



***Overcoming Poverty Together:
The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan***

Progress Report as of August 11, 2010

Since the Final Forum on November 12 and 13, 2009, when *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan* was adopted, a great deal of work has been done to implement the consensus plan. This document is a summary of these efforts.

Vision

On April 16, 2010, the *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* was passed in the Legislature. The following vision agreed to at the Final Forum was entrenched in the legislation.

Through the collaboration of governments, business and non-profit sectors, people living in poverty and individual citizens, all men, women and children in New Brunswick shall have the necessary resources to meet their basic needs and to live with dignity, security and good health. Furthermore all New Brunswickers shall be included as full citizens through opportunities for employment, personal development and community engagement.

Global Objective

On April 16, 2010, the *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* was passed in the Legislature. The following global objective was agreed to at the Final Forum was entrenched in the legislation.

By 2015, New Brunswick will have reduced income poverty by 25% and deep income poverty by 50%, and will have made significant progress in achieving sustained economic and social inclusion.

Delivery and Accountability

Establishment of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation

- On May 3, 2010, the four co-chairs for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation and the President were named. The co-chairs represent government, the non-profit sector, business and people who have experienced life in poverty. They have been appointed for a four-year term and each will serve a one-year term as board chair. Léo-Paul Pinet will be the board's first chair. James Hughes, deputy minister of the department of social development, will serve as President of the Corporation. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e0659sd.htm>
- On June 25, 2010, the remaining board members of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation were announced. The board members represent government, non-profit, business and people who have experienced life in poverty. The Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation will lead and co-ordinate the implementation of the poverty reduction plan. The board's first tasks will include establishing local community inclusion networks and working with stakeholders to determine the details of prescription drug program for non-insured persons with the goal of starting to phase-in the program by April 2012. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e1092sd.htm>
- On June 30, 2010, the board of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation held its first meeting where three advisory committees were established. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e1119sd.htm>

Health Benefits Committee

- This committee will develop a mechanism to provide a prescription drug plan to all uninsured New Brunswick citizens as well as a vision and dental plan for all low-income New Brunswick children. A committee chair or chairs will be identified by the co-chairs of the Board of Directors. The remaining members of the advisory committee will be appointed by the Board such that the composition is multi-sectoral.

Social Enterprise and Community Invest Funds Committee

- This committee will develop a policy framework on social enterprise and community investment funds within which the Community Inclusion Networks can work. A committee chair or chairs will be identified by the co-chairs of the Board of Directors. The remaining members of the advisory committee will be appointed by the Board such that the composition is multi-sectoral.

Social Assistance Reform Committee

- This committee will provide advice and feedback to the department of social development's internal Steering Committee on Social Assistance Reform as it redesigns the social assistance program for New Brunswick in accordance with the poverty reduction plan. This advice and feedback will be in response to presentations and documentation prepared and presented by the Steering Committee at critical points in the program redesign, as well as in relation to implementation issues in rolling out the initiatives. A committee chair or chairs will be appointed by the co-chairs of the Board of Directors. The remaining members of the advisory committee will be appointed by the Board such that the composition is multi-sectoral.
- The board also considered the boundaries of the Community Inclusion Networks. An announcement of these boundaries will take place in the fall.

Priority Actions

In addition to working out a governance model to ensure that the reduction of poverty involves all sectors of society, much progress has been made to implement the agreed upon priority actions. Many of the actions are underway while others will be undertaken by the Corporation. The following provides a brief update on the actions within the Plan.

Opportunities for Being (meeting basic needs)

Social Assistance Reform

- A great deal of planning has been underway for the last few months on reforming the social assistance system to move from a rules based to outcome based system. These changes, when fully implemented over the next five years, will represent a much called for change to a system that has been said to prevent many New Brunswickers from moving off of social assistance and becoming self-sufficient. The following three initiatives have already been implemented:

The Interim Assistance Rate eliminated

- On January 18, 2010, it was announced that social assistance clients who qualified for the Interim Assistance Program rate as of January 1, 2010 now qualify for benefits under the Transitional Assistance Program. This means that these clients will benefit from an 82% increase in their monthly cheque. This will help those who qualify to bridge the gap between employment positions and will help them maintain a level of self-sufficiency during their job search. The Transitional Assistance Program provides financial assistance to persons and families that have the potential to become self-sufficient once certain barriers to employment have been addressed.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e0061sd.htm>

