

# **2010 New Brunswick Election**

## **Political Parties ELECTION PLATFORMS**

on

# **Poverty issues**



**New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice Inc.**  
[www.frontnb.ca](http://www.frontnb.ca)  
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## **ELECTION PLATFORMS IN 2010 PROVINCIAL ELECTION**

Citizens of New Brunswick are going to the polls in a year time. The NB Common Front for Social Justice will be working, throughout the upcoming year, to convince all political parties of the need take the fight against poverty seriously and have it as a key issue in their electoral platform.

In order to better understand where the major political parties stand on this issue, we have read the 2010 electoral political platforms.

The following is a listing of the commitments related to poverty/social justice made by the four major political parties running in the 2010 provincial election. Those parties are the Progressive Conservative Party (PCP), the Liberal Party (LP), the New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Green Party (GP).

### **On poverty...**

#### **PCP**

- Continue to work with stakeholders and other interested parties on implementing the recommendations of the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan.
- Build on the success of recommendations to eliminate the Economic Unit Policy and extend health benefits to low-income New Brunswickers.

#### **LP**

- In our first mandate, a ground-breaking poverty reduction initiative, which included perhaps the largest public engagement initiative in this province, was undertaken. Thanks to everyone involved, it led to a poverty reduction strategy now put into law that has received widespread praise and been touted as a model for others to follow.

#### **NDP**

-The NDP will introduce the Poverty Reduction Plan Plus. It will focus on literacy – currently at an unacceptable 56% according to Statistics Canada – and on people no in work, in school, or in other government programs. Without a literate workforce we cannot compete with the rest of the world in a globalized economy. Fighting poverty isn't just the right thing to do; it's an economic necessity.

#### **GP**

- Immediately raise social assistance rates to match those of Newfoundland and Labrador, the jurisdiction with the highest rates in Atlantic Canada.
- From there, set an objective of moving the social assistance rates upwards until they reach the low income cut-off (LICO) for New Brunswick as established by Statistics Canada. The rate would be adjusted as Statistics Canada adjusts the LICO.

## **On minimum wage...**

### **LP**

- Minimum wage to increase to \$10 per hour by September 2011.

### **GP**

- Adopt the concept of "livable wage" calculated using reliable data on family expenses in our region and taking into consideration government transfers and deductions as the basis on which the legal minimum wage is calculated. This would be phased in over time and indexed to the cost of living.

## **On taxes...**

### **PCP**

- Work to keep the cost of living reasonable in New Brunswick by not raising the Harmonized Sales Tax.
- Cancel future tax reductions for the 1,300 richest New Brunswickers, who have an average income of \$450,000, announced by Shawn Graham last year. This will allow New Brunswickers to keep more than \$120 million over the next four years.
- Reduce by 50% the small business tax rate during our four-year term.
- Permanently freeze property tax assessments for all homeowners over the age of 65.
- Provide tax breaks for home renovations that make houses senior-friendly.

### **LP**

- Continue phasing in Liberal tax cuts.
- New Brunswick will have Canada's lowest corporate tax rates by 2012.
- Exempt renovations and conversion of residences from property tax increases when work is performed to accommodate a family member eligible for long-term care.

### **NDP**

- We will hold the line on income, corporate and sales taxes for two years.
- The province must phase out the double-taxation on rental properties. The NDP proposes to implement this reform in the first year the provincial budget is balanced.

### **GP**

- Roll back the planned corporate tax cuts and income tax cuts to people with incomes greater than \$40,000, restoring revenues of over \$400 million per year by 2012.
- Raise the threshold for the payment of income tax to \$20,000.
- Exempt low income seniors (less than \$28,000/year) from user fees.
- Reform property tax assessments so that apartment buildings are taxed the same as primary residences.

## **On Pay Equity...**

### **LP**

- Complete the pay equity adjustments for home care and child cre workers by 2015
- Complete the job evaluations for workers in community residences
- Begin job evaluations for early childhood interventionist, community residence and ADAPT workers and special care home attendants

### **NDP**

- The NDP will introduce legislation modelled on successful pay equity legislation in Quebec. The NDP Pay Equity Act would require employers with ten or more employees to implement a pay equity plan within four years. ...the law would be monitored and enforced by a Pay Equity Commission, which would also assist small business in complying with the law, reducing the burden imposed on them by the Act.

