

Annual review of the government of Brian Gallant 2017

Fight against poverty

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**New Brunswick
Common Front for Social Justice**
Decembre 2017



Poverty reduction

Annual review of Brian Gallant's government in 2017

Executive summary

1. Workers:

Steps in the right direction!

Score:

5.5

Jobs and Employment Standards :

There are still nearly 20,000 workers earning minimum wage in the province.

The government has increased the minimum wage to \$11.00 in April 2017, indexing it to the cost of living in April 2018. A new designated holiday, Family Day (February 2018) has been announced. No new employment standards are yet in place.

2. Pay Equity:

Moving forward!

Score:

5.5

The Pay Equity Act of 2009 does not apply to the private sector. Also, this Act does not cover health services offered in the private sector, even though the government relies on and finances much of these services.

Eight out of ten bargaining units and three out of seven Crown corporations have now completed their pay equity process. Salary adjustments are retroactive to 2012. In contrast, some of the adjustments will be spread out until 2021, which is slowing down the achievement of pay equity in the public sector.

No improvement in the private sector.

3. Social Assistance:

A wasted year!

Score:

2

Income and policies for recipients :

Still close to 37,000 women, men and children must depend on social assistance to survive in our province.

The government has done nothing to improve the economic situation of these almost 37,000 individuals in 2017. There have been some changes to certain policies, but there were no significant changes to the most restrictive ones.



4. Seniors :

Many positive activities!

Score:

7

Jobs, income and government initiatives :

In 2017, the number of seniors has continued to increase, as did the number of seniors who had employment. The percentage of those having a low income also continued to grow.

The government has published several reports and has put in place several initiatives, including a Healthy Aging Provincial Roundtable to determine how it will guide and implement this report. However, the privatization of management of the extramural services will have negative effects on seniors.

5. The New Brunswick Prescription Drug Program :

Much too expensive!

Score:

3

In March 2017, there were 30% more individuals who took part in the plan, compared to 5,979 in March 2016. The government spent \$22.4 million, while individuals spent \$4.6 million in 2017.

The government did not move on its intention to combine the NB Drug Plan with different provincial prescription plans. It appears it is pursuing negotiations with P.E.I. and N.S. to come to an agreement on joint drug purchasing program.

6. Social Housing :

Lack of real progress!

Score:

4

Income and policies of beneficiaries :

One of the social policies that would greatly help all these citizens is access to social housing costing less than 30% of their gross income. In 2017, a single individual on social assistance had to pay 81% of his income for a bachelor's apartment, a single parent with a child, 47%, while that same person at the minimum wage had to pay 40%.

In 2017, the government has slightly lowered the number of people waiting for social housing, but the list is still too long.

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7. Regulated Child Care :

A lot of ground has been covered!

Score:

7

It is quite obvious that one of the challenges for families is to first, find a place in a licensed daycare, then to have financial resources to register their child. The estimated average cost for full-time daycare services in 2016-2017 was \$34.46 for infants, \$30.22 for preschool children, and \$18.80 for school age children.

The government has implemented several initiatives in 2017 to help families and improve quality of services offered for children.

8. Poverty Reduction Plan :

A disappointing year!

Score:

1

Even after eight years of implementing the Poverty Reduction Plan, there are still 100,000 low-income citizens today. One fifth of all children (20.3% in 2015) live in poverty.

It seems the government does not want to make poverty reduction a priority, since it put the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation that manages the Plan in the hands of the Department of Tourism. The Corporation itself seems to have lost its direction in proposing broad initiatives to reduce poverty.

Notation System :

In order to evaluate the actions the Gallant government has taken in 2017 to help reduce poverty and support its citizens who struggle to make ends meet, we will analyze each sector related to poverty by awarding a score, 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest.

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