

NEW BRUNSWICK FAMILY PLAN

ADVANCING WOMEN'S EQUALITY

MAY 2017



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Province of New Brunswick
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Education. Jobs. Families. Listening and getting things done.

Like the strong ties that bind families in our province together, this government has linked three major plans that – together – will improve the lives of all New Brunswickers for decades to come. Each plan is important in and of itself, but each plan also needs the others to succeed.

The **New Brunswick Family Plan** builds on the goals and achievements of our **Economic Growth Plan** and our **10-year Education Plans**. It also works in tandem with those plans to ensure that government is tackling important issues holistically and not operating in silos.

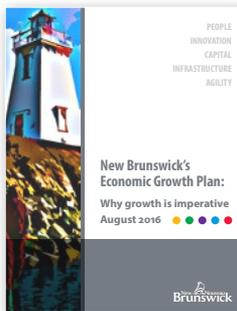
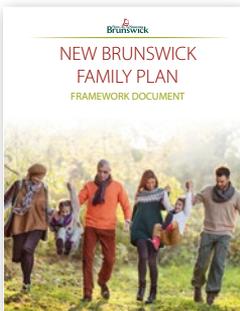
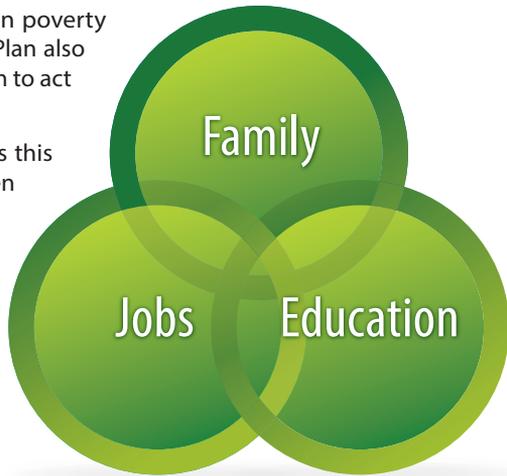
Our Economic Growth Plan must be supported by our education plans to be successful and to ensure that our workforce is well trained and innovative. Our economy also needs the social supports contained within the Family Plan in order to thrive fully.

Likewise, our education system needs a strong economy so that our graduates can find meaningful work here in New Brunswick. Our education system also needs the Family Plan so that the social determinants that impact a student's ability to learn can be addressed early on.

Finally, our Family Plan needs a strong economy so that equal opportunities are available for women and for people living in poverty or with a disability. The Family Plan also needs a strong education system to act as a social equalizer.

An integrated approach such as this one is important, especially when a number of government initiatives cut across all three of these plans.

For example, literacy is crucial to our Economic Growth Plan that aims to maintain an educated workforce. Literacy is also an important aspect of our education plans where students



are expected to make a seamless transition between learning to read and reading to learn. And finally, literacy is a key component of the Family Plan, especially as it relates to our ability to lift people out of poverty.

Other initiatives tie these plans together as well. For example, improved access to quality and affordable daycare services is as relevant to the New Brunswick workforce as it is to the education system where more students will arrive better prepared for their first year of learning. Of course, the expansion of daycare services supports various initiatives in the Family Plan, such as reducing poverty in our province.

Your government has laid the foundation for these plans to work together to achieve our collective goals. We achieve the best results when we work together and create interconnected plans focused on what matters most to New Brunswickers and their families.

These three plans work in tandem to create a unified vision that will guide your government in delivering results based on the priorities that you have shared with us.

Our collective efforts will make New Brunswick the best place to live, work and raise a family.

New Brunswick Family Plan

It is clear that individuals' socioeconomic circumstances have significant bearing on their health – and vice versa. The *New Brunswick Family Plan* is based on the premise that an integrated system of health and social care will help vulnerable populations lead independent, healthy and productive lives.

Integrating care can be particularly beneficial for the vulnerable segments of society that have difficulty accessing care due to social isolation or other barriers. This can include disadvantaged groups, persons with chronic conditions and persons with mental health problems.

The Family Plan also recognizes that health is much more than health care and that all partners must work together to address the social, economic and environmental determinants of health. Taking action on these factors builds communities and benefits society - good health matters to every person, family and community and is essential for economic and social development.

