

Open letter

January 24, 2012

Honorable Sue Stultz
Minister of Social Development
Fredericton, NB.

RE- Negotiations with New Brunswick Dental Society

Ms. Stultz,

The New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice is very concerned by the turn in the negotiations between your department and the NB Dental Society.

From our understanding, the provincial government is covering right now 68% of the costs for dental work for recipients of Social Assistance. The NB Dental society is trying to negotiate a three years agreement with 70% for the first year, 77.5% the second year and 85% the third year. You have proposed a one year agreement with 56% and 20% co-payment for all social assistance recipients. Our understanding, from the newspaper report is that Nova Scotia is reimbursing its dentists at 80%, PEI between 80%-85% and NFL at 90%, with no co-payment from recipients.

Ms. Stultz, we believe New Brunswick should reimburse dentist similar to our sister provinces and certainly not ask social assistance recipients for any co-payment.

As you are well aware, our province has some of the lowest basic rate of assistance in the Atlantic Provinces if not of all Canada and also some of the lowest total revenue. **Recipients are certainly not able to pay 20% of dental costs.**

The province has a Poverty Reduction Plan and an Advisory Committee for Health Benefits that has part of its mandate to develop a vision and dental plan for low-income New Brunswick children. We are asking ourselves where this government is going in its fight to reduce poverty if it's asking those that are at the very bottom of revenue to pay, out of their pockets, for services as essential as dental one.

We urge you to negotiate a fair deal with the NB Dental Society and certainly not ask recipients to for any co-payment for dental services.

Linda McCaustlin
Co-chair

cc- Victor Boudreau, leader of the Opposition
Dominic Hardy, leader of the NDP
Greta Doucet, leader of the Green Party