



- Minimum Wage—Decades of decline—Women most effected
- CCPA Plays Crucial Role in Alternative Provincial Budget
- Private Health Care—More Expensive—Less Effective
- Child Poverty in Nova Scotia

## Your Demonstration of Support Needed to Keep Nova Scotia Office Open

In January 2002, a full-time, 1-staff person, Nova Scotia Office for CCPA was founded. It was a bold step. With a bare bones budget, a promise of support from the national executive, a dozen committed steering committee members, and several research associates, the CCPA-NS "demonstration" year began.

For over a decade, progressive researchers, economists and community activists have pointed to the need for more balance in public policy debates in the province.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Nova Scotia believes that even in the context of "globalization" we can show our neighbours—right here in our backyard—that there are choices and alternatives in public policy. That's why CCPA National has agreed to underwrite costs for a short period—only 1-year—while local supporters demonstrate that Nova Scotians will respond positively to the development of alternative policy in Nova Scotia.

Firstly, we must show that more researchers and community groups will partner with CCPA-NS to produce research specific to Nova Scotia. To date, publications are beyond targeted numbers (see back page). Next, we must show that organizations and



Gay Harley Vice-Chair CCPA-NS & John Jacobs Director

individuals will support the development of Nova Scotia research by joining CCPA and financing the organization—so the work can continue.

With your help now—or before September 2002—we can keep CCPA-NS beyond its demonstration year. Steering committee members, elected at last year's membership meeting, are listed on our website and are available to answer questions you may have. Be part of the crucial step of building a strong membership base. If you value Nova Scotia policy that is socially and economically just—and environmentally sustainable—now is the time to take a close look at CCPA-NS... before time runs out. Membership info is on the back page.

### What Nova Scotians Are Saying About CCPA-NS

**Katherine Reed, Project Coordinator, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre.** "Advocacy organizations in Nova Scotia need a source of alternative policy information and analysis. The establishment of the Nova Scotia Office of the CCPA ensures that we will have credible research and information with which to influence public policy."

**Mark Butler, Marine Coordinator, Ecology Action Centre.** "Nova Scotia desperately needs alternative perspectives to those of corporate sponsored 'think tanks.' CCPA-NS is needed."

**Joan Jessome, President, Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union.** "Since its founding in November 1999, CCPA-NS has been doing excellent work directly relevant to the struggles of all Nova Scotians. CCPA-NS needs our individual and organizational support to continue this work."

**Jeff Moore, Just Us Coffee Roasters Co-op.** "The Centre for Policy Alternatives is a crucial resource giving a critical perspective on current events. We really need to support it."

## RELEASE OF CCPA-NS MINIMUM WAGE RATE PAPER: UNDERMINING WAGES IN NOVA SCOTIA

The minimum wage rate has just gone up 20 cents in Nova Scotia. It's become \$6 an hour: a take home pay of about \$200 a week or \$10,200 a year. So there's little cause to celebrate.

Some are quick to point out that most workers do not work for minimum wage so there's no need to increase that wage significantly. CCPA-NS researchers, Thom Workman and John Jacobs disagree. Their recent study deepens the numbers debate and shows why the minimum wage rate must increase. Here's their take on the latest statistics.

One in four Nova Scotian workers earn less than \$8 per hour and at least half of all workers earn less than \$11.40 per hour. A disproportionate number of low-wage workers are women. These low wage levels do not lift families above the poverty line. The study looks at all Nova Scotia wages and finds the minimum wage rate has a negative impact for workers earning well beyond that amount. It acts as a benchmark: when it's low—other wages across the province are too.



Thom Workman (Political Science UNB) Co-author

The current minimum wage buys 30% less than it did in 1976. It would have to increase by 40% to have the same buying power it did 25-years ago. If the provincial government legislates higher wages, research shows such increases wouldn't affect the number of jobs. However, wage increases for those labouring at the bottom end of the income ladder would help end poverty in Nova Scotian households.

