

News release

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Moncton: “This so-called public consultation is a farce” says Linda McCaustlin, co-chair of the Common Front for Social Justice.

The government has decided to consult the public on the issue of a two-tier Minimum Wage for workers in the service industry. The consultation will be done during a six-week period and only by Internet.

“First, this type of consultation limits the number of citizens who can participate as not everyone has a computer. Secondly, such an input could be made anonymously, with the writer avoiding to give his identification, thus taking no responsibility for his actions. Thirdly, the results of the survey will not be known publicly through disclosure of the authors and content of the e-mails, yet the people of NB are entitled to know the opinions of their fellow citizens on such an issue. Lastly, this type of e-mail consultation is an attack on the concept of an open government, a promise which the Alward Conservative government had included in its electoral platform” continues Linda McCaustlin.

“If decision makers in the NB government are serious about consulting the public, they should do it in the format of a public forum, where citizens have an opportunity to explain their reasoning, offer comments and are heard and seen face to face, not behind a keyboard” says Ms. McCaustlin.

“This is not about consulting the public on the issue of a lower provincial minimum wage for servers earning tips. It is an attack on workers, at lot of them women, working mainly in the service industry.”

The consultation is presented as one applicable specifically to service sector workers. However, when one reads the questionnaire on the government’s web site, one finds that questions 3 and 6 concern the Minimum Wage in general and not just a different Minimum Wage in the service industry.

The news release from the department stated that: *"This process presents an opportunity for New Brunswickers to share their thoughts on the tip differential issue, as well as on minimum wages in general,"* Coulombe said. *"We are especially interested in receiving input from servers who earn tips and from their employers."*

Employers are not paying for the tips so it is not an extra economic burden for them. Government is not paying for the tips either, so tips not an extra burden coming out of its coffers. It is the client who decides if and how much he or she wants to tip the servers. In reality, taxpayers are paying tips, thus subsidizing the income of servers and, at the same time, also subsidizing the employers.

“Implementing a lower minimum wage for servers in the service industry will mainly benefit employers. They will save money on wages while some of them will see this as an additional opportunity to “exploit” their workers. The public must realize that people working as servers are mainly women who are already earning a low salary and quite a number of them are living in a situation of poverty” 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.