

Income Inequality in Atlantic Canada

Final report on NUPGE's campaign
to spark conversations about the
growing gap between rich and poor
on Canada's East Coast





CONTENTS

CAMPAIGN OUTLINE	4
THE FAIRNESS DEFICIT	6
ONLY FAIR IS FAIR – INCOME INEQUALITY ISN'T	10
ROADMAP FOR FAIRNESS	14
THE FACES OF RISING INCOME INEQUALITY	20
CAMPAIGNERS	28
MEDIA COVERAGE	29
COMMUNITIES & EVENTS	30
FURTHER READING	32



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*Through the tax code, there has been class warfare waged, and my class has won.
It's been a rout. — Warren Buffett, Nov. 15 2011*

INTRODUCTION

Income inequality is the statistical measure of how fairly wealth is shared in a country, province, or community. The higher the income inequality, the less fairly wealth is shared.

Across the globe, income inequality is rising fast and leaders are sounding the alarm. US President Barack Obama. UK Prime Minister David Cameron. Pope Francis. Celebrity investor Warren Buffett. The World Bank. The International Monetary Fund. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. They all recognize the simple fact that when the few have too much wealth, the many don't have enough – and everybody ends up suffering.

Yet in Canada, where income inequality has also been rising steadily for more than three decades, it's rarely talked about. So over the course of six weeks in the fall of 2013, a group of more than 30 public sector union members in Atlantic Canada set out to start changing that with a campaign called “Only Fair is Fair - Income Inequality Isn't.”

Travelling in groups on board a big green coach bus dubbed “The Fairness Express,” the campaigners spread out across the four Atlantic provinces in search of everyday people to talk to. They went to county fairs, farmers' markets, college campuses, concerts, and coffee shops – anywhere they could find a crowd. It certainly wasn't the usual kind of union campaign. No specific bargaining issue. No chants. No picket signs. Just individual

conversations, thousands of them. Because when it comes to sparking fundamental change – and fundamental change is what it will take to lower income inequality and tilt the balance back towards fairness – there is little as powerful as a face-to-face, eye-to-eye conversation.

What the campaigners experienced during those conversations was both sobering and inspiring.

They met people from almost all walks of life: students, parents, professionals, labourers, entrepreneurs, and retirees. While few had heard the term “income inequality,” most were painfully aware that it exists. Atlantic Canadians can see the wealth in their communities – the millions made every year by the executives at Sobeys, Aliant, Emera, and McCain, and the billions in profits posted by the Royal Bank and Irving and Imperial Oil – but they don’t benefit from it in their own lives. Instead, they have to stretch farther each week, each day, to cover the rising costs of child-care, housing, pharmaceuticals, or education.

The stories of sacrifice and suffering the campaigners heard were often heart wrenching, but even more wrenching was the overwhelming sense of helplessness they encountered – the widespread belief that the growing gap between the rich and the rest of us is a natural part of economics, as inevitable as the rising sun or falling rain.

It’s not. And armed with facts and figures about our economy, stories about the incredible things Canadians have built and accomplished despite mighty resistance from the powerfully rich, and a detailed analysis of how our country became so unfair over the past generation and a roadmap back towards fairness, the campaigners tried to steer every conversation towards hope.

And they encouraged everybody they spoke with to do two things: vote every chance they got and, perhaps even more important, to continue the conversation about fairness with their friends, family, neighbours, and co-workers. It’s only when the many actively express their desire for fairness that they are able to

wrest it from the few.

Was the campaign a success? We visited 31 communities and participated in 49 events or gatherings. We engaged more than 3,000 people in face-to-face conversations. We were covered by 33 media outlets – newspapers, radio and TV stations, websites – with a potential reach in the hundreds of thousands. We distributed 2,500 fairness-themed t-shirts and 500 bumper magnets. And in the process, we gave more than three dozen union activists direct experience engaging strangers in conversations about politics, economics, and fairness.

So the numbers certainly look good, but the campaign will only be judged a success when Canada begins the long road back to fairness.



James Clancy

President, National Union of Public and General Employees



Members of the National Union of Public and General Employees National Executive Board (left). NUPGE President James Clancy (far right) with Fairness Express driver Lester Barkhouse.

CAMPAIGN OUTLINE

Only Fair is Fair - Income Inequality Isn't

The Issue: As in much of the rest of the world, economic prosperity in Atlantic Canada is being shared much less fairly than it has been in the past. This is reflected in rising rates of income inequality, a statistic which measures the gap between the incomes of the wealthiest and least wealthy members of a particular jurisdiction.

The Consequences: When a small group of people accumulate too much of a jurisdiction's wealth, the rest are left with not enough. The consequences include increased poverty, mental illness, child mortality and incarceration rates, and decreased educational achievement, democratic participation, and life expectancy.