Each year the Nova Scotia Alternative Budget outlines smarter policies for public spending and taxation.

## CCPA-NS PLAYS CRUCIAL ROLE IN ALTERNATIVE BUDGET

The production of an alternative budget demands the best everyone has to give. For the last 2-years a Nova Scotia Alternative Provincial Budget has been produced under the guidance of CCPA-NS staff and volunteers.

"Choices" is a Halifax-based coalition of labour and community advocates that works each year with CCPA-NS to increase citizen participation in the Alternative Budget's preparation. "It's ironic that citizens with limited time and budgets can come so close to projecting accurate annual outcomes that are later confirmed by Nova Scotia's Finance Department," says Stephanie Hunter, Choices Co-Chair.

Hunter credits CCPA-NS for this level of accuracy which gives the Alternative Budget credibility and "clout." She says, "CCPA-NS Director John Jacobs, takes Choices input and conducts the research needed to accurately respond to concerns... he then builds a document for everyone's review."

Many other CCPA-NS Research Associates are involved before the Alternative Budget goes to press. The result is a document that can withstand the scrutiny of academics and government officials— while accurately informing ordinary citizens from a standpoint that places the need for accurate, understandable budget at the top of the agenda.

## The Cape Breton Experiment: An Innovative Make-work Program?

The Cape Breton Employment and Innovation Project (CBCEIP) has recently been examined by CCPA-NS research associate, Connie deRoche. She finds that the project may not be that innovative.

The project's designed to assess "the practical and financial feasibility of developing a new strategy for delivering transfer payments to individuals." But, deRoche of the University College of Cape Breton finds there's only old wine (make work programs) in new bottles (to give an appearance of innovative market friendly alternatives to past strategies). The project shares a fundamental assumption with workfare programs—that what needs fixing is workers, not the lack of jobs.

While policy alternatives are needed this experiment, according to deRoche, is not one of them.

## PRIVATE HEALTH CARE—MORE EXPENSIVE—LESS EFFECTIVE

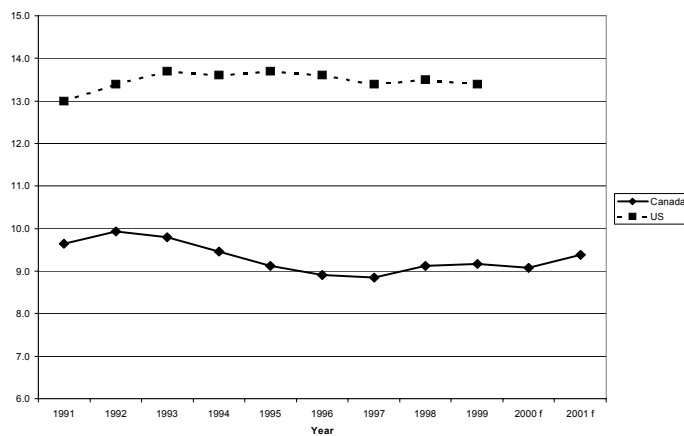
This Spring, CCPA Nova Scotia research associate Larry Haiven appeared as a panelist at a public meeting on preserving Canada's public health care system. The event was sponsored by the Nova Scotia Citizens' Health Care Network.

Larry appeared with keynote speaker Shirley

Douglas, who urged the crowd to fight to keep the system that her father, Tommy Douglas, built.

Larry made comparisons between the American and Canadian health care systems (see chart below). He showed how Americans pay a much higher price for much poorer results.

Health Expenditures as % of GDP, Canada & United States



On 10 different indices—public health care outperforms private health care. Let's keep medicare public. CCPA-NS helps Nova Scotians gain access to crucial facts—on matters of importance to them.

## NOVA SCOTIA CHILD POVERTY REPORT CARD

Without the help of CCPA-NS the NS Child Poverty report card would not have been released on time last year. CCPA-NS Associates checked figures and provided feedback on a very tight turnaround time.

