

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

• The Harper government is considering a U.S. request for further military contribution in the fight against **ISIS** (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) in Iraq. The Canadian government has already committed to deploying several dozen military advisors and two cargo planes full of weapons to assist the Iraqi government and Kurdish forces currently fighting ISIS. The U.S. is grounding its attacks on ISIS as a campaign to prevent genocide and the murder of American citizens in Northern Iraq and Syria. ISIS, ultra-reactionary Islamist fighters, currently numbering about 15,000, was born out of Al Qaeda in Iraq, a product of the U.S. occupation. The founders of Al Qaeda, including Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of its Iraqi affiliate, were trained and funded by the CIA in the 1980s. The populace of both Canada and the U.S. remain war-weary with some calling it an extension of imperialist intervention in that region and others calling for a parliamentary and public debate on involvement in that region.

• The Cuban government is sending 165 doctors and nurses to battle the **Ebola** outbreak in West Africa while the U.S. government is sending 3,000 troops to West Africa. The Cuban health care workers, 103 nurses and 62 doctors, are going to be deployed to Sierra Leone in the first week of October. “Reading these stories, which ran in, respectively, the BBC and Reuters, one learns that the Cuban government, which runs a small financially hobbled island nation of 11 million people, with a national budget of \$50 billion, Gross Domestic Product of 121 billion, and per capita GDP of just over \$10,000, is dispatching 165 medical personnel to Africa to regions where there are ebola outbreaks, while the U.S., the world’s wealthiest nation, with a population of close to 320 million, a national budget of \$3.77 trillion, GDP of \$17 trillion, and per capita GDP of over \$53,000, is sending troops–3000 of them–to ‘fight’ the ebola epidemic,” wrote Dave Lindorff for www.thiscantbehappening.ne.



About 200 people marched in Fredericton while an estimated 400,000 people marched on the streets of New York City as part of the world’s largest mobilization for climate justice on Sept. 21. The actions coincided with the UN Secretary General’s Climate Summit. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper did not join the 125 heads of state attending the summit. Fracking for shale gas and TransCanada’s Energy East pipeline were just some of the projects that were highlighted by the people participating in the People’s Climate March in Fredericton, because both of these projects contribute to climate change and both entail environmental and health impacts. Photo by Stefan Verch.

Community Calendar

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

Nowhere Else to Go. Cinema Politica Fredericton presents as part of the NB Film Co-op’s Silver Wave Film Festival, *Nowhere Else to Go*. Directed by Michael Shade. A chronology of the 2013 indigenous anti-fracking protests in New Brunswick from their early days up to the later violent clashes with police. When: Friday, Nov. 7 at 7:00pm. Where: Conserver House, 180 Saint John St., Fredericton. Contact: fredericton@cinemapolitica.org.

Making the Connections: Resistance and Movement Building Across Borders and Nations Resource. Annual gathering of the Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network (ARSN). Nov. 14 at 7 pm to Nov. 14 at 1 pm. With Alma Brooks and Eliza Star Child Knockwood. Alma is a Maliseet traditional leader with the Wabanaki Confederacy from St. Mary’s First Nation. Alma attended the May 2014 UN Forum on Mining and Indigenous Peoples. Eliza is a Mi’kmaq woman from Abegweit First Nation, PEI. She spent the summer or 2014 in Elsipogtog, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks worked together to resist fracking. Contact Kathryn at kathrynande@gmail.com.

NB Media Co-op Story Meetings. Join us at our monthly story meetings in Fredericton where we discuss politics and current events and decide what to put in this paper 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 network in the world. Cinema Politica Fredericton is back this fall screening films on Fridays. Check out film schedules and venues, or start your own chapter at: cinemapolitica.org.

By Matt Mosher

Fredericton - Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) are a growing trend in the ongoing global push toward the privatization of social services. Here in New Brunswick, even the NDP, formerly known for taking stances against attacks on public services, is jumping on board. The New Brunswick NDP’s recent promise to pilot Social Impact Bonds as an aggressive way to tackle poverty during the election campaign was roundly criticized by anti-poverty groups.

Announcing the poverty reduction plank of his party’s platform in Saint John on September 2, NDP leader Dominic Cardy explained that the SIB pilot program would fight poverty and fuel sustainability of community organizations by allowing them to make bids on services. Cardy further emphasized that SIBs are a way for community groups to participate in solving problems in their own backyards.

Anti-poverty advocates such as the Common Front for Social Justice do not support the use of SIBs as a way of reducing poverty and feel that increasing the minimum wage and social assistance rates would do more to alleviate poverty.

The Common Front also advocates modernizing the province’s Drug plan so medications are more accessible, implementing an affordable child care program, investing in public housing, restoring cuts to Employment Insurance (EI), stopping clawbacks to pensions and implementing pay equity in the public and private sectors.