The Cause: Rising income inequality is the result of government policies which prioritize corporate profits over citizen well-being. Though different from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, these policies generally fall under four spheres:

- Corporate tax cuts, subsidies, and regulatory relief
- Cuts to and privatization of public services
- Industrial strategies focussed on wage-lowering international trade deals and the rapid export of raw resources
- Curtailment of labour rights

The Remedy: Income inequality can be lowered, and economic fairness increased, through widespread citizen support of politicians who will champion policies which prioritize citizen well-being at least as high as corporate profits. Such policies would generally foster:

- Tax Fairness
- Quality Public Services

-
- Industrial Strategies that put people and nature first, focussing on ventures which capitalize on our highly educated population, add value to our natural resources, and pay appropriately
 - Labour Rights

The Campaign: Increase the public awareness of rising income inequality – both its causes and consequences – and encourage the widespread discussion of policies that will remedy it. Recognizing that the issue won't be remedied overnight, the campaign focussed less on providing people with “one-off” actions (such as signing a petition or a letter to a politician) and more on engaging them in a real conversation that will lead them to, in turn, have similar conversations with their own friends, family members, neighbours, and co-workers.

The Campaigners: The campaign was carried out by more than three dozen members of the major provincial public sector unions in Atlantic Canada. Groups of them travelled on board a rented coach bus dubbed “The Fairness Express” to community events and public spaces throughout the region between Sept. 14 and Oct. 30, 2013. The campaign itself was sponsored and co-ordinated by the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees (NAPE), the New Brunswick Union of Public and Private Employees (NBU), the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU), the Prince Edward Island Union of Public Sector Employees (UPSE), and their national union, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE).

The Campaign Accomplishments: More than three dozen campaigners visited 31 communities and took part in 49 different community events or gatherings. They spoke with more than 3,000 people about income inequality, collected almost 1,500 email addresses, and distributed 2,500 t-shirts, 500 bumper magnets, and 200 tour jackets. The campaign was covered by 33 media outlets.

THE FAIRNESS DEFICIT

Early evening in Corner Brook, NL. Outside the town's main rink, a woman approaches us after registering her elementary-school age daughter in figure skating. But despite the fact that her province boasts one of the hottest economies in the world – booming with oil, ore, and hydro – the woman tells us she almost couldn't afford the fee.

"It's up \$50 this year. That might not seem like much to some people, but for me it was agonizing," she told us. "I work full-time, but every dollar I make is budgeted for. I went through the numbers over and over again, but that extra \$50 just wasn't there. So I had to tell her we just couldn't afford it this year.

"But she loves skating and she came up with a solution: she decided she wouldn't go to any birthday parties this year. With the money we're saving from those gifts, we could afford skating lessons."

Most of us want Canada to be a fair country. It just feels right – why should somebody get a leg up just because of who their parents are or where they grew up? On a deeper level, a level playing field is right because it pays dividends to us all. The more of us who are healthy, educated and secure, the more our country will be productive, innovative and prosperous.

But fairness doesn't just happen: it can only be achieved through effort, investment, and even struggle. Our parents, grandparents and great grandparents understood this well. It's



Atlantic Canada's Rising Income Inequality

	Canada	NB	NS	PEI	NL
Level of income inequality in 1987*	0.287	0.274	0.272	0.262	0.279
Level of income inequality in 2011*	0.313	0.289	0.282	0.279	0.308
Growth of income inequality between 1987 and 2011	9% increase	5.5% increase	3.7% increase	6.5% increase	10.3% increase

The level of income inequality in an area is expressed in a measure called "the Gini Coefficient", the numbers used in this chart. The higher the number, the greater the income inequality. These figures represent the provinces' Gini Coefficients calculating the people's after-tax income and including health, education, and social services benefits they have received.

why they struggled so mightily against powerful resistance to create institutions of fairness such as public education, universal health-care, old-age security, and a defined-benefit pension plan that is the envy of the world. They demanded these things to ensure that every Canadian – no matter their heritage, connections or place of birth – had a fair shot at a decent life. Their struggles paid off: income inequality, the measure social scientists and economists use to track how fairly wealth is shared, fell steadily in Canada throughout much of the 20th Century¹.

In 1980, however, an idea swept across Canada and the rest of the world that set income inequality rising and put fairness in jeopardy. It was a seductively simple idea: unleash corporations in

¹ For a definitive primer on income inequality and the good it does a community when it falls – including increasing life expectancy, educational achievement and democratic participation, and decreasing cases of mental illness, child mortality rates, and the number of people in prison – see the book *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* written in 2009 by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett.

their pursuit of profit and we will all prosper. Unlike government, the idea went, the free market is not susceptible to incompetence or waste or even unfairness. Just remove impediments to the market – things like corporate taxes, public services, long-term industrial strategies, and unions – and the resulting boom in profits will trickle naturally down, as though by gravity, to all hard-working people.

