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## A small step, instead of a bold one !

Moncton – The New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice consider that the announcement by Minister Paul LePage of a \$0.25 an hour increase is a small step in the right direction but unfortunately not a bold one.

“The minister should have followed the direction that Premier Notley of Alberta and Kathleen Wynn in Ontario have traced by increasing their minimum wage to \$15.00. (Table 1)”, say Jean-Claude Basque, Provincial Coordinator.

**Table 1. Minimum wage by provinces (2018)**

	BC	Alberta	Sask	Mn	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NFLD
<b>Minimum wage (2018)</b>	<b>11,35</b>	<b>13,60</b>	<b>10,96</b>	<b>11,15</b>	<b>14,00</b>	<b>12,00</b>	<b>11,00</b>	<b>10,85</b>	<b>11,25</b>	<b>11,00</b>
<b>Increases</b>	12,65 June 2018	15,00 Oct. 2018	Indexé Oct. 2018		15,00 Jan. 2019		11.25 April 2018	11,00 April 2018	11,55 Aprill 2018	

In 2016, there were 20,400 workers at the minimum wage in our province, an increase from 2015 when it was 18,500.

“The April 2018 minimum wage increase to \$11.25 an hour will add \$520 gross to the annual salary, barely keeping the purchasing power of these workers. The gross annual salary will be \$23,400 while the 2015 Market Basket Measure (poverty line) for a single individual is \$19,235. For a family with one child or two children, they will be under the poverty line.” continues M. Basque.

For M. Basque, “There is another aspect to the working lives of minimum wage workers that we don’t talk about enough and that is their working conditions. Presently, under the Act, most minimum wage workers don’t have sick leave, child care, family responsibilities or compassionate care, paid leave. They are also only paid time and a half of the minimum wage for hours worked after 44 hours during a work week. They get 4% of vacation pay if they worked less than eight years and 6% of vacation pay after eight years or more. There is no

mention of the employer paying the uniforms of workers that are required to wear the employer's uniform. These are important aspects of work at minimum wage that Minister LePage should be addressing if he is serious in wanting to help these workers."

**Table 2- Market Basket Measure for New Brunswick, 2015 (\$)**

Province	Reference Family : two adult, two children	Three-person family	Two-person family	Single-person family
New Brunswick, rural	38,469	33,314	27,198	19,235
New Brunswick, population under 30,000	39,037	33,806	27,600	19,519
New Brunswick, population 30,000 to 99,999	38,463	33,309	27,193	19,231

Source: Statistics Canada. Cansim 206-0093

The business community is arguing that increasing the minimum wage will mean job loss. The minimum wage increased ten (10) times between 2008 and 2017. In 2008 it was \$7.75 and now its \$11.00, so an increase of \$3.25. The number of employees in small and medium businesses between 2008 and 2016 has not decreased, as the statistics in Table 3 is showing. On the contrary, it has increased, so the argument that increasing the minimum wage will cost jobs does not stand. The majority of job losses happened in the large industries, 500 employees and more and this had more to do with the restructuring in the forestry sector.

**Table 3. Employment for all employees, by enterprise size and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) annual (persons)**

Employees	2008	2016	Difference
0-100 employees	120,846	122,138	+ 1,292
100 to 299 employees	28,219	31,240	+ 3,021
300 to 499 employees	11,994	14,778	+ 2,784
500 and more employees	150,566	133,842	- 16,724

Source : Statistics Canada, Cansim 281-0042

**The Common Front for Social Justice is proposing the following to minister LePage:.**

- 1) Increase the minimum wage by \$1.00 an hour for the next four years.

- 2) In order to help community organizations, each time the minimum wage increases, the government should provide the community organizations it subsidized an added financial subsidy that will be equal to the minimum wage increase, including the employer's portion, for each employee that is at the minimum wage in that organization.
3. In the first year after the election, change the following Employment Standards.
  - a) Overtime hours paid at time and a half the regular wage of the employees instead of time and a half the minimum wage. The overtime would be paid after 40 hours of work per week instead of after 44 hours of work per week.
  - b) Five (5) annual paid sick leaves. These leaves would not be accumulative.
  - c) Vacation Pay at 6% after five years of full-time employment instead of after 8 years of full-time employment.
  - d) Employees who are required to wear the employers' uniform should not have to pay for them.

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