

"Social Work Education: Brief to the Commission on Post-Secondary in New Brunswick"

SUBMITTED TO THE

Commission on Post-Secondary Education
535 Beaverbrook Court, Suite 105
Fredericton, New Brunswick
E3B 1X6

April 18, 2007

By:

Miguel LeBlanc, MSW candidate, RSW
Executive Director
New Brunswick Association of Social Workers
P.O. Box 1533, Station A
Fredericton, New Brunswick
E3B 5G2

Telephone: (506) 459-5595
Fax: (506) 457-1421
Email: nbasw@nbasw-atsnb.ca
Website: www.nbasw-atsnb.ca

Introduction:

The following brief is the summary of the New Brunswick Association of Social Work (NBASW) concerns, ideas, and recommendations to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick. The brief begins with a description of the NBASW mandate and outlines the responsibilities of our association as stated in *An Act to Incorporate the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers (1988)*¹. This brief will conclude with an outline of our concerns, ideas, and recommendations to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick.

NBASW mandate:

The NBASW is the professional association and regulatory body for social workers in this province. The practice of social work in New Brunswick is regulated by *An Act to Incorporate the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers (1988)*². The Board of Directors is comprised of an elected executive, one director from each local chapter, the NB Director to the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) board, a representative of the First Nation Social Workers; and one public member appointed by the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Board serves as the governing body of the general membership and administers the affairs of the Association. Currently, there are 14 members on the Board of Directors.

¹ Government of New Brunswick. (1988/2000). *An Act to Incorporate the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers*. Queen's Printer for New Brunswick.

²Ibid.

The practice of social work in New Brunswick is regulated by *The Act to Incorporate the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers (1988)*³. As a result, anyone who:

- practices as a social worker;
- uses the title of social worker or registered social worker, or makes use of any abbreviation of such title, or any name, title or designation which may lead to the belief that the person is a social worker;
- advertises or in any way or by any means holds himself or herself out as a social worker; or
- acts or holds himself or herself out in such manner as to lead to the belief that he or she is authorized to fill the office of or to act as a social worker;

must be a member in good standing of the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers.

Responsibility:

*The Act to Incorporate the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers (1988)*⁴ outlines the objectives of the NBASW as follows:

- (a) regulate the practice of social work and govern its members in accordance with this Act and by-laws, in order to serve and protect the public interest;

³ Government of New Brunswick. (1988/2000). *An Act to Incorporate the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers*. Queen's Printer for New Brunswick.

⁴ Ibid.

- (b) establish, maintain and develop standards of knowledge, skill and efficiency for the practice of social work;
- (c) establish, maintain, develop and enforce standards of qualification for the practice of social work;
- (d) establish, maintain, develop and enforce standards of professional ethics;
- (e) promote public awareness of the role of the Association and social work, and to communicate and co-operate with other professional organizations for the advancement of the best interests of the Association, including the publication of books, papers and journals;
- (f) provide means whereby its members may take action to pursue social justice and effect social change; and
- (g) encourage studies in social work and provide assistance and facilities for special studies and research.

NBASW Concerns, Ideas, and Recommendations:

The following list is a summary of our concerns, ideas, and recommendations to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick as it pertains to social work education in our province. It is important to note that this list should not be considered an exclusive summary and the points are not necessarily in order of priority:

- The NBASW agrees that mobility and costs are important challenges to social work students (and other students) who are pursuing a post-secondary education. Thus, we agree that options such as the decentralization of university courses to community colleges are viable alternatives, specifically for the 1st and 2nd year level of study. However, the professors teaching the social work courses must be academics from a university with an accredited Department of Social Work who holds a social work education. The NBASW minimum requirement for practicing social work in New Brunswick is a Bachelor of Social Work, thus, students who want to practice social work must graduate from an accredited Department of Social Work.
- The NBASW recommends that the process of decentralization of post-secondary education, as suggested by the Commission Discussion

Paper⁵, be monitored by a formal structure that is accountable and independent from government. The representatives who represent the monitoring structure should include people and organizations from the sectors of social work, social services, and health. The trade and business community cannot be the only representatives to this independent monitoring structure.