Just as the Family Plan is part of an integrated approach to help improve the lives of New Brunswickers, each of its pillars works in tandem with the others to provide a unified vision for program development and service delivery. For example, compassionate care and home and community-based care are also important components of healthy aging and support for seniors, and wellness plays an integral role in disease management and prevention.

Similarly, food security and healthy food availability, as well as affordable housing and transportation, have a deep impact on well-being; working toward equal pay for work of equal value and promoting inclusivity in the labour market are essential for reducing barriers that prevent individuals from participating fully in their communities; and advancing gender equality is critical to all aspects of a healthy society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health and well-being of all individuals.

Each pillar is a starting point for the development and implementation of effective policies, programs and strategies. Their success will be ensured by undertaking a comprehensive

approach within and across all sectors and by providing opportunities for all stakeholders to take coordinated action at various levels of influence, and in a variety of ways.

The seven pillars of the New Brunswick Family Plan:

- 1 Improving access to primary and acute care
- 2 Promoting wellness
- 3 Supporting those with addictions and mental health challenges
- 4 Fostering healthy aging and support for seniors
- 5 Advancing women's equality
- 6 Reducing poverty
- 7 Providing support for persons living with a disability

Introduction

As the Family Plan builds on the objectives and achievements of the Economic Growth Plan and the 10-year Education Plans, so too does it build on existing initiatives and strategies of government, such as the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, Wellness Strategy, Action Plan for Mental Health and the Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy.

Advancing Women's Equality delineates the goals and actions that will address the challenges women continue to face in the quest for gender equality. It is based on current initiatives, ongoing commitments and stakeholder feedback. Advancing gender equality is essential to growing the economy, strengthening the education system and improving health care.

The goals and actions of this plan will help address the inequities that persist in the work force, including representation in positions of leadership, and the challenges that affect the personal, economic and social security of all women. This is achieved through initiatives that reinforce access to education and training, financial independence and the right to live free from violence.

Advancing Women's Equality is also supported by initiatives currently underway as part of the Priority Delivery Unit on Families. The priority delivery units oversee cross-departmental initiatives to significantly reduce silo thinking and improve access to quality services and programs. Six initiatives in particular have an overall impact on women's equality.

- Addressing barriers to the recruitment of women to government agencies, boards and commissions to ensure more women are in positions of influence in New Brunswick. Having more women at the table will lead to equality and is proven to help the economy.
- Exploring opportunities to involve the private sector in improving pay equity. This will include encouraging the private sector to examine the wage gap within their organizations and assess whether systemic discrimination and/or pay inequities exist.
- Continuing to work with all parts of government to ensure that they are meeting the obligations of the *Pay Equity Act*.
- Increasing access to high quality childcare services. Affordable early learning and childcare services are essential to improving the status of women in the province.

- Establishing legislation on Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence (DIPV) to provide victims access to civil legislative remedies when they need them.
- Increasing the safety of victims and children through information-sharing and collaboration on safety planning and risk mitigation strategies. This coordinated community response will help make New Brunswick a safer place to raise a family.

These initiatives set the stage for a robust action plan on achieving the areas of focus outlined in the following pages.

Areas of focus

Evidence demonstrates that advancing gender equality strengthens the economy and improves the health of families. To promote gender equality and reduce systemic discrimination against women, efforts and concerted actions will be undertaken to achieve the areas of focus outlined below.

Recruiting more women to fill positions of influence. Ensuring women are provided opportunities to assume a position of responsibility is a critical element in enhancing diversity in New Brunswick. More work is needed to continue to strengthen gender balance in decision-making, in political and economic life and in the public and private sectors. This will help shape more effective policies, develop a gender-aware society and create a stronger and more prosperous province.

Actions

- Appointing more women to government agencies, boards and commissions.
- Providing a financial incentive to political parties that nominate a greater number of women as candidates.
- Encouraging the private sector to have more women in positions of influence within their organizations.