### **GP**

- Legislate pay equity in the private sector.

## **On Housing...**

### **PCP**

- Reinstate the \$5.5 million home heating subsidy program cut by Shawn Graham.

### **LP**

- Introduce the New Brunswick Affordable Housing Act to support a more comprehensive, integrative approach in addressing New Brunswick's housing needs.

### **GP**

- Develop a comprehensive social housing program which includes cooperative and non-profit community housing aligned with LEED housing standards/certification, and built on community land trusts.
- Reform property tax assessments so that apartment buildings are taxed the same as primary residences and adopt rent control legislation to ensure that the cost saving is passed on to tenants.

## **On the working poor...**

### **PCP**

- Commit to regular increases in wages and benefits for senior care workers every year for the next four years...
- Include a review of the value of work performed by home care workers (mostly women) which sometimes amounts to less than minimum wage.
- Increase compensation for (daycare) staff to levels that support the retention of qualified individuals.

**LP**

- Work with the Economic and Social Inclusion corporation to reconstruct the social assistance system to create one that rewards work and helps the working poor, while providing better income support for those in need.

**GP**

- Eliminate barriers that keep people from entering the workforce such as clawbacks on earned income below \$20,000 and premature withdrawal of prescription drug benefits.
- Expand home care services and increase wages for home caregivers ...

**On Senior Care...****PCP**

- Commit to regular increases in funding for home care agencies, special care homes, and nursing homes to help them meet rising costs.
- Work towards meeting the goal of 3.5 hours of care per patients in nursing home settings over the next four years.

**LP**

- Continue implementing the Liberal plan to create 700 new nursing home beds in the province.
- Create 550 more advanced care beds outside the hospital system.
- Support on-going pilot project to implement 3.5 hours of care in nursing homes.
- Increase the home care options available to seniors and their families to promote aging in place by providing home support to 650 additional seniors in the province.

**GP**

- Expand home care services and increase wages for home caregivers to minimize hospitalization and nursing home admissions for those who can remain in their homes with assistance.

**NDP**

- Increasing the hours of care is necessary, and once the books are balanced and health and education programs are protected, this area must receive urgent attention.
- Providing services to allow senior citizens to live at home is good for seniors, good for the health care system, and therefore good for the economy. The NDP will introduce a Helping Hands Tax Credit to help those making the sacrifice to look after elderly or infirm loved ones.

**On a Drug Plan...****PCP**

- Ensure that our made-in-New Brunswick plan helps New Brunswickers afford the drugs they need by fairly subsidizing cost based on their individual ability to pay.

**LP**

- Ensure universal access to a prescription drug program for all New Brunswickers.

**NDP**

- Once finances allow, the NDP will establish a catastrophic drug coverage program for all New Brunswickers.

**GP**

- Expand coverage of the catastrophic drug program and work towards a universal Pharmacare program as recommended by the Canadian Health Coalition and the Centre for Policy Alternatives.

**On Early Childhood...****PCP**

- Increase the number of childcare spaces by 50%, bringing the total number of spaces to 30,000.
- Increase the total number of infant/toddler spaces in licensed facilities by 50% bringing the total number of spaces to 2,100.
- Enhance the affordability of licensed early learning and childcare costs for families with total income under \$30,000 per year.
- Raise the upper household income limit for the early learning and childcare subsidy for families from the current \$40,000 to \$55,000.
- Examine how we can shift the way childcare is financed, creating more of a systematic approach.
- Ensure equity for under-serviced groups, including children of families in rural areas, children with disabilities and other special needs, and children of families whose parents do shift work or seasonal work.

