

Fighting Poverty

Employment, income and unemployment

Employment

In 2012, there were 177,000 men and 174,000 women working in New Brunswick.¹

Income

In 2012, the average weekly salary for all industries was \$809.77 (\$42,108 annually) while the minimum wage provided an income of \$400 a week (\$20,800 a year) or less than half the average wage, to a person working 40 hours a week, 12 months a year.²

Minimum wage

In 2011, the province had 9.7% of its workers earning minimum wage, women being the majority, as compared to 6.8% nationally.

Between 2006 and 2011, the number of female workers in N.B. earning the minimum wage increased more than twofold, from 5.0% to 12.2%, and the number of male workers went from 3.0% to 7.1%, pointing to a substantial degradation in our province's employment situation.³

At present, the minimum wage is set at \$10.00 an hour, very near the poverty line. However it is not indexed to the cost of living and the current government does not plan to increase it anytime soon. What this really means is that since April 2012, the purchasing power of thousands of workers has continued to decrease. Let us recall that we waited until 2012 to see N.B.'s minimum wage match that of the other provinces.

Unemployment

From 2007 to 2012, the province saw a steady increase in the number of its unemployed workers, from 29,000 to 40,000, an 11,000 increase. This had a greater impact on male workers, since their unemployment rate went up by 3.4% while the increase for female workers was 2.1% over the same period.⁴ The provincial Unemployment rate was 10.7 % in September 2013.⁵

Recent cuts to the federal employment insurance program will only further decrease the protection afforded to these thousands of workers when they lose their jobs.

The CFSJ proposes that:

1- the minimum hourly wage be increased by \$0.25 per hour per year for the next four years, to reach \$11.00 an hour in 2017. As shown in Table 1, this increase will yield a \$520 increase in yearly income, an amount not likely to cause hardship to employers who pay only minimum wage.

OR

- the minimum wage be increased each year in April based on Statistics Canada’s Poverty line, as is currently being done in Nova Scotia.

2- cuts to the Employment Insurance program be cancelled.

Table 1 - CFSJ proposal to increase minimum wage in N.B. between 2014 and 2017

	Increase (%)	Minimum hourly wage	Annual earnings	Total annual increase
September 2013		\$10.00	\$20,800	
January 2014	2.5%	\$10.25	\$21,320	\$520
January 2015	2.4%	\$10.50	\$21,840	\$520
January 2016	2.4%	\$10.75	\$22,360	\$520
January 2017	2.3%	\$11.00	\$22,880	\$520

Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.

Nelson Mandela.

New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice— www.frontnb.ca

¹ <http://www.gnb.ca/0160/Economics/LabourForce-e.asp>

² <http://www.gnb.ca/0160/Economics/AverageWeeklyEarningsf.html>

³ <http://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/WI-DQF/pdf/en/EqualityProfile.pdf>

⁴ http://www.gnb.ca/0160/Economics/LabourForce_both_sexes-e.asp

⁵ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/lfss01a-eng.htm>