Enhancing gender equality. Gender equality is a fundamental human right. Advancing gender equality is critical to all areas of a healthy society, from reducing poverty to promoting the health, education, protection and well-being of all individuals. This will include, for example, ensuring tools and data are available and shared to facilitate decision-making by organizations within the province that consider a gendered perspective; and encouraging men, especially in positions of leadership, to be champions for gender equality and violence prevention and awareness. It also includes continuing the work undertaken by government to ensure broader access to reproductive services. Protecting these rights helps achieve social equity and ensures that opportunities are maximized for all New Brunswickers.

Actions

- Ensuring women’s perspectives are included in policy-making and governance processes.
- Sharing data on gender equality within the province.
- Enhancing reproductive health, including access to abortion, midwives, gender confirming surgeries and birth certificate changes.

Enhancing pay equity within the province. Increasing awareness of and working toward resolving pay equity issues will help to ensure that women are afforded the same rights as their peers in terms of compensation in the workplace. Addressing pay inequities ensures wages reflect the value of the job regardless of gender, and equitable compensation practices help ensure a better work environment and lead to increased productivity. Awareness initiatives targeted to the public, employees and employers should also include tools and resources for employers to evaluate the compensation of work done by women.

Actions

- Encouraging pay equity in the private sector.
- Requiring organizations with more than 50 employees that do business with government through procurement or financing programs to implement pay equity plans.
- Working with the public sector including Crown corporations to implement their obligations under the *Pay Equity Act*.
- Facilitating information sharing with the business community to emphasize fair compensation practices and pay equity.

Increasing access to services and supports for women victims of intimate partner violence. New Brunswick has the fourth-highest rate of police-reported intimate partner violence among the provinces. A community response is needed to increase the safety of victimized partners, their children and others who may be at risk; reduce the abusive partner’s risk to re-victimize; and to make the best use of available resources. Work must continue to raise awareness and provide support to victims of violence and their children to ensure they have the necessary tools to maintain their safety and cope with the trauma of being a victim of, or exposed to, intimate partner violence. Similarly, work must continue to raise awareness and provide support to victims of violence and their children who develop subsequent mental health challenges. Paramount to these efforts is ongoing work to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls, including support for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Actions

- Providing a coordinated community response to high risk/high danger domestic intimate partner violence. This includes establishing legislation on Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence (DIPV) to provide victims access to civil legislative remedies when they need them.
- Evaluating current policies and legislation regarding domestic violence to ensure that these truly meet the needs of victims; and building public awareness to ensure its success.
- Reporting on progress to reduce the rate of criminal victimization of Aboriginal people, including data related to homicide and family violence victimization and other crimes.
- Engaging with community partners on the establishment of a sexual violence strategy, which will coordinate government action and leverage partnerships with other jurisdictions.
- Examining system responses throughout the province to identify best practices and areas for improvement in prevention, awareness, professional education, training, identification and intervention and research and evaluation with a view to improving reporting of sexual violence.
- Providing a coordinated provincial response to the prevention and response to violence against Aboriginal women and girls in partnership with the community.
- Protecting vulnerable New Brunswickers through ongoing commitments to provide affordable housing.

Removing barriers to access and opportunities. Gender equality will only be achieved when women are afforded every opportunity to fully participate in its progression. Simplifying processes that provide opportunities, as well as access to programs and services to assist women in need is central to achieving this goal. Some areas where progress is required include increasing participation for women in certain trades and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and making improvements to workplace culture and policies.

Actions

- Improving the availability of affordable, quality childcare in the province.
- Improving the diversity of workplaces by sharing best practices in policies, leave options and workplace supports.
- Supporting initiatives aimed at encouraging women to participate in non-traditional employment opportunities.
- Improving workplace culture, both public and private, by helping employers provide safe workplaces free from harassment and violence; and supporting women who are victims of domestic violence.

Conclusion

Work is still required to improve the status of women in New Brunswick, reach equality and end family violence. Achieving the goals and actions we have outlined in this plan will further our progress toward *Advancing Women's Equality* and the other pillars in the Family Plan as they work in tandem to maximize our results and opportunities.

Gender equality is critical to ensuring a healthy society as it has an impact on the health, well-being, protection and education of its citizens. Protecting the rights of women helps achieve social equity and ensures that opportunities are maximized for all New Brunswickers.

Advancing Women's Equality is the next step in concretizing these efforts.