

For Immediate Release

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More information needed to evaluate impacts of Strategic Program Review Choices

The recently released Choices Report from the New Brunswick Strategic Program Review is missing critical information to allow New Brunswickers to evaluate its true impact on society. This week's Speech from the Throne says that 'these ideas have been analyzed for financial impacts, economic impacts, gender impacts, children's rights impacts and broader public policy impacts.'

"Although the impact on the government's finances have been made public, none of the other impacts have been shared with New Brunswickers. How can we make informed choices without this information?" says New Brunswick Federation of Labour President Patrick Colford, "We also need to better understand the cumulative effects of the how the cuts to programs and services and increases in taxes and fees will work together. Who will benefit and who will suffer?"

Many recommendations brought forward in the Strategic Program Review did not make it to the final report. Have these ideas also been evaluated for their various impacts? If so, this information should be shared with New Brunswickers before final choices are made. For example, the New Brunswick Federation of Labour (NBFL) recommended raising the corporate tax rate to the same rate as PEI and Nova Scotia, at 16 per cent, which would generate an additional \$60 million in revenue. The NBFL also recommended introducing public automobile insurance. According to a 2004 all-party government committee, public automobile insurance would generate an additional \$275 million in revenue in its second year of operation. Why were these ideas not selected? What would have been their impact on the economy, gender, children, etc?

The Strategic Program Review Choices Report includes many possible cuts to public services and the loss of many good paying jobs. Research shows, in contrast, that the highest returns on government investment, measured both in terms of increases to GDP and job creation, go to investments made in child care services, health care, social services, public infrastructure and education.

"I fear that cuts to programs and services and increases to taxes and fees will impact society's most vulnerable disproportionately and will increase the already large gap between the wealthy and the rest of us. The role of government is to make sure that economic growth benefits all segments of society and contributes to increased equity and equality." Concludes President Colford.

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The New Brunswick Federation of Labour is New Brunswick's largest central labour body representing 40,000 members of both public sector and private sector labour unions.

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