



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

*Progress Report
September 2010 - March 2011*



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Introduction

The prevention and reduction of poverty in New Brunswick is a very complex issue. There are various layers to the cause and effects, and not one solution alone is universal in preventing or eradicating poverty. No matter how poverty is defined, it can be agreed that it is an issue that requires everyone's attention. It is important that all members of our society work together to provide opportunities for all New Brunswickers to reach their full potential.

Following extensive consultations that involved New Brunswickers from all walks of life, the province's first poverty reduction plan *Overcoming Poverty Together* was launched in November 2009.

Overcoming Poverty Together contains 22 action areas with a main goal to reduce income poverty by 25 per cent and deep income poverty by 50 per cent by 2015.

This report is the third in a series that outlines progress being made towards reducing poverty in New Brunswick. It covers the period between September 2010 and March 2011.

The first two progress reports covered the period of November 2009 to August 2010. Both of these progress reports are available online at www.gnb.ca/poverty under "Publications".

Vision

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.

Delivery and Accountability

Establishment of Community Inclusion Networks

In November 2010, the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) issued a call for interested parties to host regional community inclusion networks (CIN). A CIN is an organization developed through a collaborative process in each region.

These networks will work collaboratively to develop regional plans that deliver regional solutions to regional needs. The corporation will support the work of each CIN in a variety of different ways.

The CIN members are groups and individuals from all sectors who have an interest in promoting socio-economic inclusion.

Applications or letters of interest were received from all 12 regions. At the January 19, 2011 meeting of the ESIC Board of Directors, eight organizations received approval to host regional Community Inclusion Networks.

Region	Host	Communities served
1	United Way of Greater Moncton and Southeastern New Brunswick	Greater Moncton, Westmorland County and Albert County
2	Vibrant Communities Saint John	Greater Saint John, Sussex, Queens East and Kings East
3	Greater Fredericton Social Innovation	Fredericton, York South, Tracy, Oromocto, Gagetown, Sunbury County, Queens North, Minto and Chipman
5	Youth Priority Centre Inc.	Restigouche County
6	Bathurst Youth Centre	Bathurst and surrounding area
8	Charlotte County Community Inclusion Network	Charlotte County
10	Carleton Victoria Community Inclusion Network	Carleton County and Victoria County
11	Éducation Kent	Kent County

Letters of interest have been received from the remaining four regions and their applications are in the process of being completed with assistance from ESIC's Community Network Coordinators. The goal is to have all 12 CIN's in operation by summer 2011.

Establishment of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation Board

The four co-chairs for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation Board are:

- Léo-Paul Pinet; non-profit
- Gerry Pond; business
- Monique Richard; citizen
- Hon. Sue Stultz, Minister of Social Development; government

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 one-year terms as board chair. Mr. Pinet is the board's first chair until May 2011, at which time Ms. Richard will start her one year term as chair of the board.

James Hughes, deputy minister of the Department of Social Development, serves as President of the Corporation.

The other board members are:

Business sector:

- Anne Hébert, chief executive officer, Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick Inc.
- Jean-Claude Savoie, chief executive officer, Groupe Savoie inc., Saint-Quentin
- Derek Oland, executive chairman, Moosehead Breweries Ltd., Saint John

Non-profit sector:

- Steven Hicks, John Howard Society, Fredericton
- Roger Lessard, director general, Youth Priority Centre Inc., Pokemouche
- Brenda Murphy, co-ordinator, Urban Core Support Network Saint John Inc., Grand Bay-Westfield

Provincial government:

- Hon. Madeleine Dubé, Minister of Health
- Hon. Jody Carr, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Hon. Martine Coulombe, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour

Official opposition:

- Bernard Leblanc, MLA Memramcook-Lakeville-Dieppe

Citizens:

- Juanita Black, Saint John
- Dr. Pam Coates, Saint John
- Ginette Arsenault, Fredericton
- Liette Holmes, Haut-Riviere-du-Portage
- Rachel Kelly, Val-Doucet
- Jacques-François Levesque, Grand Falls
- Jennifer Melanson, Upper Coverdale

The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC)

The ESIC Corporation has been established to guide, support and monitor the implementation of the plan. The ESIC team includes:

- Stéphane Leclair, Executive Director
- Althea Arsenault, Resource Manager
- Jeannine MacDonald, Administrative Support
- Christine Bourgoïn, Community Inclusion Network Coordinator
- Scott MacAfee, Community Inclusion Network Coordinator

A major task of ESIC is to help establish Community Inclusion Networks which will be regionally responsive.

