

# NEW BRUNSWICK FAMILY PLAN

REDUCING POVERTY

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.

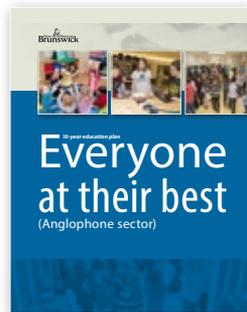
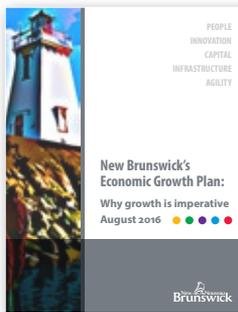
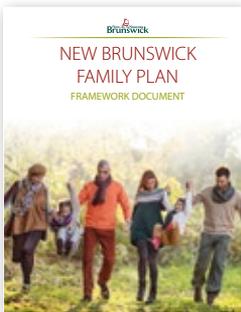
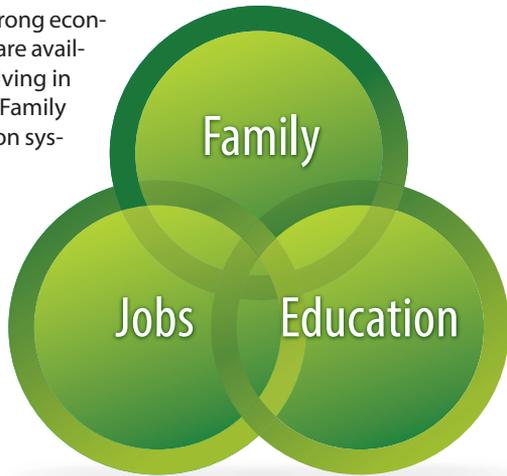
Our Economic Growth Plan must be supported by our education plans to be successful and to ensure that our workforce is well trained and innovative. Our economy also needs the social supports contained within the Family Plan in order to thrive fully.

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 *Overcoming Poverty Together : The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan*, the Wellness Strategy and the Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability.

**Reducing Poverty** is the culmination of efforts undertaken in these areas. It is based on current initiatives, ongoing commitments and stakeholder feedback, and delineates the goals and actions that will help foster economic and social inclusion.

The goals and actions of the plan will help to ensure that the most vulnerable receive the assistance they need to effect change. Everyone affected by poverty should have the necessary resources to meet their basic needs and to live with dignity, security and in good health. To make significant gains in reducing poverty, the focus will be on effective policy, a community-oriented approach to service delivery and access to quality programs.

**Reducing Poverty** is further supported by initiatives underway as part of the Priority Delivery Unit on Families. The priority delivery units oversee cross-departmental initiatives to reduce significantly silo thinking and improve access to quality services and programs. Three initiatives in particular have an overall impact on poverty reduction.

- Implementing a continuum of services that includes pre-employability skills, job preparation skills and knowledge, workplace essential skills training and a work experience component for individuals receiving social assistance. The Experiential Learning and Employment Continuum will be delivered regionally, building on existing partnerships with the departments of Social Development and Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.
- Increasing accessibility to the Work Services Program to assist individuals who are recipients of social assistance with their career development needs such as personal development, education, training, and work search and/or employment exposure. The

Work Services Program was introduced to provide individualized and personalized services to help recipients seek, obtain and maintain employment.

- Increasing access to Community Volunteer Income Tax Program clinics in previously under-served communities to help low-income earners receive associated benefits. Community organizations host free tax preparation clinics and arrange for volunteers to prepare income tax and benefit returns for eligible individuals who have a modest income and a simple tax situation.

Additionally, work continues to address the areas of focus through the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy, *Overcoming Poverty Together* (OPT2), and by ensuring it is applied across all government.

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

## Areas of focus

Poverty remains the single most important social issue that has a deep rooted impact on the emotional, social and economic health of individuals and the province. Focusing on priority areas such as employment, education, health, housing, transportation and accessibility will help us achieve our goals of poverty reduction as well as economic and social inclusion. This will occur with the collaboration of all partners and by focusing our efforts and undertaking concerted actions to achieve the areas of focus outlined below.

