

Building a more equal society

a progressive election platform for New Brunswick in 2018

Our group of community organizations and unions wants the upcoming provincial elections to focus on concrete options to make our province and our society more equal for everyone.

Our society has made enormous strides in the last fifty years. It has created conditions that brought more justice, more equality and reduced poverty for thousands of people of all ages. Public education, medical care and pensions are just a few of the services and programs that were instrumental in creating a more just society for New Brunswickers.

However, as our society evolves, so do our collective needs and we must look at new ways to better organize ourselves for the 21st century.

For instance, thanks to our education system, we now have a better-educated and specialized workforce. However, as the labour market requires more mobility from workers, we often have to move away from our families in order to work. At the same time, women gained better access to paid employment, which increased their financial autonomy and reduced the time they spend on household tasks. Increased access to birth control means that families are not as large as they used to be. Thanks to Medicare, we now have longer life expectancy, but drug costs are skyrocketing and a significant worry.

All these changes mean that individuals and families need new options to provide care to children, people living with disabilities and health conditions, as well as aging parents and relatives. Gender inequality and poverty still need to be addressed. We need to offset the growing cost of drug. We also need to take into account the needs of senior citizens as never before.

New and improved programs and legislation are required to ensure that citizens from all walks of life are included and taken care of, and that their basic human needs are met throughout their lives.

That is why our organizations and unions came together to propose a progressive election platform – a “community platform”.

Our platform does not pretend to cover every aspect of governmental responsibilities, but it highlights the priorities we wish all political parties would include in their platforms for the upcoming provincial election, in September 2018.

These priorities are:

- 1- Making sure no one is left out.
- 2- Improving our public services.
- 3- Increasing progressive sources of revenue from wealthy individuals and corporations so that we can support each other when in need.

Making sure no one is left out means that we must aim for gender equality, fair conditions for all workers, support for citizens living in poverty and seniors. We are proposing policies to increase pay equity, ensure reproductive justice, eliminate gender-based violence, and increase political representation and participation of women. We also need to increase minimum wage, improve work-family balance as well as reform our labour laws. Higher social assistance rates along with a gender-based analysis of poverty will go a long way in reducing poverty. We need victim abuse legislation for seniors, and seniors’ care-giving services must respect the official language act. How about a Seniors’ Bill of Right, a Seniors’ Advocate and an Council on Aging?

We believe that public services are key to any community-focused electoral platform. Instead of cutting or privatizing **our public services, we should improve them and develop new ones.** Childcare, home care and community care must all become critical parts of our public

system. Postsecondary education must be free. Public housing needs revamping. Our drug plan requires major improvements.

We recognize that some of our proposals require more spending rather than less. That is why we included a section on revenue. We insist on increasing **progressive sources of revenue from wealthier individuals and corporations** so that we can support each other when in need. That is based on the conviction that supportive public programmes and services ultimately benefit all of us, no matter how rich or poor, and make us all stronger collectively.

The very important Piketty Report: *World Inequality Report* (2018) made very concrete suggestions that are in line with what we are proposing:

- *Tax progressivity is a proven tool to combat rising income and wealth inequality at the top.*
- *A global financial register recording the ownership of financial assets would deal severe blows to tax evasion, money laundering, and rising inequality.*
- *Governments need to invest in the future to address current income and wealth inequality levels, and to prevent further increases in them.*¹

In conclusion, every provincial election represents a choice for New Brunswickers, a chance to reaffirm the current direction or to proceed on a new course.

Thirty years ago, governments began focusing on reducing taxation for the wealthiest in the hope that it would make our province more competitive and that everyone would eventually benefit from businesses' economic success. It is time in 2018 for New Brunswickers to recognize that the course that was set 30 years ago has not yielded the promised results. It did not lead to raised wages, increased employment, sustainable economic development and sound public finances. Instead, we have seen increased disparities between the wealthiest and poorest citizens and constant pressure that fray the very social fabric that equalized opportunities for New Brunswickers.

¹ <http://wir2018.wid.world/files/download/wir2018-summary-english.pdf>

It is time to shift the balance back to government policies that express New Brunswickers' desire to care for each other and live in a fair society.

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