



# Federal Budget 2019

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*October 2018*

**Manitoba Federation of Labour**

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# Federal Budget 2019

The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) is pleased to provide this submission on priorities for the 2019 Federal Budget. The MFL is Manitoba's central labour body, chartered by the Canadian Labour Congress, and represents the interests of more than 100,000 unionized working people from every sector and every region of the province. The MFL works to promote good jobs, fairness, and social and economic justice for all. The priorities outlined in this submission are informed by long standing MFL policies, Convention resolutions and emerging needs identified by our members.

## Health Care

As part of Budget 2019, we recommend that the federal government prioritize health care services that families depend on, and look for opportunities for improvement, like the following:

- beginning budgetary planning to implement a national universal single-payer Pharmacare program, in order to ensure universal access to prescription drugs and save Canadians money and improve health outcomes;
- committing to a long-term, national health care funding arrangement with provinces and territories that reverses the cuts launched by the Harper government and continued under this government;
- increasing the federal government's share of health care spending while enforcing the principles of the *Canada Health Act*;
- working with provinces and territories on a national seniors' care strategy, including investments in public home care and community support services;

## Good Jobs and Training Opportunities:

In order to address Canada's long and poor record of productivity growth, the federal government must put quality jobs at the heart of its agenda. Labour market and social

policy should systematically restrict precarious work and the exploitation of vulnerable workers. We urge the federal government to:

- take immediate action on pay equity to ensure that women are paid the same as men for the same work (do not delay until after the next election – women have already waited far too long for fairness);
- prepare workers to adapt to technological change and emerging skills needs to ensure workers are able to meet the jobs requirements now and in the future, including making sure Canada is a leader on implementing a right to continuous workplace training and lifelong learning;
- prioritize access to training opportunities for groups with fewer opportunities including youth, lower skilled workers, workers with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, and workers of colour and expanding vocational opportunities through apprenticeships and on-the-job experience, while recognizing the vital role of labour, employers, and post-secondary education institutions in partnering to deliver these opportunities;
- mandate that employers hire and train apprentices on federally-funded infrastructure projects, including utilizing community benefit agreements and project labour agreements to maximize local job and training opportunities.

## Supporting Working Families:

The federal government needs to invest in more supports for working families to ensure that life is affordable and that parents, especially women, have greater opportunities get good jobs and contribute to our economy. We call on the federal government to:

- transfer \$1 billion in 2019-20 to provinces, territories and Indigenous communities in order to establish universal, accessible, affordable, high-quality and fully-inclusive early learning and child-care in Canada, delivered by public or not-for-profit providers. This funding must come with a strings attached approach to ensure universality and affordability;
- reform the EI system to better reflect the realities of the working people, especially women, including reducing the number of qualifying hours (for regular benefits) to 360 hours, measuring a “week” as 30 hours instead of 35 to

reflect the average Canadian work week, and reform the EI sickness benefit to permit working while on claim, while expanding the number of weeks for sickness benefits to deal with episodic or long-term illnesses;

- restore the more than \$58 billion that has been withdrawn by governments from the EI fund and ending the use of EI funds for non-EI purposes;
- increase training supports for EI recipients, including targeted programs to help workers from equity-seeking groups to overcome barriers to employment, gain valuable on-the-job experience, and acquire training in high-demand occupations;
- bring back the ability for workers to “drop out” periods of low and zero earnings from the calculation of their Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefit and increase the CPP income replacement rate further, raise the ceiling on pensionable earnings, and further enhance the portion of employee contributions that are tax-deductible. These continued inequities primarily impact women and the disabled.

## Poverty Reduction:

Too many Canadians live in poverty, especially women, Indigenous peoples, and children. The federal government’s strategy to reduce poverty must include:

- a comprehensive plan to eliminate poverty in Canada;
- raising the federal minimum wage to a living wage of \$15-an-hour, setting the standard for provinces to follow;
- increasing the Canadian Social Transfer to fund social assistance and support for people with disabilities;
- increasing the flat-rate Old Age Security benefit and indexing it to average wage growth;
- reforming the federal insolvency regime in order to better protect workers’ pensions and benefits in creditor protection and bankruptcy.