

# Together

## for a Better New Brunswick



### 2018 New Brunswick Federation of Labour **Electoral ASKS**

The **New Brunswick Federation of Labour's (NBFL)** advocacy work with government has brought about results. We have made some gains that will improve the lives of both our members and New Brunswickers. First contract arbitration is now the law, improvements are underway to make quality child care more affordable and available for families, the government introduced intimate partner violence leave and violence is now recognized as a workplace hazard.

**The NBFL needs your help to keep the momentum going!** During the 2018 New Brunswick election campaign, the NBFL will be evaluating political party platforms based on the following four priority areas: **workplace health and safety**, **protecting public services**, **pay equity**, and **basic labour standards**.

# Workplace Health and Safety

Workers, not employers, pay the heaviest price for workplace accidents and illnesses that often are the result of inadequate training, poor employer safety practices, hazardous equipment, infrequent workplace inspections and weak or poorly enforced safety laws. For workers injured on the job, the pain, suffering and financial loss are all too real. For many employers it is little more than a book entry.

Our health, safety and compensation laws, programs and services must effectively protect workers and their families and treat injured workers fairly and with respect.

It is time for balance to be restored at WorkSafeNB.

**Employers have been the main beneficiary of changes to assessment rates, legislation and policies during the past twenty years.** These changes have also led to a decrease in the monies available in the accident fund to provide benefits to injured workers and their families. **This needs to change!** Balance must be restored between the interests of employers and workers.

Political parties must commit that rebates to employers will only be considered when the funding level of the accident fund reaches 125 per cent or more. Employers should only be able to get a rebate if they can demonstrate that they have made improvements to the health and safety culture in their workplace. The rebated funds should be equally shared between both stakeholders: workers and employers.

**The three-day waiting period to receive benefits must be eliminated.** It was implemented when the workers' compensation system was underfunded and is no longer needed. We are going against the national trend in Canada by maintaining it. At best, the three-day waiting period is no more than a cost-saving move for employers and, at worst, forces many employees to conceal injuries or not report them as the potential loss of income is too great.

# Protecting Public Services

The government is facing pressure to reduce and/or privatize our public services. These services benefit society's vulnerable citizens the most: seniors, low income, immigrants, the sick and children. Privatization requires the creation of a profit margin for the private sector. This leads to reduced services, lower quality of services, reduced access, higher costs and less transparency and accountability. Private profit also comes at a cost to wages, effective pension plans, workloads, and jobs. Public-private partnerships (P3s) in other jurisdictions have already proven these negative outcomes, with multiple Auditor General Reports criticizing the cost overruns of P3 projects in their provinces.

At the same time, the income gap between the rich and the rest of us, continues to grow. Now more than ever, we need to improve public services to meet the needs of New Brunswickers. Here are the commitments we will be looking for regarding public services:

- Stop using public-private partnerships and retain ownership, management, administration and delivery of public services;
- Integrate community care services (community residences, family support agencies, ADAPT centres, special care homes and transition houses) into our public system via either the Department of Health or the Department of Social Development;
- Make yearly investments to improve the wages and working conditions of the community care sector;
- Cancel the agreement between the Government of New Brunswick and Medavie, reintegrating extramural care and Tele-care back into the regional health authorities.

# Pay Equity

Pay equity is different from pay parity. Pay parity is paying two people doing the same job the same rate of pay. Pay equity is paying two people doing different jobs that have the same value, the same rate of pay. Often traditional female jobs are undervalued and underpaid.

Over the past ten years, the government of New Brunswick has made significant gains in achieving pay equity in the public sector and for 4 private sector workplaces, namely child care programs, home support agencies, transition houses and community residences.

Most New Brunswick women (70%) work nonetheless in the private sector. No pay equity law protects these workers against wage discrimination. New Brunswick's Five-Year Wage Gap Action Plan, 2005-2010, proposed voluntary measures for employers to achieve pay equity, but it did not bring about any results. **It's time for political parties to take the next step and commit to adopt pay equity legislation to cover the private sector.**



## Basic Labour Standards

Unionization rates have been decreasing. Slightly less than one-third of New Brunswick workers are unionized. At the same time, New Brunswick is seeing an increase in precarious work, with more part-time and casual workers than ever, and stagnant wages despite rising economic gains. Non-unionized workers only have minimal employment standards for their protection. These workers deserve some of the same basic protections that are provided to unionized workplaces.

The Employment Standards Act has not had any major changes during the past decade. The current Act does not include paid leave in cases of personal illness or sick children, paid maternity leave, or leave of absence for personal obligations or homecare. Here are some specific things that should be included as basic minimum labour standards:

- Pay overtime hours at time and a half of the employees' regular wage instead of time and a half of the minimum wage. Overtime must be paid after 40 hours of work per week rather than the current 44 hours per week;
- Provide five paid sick-leave days per year where unused sick-leave days cannot be banked;
- Make sure that employers supply free uniforms to employees who are required to wear them on the job.

# Together we can do it!

By working together, we can make sure that labour's priorities are included on the political agenda. Please share our ideas with your friends, family and neighbors. We also invite you talk about these issues



when political candidates come knocking at your door. Feel free to attend all-candidates meetings in your community to raise our issues to improve workplace health and safety, public services, pay equity and basic labour standards in the province of New Brunswick.

As we get closer to the election, we invite you to visit the New Brunswick Federation of Labour web site to see what political parties have to say about the NBFL's priorities.

**Most important though, please get out and vote on Monday September 24!**

For more information, please visit the NBFL web site at: [www.fednb.ca](http://www.fednb.ca), send us an email at: [info@fednb.ca](mailto:info@fednb.ca) or call at: **(506) 857-2125**.