Extended Health Card

- On December 9, 2009, a change in policy was made to extend the health card provided to social assistance clients for up to 3 years after they leave social assistance for a job. The benefit was previously good for up to 12 months for clients leaving social assistance. This extension means clients can renew their benefit for up to 36 months. This will eliminate a barrier to employment and ease the transition to work for social assistance

recipients while the new Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation considers ways of extending prescription drug coverage to all New Brunswickers. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2009e1956sd.htm>

Changes to the Household Income Policy

- On February 17, 2010, improvements were made to the Household Income Policy under the social assistance system. The modifications mean that clients who were in receipt of social assistance on January 1, 2010 and who are in non-spousal relationships will be able to share accommodations with clients or non clients and receive separate cheques. This policy has been a long-time barrier for many social assistance clients who are struggling to achieve self-sufficiency and improve their financial situation. This is an interim measure that will help current clients economically until a complete overhaul of the social assistance system is completed. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e0232sd.htm>

Minimum Wage Increases

- On January 5, 2010, a schedule was announced for increases to New Brunswick's minimum wage that will see it rise to \$10 by September 1, 2011. The increases reflect one of the commitments outlined in the poverty reduction plan. The long-term plan for increasing the minimum wage provides predictability for employers and more certainty for wage earners. These increases will provide a fair wage allowing employees to improve their standard of living. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2010e0003pe.htm>

Prescription Drug Program

- On June 30, 2010, an advisory committee on Health Benefits was established by the Board of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation at their meeting. The committee will develop a prescription drug program for non-insured citizens with the goal of starting to phase in the program by April 2012.

Homeless Shelters

- On June 22, 2010, *A Home for Everyone*, the province's homelessness framework was released. The framework is part of New Brunswick's new housing strategy, *Hope is a Home*, and was developed in co-operation with emergency shelter and

service providers. It provides government with direction to address chronic homelessness over the next five years which includes stable funding to help emergency shelter providers.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e1044sd.htm>

Roomers and boarders

- On April 1, 2010, amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* came into effect. The amendments provide protection for roomers and boarders by ensuring that equal rights and responsibilities are afforded to these tenants as currently are given to tenants of other rental units. The unfair treatment of roomers and boarders has meant they have unstable housing making it difficult for them to strive towards inclusion. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/snb/2010e0461sn.htm>

Funding for Community Transportation

- Under the *Economic and Social Inclusion Act*, an Economic and Social Inclusion Fund will be established. The fund will be administered by the Corporation to provide the financial assistance to the community inclusion networks for the purposes of helping them implement the objectives of the Provincial Plan. One such objective is the establishment of transportation programs, such as the Dial-A-Ride. The lack of public transportation systems in many New Brunswick communities, particularly rural areas of the province, has been considered to be a major barrier to economic and social inclusion.

Integrated service delivery model

- The Plan calls for the development and implementation of an integrated service delivery model focused on low-income people. Government departments and service providers are finding ways to work more collaboratively. The Department of Social Development has commenced a review of its service delivery model to ensure that it is client focused.

Opportunities for Becoming (life-long learning and skills acquisition)

Early Learning and Child Care

- On March 9, 2010, Social Development Minister Kelly Lamrock announced that funding for new spaces will be available for childcare facilities that offer French services in predominately English communities and English services in predominately francophone communities. The Early Learning and Child Care Trust Fund provides financial incentives to increase infant, rural, and extended hours care spaces; support early childhood education training; and curriculum training.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e0331sd.htm>
- Additional investments were announced in the Budget for enhancements to the Day Care Assistance Program to provide subsidies for families all with a view to reaching, within five years, significantly increased access to quality child care than is the case today.

Early Learning and Child Care Act

- On April 16, 2010, a new *Early Learning and Child Care Act* was passed in the legislative assembly.
<http://www1.gnb.ca/legis/bill/editform-e.asp?ID=816&legi=56&num=4>

Integrated Early Learning Sites

- On March 11, 2010, it was announced that five early childhood development centre demonstration sites are being developed as part of a three-year project to provide integrated services and support for young children and their parents. The sites in Centreville, Keswick, Millville, Perth-Andover and Richibucto are receiving start-up grants from the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation. Government is working in partnership with the foundation to provide support and guidance to the sites.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e0342sd.htm>

Literacy Mentor Programs

- Two successful pilot programs were completed in the Anglophone and francophone sectors, involving a total of 9 schools and almost 100 students throughout the province. Results achieved were very promising, and will contribute to the overall strategic planning effort to shape the expansion of the

program in the fall. Plans to expand the program to include every school in New Brunswick within the next 5 years are underway, including the identification of the resources and partners required to do so. Upwards of 3000 volunteers will be required over this time period to ensure that every child struggling with foundational literacy skills will get the support they need.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/edu/2009e1949ed.htm>