This organization is truly an extraordinary resource for community-based researchers like myself.

Pauline Raven, Author NS Child Poverty Report Card

Published by CCPA-NS and authored by CCPA-NS Research Associate Pauline Raven, this report card gives the most current statistics available. Numbers and analyses are specific to Nova Scotia.

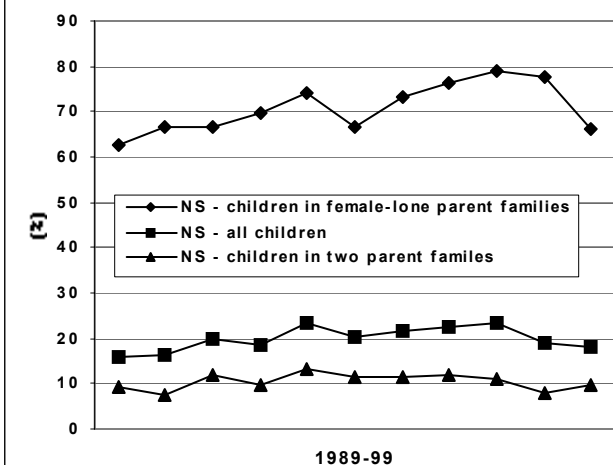
So you can see how a single mother, working for minimum wage, would need to work 1.7 jobs to raise herself and a child above the low-income cut-off...

Consider the fact that First Nations and disabled children experience a much

greater risk of the negative impacts of poverty on healthy child development. It's all in the report card.

The full card is available on the CCPA-NS website. See back cover for details.

Child Poverty Rates by Family Type



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## Current CCPA-NS Publications

### **Nova Scotia Alternative Provincial Budget 2002-2003**

Co-produced with Choices (March 2002/32 pages)

The Nova Scotia (APB) places the provincial government's fiscal planning in the context of the neo-liberal policy framework and the current economic slowdown. The APB shows that rather than cutting services and programs, the government needs to increase own-source revenues. The APB for 2002-2003 presents a realistic fiscal plan that balances the provincial budget within 2 years while increasing investments in programs, services and infrastructure.

### **Three Nova Scotia Fiscal Myths**

By John Jacobs and Larry Haiven (April 2002/5 pages)

This paper debates if: 1) Nova Scotia spends too much on programs and services; 2) Nova Scotia is over taxed; 3) User fees ensure that everyone pays their share to balance the budget.

Learn how Nova Scotia's fiscal problems are tied to insufficient own-source revenue and how user fees put a heavy burden on those least able to pay.

### **Undermining Wages in Nova Scotia: The Minimum Wage from 1976 - 2002**

By Thom Workman and John Jacobs (May 2002/19 pages)

Minimum wage policy has the potential to increase the wages of the working poor. The minimum wage in Nova Scotia has decreased over the past 25-years and is a benchmark wage for all workers. Increases will benefit minimum wage workers and those earning more. The paper outlines how women disproportionately work for low wages.

### **Scotian Gas: Breaking Free Trade Consensus**

by Steven Shrybman and Fred Wilson (Aug. 2002/10 pages)

This report finds oil and gas companies have taken advantage of gaping loop-holes in National Energy Board regulatory procedures. This undermines public interest safeguards. It finds 90% of Scotian gas exported occurs through a regulatory loop-hole. The authors note that under NAFTA it's not possible for Canada to 'turn off the tap' if it discovers it has over-committed non-renewable energy resources to export markets.

## Ongoing Projects, Analyses and New Initiatives

Community Health Centres in Nova Scotia • Low Wages and Women • Education in Nova Scotia • Right to Strike in the Health Care Sector • Nova Scotia's Cultural Sector and Social and Economic Development • Review of Nova Scotia Labour Legislation • Fair Trade in Nova Scotia

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