Politicians flocked to the idea and voters followed. More wealth, more fairness, less effort; it was just too good to resist. But now we're starting to see that it was really just too good to be true.

Wealth has certainly boomed: our per capita gross domestic product is more than twice what it was in the 1980s. And as the richest Canadians have seen their wealth skyrocket – there are now 61 billionaires in the country who earn roughly the same in a year as 17 million working Canadians – they have wielded their wealth to amass even more, supporting politicians who have over the past generation:

- Cut high-income taxes by a quarter and corporate taxes by half
- Starved and privatized public services
- Presided over low-wage job strategies and trade deals that prioritize profits over people and nature
- Enacted more than 200 laws curtailing labour rights, pushing down the number of Canadians in unions by 25 per cent.

But for the vast majority of Canadians, the nation's prosperity isn't so much trickling down as trickling away: every year for almost 30 years, income inequality has gone up. For many of those years, however, the damage being done was masked. As most people's wages stalled in the 1980s, they started working longer hours, and some took second jobs. It became common, even necessary, for both people in a couple to work full-time. The aggressive marketing of cheap credit also masked the growing



problem: people simply started borrowing their way out of trouble.

But after 30 years of stagnant wages, longer hours, less stable work, and record indebtedness, the strain is becoming unbearable. The costs of housing and education have shot up. Contract and part-time jobs have become the norm. And secure retirement has become a dream.

For the few at the top, life is sweet. But for the rest of us, like the working mother who must watch her daughter decide between figure skating and her friends' birthday parties, day-to-day life is hardening into a series of increasingly difficult choices, shameful indignities, and heartbreaking sacrifices.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. The bad news is that without effort and even struggle, it will only get worse.

ONLY FAIR IS FAIR – INCOME INEQUALITY ISN'T

“The Fairness Express bus tour was one fantastic experience,” wrote one of the Fairness Express campaigners after the tour wrapped up.

“I met some more beautiful people and have learned so much about myself in the process. Keep talking, people, about income inequality and fair taxation because this affects us all. We all have the responsibility to educate and communicate and hopefully we as the people in this country will be the difference! I’m truly feeling a huge sense of accomplishment”

Long before dawn one mid-September morning in Dartmouth, NS, a dozen public sector union members boarded a big green coach dubbed The Fairness Express. They were a varied group – a hospital ward clerk, an elementary school educational assistant, group home workers, a university administrator, a gaming inspector – but they shared in common the conviction that they could help make Atlantic Canada a better place.

Like many public sector workers, they’ve had front-row seats to the growing fairness deficit in their communities. Their jobs bring them face-to-face every day with people from all walks of life, including some of the most vulnerable. And despite our country’s growing wealth, they’ve seen first-hand that more people seem to need help and more people are in danger of falling right through the cracks.

And so they’d gathered early that morning to take part in a





campaign called “Only Fair is Fair – Income Inequality Isn’t” being co-mounted by their union, NSGEU, the other three major provincial public sector unions in Atlantic Canada – NAPE, NBU, and UPSE – and their national umbrella group, NUPGE². It was the first day of the campaign and the group of NSGEU members taking part that day were bound for the Yarmouth International Air Show, about four hours away on Nova Scotia’s southern tip, where crowds in the thousands were expected to gather.

The idea that day – and for the rest of the six-week campaign – was to talk to as many Atlantic Canadians as possible. It wasn’t

2 NSGEU is the 31,000-member Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union. NAPE is the 28,000-member Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees. NBU is the 8,500-member New Brunswick Union. UPSE is the 5,000-member Prince Edward Island Union of Public Sector Employees. NUPGE is the 340,000-member National Union of Public and General Employees.



the usual kind of union campaign. No specific bargaining issue. No petition. No chants and no picket signs. Just go out and spark conversations about income inequality.

The statistics are clear enough: income inequality is going up in each of the region's four provinces. But the goal was to reach deeper than numbers and put a real face on the kind of unfairness those numbers represent. How are people feeling about their lives and the prospects for their families and their communities? What do they feel needs to be done to improve those prospects? And what kind of power do they feel they have to see those improvements start to take shape?

In a scene that would be repeated throughout the campaign, the campaigners were exhausted but elated by the end of that first day. They'd spoken to hundreds of people and although few had ever heard the term "income inequality" before, it didn't take much explanation before they understood the concept and recognized its consequences in their own lives and communities.