Priority Actions

In addition to working out a governance model to ensure that the reduction of poverty involves all sectors of society and all regions of the province, 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 which are organized in three segments: Opportunities for Being, Opportunities for Becoming and Opportunities for Belonging.

Opportunities for Being (meeting basic needs)



Social Assistance Reform

- A great deal of planning and research is underway on reforming the social assistance system to move from a rules based to an outcome based system. These changes, when fully implemented, will represent a much called for change to a system that has been said to prevent many New Brunswickers from moving off social assistance and becoming self-reliant. An advisory committee to the board of ESIC has been formed to reflect the perspectives of all four sectors.

Advisory Committee on Social Assistance Reform

- The Advisory Committee on Social Assistance Reform has met twice (January and February 2011).
- The Advisory Committee is gaining in-depth knowledge of the current social assistance system, marginal tax rates, interdependencies and worldwide best practices so that it is better able to provide feedback on the proposed changes that are brought forward, in accordance with the *Overcoming Poverty Together* plan.
- The Committee will be focusing on jurisdictional review & marginal tax rates at meetings in March and April and in May the committee will commence the evaluations of the redesign options.

Members of the Advisory Committee on Social Assistance Reform are:

- Roger Lessard, Pokemouche, Co-chair
- Ken Pike, Rothesay, Co-chair
- Brenda Murphy, Saint John
- Liette Holmes, Neguac
- Dr. Pam Coates, Saint John
- Jennifer Melanson, Upper Cloverdale
- Haley Flaro, Fredericton
- Randy Hatfield, Saint John
- John Wheatley, Saint John
- Ben Beaulieu, Edmundston
- Nancy Hartling, Moncton
- Julia Auclair, Bathurst

The following initiatives have been implemented:

The Interim Assistance Rate eliminated

- 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 per cent 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-reliance during their job search. The Transitional Assistance Program provides financial assistance to individuals and families that have the potential to become self-reliant once particular barriers to employment have been addressed.
- In the two years prior to this particular policy change, there were on average, 1,200 cases per year receiving the Interim Rate - the lowest rate available to clients. This caseload was comprised of families with children awaiting EI benefits, single employable persons under age 55 with no medical issues, childless couples under age 55 with no medical issues, and roommates under 55 with no medical issues.
- With the elimination of the Interim Rate, all of the people on the previous interim caseload are now receiving more money each month, and a larger number of people - particularly single employable people - now qualify for social assistance.

Extended Health Card

- A change in policy was made to extend the health card provided to social assistance clients for up to three years after they leave social assistance for a job. As a result, 802 clients have been able to benefit from the extension of the health card up to 36 months.

Changes to the Household Income Policy

- Improvements have been 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-reliance and improve their financial situation. This is an interim measure that will economically help current clients until a complete overhaul of the social assistance system is completed.
- As of February 6, 2011, there were 350 people who received the Transitional Rate that have more than one "head of household" living at the same address.

Minimum Wage Increases

- On April 1, 2011 the minimum wage in New Brunswick is scheduled to increase to \$9.50 per hour and to \$10 per hour on September 1, 2011.
- In 2009, Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimated that 17,100 New Brunswickers earned minimum wage. This represents 5.3 per cent of all employed persons in the province.

Homeless Shelters

- Since the launch of the province's homelessness framework, *Hope is a Home*, provisional funding has been provided to six of the homeless shelters for programming to end chronic homelessness. A total of \$225,182 in additional funding has been allocated and work is currently underway to develop a long term funding formula for emergency shelters.
- A total of \$460,000 was provided to five homeless shelters in need of repairs to alleviate health and safety concerns.

