

# NEW BRUNSWICK FAMILY PLAN

PROMOTING WELLNESS

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.

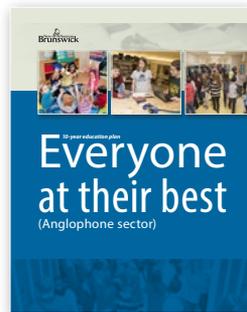
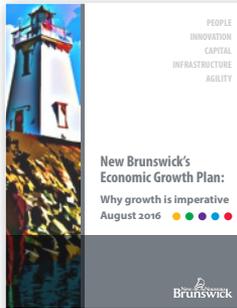
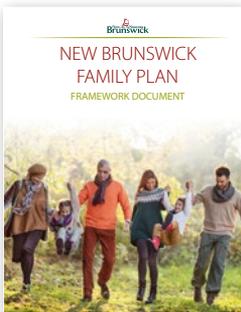
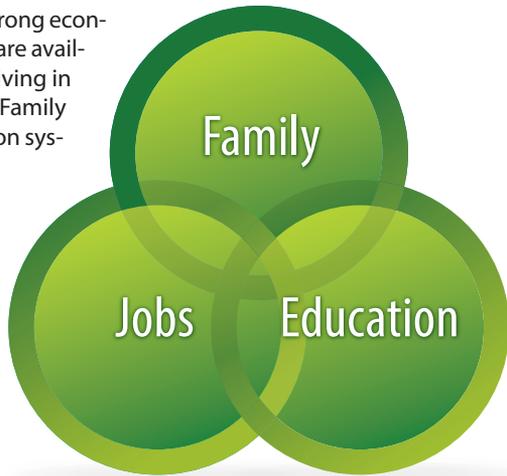
Our Economic Growth Plan must be supported by our education plans to be successful and to ensure that our workforce is well trained and innovative. Our economy also needs the social supports contained within the Family Plan in order to thrive fully.

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 New Brunswick's Wellness Strategy, the Action Plan for Mental Health, the Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, Home First Strategy, and the Aging Strategy.

*Promoting Wellness* is a combination 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 achieve sustained improvements on wellness at the population level. It focuses on more than just changing behaviours one person at a time. Rather it aims to make population level improvements to address all the dimensions of wellness and all the determinants of health.

*Promoting Wellness* 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. One initiative in particular is focused on the collaborative development and implementation of evidence based, healthy public policy. This work is focused on reducing obesity rates as well as tobacco use and smoking as defined under the *Smoke Free Places Act*. It is inclusive of all products smoked, vaped or inhaled.

Promoting wellness is essential to living well, being healthy and having a good quality of life. Wellness is a catalyst for good physical and mental health, healthy aging, poverty reduction, accessibility and inclusion, and community development. Greater wellness in the population will have a positive impact on the demand for health care, and will help to improve the productivity of our workforce, and enhance our economic security. In other words, wellness is conditional to the success of each pillar in the Family Plan, as well as the Economic Growth Plan and the 10-Year Education Plans.

The goals and actions of this plan will help build a culture of wellness in New Brunswick. Together, these initiatives set the stage for a robust action plan on achieving the areas of focus outlined in the following page

## Areas of focus

Effectively building a culture of wellness within New Brunswick will be achieved by focusing on all dimensions of wellness and by addressing the social, economic and environmental determinants of health. This will be sustained by continuing to focus on healthy eating, physical activity as well as tobacco- and smoke-free living, and by supporting action that creates positive change. Developing mental fitness and resilience is also key to overall health and well-being. This is further described in ***Supporting Those with Addictions and Mental Health Challenges***.

Informal and formal partnerships are at the heart of creating a culture of wellness in New Brunswick. Although there is no one solution to create this culture shift, we need to take coordinated action that is integrated across multiple fronts, and at every level, to make a lasting change. This will be achieved by focusing our efforts and undertaking concerted actions to achieve the areas of focus outlined below.

