

The people-funded Parkland Institute, based at the University of Alberta, issued the news release below on March 25th in advance of the Klein government's 2003 provincial budget.



Edmonton Albertans Not Benefitting

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"The phenomenal growth in Alberta's economy and the record surpluses would lead one to believe that there are good times ahead for Albertans," says Parkland's Research Director Trevor Harrison, "but that is not the case. What we are seeing instead are stagnating real wages, mounting gas and energy prices, sky-high inflation, and crumbling public services."

The report entitled – Alberta's "good enough approach to fiscal management" – examines in detail the province's current revenue structure and recent expenditures with special concentration given to the areas of health, education, and social services.

Highlights of the report include the fact that per student government spending in Alberta is substantially lower now than it was in 1987 and even as late as 1994, and that social allowance rates are currently 40% lower in real dollars than they were a decade ago. "Given the strength of Alberta's economy, it can only be assumed that this type of de-investment in public services comes either from an ideological motivation, or from a simple lack of caring," says Harrison.

The report includes a series of recommendations regarding the government's revenue sources, spending priorities, and accounting practices. These recommendations include calls for improved accountability, for drastic increases to education funding, for an arms-length review of the government's policy of energy deregulation, and for a dropping of the government's flat-tax system.

Harrison points out that "these are policy recommendations which would bring the level and quality of government services in line with Alberta's position as the strongest economy in the country. It only makes sense that the people of Canada's wealthiest province not have to put up with inadequately funded government programs and services."

Visit the Parkland Institute's website at <http://www.ualberta.ca/parkland>