Homeless Shelter	Beds*	Amount Approved	Status
Fredericton Homeless Shelter (adult men)	40	\$24,982	completed
Grace House (adult women)	9	\$32,586	completed
Miramichi Youth House (youth)	1	\$9,962.93	completed
Harvest House (men and women)	30	\$151,733	end date February
Nazareth House (youth, men and women)	30	\$240,736.07	end date January

* Additional funding helped the shelters to maintain their existing beds. Work is ongoing to develop a funding formula that is not based on the number of beds - so that shelters are encouraged to assist their clients into appropriate housing in the shortest possible time.

- As of October 2010, the Supportive Network Committee (SUN) in Fredericton has been involved in 26 moves, fully coordinating 21 of them. Even though most of the moves are quite recent not one individual has returned to the shelter. This is a model that will be promoted in the coming months to other regions that have shelters. One of the goals of the Homelessness Framework is to improve the coordination of services across government departments and community social service agencies.

Roomers and boarders

- Work is ongoing with the office of the provincial Rentalsman to determine a way to track progress as a result of amendments that were made to the *Residential Tenancies Act* on April 2, 2010. The amendments provide protection for roomers and boarders by ensuring that they are afforded the same rights as those given to tenants of other rental units.

The following initiatives are in progress:

Advisory Committee on Health Benefits

- The Advisory Committee on Health Benefits has met three times in 2011 (January 18, February 4 and March 4), and has meetings planned for April, May and June.

The mandate of the Advisory Committee on Health Benefits is to:

- Develop a mechanism to provide a prescription drug plan to all uninsured New Brunswick citizens.
- Develop a vision and dental plan for all low-income New Brunswick children.

The committee is working in a priority manner, on the details and cost analysis for options for a vision and dental plan for low-income children in New Brunswick. The committee has requested written submissions from the respective professional associations to guide them in their decision.

Although the established goal for the committee was to have options regarding a vision and dental plan ready for April 1, 2011, the committee has informed the ESIC co-chairs that in order to prepare a comprehensive program including consultative input, the committee has no other choice but to delay its recommendations until summer 2011.

Once options for the vision and dental plan have been finalized, the committee will focus on the task of developing a prescription drug program for all uninsured New Brunswickers.

Members of the Advisory Committee on Health Benefits are:

- Dr. Dennis Furlong, Dalhousie, Chair
- Derek Oland, Saint John
- Anne Hébert, Bouctouche
- Juanita Black, Saint John
- Jacques-François Levesque, Grand Falls
- Ron Gathercole, Moncton
- Rosella Melanson, Fredericton
- Jean-Roch Cayouette, Saint-Quentin
- Mary Anne Leblanc, Saint John
- Barry Cohen Thorley, Grand Bay - Westfield
- Mike Blanchard, Bath

Prescription Drug Program

- The Advisory Committee on Health Benefits will develop a prescription drug program for non-insured citizens with the goal of starting to phase in the program by April 2012.

Funding for Community Transportation

- 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. A partnership between ESIC and the Regional Development Corporation has been established to fund community-based transportation projects. Two such initiatives have been approved, in Region 8 (Charlotte Dial A Ride) and Region 10 (Western NB Alternative Transportation) with community transportation well on the radar of many of the other CIN's.

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 strategic planning process which will include a review of its service delivery model to ensure that it is client focused.

Opportunities for Becoming (lifelong learning and skills acquisition)



The following initiatives have been implemented:

Early Learning and Child Care Act

- Work is ongoing on the development of new Regulations, and the new *Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Act* will take effect once the Regulations have been approved by government.

Integrated Early Learning Sites

- 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.
- There are nine early childhood development sites in total. The four government-funded sites (Bath, Moncton, Robertville and Saint John) have been open since 2009. As of January 2011, two of the McCain-funded sites (Keswick and Richibucto) are now offering a full range of services. The remaining three sites (Centreville, Millville, Perth-Andover) are continuing their work to get up and running.

Early Learning and Child Care

- As of January 1, 2011, there were 20,253 licenced day care spaces in New Brunswick, which is an increase of 1,468 licensed spaces from March 31, 2010.

