

Hon. Martine Coulombe, Minister
Ministry of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
Fredericton, N.B.

Minister Coulombe,

We were shocked to learn that you are considering implementing a two-tier minimum wage in New Brunswick. The Common Front for Social Justice as well as the 18 other signatory organizations are totally opposed to the introduction of such a measure which would impoverish thousands of workers and their family who are already struggling to survive.

We want to remind you the following:

- The 2006 census revealed that in N.B., over 100,000 people were living below the low income cut-off, that is, below the poverty line. This large group of persons is largely comprised of workers earning low wages.
- According to the same census, employees working in the food and beverage service sectors earned, on average, only 10,360 \$ per year. Women accounted for 85.5 % of the workforce and their average annual salary was lower than that of men doing the same job.
- Minimum wage workers often face other working conditions that lead to even greater instability. With *seasonal work*, part of their income is provided by unemployment insurance, which only amounts to 55% of their salary. These people do not earn a large income. Individuals who do *split shift work* may need to work a few hours in the morning, return home, and then come back to work for noon or in the evening. As for the people who have *unpaid waiting time*, they may need to wait on the work premises for an hour or two, without pay, before they can find out if they will be working in the coming hours, or if they will simply be told to return home.

For these reasons, the Common Front for Social Justice and the 18 signatory organizations are dismayed by the thought that you might be planning to introduce such an impoverishing proposal that comes mainly from business sector employers in the catering and tourism sectors. Indeed, if this proposal for a lower minimum wage for these two sectors would be put in place, it would maintain the high number of people, especially women, living in poverty.

It is important to note, that the income that an employee earns through tips depends on the type of establishment, on its location and on population density in the area. Given these geographical disparities, a two-tier wage would create inequities and penalize the employees who receive tips. Some work environments have developed a practice of pooling tips received by servers and sharing these with kitchen employees. In fact, this practice lowers the servers' wages.

The New Brunswick government must not, in any way, stop increasing minimum wage for its workers. Government must also ignore any proposal that would lead a two-tiered minimum wage program.

For information:

Jean-Claude Basque – provincial coordinator, 389-1578

Signatory organizations :

- Association acadiennes et francophones des aînées et aînés de N.-B- Jean-Luc Bélanger, executive director
- Association des bibliothécaires, professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Moncton- Roger Ouellette, vice- president
- Association générale des étudiant et étudiantes de l'Université de Moncton Campus d'Edmundston- Patrick Lavoie, president
- Association of Univeristy of New Brunswick teachers- Jula Hughes, president
- Canadian Labour Congress- Paulette Sadoway, director
- Canadian Union of Public Employees, N.B division- Daniel Légère, president
- Charity Federation Maritime Project- Sister Roma De Robertis, communications Liaison
- Comité diocésain de solidarité et de justice sociale d'Edmundston- Céline Létourneau, coordinator
- Fédération des femmes acadiennes et francophones du N.-B- Lorraine Ahier, president
- Fédération des jeunes francophones du N.-B- Rémi Goupil, executive director
- Fredericton Anti-Poverty Organization- Dan Weston, coordinator
- Groupe des douze- Claude Snow
- John Howard Society of Saint John- Bill Bastarache, executive director
- N.B Coalition for Pay Equity- Johanne Perron, executive director
- N.B Federation of Labour- Michel Boudreau, president
- Regroupement féministe- Estelle Lanteigne, president
- Saint John Human Development Council- Randy Hatfield, executive director
- Société de l'Acadie N.-B.- Jean-Marie Nadeau, president