

**Front commun  
pour la justice sociale- N.-B.**  
236 rue St George, pièce 412  
Moncton, NB, E1C 1W1



**NB Common  
for Social Justice**  
236 St George St., Suite 412  
Moncton, NB, E1C 1W1

New release

For immediate publication

December 21, 2017

## **The Gallant government has a score of 4.4 on 10 for its fight to reduce poverty.**

Moncton – The New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice has evaluated the different actions done in 2017 by the Gallant government to reduce poverty.

For Pauline Gallant, labour co-chair: `` *When we analyze the different actions done by the provincial government to reduce poverty for the 100 000 women, men and children who are at low income, we realize that Brian Gallant's annual report card is not very impressive. **He received 4.4 on 10, not even 50%.***

## **What comes out of our evaluation of the Gallant government?**

### **Workers: *Steps in the right direction!* Score 5.5**

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.

### **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.

**Social Assistance: *A wasted year!***

**Score 2**

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.

**Seniors: *Many positive activities!***

**Score 7**

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.

**The New Brunswick 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., N.S. and Newfoundland Labrador on better practices and approach to drug plans.

**Social Housing: *Lack of real progress!***

**Score 4**

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 83% of his income for a bachelor's apartment, a single parent with a child, 48%, while that same person at the minimum wage had to pay 47%.

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

## **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.

## **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)..

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 Crown Corporation itself seems to have lost its direction in proposing broad initiatives to reduce poverty.

*“ The new year is around the corner and we will also have a provincial election. We are asking Premier Gallant to make poverty reduction a priority in its Spring budget and in its Electoral Platform. Inequalities and poverty are an economic burden, has social costs and human consequences. This government must be proactive and invest in poverty reduction, ”* concludes Johanne Petitpas, community co-chair.

### **For information**

Johanne Petitpas, community co-chair: 204-4484 or 531-5485

Pauline Gallant, labour co-chair: 227-7175

Chantal Landry, provincial secretary- 381-7409

Jean-Claude Basque, provincial coordinator: 875-1310

**Note:** The details of our overview can be found in the attachment.