

pensions, and unemployment insurance. Funding will increase modestly with the commitment to further expansion in future years. The Health Fund creates a National Drug Plan for low-income families and the Child Care Fund would introduce a national, cost-shared child care program. A Higher Education Act would set national standards for post-secondary education and increase student grants.

Over 80% of spending in the AFB comes from growth in the economy, and lower unemployment and social assistance costs. The remaining money comes from making the tax system more progressive. Tax highlights include a wealth tax on inheritances over \$1 million, a Corporate Minimum Tax, an Excess Profits Tax on banks, and the introduction of two new tax brackets for people with incomes over \$100,000 and \$150,000, respectively. The surtax on incomes below \$20,000 would be eliminated, and a Low-Income Family Tax Credit would be introduced as an anti-poverty measure.

The AFB shows that there are clear and workable alternatives. These alternatives are endorsed by 137 economists across the country. The labour movement hopes that by educating its members, and working with social partners, the federal government will be made accountable for the choices it has made at the expense of the vast majority of Canadians.



## **Newfoundland and Labrador**

Bev Brown

NAPO Board Member

The last few months have brought more and more Newfoundlanders together at demonstrations, in forums and in coalitions to protest social programme cutbacks that seem to roll in with every tide. We are determined to fight last year's delayed federal cuts, which hit Newfoundland like a cruel winter storm on April Fools' Day this year, at a time when many people are being cut off The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS) and forced on to welfare from lack of jobs.

About a fifth of the provincial population collected welfare in 1994, and this number has been climbing steadily since then. The welfare rate for single employable people, by far the largest group on social assistance, ranges from a shocking \$89 to a not much more substantial \$129 a month.

Kay Young, former Minister of Social Services, was not re-elected in February. Shortly before the election she walked out when a petition for increased subsidized low-income housing was being presented by a fellow Liberal member in the House of Assembly.

Bereft of creativity, our politicians only use two ploys to manipulate people. One is to announce a large cutback, and then chop the cut a little bit, which usually makes people really grateful . . . **not**. Premier Brian

Tobin used that numbers game during the election, naturally. The other policy ploy also seems to be a Tobin favourite: consult the people about Where To Cut. Our choices, as usual, range from our noses to our knees.

The real numbers game goes more like this: four hundred public servants lost their jobs in December 1995. Our once-in-a-lifetime balanced provincial budget, which was only balanced because the province privatized some ferries, magically became a sixty million dollar shortfall not long after that. Home care was cut seven million dollars, affecting 1,500 people. Municipalities were cut 22% this year, which is endangering lives from lack of snow clearing.

Meanwhile, back at the trough, a John Cabot five-hundred-year celebration that became the emperor's new clothes was scrapped, leaving us with nothing to show for the public money spent. This outrage, combined with a Corner Brook ski resort scam, cost taxpayers in Newfoundland ten million dollars!

Recently over a hundred concerned groups and individuals formed the Community Alliance for Better Solutions, which became very active during our provincial election, and which will remain proactive during the coming budgets. The Alliance is pointing to the cuts in the Canada Health and Social Transfer as a cause of great stress in Newfoundland, and is using stark facts to let people know that the massive transfer of wealth to the rich in our society will not work to produce jobs.

Thanks to the work of the Alliance, four hundred people came to a People's Forum during the election to tell politicians that the real issues are not hope and hype, but jobs and good social programmes. When he was asked to respond, Lloyd Matthews, Minister of Health, cynically labelled our demands "rhetoric". What does he think, that people really want to starve to death and are only pretending to want jobs? Get a life, Lloyd!

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Quebec

Claude Girard

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*Réforme de l'Aide Sociale au Québec :  
deux rapports, une même vision*

Ce n'est pas un mais deux rapports que le Comité d'experts sur la réforme de l'aide sociale a rendu public en catastrophe<sup>1</sup>, à Québec, le jeudi 14 mars dernier<sup>2</sup>. En effet, la conférence de presse qui avait été prévue en compagnie de la ministre responsable de la sécurité du revenu, Louise Harel, fut annulée à la dernière minute en raison des divergences opposant les deux co-présidents du Comité, l'économiste Pierre Fortin et le psychologue Camil