Encouraged to talk about their own experiences and opinions, heartfelt and often heartbreaking stories poured out of people. Soon, a portrait emerged of financial struggles that stretched from childhood to old age. Expensive childcare. Crushing tuition. Grim job prospects. Stagnant wages. Food inflation. Rising housing costs. Diminishing pensions. And throughout, growing health care fees and shrinking social programs.

But while many recognized that "something was wrong," they weren't sure what the problem actually was or how it should be addressed. Many felt it *couldn't be* addressed, that it was simply a



natural part of capitalism.

The campaigners did their best to explain that growing income inequality is the result of government policy and to dispel any notion that it's natural or inevitable:

- They reminded people that universal healthcare was a mighty struggle in Canada and that the majority who wanted it faced opposition from the rich and powerful – that doctors in Saskatchewan actually went on strike in a vain attempt to derail it.
- They told people that the European Union is drawing close to establishing a minuscule “Robin Hood Tax” on the transactions of large financial institutions that will nevertheless raise billions for environmental and social causes.
- They pointed out that the amount of money Canadian governments have given up due to tax credits since the 1980s is roughly the same amount – \$500 billion – that the governor of the Bank of Canada last year said Canadian corporations were hoarding on their balance sheets; “dead money” that had been sucked out of our common wealth.

Often the conversation would at this point take a different turn. For the campaigners, it was an invigorating moment: like seeing a light come on, resignation turning to a desire to act. But what kind of action? How, most of the people the campaigners talked to yearned to know, could they as individuals reshape an entire nation, tilt its priorities back towards basic fairness?

ROADMAP FOR FAIRNESS

The first and most important step towards lower income inequality – towards fairness – is acknowledging that fairness takes effort. The promise of the politics of the past 30 years has been that if we simply unleash the market, the market will naturally ensure wealth is fairly distributed, no effort required. It's shown itself to be an empty promise.

But if we're going to commit to making an effort, what should that effort be? There are many to choose from – including joining a political party, volunteering for a non-profit, or participating in your union – but two that are particularly vital:

- **Voting every chance you get.** During the six weeks The Fairness Express was travelling throughout Atlantic Canada, there were two general elections. Newfoundland and Labradorians had the opportunity to vote for their municipal councillors, but only 44 per cent made the effort. Nova Scotians had the opportunity to vote for their MLAs, but only 59 per cent made the effort. Such low turn-outs favour the status quo.
- **Talk about fairness.** If the Fairness Express taught us anything, it's that the vast majority of people feel something's wrong but aren't sure what. But the more we talk about our desire for fairness with our friends, families, neighbours, and co-workers, the more responsive our politicians will become.





But what, specifically, should we be voting for and talking about? The campaigners offered up a general framework people can use when they're thinking about government policies and trying to decide if they will promote or hinder fairness. They fall under four general categories, the titles of which were emblazoned on the side of The Fairness Express: "Tax Fairness", "Public Services", "Good jobs", and "Labour Rights."

- **Tax Fairness:** Tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy have been the cornerstone of politics over the past generation. High-income earners have seen their taxes cut by a quarter and corporations have had their taxes cut in half while most of the rest of us have seen only small tax cuts or, for the poorest, tax hikes. It's time to ensure everybody is paying their fair share.
- **Public Services:** Public education, public health care, and public social services ensure that everybody has an equal shot at a prosperous and productive life. A common



refrain over the past decade is that public services are too expensive and that the only answer is to either cut or privatize. But in reality, the problem is that as corporate and high-income earner taxes have been cut, governments have been starved of resources to provide those services. It's time to recognize that public services have a revenue problem, not an expenditure problem, and ensure they receive the revenue they need.

- **Good Jobs:** Successful economies make things, but another cornerstone of politics over the past generation has been to exert very little influence or direction on what our economy makes. Instead, our politicians have simply focussed on negotiating low-wage trade deals with other countries and removing environmental or financial restrictions to the simple extraction and export of our raw natural resources. It's time to reassert our influence over our economy and promote the creation of industries that



leverage our resources and our creativity to make things, and value people and nature as much as profits.

- **Protect Labour Rights:** Over the past generation, more than 200 new laws have been introduced provincially and federally in Canada that have restricted Canadians' right to bargain collectively. Over the same period, the number of Canadians in unions has dropped by a quarter, a fact that alone has contributed to as much as 20 per cent of the rise in income inequality in the country. Unions ensure decent wages, safe workplaces, and secure livelihoods. They also foster the greater good, leading the charge for things like Medicare, the Canada Pension Plan, and respect for the basic human rights of women, minorities, people who are gay, lesbian, or transgendered, and people with disabilities. It's time to reassert the value of unions to all Canadians, and pass laws that strengthen our labour rights.



