Open Letter

Minister Dorothy Shephard
Department of Social Development
Sartain MacDonald Building
P.O. 6000
Fredericton, NB, E3B 5H1

April 24, 2019 (updated May 14, 2019)

Minister Shephard:

As Minister, you are responsible for the well-being of men, women and children receiving social assistance from your department. Your decisions regarding the amount of financial help provided, as well as the current policies within your department all have a direct impact on the quality of life of individuals and their families.

As you are certainly aware, the basic rates of close to 36,000 social assistance recipients under your responsibility have not followed the cost of living. All these citizens have had a steep reduction in their purchasing power. One-third of them have the same basic rate since 2010. For all other recipients, the basic rate has not increased since 2014. All of them are living below the Market Basket Measure which is the official poverty line.

To underline their plight, Table 1 compares current basic social assistance rates (indicating the last year it was increased) to the amount they should be receiving in 2019, had their basic rate followed the cost of living. Applying the Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator, we have determined what amount they should be getting now in order to keep up with inflation.

Table 1. Basic rates of social assistance recipients, according to category (2010-2019)

Category of recipient	Basic social assistance rate and last year it was increased	Basic rate taking inflation into account (2019)
One person	$537 (2010)	$624.80
One person, designated	$576 (2014)	$624.27
Single parent, 1 child	$887 (2014)	$961.33
Couple, 2 children	$995 (2014)	$1,078.38
Extended benefits, 1 person (Recognized disability)	$663 (2014)	$718.56

Source: Department of Social Development and Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator (access April 12, 2019)

Minister Shephard, as Minister of the government responsible for the common good, your duty is to take care of all, including the most vulnerable citizens among us.

Minister Shephard, we, the undersigned, urge you to increase the basic social assistance rates of individuals and families to bring them up to the 2019 inflation rate.

Signatory organization

1. Association acadienne des artistes professionnel.le.s du Nouveau-Brunswick
   Philippe Beaulieu, President

2. Association des bibliothécaires, professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Moncton, Mathieu Lang, President

3. Association des enseignantes et enseignants francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick, Lucie Martin, President

4. Association francophone des aînés du NB
   Solange Haché, President

5. Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers
   Vladimir Tasić, President

6. Au Rayon d'Espoir Inc
   Roger St-Pierre, Manager

7. Canadian Union of Public Employees - New Brunswick
   Brien Watson, President

8. Centre de Bénévolat de la Péninsule Acadienne Inc.
   Léo-Paul Pinet, Executive Director

9. Comité de justice social de Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur
   Sister Stella Arsenault, Coordinator

10. Comité des 12
    Claude Snow, Coordinator

11. Conseil provincial des sociétés culturelles
    Marie-Thérèse Landry, Executive Director

12. Council of Canadians, Fredericton Chapter
    Garry Guild, Contact person

13. Council of Canadians, Saint John Chapter
    Leticia Adair, Contact person

14. Coverdale Center for Women Inc.
    Mary Saulnier-Taylor, Executive Director

15. Development and Peace - Moncton
    Bertrand LeBlanc, President

16. Fédération des étudiantes et étudiants du Campus universitaire de Moncton
    Pascale Rioux, President

17. Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations
    Mary Lou Babineau, President

18. Fredericton Anti-Poverty Organization
    Dan Weston, Coordinator

19. Fredericton Organic Community Garden
    John Coates, Ph.D., President

20. Greater Moncton Homelessness Steering Committee
    Lisa Ryan, Community Development Coordinator

21. John Howard Society of New Brunswick
    Bill Bastarache, Executive Director

22. Les Filles de Marie-de l'Assomption
    Dolores Bourque, f.m.a., Superior General

23. Mount Allison Faculty Association
    Jeff Lilburn, President

24. National Farmers' Union – NB
    Rebeka Frazer Chiasson, President

25. No One Is Illegal – Fredericton
    Gül Çalışkan, An Organizer

26. New Brunswick Association of Social Workers
    Claude Savoie, President

27. New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity
    Frances LeBlanc, President

28. New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice
    Johanne Petitpas & Pauline Gallant, Co-chairs

29. New Brunswick Federation of Labour
    Patrick Colford, President

30. New Brunswick Media Co-op
    Tracy Glynn, An Organizer

31. New Brunswick Nurses Union
    Paula Doucet, President

32. New Brunswick Refugee Clinic
    Akram Ben Salah, Executive Director

33. New Brunswick Senior Citizens Federation
    Gildard Lavoie, President

34. New Brunswick Union
    Susie Proulx-Daigle, President

35. Peter McKee Community Food Centre
    Chantal Senecal, Executive Director

36. Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick
    Lyne Chantal Boudreau, President

37. Rural Action and Voices for the Environment (RAVEN)
    Susan O'Donnell, UNB Project Coordinator

38. Salvus Clinic Inc.
    Dr. Susan Crouse, Executive Director

39. St. Thomas University School of Social Work
    Marilyn Dupre, Director

40. Shediac Food Bank
    Mark LeBlanc, Executive Director

41. Social Innovation Fredericton
    Sandi MacKinnon, Executive Director

42. Social Justice Committee of the Edmundston Diocese
    Denyse Mazerolle, Coordinator

43. Social Justice Team for the Archdiocese of Moncton
    Gladys LeBlanc, Coordinator

44. Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick
    Robert Melanson, President

45. Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Mother Teresa Conference, Moncton
    Auréa Cormier, Contact person

46. Unifor Local 506
    Sandy Brideau, President

47. United Way of Greater Moncton and Southeastern New Brunswick
    Debbie McInnis, CEO

48. University of Moncton School of Social Work
    Lise Savoie, Director

49. YWCA Moncton
    Michèle Nadeau, Executive Director