



New release

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Moncton – “The best test to evaluate the work done by the Economic and Social Inclusion Plan is to answer the question “*Did it really reduce poverty?*” says Ms. Linda McCaustlin, co-chair of the NB Common Front for Social Justice (CFSJ).

The Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation responsible for implementing the Poverty reduction Plan has just published its 2011-2013 report where the **Vision** of the Poverty Reduction Plan is stated as follows:

*Through the collaboration of governments, business and non-profit sectors, people living in poverty and individual citizens, all men, women and children in New Brunswick shall have the necessary resources to meet their basic needs and to live with dignity, security and good health. Furthermore, all New Brunswickers shall be included as full citizens through opportunities for employment, personal development and community engagement. By 2015, New Brunswick will have reduced income poverty by 25% and deep income poverty by 50% and will have made significant progress in achieving sustained economic and social inclusion.*

“Individuals and families living in poverty in our province have not seen much change in their income since the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Plan in 2009” states Ms. McCaustlin. Yes, there was an increase in the minimum wage but it has not been indexed to the cost of living so the purchasing poverty of low-income workers is reduced. After a 5-year freeze on basic assistance rates for most social assistance beneficiaries, there will be a 4% increase in October 2013 and another 3% increase in April 2014. But these increases will not be enough to allow them to cover their basic needs.

“It is interesting to read in the April 2012 Canadian Medical Association’s brief to the House of Common Standing Committee on Finance: “*One reason income is so critical to individual health is that it is so closely linked to many of the other social determination of health. These include but are not limited to: education,*

*employment, early childhood development, housing, social inclusion, and physical environment (p. 3)*”.

“Members of the CFSJ are convinced that there is an urgent need to increase the income of New Brunswickers living in poverty in order to reduce their present hardship. The Economic and Social Inclusion Plan has not put enough effort in addressing this basic issue” continues Ms. McCaustlin.

Many positive decisions have been taken by the Corporation. One example is the Vision and Dental Care Program for children in low-income families. Another example is the pending Prescription Drug Program for Non-insured Citizens. These two initiatives will have concrete and long lasting effects and will directly help people living in poverty.

“When members of CFSJ analysed the Report, they noted that the amount of money invested by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation in the six Community Integration Networks in the southern part of the province was almost twice as much (\$850,663) as what was allocated to the other six Community Integration Networks in the northern part (\$443,342). In the southern regions, the average amount of money invested per Community Inclusion Network was \$141,777 while it was only \$73,890 for the northern part of the province, namely twice less.”

“There were numerous initiatives undertaken at the community level. However, the CFSJ is concerned that this is not sufficient to achieve the Plan’s goal of a 25% reduction in the number of people living in poverty. Is the Plan to Overcome Poverty Together sidestepping the issue through the involvement of communities in different projects? Although beneficial, such a focus is not sufficient to reach the projected goal.” concludes Ms. McCaustlin.

For information

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