***Addressing barriers to healthy living.*** While we know that positive life choices have an impact on people’s health, evidence shows that those choices are significantly affected by the environment in which people learn, work, play and live. Strategic policies and programs are needed to make it easier for all New Brunswickers to live healthy lives. As health is interdependent with earnings, education and standards of living, addressing gaps in the social determinants of health will also support population wellness.

### Actions

- Working on creating supportive environments through initiatives that enable individuals, families and communities to take positive actions toward wellness.



- Supporting and promoting wellness for First Nations and Aboriginal People focusing on culturally relevant resources, community capacity-building and knowledge exchange.
- Promoting wellness through initiatives in multiple government departments and agencies and supporting the enhancement of provincial wellness-related legislation and policy across government.
- Supporting engagement, motivation and healthy behaviour change by creating environments that support our mental fitness and resilience.

**Encouraging New Brunswickers to eat healthy and foster healthy living habits.** Healthy eating is a key component of health as the rewards will be experienced in the short term as well as the long term. Good nutrition helps to protect against chronic disease such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, stroke and high blood pressure.

## **Actions**

- Promoting healthy eating habits, nutritional literacy and increased access to healthy food in the early childhood and education system.
- Exploring options regarding preventative care linked to healthy eating.
- Supporting increased individual and community food security.

**Motivating New Brunswickers to become physically active.** Physical inactivity is one of the major contributors to declining overall health in New Brunswick. This, along with increased sedentary behaviour, contributes to higher rates of obesity, increased prevalence of chronic disease and a general decline in quality of life. Physical activity plays a key role in improving mental, social and physical health. Many people, including the most vulnerable and those with a disability, face barriers that prevent them from being active. Comprehensive strategies help engage individuals and provide opportunities for participation in inclusive sport and recreation experiences.

## **Actions**

- Exploring options about preventative care linked to physical activity.
- Improving physical activity and physical literacy with a particular emphasis on early childhood and older adults.
- Creating environments in schools, communities and workplaces that encourage physical activity.
- Supporting opportunities for physical education in schools to help students maintain a physically active lifestyle into and through adulthood.
- Encouraging community leaders to lead by example.

**Promoting tobacco and smoke-free living and encouraging smoking cessation.** Tobacco use and smoking remain a significant cause of premature disease, disability and death. Living tobacco- and smoke-free reduces the risk of many chronic diseases and enhances quality of life. Efforts are underway to make New Brunswick a place where living tobacco- and smoke-free is the cultural norm. To achieve this, additional supportive policies are needed to accelerate and maximize the province's impact on this health outcome.

## Actions

- Exploring additional policies to prevent tobacco use, reducing smoking and protecting more people from second-hand smoke.
- Systematically promoting and providing supports for smoking cessation to patients of regional health authorities.

***Making information on programs and services readily available to all New Brunswickers.*** Busy schedules and modern conveniences have made living well a challenge for many individuals. Effective promotion and communication strategies to enhance the culture of wellness in the province can contribute to positive social change in improving the health of its residents. This includes sharing information about available resources (human, natural and infrastructure) and evidence-informed practices. Understanding our situation is as important as providing appropriate mechanisms for continuous learning to ensure efforts are informed by others' success.

## Actions

- Using social marketing initiatives such as the Wellness Movement to promote the creation of supportive environments through sharing information and stories.
- Making it easier for residents and stakeholders to find out about available resources.
- Identifying and sharing best practices, and using these learnings to inform future decision-making.

# Conclusion

Our challenge and our opportunity are to make a conscious decision as a society that our priority is wellness for everyone, everywhere, every day. Achieving the goals and actions we have outlined in this plan will benefit work undertaken in the second pillar of the Family Plan (*Promoting wellness*) and every pillar as they work in tandem to maximize our results and opportunities.

Development of a culture of wellness is firmly underway in the province. Building on the strong and myriad partnerships, programs and strategies will further enhance the health and well-being of all New Brunswickers. Our success will depend on how we continue to foster these relationships, create environments and build on the existing synergy that support and improve our wellness.

The development of *Promoting Wellness* is the next step in concretizing these efforts.