The campaigners also had some specific ideas to offer. The ones that received the most enthusiastic response included:

- **Robin Hood Tax:** The European Union is getting closer and closer to enacting a tiny tax – just 0.05 per cent – on every transaction made by banks and other large financial institutions. If passed, it will raise billions towards social and environmental programs. Well aware of Canadian banks’ massive profits each quarter, many felt it was appropriate to enact a similar tax here.
- **National Child-Care Program:** Many parents and grandparents were agog to learn that in Québec, child-care costs are rarely more than \$200 a month, less than a third of what most Atlantic Canadians have to pay. Québec’s child-care is so much more affordable because its government has a child-care program. Canada should, too.
- **Boost the Canada Pension Plan:** The CPP is the envy of the world: a massive, healthy, and well-managed pension plan that helps keep millions of retirees out of poverty. It works and would work even better if premiums and benefits were nudged upwards.



These conversations weren't just a one-way street, however. A number of the people the Fairness Express campaigners met also had a few compelling ideas of their own:

- **Tax brackets for corporations:** Corporate taxes have been cut in half over the past generation. Those cuts make some sense for small businesses that need help surviving and flourishing. But do large, established corporations really need such a windfall? Why not establish a bracket system similar to personal income tax: the more profit a corporation earns, the higher its tax rate?
- **Maximum wage:** We agree as provinces on the minimum amount people can be paid, why not agree on a maximum? A simple approach might be to set the maximum wage in ratio to a firm's or organization's average wage.
- **Compulsory voting:** In Australia, citizens risk a fine if they don't vote. After all, voting is as much a responsibility as a privilege, and we should take steps to ensure people honour that responsibility.

THE FACES OF RISING INCOME INEQUALITY

Over the course of the six week campaign, the Fairness Express campaigners met thousands of Atlantic Canadians in more than 30 different communities. Here are brief snapshots of some of those conversations.

“See the crack in this tooth,” said a retiree we met in western Newfoundland, pointing to a clear fissure running down one of her front teeth. “I can feel this all the time – it hurts – but I can’t afford to have it taken care of.” She’s already stretching her budget to pay \$200 a month for extra health insurance, but a loophole in the policy is allowing the company to wriggle out of paying for the \$1,000-dollar procedure she needs. “My policy includes dental, but the fine print says they’ll only pay for tooth repair, not replacement,” she says. “My dentist says my tooth is too far gone to be repaired, so I’m out of luck.”

A graphic design student at the College of the North Atlantic in St. John’s told us how frustrated she was when one of her instructors recently handed her back an assignment and told her it wasn’t up to her usual standard. “I told him it’s because I’ve had to take a second job because I wasn’t able to afford groceries. He told me I have to feed my mind as well. Sure, but I can’t wait until after I’ve graduated to buy food!”

In Kentville, NS, a man who owns a chimney-sweep business told us he feels minimum wage laws prevent him from hiring as many people as he’d like. “Is it better for me to hire three people



at a good wage, or five people at a decent wage?” We told him that we’re want small businesses hiring as many people as possible, but that these days, his idea of a “decent wage” might just consign his employees to working poverty. Shifting the argument a little, we suggested: “If large corporations were paying their fair share of taxes, people wouldn’t have to pay so much extra for health-care or education or day care and a ‘decent wage’ wouldn’t be so difficult for your employees to get by on.” He looked at us and nodded: “That actually makes good sense.”

“I’ve always tried to be an honest person,” a man in Campbellton, NB, told us, “but I feel like this government is forcing me to become a liar.” He and his wife had stopped by our barbecue and were telling us how the changes to the EI system were affecting their family. He has a seasonal job that kept him working nine months of the year, but he’s at risk of losing his EI benefits if he doesn’t apply for any other work that’s available, even if it’s an expensive commute down the highway. And when



he does apply, the first thing most employers ask is how long he's available. "Who's going to hire me if I tell them I'm just available for three months?" he asks. "I'd have to lie to get the offer."

Early evening in Corner Brook, NL. Outside the town's main rink, a woman approaches us after registering her elementary-school age daughter in figure skating. "The fee for skating is up \$50 this year. That might not seem like much to some people, but for me it was agonizing. I work full-time but I only make \$10 an hour. Every dollar I make is budgeted, and the money just wasn't there. I had to tell her we just couldn't afford it this year," she told us. "But she loves skating and she came up with a solution: she decided she wouldn't go to any birthday parties this year. With the money we're saving from those gifts, we could afford skating lessons."