	Total licenced day care spaces	Infant spaces	Preschool spaces	After school spaces
March 31, 2010	18,785	1,371	8,283	9,131
January 1, 2011	20,253	1,458	9,054	9,741

% Coverage	Total children 0-12 years)	Infant (0-23 months)	Preschool (2-4 years)	School Age (5-12 years)
March 31, 2010	18.8%	10.2%	39.2%	14%
January 1, 2011	20.3%	11%	43%	15%

Note: % coverage is calculated by applying actual daycare spaces in each age group against 2006 Census population counts as follows:

Infants 0 -23 months – 13,335

Preschool 2 – 4 years -21,095

School age 5 – 12 – 65,080

- To date, \$112,000 in funding has been provided from the Early Learning and Childcare Trust Fund to two childcare facilities (in Saint John and Moncton) to support the creation of 56 francophone childcare spaces.

Literacy Mentor Programs

- As of February 2011, Elementary Literacy/Littérature au Primaire is delivering the ELF Program and Programme CLEF in 17 schools (an increase of nine schools from 2009-2010) throughout New Brunswick. Marketing efforts are generating interest from parents, volunteers, and the business and non-profit communities as the momentum for this initiative continues to develop.
- In this second year of pilot program operations, more than 100 volunteers have been recruited and trained to deliver one-on-one literacy tutoring to struggling readers in Grades 1 to 3 as the programs continue to expand. Volunteers and schools are fully equipped with the necessary resources to deliver the ELF Program and Programme CLEF in a manner that is consistent with expectations and curriculum outcomes. Sessions are held after school, twice per week for the duration of one hour. Volunteers are required to commit to the program for an initial duration of 12 weeks. Progress is evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative measurement.

The following initiatives are in progress:

Teacher Training

- In collaboration with school districts, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has developed a professional development strategy to target a number of areas, including helping teachers to meet diverse learning needs.



Opportunities for Belonging (community participation)

The following initiative has been implemented:

Comprehensive housing strategy

- Over the next five years, the New Brunswick Housing Corporation (NBHC) will focus its activities on supporting the overall goal of moving the province to self-reliance and overcoming poverty. Specifically the NBHC will invest in:
 - Reducing the number of households in need of housing assistance
 - Making quality housing more affordable
 - Ensuring the sustainability of government assisted housing
 - Reducing chronic homelessness
 - Increasing rural housing opportunities
 - Creating homeownership opportunities
 - Strengthening housing supports
 - Supporting government's commitment to energy efficiency
 - Ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities
- Strategic objectives and key actions have been developed to identify what NBHC plans on achieving in order to ensure the success of the strategy.
- Changes in existing program policies as well as new program initiatives will be developed to assist with the continuum of housing and support services needed to address housing challenges in the province.
- The strategy is a framework for better understanding complex and interrelated housing issues. It is intended to help identify the gaps in the system and how we can work together to fill those gaps. The supporting actions will form the basis for a more integrated response that deals with housing and communities more holistically.

The following initiatives are in progress:

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

- A three-year action plan was released in February 2011 that relates to *Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick*. The strategy focuses on four priority areas: reducing barriers and increasing participation; increasing the number and range of adult literacy learning opportunities; ensuring the quality and effectiveness of adult literacy programs; and strengthening partnerships to develop an effective adult literacy system.
- Work is underway to improve New Brunswick's adult literacy system in departments of government and with stakeholders in the private and voluntary sectors.
- A citizen engagement initiative on learning, called *Learning: Everybody's Project*, was launched on November 10, 2010 by Roundtable NB2026. The initiative will involve New Brunswickers in a sharing of ideas on how the province's learning culture may be fostered and improved. The process will unfold over the coming year, leading to a provincial forum, to be held in early 2012. At that time, an action plan will be adopted by citizens from all sectors of New Brunswick.