<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2009e0503ed.htm>

Trades and Cooperative Education

- On January 18, 2010, the provincial government indicated it would invest money to increase access to vocational and technical education for francophone students. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/edu/2010e0058ed.htm>
- In June 2010, two new vocational and technical courses have been made available in francophone schools and two other courses have been updated. The provincial government will invest more than \$100,000 to train staff who will teach these four courses along with five of the courses announced in January. With these new and updated courses, francophone high schools now have a choice of 29 vocational and technical courses. The schools select the courses they will offer their students based on industry needs in their regions.
- In the anglophone sector, \$500,000 was invested in the last year to look at alternative energy education which is an important component of the skills, trades and technology program. The primary goal of this initiative was to highlight opportunities for future development in the energy sector and to increase the energy consumption awareness of New Brunswick youth. The program introduced students to the principles of wind, solar, nuclear and tidal power generation by exploring how they impact the environment and creating sustainable 'green' power and energy solutions. The Department of Education continues to invest in professional development opportunities for teachers and safety upgrades for facilities.

Teacher Training

- In collaboration with school districts, the Department of Education has developed a professional development strategy to target a number of areas including helping teachers to accommodate diverse learning styles.

Opportunities for Belonging (community participation)

Comprehensive housing strategy

- On June 21, 2010, *Hope is a Home*, the province's housing strategy, was released. The strategy is a five-year plan to reduce poverty by making housing more affordable. It includes actions that improve access to more affordable housing, the establishment of mixed income neighbourhoods, supported housing options and co-op housing.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e1024sd.htm>

Strengthen the ability of low-income people to enter the workforce

- On December 17, 2009, a new adult literacy strategy was unveiled. The strategy will create the best opportunities to help adult New Brunswickers attain the literacy skills they need to participate fully at home, at work and in their communities. The strategy focuses on four priorities: reducing barriers and increasing participation in the labour force; increasing learning opportunities; ensuring quality and effectiveness of adult literacy programs; and strengthening partnerships to develop an effective adult literacy system.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2009e2017pe.htm>

Reducing barriers to Continuing Education and making it more accessible and affordable

- On December 21, 2009, government announced that it was one of two provinces taking part in a research project to find ways to encourage more students from low-income families to continue their education. Innovative programs will make pursuing post-secondary studies more accessible and affordable which in turn will make continuing education after high school more attractive.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/edu/2009e2026ed.htm>
- On December 28, 2009, the government announced that it will invest money in the New Brunswick Community College campuses to increase access to post-secondary education for all students. The colleges will be able to offer all its students the support they need, and to develop and maintain services and adaptive training that take into account any special needs they may have. Supporting the achievement of academic success is an essential and integral part of an education system that will help reduce barriers to continuing education.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2009e2039pe.htm>

- Further, on January 6, 2010, the provincial government announced that it was investing more than \$1 million to help Aboriginal persons pursue post-secondary education. The objective is to increase the participation of under-represented groups in post-secondary education to ensure more New Brunswickers have the opportunity to be better educated and better positioned for success. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2010e0007pe.htm>
- As well, investments to the post-secondary education infrastructure were announced on January 20, 2010 and include tuition freezes at the four public universities and the community colleges. The government recognizes the universal importance of quality education, skills development and successful employment strategies and practices. Efforts will continue to ensure a brighter, more educated future for New Brunswickers. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2010e0075pe.htm>

Develop Public Awareness Campaign

- The Board of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation will develop a public awareness campaign, which is critical to the success of the poverty reduction strategy.

Explore the concept of Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds

- The advisory committee on Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds will develop a policy framework on social enterprise and community investment funds within which the Community Inclusion Networks can work.

Indicators and Monitoring

- On June 30, 2010, the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation Board approved progress indicators and a Request for Proposals to establish baselines and gather and report on data. The *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* also gives authority to the Corporation to monitor the progress of the implementation of the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan.

Renewal of this Plan

- As per the Legislation, a new Economic and Social Inclusion Plan shall be adopted every five years through a public engagement process lead by the Corporation.

Legislation

- On April 16, 2010, the *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* was passed in the Legislature. The Act established the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; provided for the establishment of local community inclusion networks and for the establishment of a co-ordination unit to provide support for the board and the local networks. The corporation will implement the province's poverty reduction plan and ensure the delivery of poverty initiatives at the community level.
<http://www1.gnb.ca/legis/bill/editform-e.asp?ID=806&legi=56&num=4>