

In Brief...

- The Common Front for Social Justice reports that **food prices in New Brunswick** have increased by 5.74% from July 2010 to July 2011.
- Three Fredericton doctors have quit in protest of the Alward government's **cuts to sexual health clinics** in the province that reduce access to medical services for women and youth at a time when chlamydia, a sexually-transmitted disease, is on the rise in the province.
- According to StatCan 2010 data, **863 women were admitted to a transition house** in New Brunswick in 2009-2010. New Brunswick has 13 transition houses for women who are seeking shelter from relationship violence.
- This year's week-long Blair Doucet Youth Summer Camp, organized by the New Brunswick Federation of Labour, imparted **knowledge of union organizing to youth** in grades 9 to 12. Youth negotiated with their counsellors the terms and conditions for the following year's camp, including bed time, wakeup calls and safety. This year, campers voted to strike to obtain better conditions for next year's campers.
- Sex work activist, feminist and law student **Wendy Babcock** died of an apparent suicide in her home in Toronto on August 9th. Babcock won the Toronto Public Health Champion award in 2008 for her tireless efforts to implement harm reduction strategies for sex workers. Before becoming a law student, Babcock was a homeless teenaged sex worker. For several years she advocated on behalf of sex workers, was a prominent voice for trans rights across Canada and fought for the return of her son who was put into custody when she was a sex worker.
- The National Assessment of First Nations Water and Wastewater Systems revealed in July that **1,800 reserve homes are without water or sewage service** and nearly 40 per cent of all water systems on native reserves pose high levels of risk.
- Labour rights groups are drawing attention to the largest ever influx of **migrant farm workers to Quebec**. About 7,000 migrant workers from mostly Mexico, Guatemala and the West Indies face hazardous work that often involves exposure to extreme heat and pesticides and risk of repetitive strain injuries from picking crops. Minimum wage for migrant workers in Quebec is \$9.65 per hour.
- Freedom Flotilla II, boats carrying people from around the world wanting to deliver **humanitarian aid to Gaza**, were sabotaged and threatened by the state of Israel. The mission was grounded in Greece at the request of the Israeli Foreign Ministry.
- A group of U.S. lawmakers launched a lawsuit against President Obama, claiming that the **bombing of Libya is illegal**. Canada-led NATO forces have carried out at least 4,700 bombings in Libya over the past three months.
- Prime Minister **Stephen Harper visited South America on a trade tour** in August. The Washington Times reported that Harper was accused of locking himself in a bathroom in Brazil after not getting his way during trade negotiations. Harper initiated a free trade deal with Honduras, which was protested in Honduras and in Canada, by social justice groups who say the free trade deal will worsen human rights and labour violations, which have increased since the 2009 military coup that they say Canada supported.



Craig Mazerolle, VP Education for the St. Thomas University Students' Union, says that post-secondary education is becoming less accessible with rising tuition and the New Brunswick government's changes to student loan programs that take into account parental contributions. Photo by Shane Magee.

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☐ \$25/month

☐ \$10/year

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- Shale Gas Blockade** (continued from page 1)
- ..energy, i.e. shale gas, to the U.S. Companies have also used Chapter 11 of NAFTA to sue jurisdictions for losses in profits. Melanson was left wondering whether SWN Resources from the U.S. could sue New Brunswick if the province chose to ban or regulate the industry. She said, "It is better to cut our losses now so we don't lose our water."
- "How close can seismic work come to our rivers, streams and brooks?" asked a resident of the rolling hills of Nashwaak River Valley. MacDonald responded, "Every home and water well is protected by a 200 metre set back." MacDonald said that the Taymouth Community Association has been successful in getting the Department of Natural Resources to agree to have a government official and a community representative monitor each test site as they are installed. He said the work will also be videotaped.
- Milda Titford, a resident of Stanley, demanded a position from MacDonald–yes or no to shale gas. MacDonald said he represents the people and shares the opponents' questions on the impacts of the industry but refused to say that he will oppose the industry.
- Brooks ended the meeting by thanking the community of Stanley for donating food for their gathering. Billy's Restaurant in Stanley, with an anti-shale gas sign in their yard, collected donations for food provisions for the blockade. "The community of Stanley has cooked supper for us. We will share this food and it will make us stronger," said Brooks. After inviting MacDonald to join their supper, Brooks turned to MacDonald and said, "We'll see you at the Legislature."
- On August 11th, the day after the blockade, shale gas opponents gathered at the Centennial Building in Fredericton. Natural Resources Minister Bruce Northrup met briefly with the demonstrators in the afternoon including Alma Brooks who reminded him that First Nations in the province have not been consulted on shale gas and of the province's obligations to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The meeting ended with calls of shame when he cut the meeting short and refused to meet with St. Mary's Chief

