



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

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Federal fiscal update a thinly-veiled attack on workers' rights

The "fiscal update" presented Thursday by the Conservative Party government of Stephen Harper represents a direct attack on workers' rights while failing to deliver the economic stimulus package needed to soften the blow of a recession-bound economy, says the Hospital Employees' Union.

Measures announced by federal finance minister Jim Flaherty would ban strikes in the federal public service while rolling back wage increases and undermining pay equity for federal government workers.

"Governments around the world are adopting comprehensive strategies to protect jobs, invest in infrastructure and safeguard public services," says HEU secretary-business Judy Darcy.

"But our national government is using this economic crisis as an opportunity to undermine workers' rights and privatize crown assets."

Darcy says the move to suspend the right of federal government workers to strike flies in the face of last year's Supreme Court ruling on *Bill 29* which establishes collective bargaining as a right protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

The lack of action on the economy and the attack on workers' rights was a hot topic of discussion on the floor of the B.C. Federation of Labour convention being held this week in Vancouver. HEU delegates joined other unions in calling on the opposition parties in the House of Commons to defeat Harper's minority government and form a coalition government.

Paul Moist, president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, said that the Harper Conservatives should have taken action to fix the Employment Insurance system in the face of rising unemployment.

"Today's update failed to address our flawed system, where only 40% of workers qualify for what are now poverty-level benefits," said Moist. "And while the update vaguely addresses pensions, it promises nothing to help seniors who are currently living in poverty."

"Unlike other countries, Canada has no plan to save jobs," added Moist. "Our government is opting for belt-tightening, while the U.S., the U.K. and the European Commission have all proposed stimulus plans. Recessions are when people need government. The Harper government only wants to downsize, and leave working Canadians and their families to their own devices."

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