

**Ken Neumann,
National Director for Canada,
United Steelworkers
Speaking notes**

**Standing Committee on Finance:
Study on C-30: Budget Implementation Act**

**May 20, 2021,
11:00 am – 12:30 pm EDT**

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

And thank you as well, the clerk, committee staff, interpreters, and all committee members for the opportunity to join you today.

I am Ken Neumann, National Director for Canada for the United Steelworkers

Our union represents over 850,000 workers in North America, including over 225,000 workers in virtually every economic sector and region of Canada.

I would like to add our voice to acknowledging the history that was made when Minister Freeland became the first woman to table a budget in Canada. It's well past time.

Another historic piece of this budget is the scope of the need people across Canada are facing. COVID-19 has hit - and is still hitting - people hard.

As a union we are focused every day on fighting for our members, fighting to keep them safe and secure in their jobs.

We also serve them by fighting to make Canada a stronger, fairer and more equitable place.

By raising the bar for everyone, we can keep raising it even higher at the bargaining table. And that's the lens we used to look at Bill C-30.

If you forget about pharmacare... because the Liberals did..., this big budget can look like there's a little something here for almost everyone.

That includes some important changes that improve labour standards.

Stopping contract flipping in airports, creating a federal minimum wage, and increased protections of some pensions, we're very happy to see clear changes we've been calling for.

And, of course, we're hopeful to see the promise of childcare become a reality.

But, in between a lot of big spending, the government failed to get some big things right.

COVID-19 made major holes in programs like Employment Insurance impossible to ignore.

The changes that were brought in to fix EI during the pandemic – including a federal role in paid sick days – should be made permanent, not canceled before COVID-19 is even behind us.

And the budget barely scratches the surface of making the ultra wealthy pay their share.

While the government is slashing CRB supports 40% from their CERB levels, they're doing nothing to claw back money some big corporations took in bad faith through the wage subsidy program.

By not going retroactive, the Liberals are letting the big businesses who threw people out of work and handed big bonuses to the bosses and shareholders off the hook.

The budget does include some good skills training and retraining programs. But, too often it seems like protecting workers' jobs was an after thought.

The government needs to connect the dots when it comes to creating a real industrial and jobs creation strategy.

With the supply chain that brings materials and parts back and forth across the border, there are more workers involved in the auto industry than auto workers.

But, in all the talk about zero-emissions vehicles, there is no explicit jobs strategy tied to that supply chain.

Obviously, there is a lot of potential in the 15 billion dollars promised for public transit, but, where will the materials be sourced?

Like with other infrastructure announcements and commitments in this budget, there is no requirement to use domestically manufactured materials.

And there are no sustainability and emissions conditions either.

Knowing where our steel, aluminum and other products are from is crucial to the development of a North American approach to procurement and infrastructure, ... which is how we get an exemption to Buy America provisions.

To that end, we're advocating for a North American buy clean strategy, which would prioritize the environmental impact of materials used in public construction projects.

A recent Buy Clean report prepared by Blue Green Canada, shows that steel, aluminum, cement and wood products produced in Canada have some of the lowest carbon emissions in the world.

This strategic approach would allow Canadian workers to benefit from President Biden's massive infrastructure, environment and jobs investment.

You have a partner in the USW in working with the Biden administration to make that strategy a reality.

And, from the Carbon border adjustments to improving workers' access to Canada's trade remedy system, we look forward to consultations on border measures that are tied to a clear procurement strategy that maintains and creates jobs.

Before the budget was tabled, I said it needed to support everyday people and help make sure workers have jobs to support their families – today and into the future.

This budget tries, in many ways, to look like it's doing a lot of that.

With some important changes, I believe it actually can.

Thank you again.

I look forward to your questions.