

What is important to know about Budget 2012?

Bill C-38, the government's *Budget Implementation Act*, proposes fundamental legislative changes to the federal regulatory system and allows for expedited big resource projects.

The NDP caucus has been working to have this 425-page bill split into segments so we can study it in depth. Unfortunately, the Conservatives rejected our constructive proposal. As your Official Opposition, we have launched cross-Canada budget hearings to hear from you.

On the Island, people are concerned about the bill's impacts on the environment, jobs, and health care and the effects it will have on our natural resources management and on our fisheries. Here are a few of the many changes proposed in Bill C-38 that will affect our lives:

Environment:

- ❖ Repeals and replaces the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA), the central piece of federal environmental legislation
- ❖ Responsibility for the environmental assessments for most projects becomes the responsibility of provinces and the Federal Government would limit its reviews to discrete areas of federal jurisdiction
- ❖ Gives Cabinet ultimate decision-making for major projects, not regulatory bodies
- ❖ Repeal of the *Kyoto Implementation Act* – no more domestic or international accountability measures on climate change
- ❖ Allows the government to eliminate the National Round Table on the Environment

Fisheries:

- ❖ Elimination of fish habitat protection in *Fisheries Act*
- ❖ Protection is limited to commercial, recreational, or Aboriginal fisheries and their habitat, as opposed to all fish and all fish habitat in Canada
- ❖ Temporary alteration or destruction of fish habitat is not prohibited unless it can be shown to have resulted in the death of useful fish

Natural Resources:

- ❖ Exclusion of concerned groups and citizens from the environmental review process for pipelines and possibly other projects
- ❖ Cabinet granted authority to override a "no" decision of the National Energy Board (NEB) – politics will predominate over independent expertise.
- ❖ Allows the board to exempt pipelines from the requirements of the *Navigable Waters Protection Act*.
- ❖ Allows the NEB to issue permits for development even when the project could affect species listed under the *Species At Risk Act*

Jobs:

- ❖ No comprehensive plan to create jobs at a time when unemployment, particularly among youth, is high and wages are not keeping up with the cost of living
- ❖ Forces Canadians to work two years longer, to age 67, to qualify for Old Age Security
- ❖ Cuts workers' access to Employment Insurance benefits if they don't take any job the Minister of Human Resources deems "suitable"
- ❖ Repeals The *Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act*, which sets minimum standards for hours and wages of construction workers working on federal projects
- ❖ Removes federal contractors from the protection of The Employment Equity Act.

Health Care:

- ❖ Short-changes cash-strapped provinces of expected health transfers by \$31 billion
- ❖ Weakens food and drug regulations to allow the Minister of Health to exempt products from regulatory oversight at her discretion
- ❖ Ends vital Auditor General oversight of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- ❖ Paves the way for private contractors to perform food safety inspections

Government Ethics and Oversight:

- ❖ Removes the Auditor General's powers to hold government accountable through independent oversight over 12 key government agencies including the Northern Pipeline Agency, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Canada Revenue Agency
- ❖ Eliminates CSIS's Inspector General, who provides oversight on the intelligence agency's activities and who recently released a report critical of CSIS activities
- ❖ Eliminates organizations that produce independent policy research including Rights & Democracy, the National Council of Welfare, and the First Nations Statistical Institute
- ❖ Dissolves the Public Appointments Commission designed to ensure key positions are assigned based on merit instead of insider connections

Arts and Culture:

- ❖ \$115 million (10%) cut to the CBC budget, meaning less Canadian programming, more ads on the radio, less support for arts and culture and 650 jobs lost
- ❖ Loss of access to our historic and artistic heritage through cuts to Library and Archives
- ❖ A \$10.6 million cut to Telefilm Canada, and a \$6.7 million cut to the National Film Board, and the elimination of the Canada Music Fund's Creator Assistance Program

Write to the Prime Minister with your concerns and copy your MP:

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