

June 5, 2009
Letter to the editor

The Common Front for Social Justice has been pressing for the abolishment of the economic unit policy for more than two years. This policy requires that the amount of money granted to a recipient of income assistance be determined by household income. As a consequence, if a recipient shares housing with any another person – even if it isn't her spouse – her income assistance check will be reduced or withdrawn.

This policy is shameful. The case of the Arseneau family, discussed in the June 1, 2009 L'Acadie Nouvelle (p.9), illustrates it. Because Raynald and Marie-Anne Arseneau welcomed their elderly mothers and Raynald's disabled sister in their home to care for them, their income assistance was totally withdrawn, an old age pension was reduced and their prescription drug cards were revoked. Yet, the Department of Social Development declares that it « truly cares about people and their issues, » that it treats its « clients » with respect and empathy (Annual Report, p.11).

The Common Front already met with Social Development Minister Mary Schryer to express its disagreement with the economic unit policy. It has also submitted documents explaining the injustices that the policy implies. The Advisory Council on the Status of Women in New Brunswick has also taken a stand against it and, recently, we have published a document, endorsed by 19 organizations, demanding the abolishment of this unjust policy.

Minister Schryer must act now. People living in a situation of poverty should not have to wait for a Poverty Reduction Plan to see this policy change.

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