**Removing barriers to employment.** Every individual has the potential to contribute to the economy in a variety of ways. Having a job provides a sense of belonging and the ability to overcome individual poverty. Unfortunately, many obstacles prevent full participation in the workforce. For instance, the labour market is often out of reach for people with disabilities, people living with mental illness, or those for whom traditional work environments cause a challenge.



## Actions

- Promote and support inclusion in the workplace.
- Support flexible workplace conditions to generate opportunities for people with barriers to employment.
- Supporting initiatives under the *Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability*.

**Improving labour market outcomes for New Brunswickers.** Learning, education and training are essential for individuals and communities to promote economic and social inclusion and to reduce poverty. Crucial elements for success include high quality and accessible early childhood education and childcare, instilling an appreciation for lifelong learning in children and youth, ensuring students graduate with appropriate skills for further education and employment, and the critical role of parents, families and the community. Improving the labour market outcomes of those in need will require a continuum of services including job preparation skills and knowledge, as well as workplace essential skills training.

## Actions

- Supporting and promoting literacy in all aspects of learning and education, from birth into and through adulthood.
- Exploring ways to provide information to vulnerable socioeconomic groups on the value of pursuing education opportunities.
- Continue to focus on accessible and affordable opportunities for post-secondary education.
- Supporting community-based initiatives in skills development and workplace entry preparation.

**Improving the health and well-being of people living in poverty.** Those with distinctive experiences with poverty such as youth, seniors, Aboriginal communities, immigrants, as well as persons living with a disability or mental health issues, must be taken into consideration when making decisions that affect poverty outcomes. Efforts to reduce fragmentation and enhance social inclusion will be successfully achieved through concerted action and integrated provision of services, leading to well-being and economic security. Greater wellness in the population will have a positive impact and will help to improve the productivity of our workforce and enhance our economic security.

## Actions

- Promote and support community-based initiatives regarding access to healthy food.
- Supporting increased individual and community food security.
- Fostering supportive environments that enable individuals, families and communities to take positive actions towards wellness.

**Reducing barriers that prevent people from fully participating in their community.** Reducing barriers that limit or prevent individuals, regardless of challenge or ability, from fully participating in the workforce and in their communities is an important step in promoting economic and social inclusion. This can be achieved by supporting initiatives related to affordable housing and transportation among others. A more economically and socially inclusive New Brunswick will also be achieved by empowering communities to strengthen

individuals and groups of people by building on their assets and capacities. Mobilizing individuals to effect change in their community is an important step to overcoming obstacles related to poverty, regardless of socially determined circumstances.

## **Actions**

- Protecting vulnerable new Brunswickers by continuing to focus on affordable housing options.
- Providing affordable and accessible transportation to assist individuals in need.
- Fostering community development to ensure citizens have a meaningful connection to their community.

***Facilitating access to programs and services to improve the quality of life of all New Brunswickers.*** To support the transition of individuals from poverty to self-sufficiency, efforts must continue to facilitate access to the many programs and services that already exist in communities. Communication, networking, promotion and training are all important tools to help inform individuals trying to improve their quality of life. Additionally, access must be rooted in the principles of accessibility, effectiveness, inclusiveness and accuracy. The foundation for any new access model must consider best practices, be needs-based and person-centric, while respecting the uniqueness of communities.

## **Actions**

- Working with non-profit charitable organizations dedicated to poverty reduction.
- Supporting the work of the Community Inclusion Networks and their regional plans.
- Supporting those in need to better navigate the government system of programs and services through the creation of a “one-stop shop” for programs related to economic and social inclusion.

# Conclusion

Factors that affect economic and social inclusion should be collectively identified, considered and, ultimately, shape the implementation and execution of policies and initiatives. Achieving the goals and actions we have outlined in this plan will benefit work undertaken in the sixth pillar of the Family Plan (*Reducing Poverty*) and every other pillar as they work in tandem to maximize our results and opportunities.

Collectively, we must work together to remove barriers and help New Brunswickers seize opportunities by reducing poverty, helping people move towards employment and income security and investing in innovative grassroots programs. Through this collaborative approach, we are better able to achieve an improved quality of life for all New Brunswickers.

***Reducing Poverty*** is the next step in concretizing these efforts.