vital element of national productivity and wellbeing.

2016 marks the start of a series of hugely important 100 year anniversaries in Canada. Women started to get the vote provincially, 100 years ago this month in Manitoba and then just a bit later in the other provinces. These milestones are of significance to this budget because when we ask if women have fully attained equality in those 100 years, we are close.

But we are not there yet. The final hurdle is no longer in the paid labor force really. We have on paper at least pay equity and we have human rights and labor law that prohibit

gender discrimination or even discrimination on bases related to gender such as pregnancy. Women are as numerous as men on post-secondary campuses and in some faculties outnumber men. What we have not yet done though is to ensure there is full value of women or men, whose work is in the unpaid sector. They are still in some sectors called 'not working' and their one-third of the GDP contribution were it counted, is still not counted.

We can do something about that with this budget. We can advance the recognition of the traditionally unpaid care roles, volunteer roles and anchors to the paid economy that women have always been in the home. Why should we do that?

Because that is the final liberation. It is also gender neutral because men can be caregivers, nurses, at-home dads, daycare employees and what we need to do is to raise the profile and dignity of the role, whoever does it. To force people to leave that role is a mistake because then the state has to pay for professional level care. That is way more costly. We know by polls and surveys that people differ in how they want to balance career and family. Let them differ. The state should not take sides but should ensure money flows with the one who needs care, and let the people choose who takes care of the kids as their own needs change.

An economic plan that only looks at paid labor actually is bound to be tilted, and seriously flawed around the edges. It is as much an error as considering the environment of value only for jobs created and not for the value of clean water and pristine forests that are not creating jobs but are creating health and wellbeing.

So I urge you to continue the plans to value the care sector and would like to add some more thoughts of how to do this.

I attach a copy of a recent historical study of such care rights in Canada . Don't worry. I don't expect that you will translate it or make a lot of copies of it for I too want to save government time and money. I only hope that one copy of it reaches a few key people who can consider the ideas as they put together this budget.

I also would request the opportunity to be part of the in-person consultation though I realize the deadlines are tight. I am however always available for a phone chat or for a meeting in Calgary or in Ottawa at the convenience of your staff.

Yours truly

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