

News Release
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The Common Front is shocked by Minister Coulombe's decision on minimum wage

Moncton- "Minimum wage workers will feel betrayed by Minister Martine Coulombe. For the last 8 years, 17,000 NB minimum wage workers have been forced to adjust their lives to a lower minimum wage than the Atlantic average. Now, Minister Coulombe is asking them to keep adjusting themselves to a lower minimum wage. It is totally unacceptable" says Jean-Claude Basque, provincial coordinator.

The proposed minimum wage increase that was to be put in place in September, 2011 was an integral part of the NB Poverty Reduction Plan. It was recognized at that time that increasing the minimum wage was a key way of alleviating poverty for a large number of individuals and their families in the province.

"We are asking ourselves if this Conservative government is serious about reducing poverty. What other parts of the Poverty Reduction Plan are they not going to implement?" asks Mr. Basque.

As the table shows (see below), the small and medium sized businesses have been, for the last eight years, paying their workers less than the average Atlantic Provinces. This means that in affect, minimum wage workers were subsidizing them. On top of that, in the last provincial budget, this Conservative government decided to reduce their income taxes by 50% in the upcoming four years.

Minimum wage workers, like others, have seen the cost of living going up, especially the price of food which in the past four years has increased by 21%. In the last two years the use of food banks rose by 18%. One quarter were people working at low wages. The proposed September increase would have helped them and their family offset the increase costs (heating, school supplies, snow removal, etc) that we all face during the winter months.

"Minister Martine Coulombe's decision to listen to the small and medium business community instead of low wage workers is wrong, wrong, wrong!" concludes Mr. Basque.

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Table 1: Minimum Wages in Atlantic Canada between 2000 and 2010

Province	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
N.B.	5.75	5.90	6.00	6.00	6.20	6.30	6.50 6.70 ^a	7.00 7.25 ^a	7.75	8.00 8.25 ^e	8.50 ^b 9.00 ^e
N.L.	5.50	5.50	5.75 ^c 6.00 ^g	6.00	6.00	6.25	6.50 6.75 ^d	7.00 7.50 ^f	8.00	8.50 9.00 ^a	9.50 10.00 ^a
N.S.	5.70	5.80	6.00	6.25	6.50	6.80	7.15	7.60	8.10	8.60	9.20 ^b 9.65 ^f
P.E.I.	5.60	5.80	6.00	6.25	6.50	6.80	7.15	7.50	7.75 ^c 8.00 ^f	8.20 ^d 8.40 ^f	8.70 ^d 9.00 ^f
Average in Atlantic	5.64	5.75	6.00	6.13	6.30	6.54	6.94	7.46	7.96	8.56	9.41
Difference*	+0.11	+0.15	0.00	-0.13	-0.10	-0.24	-0.24	-0.21	-0.21	-0.31	-0.41

* Difference: represents comparison between value of minimum wage in N.B. and average of minimum wages in the four Atlantic Provinces (N.B., N.S., P.E.I. and N.L.).

Superscripts ^a to ^g indicate the month of the year when the minimum wage rose: ^a July; ^b April; ^c May; ^d June; ^e September; ^f October; ^g November.