**LP**

- Increase child care spaces by 7,000 with focus on infant and preschool spaces (1,000 infant care spaces; 2,000 preschool spaces; and 4,000 school age children spaces).
- Create a wider range of day care options.
- Increase proportion of child care workers with an Early Childhood Education certificate
- Increase subsidy rates for infant and preschool children
- Raise the income level at which a parent is eligible for full subsidy for Alternative
- Allow grandparents providing care while parents work to receive child subsidy

**NDP**

- The NDP endorses the call of the New Brunswick Child Care Coalition for a universal child care program and will implement this commitment as soon as funds become available.

**GP**

- Establish a non-profit, universally accessible quality childcare system and ensure childcare worker wages are commensurate with their training and responsibility.

**On School-Aged Children...****PCP**

- Raise the amount of the annual back-to-school supplies funding to low-income families to \$100.

**LP**

- Double the school supplement to families with school age children who receive social assistance from \$50 to \$100.
- Provide a dental and vision care plan for children of low income families.

**On Post-Secondary Education...****PCP**

- Establish four-year rolling grants to our province's publicly-funded universities and community colleges to provide for long-term financial planning and growth
- Add \$3.5 million in new bursary money for low and middle-income students to offset the loss of the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation

**LP**

- After capping student debt at \$26,000 in its first mandate, a Liberal Government will further lower the cap on student debt upon graduation in a timely manner to \$24,000, which is below the national average.
- Increase the tuition tax rebate program to \$25,000 from \$20,000.

**NDP**

- The NDP will maintain the freeze on tuition for two years, in parallel with a review of post-secondary education to determine how to increase education quality and improve access for students with sufficient academic qualifications.
- The NDP will remove the mandatory summer income contribution for recipients of student loans.

**GP**

- Make all provincial student loans interest-free, including all outstanding loans.
- Develop a program whereby university or college graduates could have their student loans forgiven if they choose to work for a set period in a community service job in return for a minimum stipend.
- Apply the current \$26,000 cap on student debt (New Brunswick residents) to all loans retroactively and over time reduce the cap to \$26,000.
- Extend the grace period of six months from graduation to one year before repayment of student loans begins.
- Increase funding for bursaries.

## **On Disabled New Brunswickers...**

### **PCP**

- Provide \$1.5 million in additional annual funding to enhance access to on the job employment supports for people with disabilities up to 52 weeks from the current 12 weeks.
- Establish a separate and distinct income support program for people who have disabilities.
- Increase the wage exemption for individuals before their disability benefit is affected.
- Target a 20% increase in the individual disability supplement benefit by the end of our mandate.
- Improve and increase funding by \$1 million for the Department of Social Development's Health Services program that provides equipment and technical aids to people with disabilities.
- We recognize the challenges faces by senior parents who have a son or daughter with a disability they are still supporting in the family home and will find innovative ways to support them.
- Revise the rent subsidy program to make it more responsive to the needs of disabled New Brunswickers.

### **NDP**

- More than 20,000 New Brunswickers live with intellectual disabilities. The NDP commits to developing stronger government programs in the areas of employment, education, housing, and access to support.

## **On Healthy Living...**

### **PCP**

- Provide assistance to non-profit organizations that help kids from lower-income families access sports equipment.
- Establish a \$500 tax incentive for families to offset applicable costs of registration fees, uniforms and sports equipment.

## **On Adult Literacy...**

### **LP**

- Strengthen the ability of low-income people to enter the work force by increasing opportunities for life-long learning and skills development including literacy and financial literacy.

### **NDP**

- The NDP proposes to expand the recently created "Working Together for Adult Literacy" program, which contains twelve short-term programs, by \$5 million over four years.
- We further propose to expand the government's partnership with Lauback Literacy New Brunswick (LLNB) and la Fédération d'alphabétisation du Nouveau-Brunswick

(FANB) to extend one-on-one reaching programs through an investment of up to \$10 million over four years, based on the organizations' demonstrating verifiable results.

- We will also develop a new NB Reads program that will allow up to 500 university students per year to receive a one-term tuition rebate (in return for working for two months with persons in need of literacy).

**GP**

- Support adult literacy programs province-wide using existing public education facilities and community colleges and remove any barriers to participation by the unemployed and those on social assistance.

***Note:** The proposals in this document are not all of what each party had proposed in 2010 but are, in our judgment, the most important ones. We apologize if we missed any.*