

Michael Chong calls out Liberals on federal budget

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Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong says for Halton Hills residents who have been feeling financially squeezed, it's not just their imaginations talking - they have the Trudeau Liberals to blame.

His comments come after Finance Minister Bill Morneau tabled the third federal budget in Ottawa on Feb. 27, titled Equality and Growth: A Strong Middle Class.

The budget, which forecasts a \$18.1-billion deficit in the upcoming fiscal year (including \$3 billion for risk), takes as its main theme gender equality, with a primary focus on closing the gender gap in the workplace.

"It's a budget that doesn't create growth and prosperity for Canadians," Chong said, citing the numbers for projected real GDP per capita growth over the next three years: one per cent, 0.4 per cent and 0.5 per cent.

"We have essentially zero economic growth over the next few years based on the budget's own projections and the government is spinning the numbers and trying to put a good face on it," Chong said. "But the reality is, the per capita growth projected for the next three years is barely above zero . and that's why many people are struggling."

The government is proposing \$1.2 billion to go toward a new five-week "use-it-or-lose-it" paternity leave, over the next five years, with the intent to give more women the option of returning to work earlier after giving birth.

The budget also proposes legislation to ensure equal pay for equal work among federal government employees, and others who work in federally-regulated industries, though an amount allocated for said legislation has yet to be indicated.

Morneau announced the government will also be dedicated to improving living conditions throughout Indigenous communities, through allocating an additional \$172.6 million over three years toward clean drinking water and \$1.4 billion over



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six years for First Nations Child and Family Services.

Other main aspects of the budget include almost \$4 billion in funding for science, \$507.7 million for a new national strategy on cybersecurity and \$50 million to aid non-governmental organizations that support local journalism, all over the next five years.

Chong says what he would have liked to see is the government upholding their commitment to invest in Canada's aging infrastructure, as well as a plan to return to budget balance - a plan he says the Liberals have been vague on.

"When families in Halton Hills are struggling - when they feel they are struggling to pay the monthly bills - it's not just their imagination. We have very anemic economic growth," Chong added.

"And that's despite the fact that the government is spending a lot of money that we don't have. They are borrowing a lot of money to spend on things that aren't making a real difference in people's lives. The budget has no plan to return to budget balance."

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