"A lot of people think a lobster tag is a licence to print money, but it sure isn't these days," a woman from Nova Scotia's eastern



shore told us. A recently retired fisheries officer, she told us many of the fishermen she knows are barely getting by. “They’re paid \$3.75 a pound for lobster at wharf, but then it’s sold for \$15.99 in the store. Where is all that extra money going?”

Outside the Irish Rover’s farewell concert in Corner Brook, a woman related to a prominent Newfoundland and Labrador politician was shocked to learn just how severely corporate taxes have been cut over the past generation (they’re half what they were in the 80s). She was outraged that many of Canada’s largest corporations are simply hoarding the windfall on their balance sheets – the “dead money” as then-Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney called it in 2012. “I’m going to talk to him [her relative] the next time I see him,” she told us. “He needs to know this stuff.”

A young man who’s a student at the College of the North Atlantic, and an active volunteer in his community, and whose father owns a business, told us he thinks unions are fundamentally unfair because unionized employees are protected from consequences when they don’t work hard. We countered that there will always be bad apples out there and that, yes,



unions have a duty to protect them from unfair and overly zealous punishment, but that to dismantle unions is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. “Rather than take away everybody’s right to defend themselves, we’d rather give that right to more people.”

Over and over, we met people who are incredibly anxious about growing old. One woman in Miramichi City, NB, was especially blunt. “I’m close to 60, but I’m not going to be around to see retirement,” she told us. “I’ll kill myself first.” We were shocked, but she insisted she’s serious. “I’ll never be able to put up with what old people have to put up with. The poverty. The shame. That’s no way to live.”

A small group of instructors at the College of the North Atlantic weren’t afraid to wear their hearts on their sleeves. The conversation started with a human resources instructor tearing up as she talked about the fact kids today won’t likely enjoy the



same quality of life as her generation. “My son has to work in Fort Mac. The money’s good, but he’s not even really saving anything because he’s two weeks on and one week off, so is spending most of his money just travelling.” Her friend, a nursing instructor, was likewise despairing about the future faced by her students. “What can we do about it?” she asked. As we talked about the variety of policies that would leave all of us with a fairer share of the country’s prosperity, we emphasized the importance of hope and optimism. “Yes,” she said. “Hope is a good thing. A good beginning.” Their other friend, a French instructor, cautioned against passive optimism, saying we can’t just sit back and hope things get better. “Sometimes you have to shout together to get attention,” he said. “Sometimes you have to swear.”

Three co-owners of a property appraisal business in the Annapolis Valley got nervous when we suggested corporate taxes have been cut too much over the past generation. “Bigger corporations can spend money and energy working to reduce



their taxes, but we're small enough that we can only concentrate on running the business itself," one of them told us. "Having straightforward and low taxes have allowed us to hire another person." That's great, we replied. But since so many large businesses are hoarding their tax savings instead of hiring with it – what if we implemented more tax brackets for corporations (right now there are only two brackets) in the same way that we have a variety of brackets for personal income tax. "I'd vote for that," he said.

At Memorial University in Newfoundland and Labrador, we met a number of students from Nova Scotia who, despite the fact their home province has seven universities, couldn't afford an education there. If NL hadn't frozen its tuition, those students would all have to leave the region altogether. "It's like half the price here," one of them told us. "I can barely afford the tuition. There's no way I'd be able to go to university back home."

Outside a Buffy Sainte-Marie concert in Fredericton, NB, we spoke with a 50-year-old who'd served in the forces in Bosnia.



He'd lost a leg in combat and, like a lot of veterans these days, has to struggle to get the support he felt he'd been promised by the federal government, which seems primarily concerned with cutting costs. But he says he has it easy compared to the men and women returning from combat with psychological instead of physical wounds. "I feel sorry for the people suffering post-traumatic stress disorder," he said. "For them, it's a constant fight to get the help they need."

At the farmer's market in New Glasgow, NS, a man who works at a local call centre told us a story that made us cringe. Every month, he gets a note from the HR department telling him how many vacation days he's accrued. Over the summer, he decided to cash it all in and his manager approved. But when he got back, he found another note from HR saying they'd mistakenly given him an extra day off. "They said they considered the last day I'd taken off an 'unexcused absence,'" he told us. "Not only did they dock me a day's pay, they also gave me demerit points!" His manager told him he'd follow up on it, but doesn't seem to have. And without a collective agreement, he has no other recourse. "I just have to suck it up," he said. "Makes me wish we had a union."

