Social Impact Bonds: a poverty reduction strategy or a privatization scheme?

By Matt Matcher

Fredericton - Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) are being discussed in the region as a way to push toward the privatization of social programs. Here in New Brunswick, even the NDP government has yet to take a position against attacks on public services, especially health care and social services. The NPD's recent promise to pilot Social Impact Bonds as an aggressive way to address poverty during the election campaign was roundly criticized by anti-poverty groups.

According to a spokesperson for the Common Front on Social Justice, one of the largest anti-poverty groups in the province, the New Brunswick government is wrong to make poverty feel even worse by making it an issue for cafe conversations. Anti-poverty advocates such as the Common Front for Social Justice do not support the use of social impact bonds to make poverty feel even worse. They believe that increasing the minimum wage and social assistance rates would be a more effective way to alleviate poverty.

The Common Front also advocates for a variety of policies to address poverty, including increasing the minimum wage, implementing public housing programs, and providing better access to health care. They believe that these policies would be more effective than social impact bonds in addressing poverty.

David Coon wins Fredericton South with clear pro-environment and pro-choice positions

(continued from page 1) survey, demonstrated outside the Loblaw grocery store last weekend, showed a vast majority of the respondents supported a repeal of sections of Regulation 84-20 of the Medical Services Payment Act that restrict access to publicly funded abortion services.

I think David Coon’s win is an amazing step forward for reproductive rights in New Brunswick. He is committed to ensuring that women have access to safe and affordable abortion services and is strongly aligned with female Reproductive rights activists. The campaign has been a success and it has inspired many others to stand up for their rights. It has shown the power of collective action and the importance of community organization.

Reproductive rights activists, initially discouraged by the Liberal win in the last federal election, have been bolstered by Coon’s victory. Forestry was another top issue. Coon, known for his decades of work against clear cutting, made it a centre issue. He gathered a coalition of groups strong against the government’s forest plan while the NDP refused to criticize the plan, saying they didn’t know enough about it to evaluate it.

The plan has been criticized for being a stealthy move towards deregulation in the forest that would allow forestry companies to clearcut in areas previously set aside for protecting wildlife and wetlands.

Hundreds rallied against the forest plan at the New Brunswick Legislature in May. Almost 200 forest scientists, environmentalists and the province’s universities condemned the plan in an open letter. First Nation Chiefs are awaiting a decision from the courts on an appeal to get an injunction on the plan.

I was surprised that shale gas was a larger election issue. Coon’s commitment to ensuring that the province’s forests are protected and the province’s interests in Crown land forests was actually sold down to the voters. An environmental consultant who worked with the campaign, Tom Stobie, a conservation biologist with the Department of Forestry and Environmental Management at the University of New Brunswick, “While many people were actively working to keep our forests intact, we are dealing with S word contracts with industry, I have every confidence that Mr. Coon will continue to articulate the public’s interest for our forests.”

Leo Goguen of Regisville is one of many woolist owners opposed to the Award government’s forest plan. He organized a protest against hardwood spruce in the forest in Miramichi in early September when he heard they were planning to cut into their property.

The concerns in our area are real. I don’t support spraying the forest because so many people are getting cancer. We’re trying to protect the people, the moose and deer, the partridge and the rabbits that we eat,” says Goguen.

Opponents like Goguen say that the clear cutting and herbicide spraying of New Brunswick’s old spruce and fir stands and maple and beech ridges is waging out the diversity and resilience of the forest and they are concerned about the human health concerns associated with the glyphosates, the herbicide used on public lands. The Greens and NDP also differ on the building of the TransCanada’s Energy East pipeline from the Alberta tar sands to the Irving refinery in Saint John. The Greens oppose the pipeline while the NDP support it.

“For the first time in my life, I’m happy. More people in New Brunswick are standing up for their communities and taking a position against shale gas, the Energy East pipeline, and Irving’s control of the forest,” says Acquin-Michaud.

Tracy Jewiss is an editor for the NB Media Co-op.

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org. To list your event, email community@nbmediacoop.org.

New to the Region: Location: Cinema Politica Fredericton presents as part of the NF Film Co-op’s Silver Wave Film Festival, New to the Region: Location: Fredericton, contact: fredericton@cinemapolitica.org.

Making the Connections: Resistance and Movement Building. Location: University of New Brunswick, Fredericton. Contact: Allegra @uofn.ca.

NBA Media Co-op Story Meetings. Join us at our monthly story meetings in Fredericton where we discuss politics and social issues. Meetings take place on the 3rd Monday of every month. To find out the meeting time and venue, email info@nbmediacoop.org.

Cinema Politica believes in the power of art not only to entertain but to engage, inform, inspire, and provoke social change. Cinema Politica is the largest volunteer-run, community and campus-based documentary screening collective in New Brunswick. Fredericton is back this fall screening films on Fridays. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at cinemapolitica.org.

Got a story to tell? Send your articles, story ideas and photos to info@nbmediacoop.org.