- The transfer of community college credits towards a Bachelor of Social Work university degree is acceptable; however, these credits must be reviewed with great scrutiny and the NBASW should be involved in the course audit process. This recommendations supports our obligations as described in *An Act to Incorporate the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers (1988)*, section 5 and section 6 (a, i, & k)⁶.
- In New Brunswick, there is a demand for social work professionals, and this demand for the skills and expertise of social work professionals will continue to grow in the future. In 2006, the NBASW released a survey from social workers who work in New Brunswick, which highlights the highly problematic working conditions of social

⁵ Government of New Brunswick. (2007). *Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick: Discussion Paper*. (March). Available Online: <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/docs/CPSENB-DiscussionPaper.pdf>.

⁶ Government of New Brunswick. (1988/2000). *An Act to Incorporate the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers*. Queen's Printer for New Brunswick.

work professionals⁷. This trend is further supported in a Canadian study on the social work sector, which highlights that the working conditions for professionals in the social work sector is highly taxing⁸. Thus, there is a demand for more social work graduates to work in New Brunswick. To meet this demand, the government must provide greater resources specifically allocated to both Departments of Social Work in New Brunswick.

- Currently, only one university, l'Université de Moncton, provides a French graduate program in social work in New Brunswick. The NBASW believes that an English graduate social work program, specifically a Masters of Social Work, should be developed for New Brunswick students who want to study and practice social work in our province. The NBASW believes this is one possible strategy for increasing new graduates of social work to practice and live in New Brunswick. In fact, the NBASW believes this compliments the objectives and ideas for decreasing the exodus of young New Brunswick professionals to other provinces.

⁷NBASW (June 1, 2006). News Conference. Available Online: <http://www.nbasw-atsnb.ca/PDF/media%20statement%20on%20Letterhead%20English.pdf>

⁸ Stephenson, M., Rondeau, G., Michaud, J.C., & Fiddler. (2001). *In Critical Demand: Social Work in Canada*. Toronto: Grant Thornton.

- The social work profession is seen as a non-traditional occupation for men⁹. Therefore, the NBASW recommends that greater effort is needed to promote the social work profession to young men. This can be accomplished with partnerships with provincial initiatives such as the government program, NB Career Surf¹⁰, which promotes opportunities to youths for working in non-traditional occupation that is dominated by one sex. Thus, in the case of social work professionals, more emphasis is needed to highlight the opportunities for men to practice social work in New Brunswick.
- The NBASW is concerned that the advisory committee of this commission is primarily dominated by representatives from the business sector¹¹. Our concern was reinforced when we learned from an article in the business section of the Telegraph Journal that states the "business community will have a strong voice during discussions about the future of universities and colleges in the province"¹². Therefore, the NBASW recommends to the commission that representatives from the social work, social services, and health sectors be included on the advisory committee. This recommendation would ensure that the social and health spheres of our labour force in

⁹ Christie, A. (2001). *Men and Social Work*. (Ed.). New York: Palgrave Publishers.
Stephenson, M., Rondeau, G., Michaud, J.C., & Fiddler, S. (2001). *In Critical Demand: Social Work in Canada*. Toronto: Grant Thornton.

¹⁰ Please see: <http://www.gnb.ca/0012/Womens-Issues/wg-es/careersurf/index-e.asp>

¹¹ Please see: <http://www.idconcept.net/cpse-ceps/EN/commissioners.html>

¹² Shipley, D. (April, 2007) Business Gets Voice on Education Advisory Committee. Telegraph Journal: B-1.

New Brunswick are not forgotten due to the lack of appropriate representatives from our sector on this panel.

Conclusion:

The NBASW agrees with the Commission on Post-Secondary Education that New Brunswick is experiencing a difficult future regarding our post-secondary education in the province. Therefore, the NBASW appreciates the opportunity to present our concerns, ideas, and recommendations to the commission. The NBASW wants to remind the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick that the final recommendations from the commission must not forget the needs and interests of our sectors. In the end, the needs from the business communities are different from the needs of our sectors. Thus, the NBASW would welcome the opportunity to further discuss our concerns, ideas, and recommendations with the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick in the development of your final report on the future of our post-secondary education.