

A misspent year

Dear editor:

Looking back on the year, it is increasingly clear that Prime Minister Stephen Harper's priorities are no longer the priorities of Canadians.

His Conservative government has focused economic attention solely on its promise to introduce an expensive income splitting scheme.

Paying for it has trumped every other need. Over a billion dollars for veterans' services have gone unspent while the government closed nine local offices making it even harder to access a support system the Auditor General called "complex and time-consuming." Veterans who needed mental health services have been left waiting months, even years, to get help.

Spending on infrastructure projects through the Building Canada Fund has been cut by 90%. Employment Insurance payroll taxes have been frozen at artificially high levels. Other taxes, such as tariffs on imports, have gone up. Public safety has been shortchanged, from search and rescue to food inspection and rail safety to environmental protection.

All for the sake of income splitting, which will cost the federal government a whopping \$2 billion a year, but will not benefit 85% of Canadian households. Single mothers and fathers, those who have the least and couples with similar incomes will get nothing.

Among the few who will benefit, the largest benefit will go to those who need it the least.

There is no reason why middle class families should have to pay to give families like Mr. Harper's a \$2000 tax break.

Worst of all, this scheme will do nothing to help with our middling economic outlook. Economic growth continues to be low, the jobs market sluggish and household debt high. Federal mismanagement has left big projects like the Keystone XL pipeline struggling to get going. Exports are only returning to their pre-recession peak.

Liberals have been hearing from Canadians that this is just not good enough. They are looking not only for a different government, but a better government. We are working hard to earn their trust.

We believe that a surplus built by Canadians should be invested for the benefit of all Canadians. That means investing in our people, our natural resources, our infrastructure, our trade and our drive to innovate. These are the things that made Canada successful in the first place. That is how we will restore growth and bring relief to struggling middle class families and all those striving to get there.

Canadians can't afford another misspent year.

Judy Foote, MP

Liberal Party of Canada Whip