

June 9, 2009
Letter to the editor

In February 2008, a Task Force was appointed by Justice and Consumer Affairs Minister T.J. Burke to study the family court system, with a mandate to find ways to facilitate access to justice for families going through legal disputes. Among other recommendations, « The Report of the Access to Family Justice Task Force » called for the expansion of the role of court social workers as mediators.

The Common Front is appalled to find out that the report was handed in to Minister Burke months before the Provincial Budget was unveiled, announcing the elimination of all 14 court social workers in the province.

In a time of economic crisis, we cannot turn our backs to the most vulnerable citizens of our province. Court social workers provide guidance for people going through very stressful ordeals, and offer the possibility to resolve disputes outside of the courtroom, in a manner that promotes the well-being of the children involved.

Healthy child development is a deterrent to poverty. We count on our government to make choices for the common good. As a redistributive agent, our province's government has a duty to provide crucial social services such as legal aid and family legal mediation. The elimination of court social workers in this year's budget contradicts a government that claims to want to reduce poverty and reform the clogged family court system.

The Common Front supports the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers: court social workers must be reinstated to play an extensive and valued role in our family justice system.

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