



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

Progress Report as of March 15, 2010

At the Final Forum on November 13, 2009 it was agreed that a continued partnership was essential to the success of the poverty reduction initiative. Since the adoption of Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, a great deal of work has started to implement the actions adopted. On February 19, 2010 a bill entitled the *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* was introduced to the Legislature.

For details go to: <http://www.gnb.ca/legis/bill/pdf/56/4/Bill-39.pdf>

Vision

The following vision was agreed to at the Final Forum and will be 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

The following global objective that was agreed to at the Final Forum and will be 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 a Transition Team

- On November 30, 2009 a transition team was appointed to establish the new governance structures proposed at the Final Forum. Co-chairs Léo-Paul Pinet and Gerry Pond along with the following participants from the public engagement process; Brenda Murphy, Ken Pike, Sue Rickards and Roger Lessard were mandated to flesh out details for the establishment of a provincial economic and social inclusion board, community inclusion networks and the contents of the new legislation to ensure there is accountability for implementation of the plan. As you will see, a great deal has already been accomplished but the best is ahead. This is why not every action foreseen in the Overcoming Poverty Together is mentioned in this progress report.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2009e1897sd.htm>

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 completed 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>

Homeless Shelters

- A Homelessness Framework has been presented to stakeholders in the sector for discussion. The intent of the framework is to establish the manner and methods to reduce chronic homelessness in New Brunswick and include provisions for stable funding for homeless shelters within five years.

Roomers and boarders

- The government is working intensively to introduce amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act*. The amendments will 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 self-sufficiency.

Funding for Community Transportation

- Under the *Economic and Social Inclusion Act*, a 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 self-sufficiency.

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 Minister 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.

Literacy Mentor programs

- On December 7, 2009 a literacy centre pilot project was officially launched in two District 5 schools by the Department of Education and the Caisses populaires acadiennes. Through the volunteer partners program, more than 10 volunteers have been recruited to offer individual help after school to students in grades 1-3 who are having trouble learning to read and write. The focus is on literacy with efforts being placed on ensuring that the children become independent readers.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/edu/2009e1949ed.htm>
- In April 2009 a unique partnership was established to help young readers. The establishment of the Elementary Literacy Friends (ELF) Foundation recognizes the role that the private sector and volunteers can play in supporting the education system in raising literacy rates. On February 1, 2010 a pilot project was launched in seven Anglophone schools. The Elementary Literacy/Littératie au primaire involves the recruitment and training of volunteer reading tutors who will work with grade 2 students who have literacy issues. The project represents collaboration between the business and non-profit sectors to work together to find ways to improve the literacy of elementary school children in an effort to ensure that every child graduates with adequate literacy and numeracy skills. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2009e0503ed.htm>



Early Learning and Child Care Act

- A new *Early Learning and Child Care Act* was introduced in the legislative assembly on March 12, 2010.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e0353sd.htm>

Integrated 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.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e0342sd.htm>

Trades and Cooperative Education

- On January 18, 2010 the provincial government indicated it will be investing money to increase access to vocational and technical education for francophone students. By investing in the trades courses young people will be offered new learning opportunities that accommodate diverse learning styles and meet the interests of more students. It is anticipated that more young people will be stimulated to learn and will then be better able to meet the challenges in tomorrow's work force thereby achieving greater levels of self-sufficiency.
<http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/edu/2010e0058ed.htm>

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

- The New Brunswick Housing Stakeholders Advisory Group reviewed a comprehensive housing strategy at its meeting in mid-March. The strategy is expected to include actions that improve access to more affordable housing, the establishment of mixed income neighbourhoods, supported housing options and co-op housing.



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>

Indicators and Monitoring

- The Act makes provisions for the Corporation to make by-laws concerning the establishment of progress indicators. The legislation also conveys authority to the Corporation to monitor the progress of the implementation of the Provincial 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 February 19, 2010 the *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* was introduced in the Legislature. The Act will establish the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation; provide 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 legislation will implement the province's poverty reduction plan and ensure the delivery of poverty initiatives at the community level. <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/fcs/2010e0252sd.htm>