CAMPAIGNERS

NAME	UNION
Al Mullins	NBU
Andy Parsons	NAPE
Anthony White	NBU
Anick Carruthers	NBU
Bert Blundon	NAPE
Brendan Ellsworth	UPSE
Carol Furlong	NAPE
Cathy Quilty	NAPE
Dan Quilty	NAPE
Darren McPhee	NSGEU
Debbie Boyer	UPSE
Earl Hann	NAPE
Eileen Brown Wilt	UPSE
Éliette Le Breton	NBU
Glenn Kennedy	NSGEU
Heather-Ann Slade	NSGEU
Ian Donald	NBU
Jason MacLean	NSGEU
Jean-Marie Michaud	NBU
Jim Fudge	NAPE
Joan Jessome	NSGEU
Joely Balazs	NBU
John Arthur Ramsay	UPSE

NAME	UNION
Kathy Oake	NAPE
Kelly Murphy	NSGEU
Kim Nichols	NSGEU
Laurie Hiscock	UPSE
Lisa Watters	NBU
Melissa Hanley	NBU
Michelle Robertson	NBU
Nanette Doherty	NSGEU
Natalie Hillier	NSGEU
Normand Bourque	NBU
Peggy Firlotte	NBU
Randy Avery	NAPE
Rick Wiseman	NSGEU
Robyn Goodwin	NSGEU
Ron Patterson	NSGEU
Shelley Coulombe	NBU
Sue Sutherland	NSGEU
Susan Breen	NSGEU
Susie Proulx-Daigle	NBU
Tammy Gillis	NSGEU
Terry Richard	NBU
Vida Hoff	NAPE

MEDIA COVERAGE

MEDIUM	OUTLET	COVERAGE AREA
TV	Corner Brook Café	Corner Brook, NL
	CTV Atlantic News	NS, NB, PEI
	Global News Maritimes	NS, NB, PEI
	Here and Now	NL
	NTV Evening News	NL
RADIO	98.9 XFM	Antigonish County, NS
	101.5 The Hawk	Port Hawkesbury, NS
	AVR 97.7	Annapolis Valley, NS
	East Coast FM 94.1	Pictou County, NS
	KHJ	Fredericton, NB
	Magic 94.9	Annapolis Valley, NS
	News 95.7	Halifax, NS
	Radio Free Saint John	Saint John, NB
	The Fox 105.3	Fredericton, NB
	VOCM Radio	NL
	West Coast Morning	Corner Brook, NL
	PRINT	Antigonish Casket
Cape Breton Post		Cape Breton, NS
Charlottetown Guardian		PEI
Chronicle Herald		NS
Clarenville Packet		Clarenville, NL
Cumberland News Now		Amherst and Springhill, NS
Grand Falls-Windsor Advertiser		Grand Falls-Windsor, NL
L'Aviron		Campbellton, NB
Miramichi Leader		Miramichi, NB
New Glasgow Evening News		Pictou County, NS
Port Hawkesbury Reporter		Port Hawkesbury, NS
Queens County Advance		Liverpool and Bridgewater, NS
Restigouche.net		Miramichi, NB
Summerside Journal-Pioneer		Summerside, PEI
The Georgian		Stephenville, NL
Western Star		Corner Brook, NL
Yarmouth Vanguard		Yarmouth County, NS

COMMUNITIES & EVENTS

COMMUNITY	EVENT	APPROX. PEOPLE TALKED WITH
Dartmouth, NS	Canadian Labour Congress training session for 'Together, Fairness Works' campaign	100
Yarmouth, NS	International Air Show	300
Halifax, NS	Atlantic Film Festival	30
	Nova Scotia Federation of Labour Convention	65
	Rally against Emera Layoffs	-
Summerside, PEI	CUPE Health Accord Town Hall	25
Caledonia, NS	Queens County Fair	150
Saint John, NB	Rally for the "Saint John 7"	20
Moncton, NB	Wildcats hockey game	25
	Touchdown Atlantic CFL game	30
Dieppe, NB	Dieppe Farmers' Market	100
Charlottetown, PEI	AIDS Walk For Life	30
	Charlottetown Farmers' Market	25
	University of Prince Edward Island	60
	PEI Union of Public Sector Employees (UPSE) Emergency Pension Meeting	20
	International day for the Eradication of Poverty	60
Montague, PEI	PEI Union of Public Sector Employees (UPSE) Emergency Pension Meeting	60
Corner Brook, NL	Hockey/figure skating sign-up	20
	Municipal election polling booth	15
	Memorial University (Grenfell Campus) and Corner Brook High School BBQ lunch	60
	Queer Prom	10
	Irish Rovers Farewell tour	15
Grand Falls-Windsor, NL	College of the North Atlantic	50
Stephenville, NL	College of the North Atlantic	60
Port au Port, NL	Port Au Port Fall Fair	90

