

Common Front for Social Justice

Our actions in 2009-2010

The New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice (CFSJ) has had a very productive year in 2009-2010. Our press releases and documents can be consulted on our Web site at www.frontnb.ca. Following is a brief outline of the actions that we have undertaken.

Activities and special events

October 17 – For almost 10 years we have been organizing a march and an annual supper to highlight the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

December 10 – We held our 2nd breakfast to highlight the anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights.

Poverty Evaluation

- Text written as an evaluation of the year 2009 in terms of poverty.

Poverty Reduction Plan

The Common Front for Social Justice has invested, during the year, enormous efforts with this issue in order to defend and make known the points of view of people living in poverty.

- Public unveiling of the CFSJ's *Analysis of the Poverty Reduction Plan*. This text was circulated to all members of the CFSJ, to the media of the province, to MLA's and to national anti-poverty groups. It is available on our Web site (www.frontnb.ca).
- Participation at the consultation sessions.
- Open letter to Prime Minister Shawn Graham, signed by more than fifteen different organizations, requesting that the « Options Document », produced after the Round Table sessions of the Poverty Reduction Plan, be published.
- Preparation of a Power Point presentation.
- Many open letters and press conferences expressing our worries.
- Presentation of 24 popular education sessions across the province¹ dealing with New Brunswick's Poverty Reduction Plan. Jean-Claude Basque and Auréa Cormier explained the major aspects of the Plan and indicated certain worries of the CFSJ in terms of this Plan. Approximately 500 people have been reached by this information.
- Press release regarding Bill 39 requesting real representation of people currently living in poverty, as well as a process including the obligation for the community networks to deliver their services in the language of choice of the clients.
- Press release on the « economic unit », stating that the Poverty Reduction Plan was creating a two-tier system by not allowing social welfare recipients to share housing without a financial claw-back if they applied for this after December 31, 2009.
- Press release regarding the nomination of four vice-presidents of the Crown Corporation.
- Production of a number of fact sheets and leaflets dealing with poverty and related issues.

¹ Locations visited : Campbellton, Caraquet, Tracadie-Sheila, Bathurst (3 times), Miramichi, Saint-Louis-de-Kent, Bouctouche, Shédiac, Moncton (3 times), Riverview, Saint John (2 times), Fredericton (5 times), Perth-Andover and Edmundston.

International Women's Day

Participation, with the Coalition for Pay Equity, the NB Child Care Coalition, and « le Regroupement féministe du N.-B. », at a public forum with the four party leaders of New Brunswick.

Food banks and soup kitchens

- Production of a report on food banks and soup kitchens in NB.
- Meeting with three members of the Board of directors of Karing Kitchen, in order to present certain complaints to them with regards to the quality of the food and the attitude of certain employees.

Presence in the media

- Press conference to pressure the NB government to release its 2010-2011 heating supplement program. The title of the document was « To Freeze or Not to Freeze ».
- Press release to highlight the 20th anniversary of November 30, 1989, when the Canadian Parliament declared that child poverty would be eliminated. A few mothers, social assistance recipients, have explained to the media their difficulties in making ends meet.
- Press release to rectify the comments of Minister Kelly Lamrock, saying that the CFSJ was citing problems without proposing solutions. The co-chair of the CFSJ affirmed the contrary.
- Press conference to demonstrate that the provincial government needs to move faster and be more decisive on disability cases such as those of Zélia Cormier and Coleen Jones. The government must also come to the rescue of people who lose all their belongings in a fire, such as Peter Borden.
- Press release to highlight that 37,000 NB social assistance recipients were left out from the 2010-2011 provincial budget.
- Participation in the March 4, 2010 Federal Budget Watch, followed by interviews on issues related to its impact on poverty.

We have submitted a number of letters to the editor.

Along with regular media, certain of our press releases and documents have been published in the online magazine « NB Media COOP ».

Lobbying politicians

- Meeting with three members of the CFSJ and Minister Kelly Lamrock on October 30, 2009, to discuss the economic unit policy, the heating supplement and the need to modify the process of disability certification.
- Report submitted to Finance Minister Greg Byrne during the pre-budget consultations, requesting that he redistribute public funds so as to reduce poverty.