Workplace Essential Skills

- Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour has collaborated with business, industry, community and labour organizations to introduce Workplace Essential Skills (WES) training throughout the province. The program has developed rapidly since its implementation formally commenced in November 2009. The department has developed a comprehensive competency-based curriculum that covers all nine of the essential skill areas identified by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). Two Centres of Excellence have been established within the WES Program, one at Collège Communautaire du Nouveau Brunswick (CCNB) in Bathurst (French) and one at New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) Saint John (English). The Centres of Excellence provide leadership and expertise provincially in the development of learning materials, best practices and trainer development.
- The mandate of the WES program is to increase literacy through essential skills training. The target population for the program is employed and employable adults with low essential skills. The WES program provides an accelerated learning pathway to employment and/or further learning. The primary focus of the program in its initial year was delivery to employed individuals through workplace trainings. The second year continued to prioritize training to employed individuals and will further expand delivery of training to employable individuals. By the end of 2010-11, there had been 81 active initiatives since the program was formally implemented in 2009. In 2011-12, a strategic plan will be developed and implemented. Training will continue to prioritize employed initiatives and will explore opportunities to enhance delivery to employable learners and foster provincial partnerships.

Community Adult Learning Centres

- The Community Adult Learning Network (CALNet) was created to expand and improve adult literacy training around the province. CALNet manages Community Adult Learning Centres offering academic and e-learning programs in either English or French depending on the needs of the community. This service provides adults with the opportunity to attain the literacy and information and communication technology skills they need to function in a knowledge-based economy and society.
- Community Adult Learning Centres provide literacy training to adults to IALSS Level 2, GED preparation, both in class and online as well as e-learning programs that offer computer training and other lifelong learning opportunities. In 2010-11, a total of 242 academic and e-learning programs have been funded in over 100 communities throughout the province. The overall number of learner hours committed to training has risen substantially (approximately 10 per cent) over the course of the year.

Reducing barriers to continuing education and making it more accessible and affordable

- Projects with the objective of increasing participation of Aboriginal persons in post-secondary education are ongoing.
- Projects aimed at increasing access to New Brunswick Community College and Collège Communautaire de Nouveau-Brunswick campuses are ongoing. The colleges will be able to offer all their students the support they need, and to develop and maintain services and adaptive training that take into account any special needs they may have.
- In 2011-12, funding for improving access to post-secondary education for families with lower incomes was increased to \$1.5 million. This funding assists post-secondary education institutions in developing and implementing a variety of pilot projects such as low income support programs to encourage parents and their children to pursue post-secondary education, development of services for students with learning and physical disabilities, improved academic and skill supports and individualized outreach to students who do not meet the admission average requirement for university, and free academic upgrading courses in both official languages for adults wanting to improve their occupational and academic situations.

Explore the concept of Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds

- ESIC's Board has created an Advisory Committee for Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds which has met twice (January 18, 2011 and February 18, 2011). This committee is developing a policy framework on social enterprise and community investment funds to support the CIN's.
- The members have designed a project plan framework to develop a social enterprise model that will foster social and economic growth. By April 2011, the committee will have investigated and inventoried social enterprise operations and best practices across the province. This report will identify the location, purpose, challenges and operations of the social enterprises.
- The committee will also be developing an overall comparative analysis, with emphasis on community investment funds, with organizations outside of New Brunswick and Canada. The goal of the committee is to develop a framework that will mobilize investment, individuals and communities to initiate social enterprises which will strengthen the economy of New Brunswick.

Members of the Advisory Committee for Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds are:

- Seth Asimakos, Saint John, Co-chair
- André Leclerc, Edmundston, Co-chair
- Jean-Claude Savoie, Saint-Quentin
- Monique Richard, Saint-Louis-de-Kent
- Gerry Pond, Saint John
- Ginette Arseneau, Fredericton
- Dan Gillis, Moncton
- Sharon Geldart, Moncton
- Val MacDermid, Port Elgin
- Simon Mitchell, Dumfries
- Steven Hicks, Fredericton

Indicators and Monitoring

The Request for Proposals on performance measures for ESIC was issued on October 20, 2010 and closed on December 1, 2010. Seven proposals were submitted by companies within and outside New Brunswick. In January 2011, the Board of Directors approved a company to conduct the performance measures for ESIC for the next five years.

Performance measures include: school readiness among four-year olds, participation rate in post-secondary education and percentage of New Brunswickers in core housing need.