“An aggressive poverty reduction strategy would have something for the 40,000 people in this province who have to depend on social assistance and food banks to survive. The NDP strategy does not address basic social assistance rates, which are some of the lowest in the country, or what is needed to help those who are employable return to work,” argues Pauline Richard, co-chair of the Common Front for Social Justice, New Brunswick’s largest anti-poverty group.

One in seven New Brunswickers live below the poverty line. Sixty food banks in New Brunswick are feeding close to 20,000 women, men and children each month. Two-thirds of food bank users receive social assistance, according to Richard.

Graham Cox, a researcher with CUPE, Canada’s largest public sector labour union, calls SIBs a disruptive form of social service privatization.

“Social impact bonds pose a major risk to the preservation of valuable public services... Unions and non-profit organizations involved in the delivery of services to people should oppose them,” argues Cox.

The Common Front concurs that SIBs are a way of reducing the responsibility of government to deliver social services to citizens by turning it over to community groups or to the private sector. The coalition argues that donors will want a return on their investment, so they will fund projects or services that are more easy to administer and measure.

Investors having more influence than elected representatives



Anti-poverty groups like the Common Front for Social Justice, members of which are shown here, have criticized a move toward Social Impact Bonds. Instead they advocate for increased minimum wage and social assistance rates as a more effective way of alleviating poverty. Photo courtesy of the Common Front for Social Justice.

over social programs like illiteracy, child protection, and support for released prisoners concern the Common Front.

The government of British Columbia is passing several laws that would introduce SIBs into the public sector. SIBs have been implemented in the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand.

Finance for Good is a Canadian non-government organization behind the use of SIBs. They argue that SIBs allow the government to pay only if a contract becomes successful, therefore saving the government money in the case of failed social programs. According to Finance for Good, service providers will also benefit because they will continue to have long-term funding if they become successful.

Jean-Claude Basque, provincial coordinator of the Common Front, worries foremost about accessibility and affordability for service users.

“Are those who need the services the most going to be able to access these services? Where would they put these services? My guess is in urban areas. This could be a major problem for people working for minimum wage. SIBs are about providing cheaper services. If a larger company can provide a cheaper service, smaller companies will feel pressure to compete and this could impact salaries, lead to job losses and cuts to benefits that workers are owed,” argues Basque.

Matt Mosher is a social work student at St. Thomas University interning with the NB Media Co-op.

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

(continued from page 1) ...survey, demonstrated outside Conservative and Liberal candidates’ offices, and demanded a repeal of sections of Regulation 84-20 of the Medical Services Payment Act that restrict access to publicly funded reproductive health services across the province.

“I think David Coon’s win is an amazing step forward for reproductive justice. He is the first New Brunswick MLA to be elected with a strong and clear pro-choice position within his party’s platform. Being publicly pro-choice in New Brunswick is now an electable political stance,” says Marilyn Merritt-Gray, a reproductive justice advocate and former nurse at the Morgentaler Clinic.

Marie-Claude Blais, the former Minister Responsible for Women’s Equality, who defended her Progressive Conservative party’s position that there were no barriers to abortion access in the province lost her seat in Moncton Centre to Liberal Chris Collins.

Reproductive rights activists, initially discouraged by the Liberal’s failure to name barriers to abortion access and support the repeal, are waiting to see if the governing Liberals will remove those barriers like they had promised pre-election.

Forestry was another top election issue. Coon, known for his decades of work against clear cutting, made it a centre issue.

The Greens came out strong against the Alward government’s forest plan while the NDP refused to criticize the plan, saying they did not 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 to protect wildlife and waters.

Hundreds rallied against the forest plan at the New Brunswick Legislature in May. Almost 200 forest scientists, economists, and academics at 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 to temporarily halt the forest plan.

“I was surprised that shale gas was a larger election issue than forestry, given that shale gas is still speculative and the public’s interest in Crown land forests was actually sold down the river by the last government,” says Tom Beckley, a sociologist with the Department of Forestry and Environmental Management at the University of New Brunswick. “While many seem resigned to the fact that we are locked in to 25 year contracts with industry, I have every confidence that Mr. Coon

will continue to articulately defend the public’s interest from his unique vantage point in the legislature.”

Leo Goguen of Rogersville is one of many woodlot owners opposed to the Alward government’s forest plan. He organized a protest against herbicide spraying of the forest in Miramichi in early September when he discovered aerial spraying on public land adjacent to his property.

“The clearcuts in our area are unreal. I don’t support spraying the forest because so many people are getting cancer. We’re trying to protect people, the animals, 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 birch ridges is wiping out the diversity and resiliency 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 TransCanada’s Energy East pipeline of bitumen 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 I’m hopeful. 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-Mikovsky.

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

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