

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coalition concerned with government's lack of action re: minimum wage

ST. JOHN'S – The Religious Social Action Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador (RSAC) today expressed its concern with the government's lack of commitment to increasing the minimum wage in the province.

"While increasing the minimum wage helps more people, we advocate for indexation of the minimum wage to the Consumers Price Index as was recommended by the Government's own review committee in 2012. The already promised increase to the minimum wage in October 2015 is helpful but does not meet the overall goal of a living wage when food, heat and housing costs are increasing rapidly," said Coalition Director The Rev.'d Canon David Burrows.

"In fact, we would like the Government to work towards implementing a Living Wage," Burrows says. "A living wage allows people to live without stigma, to live with dignity. The minimum wage does not adequately support people and families. People who work fulltime should not be living below the poverty line. A living wage is reasonable and achievable; it contributes to the economic and social strengths of our communities by improving productivity, ensuring healthy workers, and creating a culture of dignity, diversity and prosperity."

The RSAC is pleased with the government's renewed commitment to the Poverty Reduction Strategy as reported in the Throne Speech last month and is looking forward to working with government in implementing a fairness prism for assessing policy and programs arising from the Strategy. The fairness prism or lens will help ensure the province's resources are being fairly distributed for the well-being of all citizens in the future.

Coalition Director Muhhamed Nazir says the coalition recognizes the financial limitations the government faces. Nonetheless, he says the government must continue to address the social inequities many people in the province experience.

"We believe poverty is a failure of community to achieve justice. If one person is poor, we are all poor. We have sufficient resources for all in our communities but we are not sharing them. Our goal is equity not equality. The fairness prism is a tool for justice in policy development and implementation."

The **Religious Social Action Coalition** is comprised of ten directors representing the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu religious communities. RSAC is a voice of consciousness and moral persuasion in Newfoundland and Labrador's society at large; its members aspire to be a catalyst for social change to achieve productive and dignified life for all members of the society and to working towards poverty elimination in our society. www.rsacnl.com

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For more information, or to arrange an interview please contact The Rev.'d Canon David Burrows, 709-746-2095

BACKGROUND

Origins of the Coalition

Founded in 2007, the Religious Social Action Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador is a nonpartisan group from a broad array of faiths (Anglican Church, United Church, Salvation Army, Pentecostal, Presbyterian Church, Roman Catholic Church, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhs, Jain, Zhorashtrian, Buddhist) united in their commitment to call on society to eliminate poverty at home and abroad.

Goals of the Coalition

The Coalition works to help the poor and has organized educational sessions to educate the community on poverty and how government policies help make the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. The Coalition also

- Advocates for socially responsible legislative policies that lead to reduction in the gap between well off and not so well off citizens and poverty elimination.
- Advocates for the release of timely information on social statistics.
- Establishes biannual conversations between RSACNL, The Fairness Caucus, and the Premier to further the work of poverty elimination in the province.
- Affirms Government's leadership in assuring that there is a fair and equitable sharing of ALL resources among our citizens and a fair, basic standard of life and well-being for all citizens.

Directors of the Religious Social Action Coalition of Newfoundland and Labrador

Muhammed Nazir – Muslim Association of NL

Paul Lundrigan – Roman Catholic Church of NL

Marion Pardy – The United Church of Canada

David Burrows – Anglican Church of Canada

Jonathan Richler – Jewish Community Havura, St. John's

Lloyd George – Salvation Army

George Powell – West End Baptist Church

Veeresh Gadag – Hindu Temple of NL

David Newman – Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador

Rami Wadhwa – Newfoundland Sikh Society, St. John's