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Moncton- **Anything but an Aggressive Poverty Reduction Strategy!**

“Yesterday, the NDP announced what it’s Aggressive Poverty Reduction Strategy. It is anything but a strategy. At most, it is a small piece of the pie” says Pauline Richard, co-chair of the NB Common Front for Social Justice.

“An Aggressive Poverty Reduction Strategy would have at the very least something for the 40,000 citizens who have to depend on social assistance and food banks to survive. The NDP strategy does not address the basic rates of these individuals which are some of the lowest in the country. It does not address the need to modernize the rigid policies they have to live under. It does not address the issue of what is needed to help those who are employable return to work. It does not say anything on the fact that the province has more than 60 foods banks which are feeding close to 20,000 women, men and children each month, two-third who are beneficiaries of social assistance” continues Ms. Richard.

“An Aggressive Poverty Reduction Strategy should have included concrete proposals for public programs which, if put in place, would help reduce poverty for New Brunswick citizens.

- ✓ From earlier public statements, the NDP is supporting the present NB Drug Plan brought in by the Conservative government. We know this drug plan premium and co-payment are too expensive for citizens, especially those at low wages, so we would have expect the NDP to propose changes.
- ✓ We also know that families with children need access to affordable child care. The strategy does not talk about it at all.
- ✓ The lack of public housing is another key area where steps need to be taken. The NDP proposal to integrate the program of Housing First principles into a provincial housing strategy is good but what is the NDP affordable housing strategy? Should it not be part of this Aggressive Poverty Reduction Strategy?” asks Ms.Richard.

Part of the strategy is the Social Impact Bond pilot project. The Social Impact Bond is in effect a way of reducing the responsibility of government to deliver social services to citizens by turning it over to community groups or to the private sector. The donors will want a return on their investment so they will fund projects or services that are more easy to administer and measure. For example, the decisions of putting in place programs to reduce illiteracy, for child protection-foster care or for reducing prisoner recidivism would be influenced now by these investors instead of decided by our elected representatives. There will also be unfair competition between small and large community organizations which will be looking at accessing new monies. One of the dangers is to invite in this way the private sector in the delivery of public services. This is clearly a form of privatization of public services.

“ The NDP Aggressive Poverty Reduction Strategy falls short of the expectations of the Common Front for Social Justice. We were expecting a lot more from this political party. After more than four years of a Poverty Reduction Plan, the level of poverty has not decrease significantly in our province. We challenge all political parties to propose, in their electoral platform, concrete actions that will make a real difference in the lives of the thousands of citizens living in poverty.” concludes Ms. Richard.

The Common Front is encouraging citizens to vote to reduce poverty.

For information

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The Common Front for Social Justice is one of the largest democratic and popular organizations in New Brunswick, with close to 75,000 group and individual members. The Common Front brings together individuals as well as local, regional and provincial organizations to work towards the eradication of poverty.