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Press Release

For immediate distribution

Monday May 30, 2011



## A Plate Left Empty

**The Common Front for Social Justice is officially launching their campaign on Monday May 30, 2011.**

Moncton – “Fourteen MLA’s, both Conservatives and Liberals, will be receiving a visit today” says Linda McCaustlin, Co-chair of the Common Front for Social Justice.

Volunteers from across the province have gotten a petition signed (in the form of empty paper plates) supporting the Common Front’s two demands:

1. The implementation of a food solidarity program of \$50 per month for all households on social assistance;
2. A raise of the basic social assistance rates to match the average of those in place in Atlantic Canada.

Why a campaign now?

“Because the first budget presented by the newly elected conservative government did not allocate money to the Minister of Social Development for her to raise the basic rates of the thousands of citizens living on social assistance” continues Ms. McCaustlin.

In April of 2011, there were 41,197 individuals and families living on income assistance and these people faced, for a fourth consecutive year, a basic income freeze from the Department of Social Development. Yet, according to research done by the Common Front, the price of food has increased by 21% since 2006 and that of electricity, by 29% since January 2008. Additionally, the price of a two-bedroom apartment has increased by 9% within four years.

Between 2008 and 2010, food bank use has increase by 18%. It is distressing to note that 32% of the users are children, that 22% are workers with an income or receiving

employment insurance and that the wide majority of users are people who depend on social assistance.

“Our province’s basic social assistance rates are among the lowest in Canada. What is devastating is that the situation in N.B has remained unchanged since 2008” says Ms. McCaustlin.

The last government reduced taxes for individuals as well as for businesses. Those reductions have benefited and continue to benefit the richest citizens. Individuals in the \$123,212 range and above saw their tax rates decrease from nearly 18% in 2008 to 14.3% in 2011. Corporate income taxes have been reduced and, under the Alward government, the total general income tax of corporations will remain at 10% while the tax rates of small businesses will shift from 5% in 2011 to 2.5% within four years.

However, as for people on social assistance, the provincial government has said NO to an increase in their rates. The 2011-2012 budget will continue to widen the gap that is ever growing between the richest and poorest. In addition, the tax cuts granted have siphoned hundreds of thousands of dollars from public coffers. That money would be better spent if we invested it in reducing poverty in N.B.

“We hope that Premier David Alward will hear the cry of those living in poverty, as well as the voices of the hundreds of people who have supported the Common Front’s petition. We sincerely hope that he will implement our two demands” concluded Ms. McCaustlin.

For information:

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*The Common Front for Social Justice is one of the largest democratic and popular organizations in New Brunswick, with close to 75,000 group and individual members. The Common Front brings together individuals as well as local, regional and provincial organizations to work towards the eradication of poverty.*