

News release

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**Moncton - The new government of David Alward should immediately increase revenues for people who are living on social assistance - Linda McCaustlin, co-chair of the Common Front for Social Justice**

“The last two Hunger Count Reports have revealed that during the last two years, there was an 18% increase in food bank usage in N.B. Just this year, the number of people using food banks has also increased. Thirty-four percent of food bank clients are children; thirteen percent are wage earners but the majority of them (61%) are social assistance recipients. This is completely unacceptable in a country as rich as Canada” says Linda McCaustlin.

“We are asking Hon. Susan Stultz, the new Minister of Social Development, to immediately provide all adults on social assistance with a \$100 per-month healthy food allowance supplement. We are also asking her to provide an additional \$35 per month per child to households receiving social assistance. Moreover, since the income of seniors receiving the guaranteed annual supplement is below the Low Income Cut-off (before tax), a \$100 food supplement should be added to the current \$400 supplement forwarded to these seniors. These food supplements should be indexed with the cost of living. Given that 13% of N.B. food bank users are people in the workforce, the minimum wage should continue to rise so as to meet one of the workers most basic needs, namely a nutritious diet.”

“Food is essential for life and is therefore recognized as a basic human right in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The fact that thousands of N.B. citizens and their families go to bed hungry is a shameful result of our political leaders’ inability to govern in the interest of the common good. Those members of our business community who are paying very low wages should realize the detrimental effects of this practice on the nutritional status of their employees” continues Ms. McCaustlin.

Ms. McCaustlin states: “Part of the problem of food banks being unable to cope with current demands is due to the inadequate income of too many New Brunswickers.” Indeed, N.B. is the province that has one of the lowest social assistance basic rates in all of Canada and it ranks as the fourth lowest in terms of minimum wage.

“The Common Front for Social Justice has been advocating with the previous government for an increase in basic social assistance rates but unfortunately, this did

not happen. We hope that the present government will listen and make the necessary increases. Right now, our province is increasing the minimum wage which is a positive move. But we are hearing that some segments of the business community are lobbying for a two-tier minimum wage – one applicable mainly to workers receiving tips. We hope that this will never be implemented because it would keep a large segment of workers, mainly women, in low paying jobs”, continues Ms. McCaustlin.

Nutritious food is more expensive than ever as was shown by the 2010 CFSJ provincial survey on food prices. Between 2006 and 2010, basic items like eggs went up by 21.9%, cheese by 36.7%, round steak by 23.8%, rice by 42.6%, flour by 84.9% and whole wheat bread 102.1%. “Food price increase is a harsh reality facing all N.B. households. However, the situation is more dramatic for those who work at minimum wage, for those who depend on social assistance and for those seniors living on a low fixed income”.

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