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Premier David Alward,  
Premier of the province  
Fredericton, NB

September 18, 2012

Premier Alward:

The NB Common Front for Social Justice is very disappointed by your almost silence regarding the major negative changes to the Employment Insurance program which the Harper government has adopted.

As you are certainly aware, since 2008, the province has lost a total of 7,000 full-time jobs and the provincial employment rate has steadily risen from 8.5% in 2008 to 9.5% in 2011. The situation outside the three major urban areas is more dramatic. Since January 2011 the Madawaska-Charlotte area has experienced an unemployment rate of close to 11%. For the Restigouche-Albert area, it has been between 14% and 16%. As Premier, these hardships occurring in rural New Brunswick should be of great concern as it is where the majority of the citizens and their family live. It is also the place where a high percentage of our seasonal economy is concentrated.

Our province has thousands of workers in industries that are seasonal in nature; tourism, agriculture, fishery, forestry, education, etc. All of these workers need revenue between jobs. The Employment Insurance program was put in place in order to help workers and their family when they are in-between jobs so they do not fall into poverty. Communities where there is a high number of seasonal employment and few jobs available between seasons will feel the negative impact the most. The employers in these industries will also be negatively impacted because they could lose the trained workers they presently have. The negative changes will certainly bring a high number of these families closer to the poverty line and they will need to access our provincial social assistance program.

M. Alward, we urge you to stand up, as the other Premiers in Atlantic Canada have done, for these workers, their families and the communities they live in.

Yours,

Linda McCaustlin, co-chair

John Gagnon, co-chair

Cc. Victor Boudreau, Liberal party

Dominic Cardy, NDP

Green Party