

News Release
For immediate publication
January 11, 2012

Pre-Budget consultations: Thousands of taxpayers cut-off by Mr. Higgs

Moncton - "We are totally flabbergasted by the decision of Mr. Blaine Higgs, our Minister of Finance, to cut out thousands of citizens and taxpayers from an access to public consultations in the upcoming pre-budget consultation tour" states Linda McCaustlin, co-chair of the Common Front for Social Justice.

"We are scratching our head trying to understand why three major areas of our province, Restigouche, Miramichi and the Acadian Peninsula, have not been seen fit to have the Minister of Finances come to hear them out. No public meetings for them! Moreover, there are only a few stakeholders' meetings where representatives from specific groups are invited " continues Ms. McCaustlin.

During the last pre-election campaign, this Conservative government ran on a platform which included consulting citizens before making major decisions. They said then that they had understood the message, loud and clear, from citizens who were displeased with the Liberal government because they had refused to consult the public on the sale of NB Power.

"It seems that after only a brief time in office, this current government has developed a short memory" says Ms. McCaustlin.

Finally, the Common Front for Social Justice is not pleased with the timeline announced for these consultations. It is unacceptable that the announcement for these consultations sites was only done on the Friday preceding the Christmas holidays. It is also totally unacceptable that citizens are receiving details regarding the pre-budget consultations **less than one week** before the beginning of the public meetings.

"The budget, prepared by our government on our behalf, is the most important piece of work done by our elected Members of the Legislative Assembly during the year. It should be done with the largest democratic consultation process possible, not in this shameful way" concludes Ms. McCaustlin.

For information:

Linda McCaustlin, co-chair – 855-7046

Jean-Claude Basque, provincial coordinator – 875-4232

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.