Minimum wage increase delayed again

By JODY DALLAIRE

- Minimum wage earners in New Brunswick have to wait again for an increase in their pay at a time when taxes for corporations and higher income earners are set to decrease by another 1% and the small business tax is set to drop by 0.5%.
- Minimum wage workers will not get the additional 50 cents per hour they were promised would start in September. Instead, these workers will have to wait until next April when hopefully it will finally reach \$10 per hour, the average in the Atlantic provinces. By not increasing the minimum wage as promised in September and waiting until April, each full-time worker will hand over \$20 to their employer every week.
- Employers asked the government to not raise the minimum rate and the government complied. With a straight face, the spokesperson for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business asserted that, “Minimum wage is not an effective tool for reducing poverty.”
- It’s a statement that would be almost comical were it not so sad. How is paying someone less than minimum wage effective in reducing poverty? In what world does it make sense to have jobs that create poverty?
- Poverty wages mean not just misery, poor health, less education, more victimization and crime, but also more public spending to deal with the problems caused by poor wages like the ones the New Brunswick government announced a few days after cancelling the minimum wage raise: back-to-school cheques of \$100 per child for low-income families, and grants for food banks.
- The provincial minimum wage rate has increased a few times in the last few years, but it was only beginning to catch up from decades of neglect. Currently, someone who works full time at minimum wage is paid about \$19,760 per year. There

Community Calendar

For details and updated event listings, visit nbmediacoop.org. To list your event or to receive the community calendar by email once per week, email community@nbmediacoop.org.

- Shale Gas Sidewalk Protest.** Shale gas opponents will gather outside the government offices at Centennial Building on 670 King Street in Fredericton every Thursday, from 10am to 2 pm, to show their public opposition and demand a change in the position of the provincial government.
- Falls Brook Centre Fall Fair.** Sept 10-11, 9:00am-5:00pm. Falls Brook Centre in Knowlesville, NB. Great local food, music, and artisans. Admission is \$5/person. Children under 7 free. Saturday night concert in the barn featuring Jim Blewett. Tickets: \$20 at the door. Contact julia@fallsbrookcentre.ca, (506) 375-4310. Visit: www.fallsbrookcentre.ca
- Support for Penobsquis.** The Concerned Citizens of Penobsquis resume their case against PotashCorp at Mining Commissioner Hearings on Sept 14-16. The public is asked to join the hearings to show support for their claims of compensation for damaged water, lands and quality of life. Sixty water wells were lost in Penobsquis affecting upwards of 200 people. The hearings start at 9am daily at the All Seasons Inn at 1015 Main Street in Sussex. A rally is planned on the opening day, Sept 14, 10am. Visit: www.penobsquis.ca
- March Against Shale Gas in Moncton.** March to Moncton City Hall. March starts at 12 noon at the Corner of Assomption Blvd and Vaughan Harvey Blvd. Contact: terri@banfrackingnb.ca
- Take Back the Night.** Take Back The Night is an international movement that seeks to end sexual violence in all of its forms



Alma Brooks, a Maliseet elder from St. Mary's First Nation, at the blockade in Stanley on August 10th. "To me New Brunswick is just a government, nothing more. You see the flag flying up there? That speaks the truth," said Brooks, pointing to the Mohawk warrior flag that had replaced the provincial flag at the Legislative Assembly during the anti-shale gas protest on August 1st. Photo by Tracy Glynn.

Candice Paul.

Shale gas opponents are hailing the August 19th announcement that SWN Resources will be suspending operations until next year as one victory in a larger battle to stop shale gas exploration and extraction permanently in the province of New Brunswick.

- are limited circumstances under which that amount of income would keep a person above the poverty line, especially since getting full-time hours is often a challenge in the minimum wage sphere.
- As Kurt Peacock of Saint John says about poverty in New Brunswick, in his 2009 report for the Canadian Council on Social Development, “Despite the provincial government’s promotion of work as a remedy to poverty, the actual value of entry-level jobs has barely kept pace with rising costs for energy, housing and food... Recently, the financial rewards of minimum-wage work have improved considerably... Adjusting for inflation, however, a minimum-wage worker in New Brunswick now is earning less now than a minimum-wage worker of 30 years ago.”
- Another threat to the working poor is the talk of implementing a two-tiered minimum wage. The Labour Minister has said the government is entertaining the possibility of a two-tiered minimum wage, which would mean a lower rate for teenagers or for workers who get tips. Exactly how can we justify saying to someone who is qualified for a job that because they are under 18 or 19, or because they’re working in the food service industry, they’ll be paid less?
- The 4,200 New Brunswickers who work as food and beverage servers or bartenders – more of them women– earn on average \$10,000 per year (the women) or almost \$13,000 (the men). Are we really going to say that is too much? Is that really the best idea we can come up with to improve our economy and our poverty rate?
- Keeping minimum wages low is justified through misleading arguments that increasing minimum wage leads to job losses, but no evidence exists to support such a claim.
- It is in our interest to fight for a minimum wage that ensures a dignified life for all workers.

including sexual assault, sexual abuse, dating violence, and domestic violence. A public protest organized by women, for women. In St. Stephen on Fri, Sept. 16, 7pm. Canada/US border in St. Stephen. Host: Charlotte County Abuse Prevention Network. Visit: takebackthenight.org. Contact: 456-4248 or 469-5544. In Fredericton on Fri, Sept 23, 8pm. Fredericton City Hall. Host: Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre. Visit: www.fsacc.ca

Work in a Warming World Atlantic Forum: Saving the Planet and Creating Jobs. Sept 29-30. St. Thomas University Forest Hill Conference Centre in Fredericton. A forum for workers and their unions, environmentalists, academics, and activists and a chance for coalition-building. Guest speakers: William Rees, Dave Coles and others. Visit: www.workinawarmingworld.yorku.ca/

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