COMMUNITY	EVENT	APPROX. PEOPLE TALKED WITH
Truro, NS	NSGEU Family Day	30
Fredericton, NB	Buffy Sainte-Marie Concert	25
	Fredericton Farmers' Market	45
	New Brunswick Union (NBU) Component Meeting	20
Campbellton, NB	BBQ at Riverside Park	50
Dalhousie, NB	BBQ at Rotary Park	30
Miramichi, NB	BBQ at Waterford Green	70
Kentville, NS	Downtown Information Table	40
Wolfville, NS	Native Spirits Aboriginal Art and Literature Mawio'mi (Gathering) at Acadia University	15
New Glasgow, NS	New Glasgow Farmers' Market	60
Windsor, NS	Windsor Pumpkin Regatta	120
Springhill, NS	Dr Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre	75
Antigonish, NS	Downtown Information Table	100
Sydney, NS	Cape Breton Farmers' Market	250
	Tim Hortons	15
Cabot Strait	Marine Atlantic Ferry between Cape Breton and Newfoundland-Labrador	80
Gander, NL	College of the North Atlantic	50
Clarenville, NL	College of the North Atlantic	60
St. John's, NL	Labatt picket line	15
	NAPE (Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees) Convention	250
	Labatt rally	-
	College of the North Atlantic	80
	Memorial University	120
Port Hawkesbury, NS	Nova Scotia Community College	70
31	49	3,090

FURTHER READING

The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger (2009) by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

The definitive primer on income inequality and the good it does a community when it falls – including increasing life expectancy, educational achievement and democratic participation, and decreasing cases of mental illness, child mortality rates, and the number of people in prison.

alltogethernow.nupge.ca

Altogether Now! is a four-year-old campaign undertaken by Canada's National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) to encourage and support its members as they work to reduce income inequality across the country. The website contains information about income inequality in Canada, along with initiatives and action that all Canadians can take part in.

www.nupge.ca

As the national union of Canada's major provincial public sector unions, The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) has more than 340,000 members. Its mission is to improve the lives of working families by ensuring our common wealth is used for the common good.

www.taxfairness.ca

Canadians for Tax Fairness is a group dedicated to ensuring that all citizens and businesses pay their fair share of taxes.

robinhoodtax.ca

The Robin Hood Tax is a small tax on banks and large financial institutions that could raise billions for environmental and social justice causes. It is close to becoming a reality in the European Union and this website is dedicated to making it a reality here too.

industrialstrategy.ca

Canadians for a Modern Industrial Strategy (CMIS) brings together people from labour, business and the community who believe our economic success and social well-being depend on

adopting a proactive industrial strategy that reduces inequality by creating good jobs and putting people and nature at the heart of the economy.

www.labourrights.ca

The Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights is a group which understands that labour rights are human rights. Its website contains news and information about the attacks on Canadians' labour rights and actions we can all take to help stop them.

www.publicservicesfoundation.ca

The Public Services Foundation of Canada is a national research and advocacy organization dedicated to defending and promoting the value of high quality public services. Its website contains research and news about the role of public services in supporting Canadian families and communities.

www.policyalternatives.ca

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives is an independent organization that undertakes and promotes research on economic and social policy issues from a progressive point of view.

operationmaple.ca

Operation Maple is a group of filmmakers and designers who produce short videos, infographics, and fast facts about income inequality and other social justice and environmental issues in the country. They're fun, fast, and easy to share.

www.rabble.ca

With more than a quarter-million visitors every month, Rabble is one of the country's most popular and active websites covering the news of the day from a progressive point of view.

www.huffingtonpost.ca/news/mind-the-gap

The Canadian edition of the wildly popular internet news source features an entire section dedicated to covering rising income inequality called "Mind The Gap."

ONLY FAIR IS FAIR!

Income inequality isn't!
#FAIRNESS EXPRESS

This is the defining issue of our time. At stake is whether this will be a country where working people can earn enough to raise a family, build a modest savings, own a home, and secure their retirement. — US President Barack Obama, Dec. 6, 2011

Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. — Pope Francis, Nov. 26, 2013.

If the minimum wage had kept pace over time with the average growth in productivity, it would be about \$17 an hour. The problem is that the benefits of that growth have flowed increasingly to profits, shareholders and executives, not workers. — NY Times editorial, Nov. 11, 2013

Among the richest countries, it's the more unequal ones that do worse according to almost every quality of life indicator. GDP is much less significant for a country's life expectancy, crime levels, literacy and health than the size of the gap between the richest and poorest in the population. — UK Prime Minister David Cameron, Nov. 10, 2009

“Inequality is getting wider. The rich are doing extremely well. Business profit margins are terrific compared to records historically. But many people, the bottom 20 per cent of households, live on \$22,000. I don't want to try to live on \$22,000 with a couple of kids. — Warren Buffett, Sept. 19, 2013

