

New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice

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News release

For immediate release

Moncton- “At least four areas of New Brunswick won't have any representatives of people living in poverty on the new Board of Directors of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation”, Linda McCaustlin, co-chair

“People living in poverty from the Miramichi, Bathurst, Restigouche and South-western regions of the province will have no one to represent them or to speak on their behalf within the new Board of Directors” says Linda McCaustlin. “Furthermore, an initial look at the names of the eight persons chosen as Board members to represent people living in poverty, leaves one with the impression that less than half of them are currently living on income assistance”.

A very high proportion of people living in poverty are currently on income assistance so it would make sense that they should hold a least half of the eight positions allocated to people living in poverty on the new Board of Directors of the Corporation. The Common Front for Social Justice had made its position clear on that issue to the government, stating that at least four out of the eight members representing people living in poverty should be on income assistance when they were selected. Organizations which have a long standing record of fighting against poverty are very clear on one point: the people most apt to resolve poverty issues are those who are living it day in and day out.

“The selection process for the entire Board of Directors did not allow for democratic input. Everyone was chosen, either directly or indirectly, by government officials and there was no mechanism for the public nor for special interest groups to submit names of candidates they would consider as particularly well suited to represent people living in poverty.” continues Ms. McCaustlin.

The Common Front had proposed the following criteria for the composition of the Board of Directors:

The three vice-chairs (representatives of business, community organization and of people living in poverty) and the thirteen members of the Board should be appointed through an independent Ad-Hoc committee to eliminate the risk of political influence.

This AD-HOC Committee could be composed of one person from both political party and the Ombudsmen as chair.

The positions of the three vice-chairs and of the thirteen other board members (except the one from government) should be advertised publicly. The public announcement should be put in the major newspapers.

Criteria and details of the job description, as well as the associated benefits, should be part on the announcement. Criteria for the selection of members to compose the Board should be:

- *Balance between rural and urban dwellers*
- *Absence of current active involvement/responsibility in a provincial political party*
- *Gender balance*
- *Annual earnings below the Low Income Cut-Off in the case all the eight low-income positions on the Board*
- *Being a current client of social assistance for four of the eight members who represent people living in poverty.*
- *Recent experience, in the case of the President of the Corporation, in working with non-profit organizations presently committed to reducing poverty*
- *Experience, in the case of the four Vice-Chairs, in dealing with low-income organizations or working with low-income groups.*
- *Balance between members who can speak English and French*

The Common Front for Social Justice is happy to see that some of the above criteria where applied during the selection process, namely the percentage of members coming from rural versus urban areas, a reasonable balance between women and men and a good representation of Francophones and Anglophones.

“It is interesting to note that very few of the new Board Members are citizens who are widely recognized as ardent militants in the fight against poverty” says Ms. McCaustlin.

“Once again, the New Brunswick government has made major decisions without consulting the public nor those who will be affected by their impacts” concludes Ms. McCaustlin.

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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.