

Common Front for Social Justice

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Moncton, NB

News release

“There has to be real representation of people currently living in poverty, the process has to be open and language of service needs to be included in the new proposed Bill 39, Economic and Social Inclusion Act,” says Linda McCaustlin, co-chair of the New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice.

Bill 39, which is presently in front of the Legislature, is establishing the composition of the new Crown Corporation to be known as the NB Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, which will administer the Poverty Reduction Plan. The Bill proposes to create a 22-member Board of directors, appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.

“We strongly believe that the appointment of the three vice-chairs and the thirteen representatives should be submitted to an open public process,” continues Ms McCaustlin.

Our proposal:

The three vice-chairs (business, community organization and the one representing the poor) and thirteen members of the Board **should all 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 of 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 eight low-income positions on the Board
- Being a current client of social assistance for four members representing 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

Bill 39 is proposing that representatives of people living in poverty could be individuals who live or have lived in poverty.

For Ms McCaustlin "...it is very important that the persons representing people living in poverty should truly be people currently living in poverty **and not people who have lived in poverty**. This is very important because we could end up with a Board where all representatives of people living in poverty are not currently living in poverty. If the NB government is serious in its poverty reduction efforts, in being inclusive, in giving a real voice to people living in poverty, then it is critical that people **currently living in poverty** be placed front and center where the decisions are made."

Finally Bill 39 will see the creation of up to 20 Community Inclusion Networks that will be responsible to deliver services for work force inclusion, literacy/mentoring, community transportation, community economic development, social enterprise, and setting priorities for housing.

"Bill 39 makes absolutely no mention of the need for these services to conform to the New Brunswick Official Languages Act. This should be corrected. Ours is the only bilingual province in the country and we have an obligation to give services to citizens in the language of their choice. People living in poverty are full-fledged citizens and should be able to access these services in their language wherever they are in the province," concludes Ms McCaustlin.

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