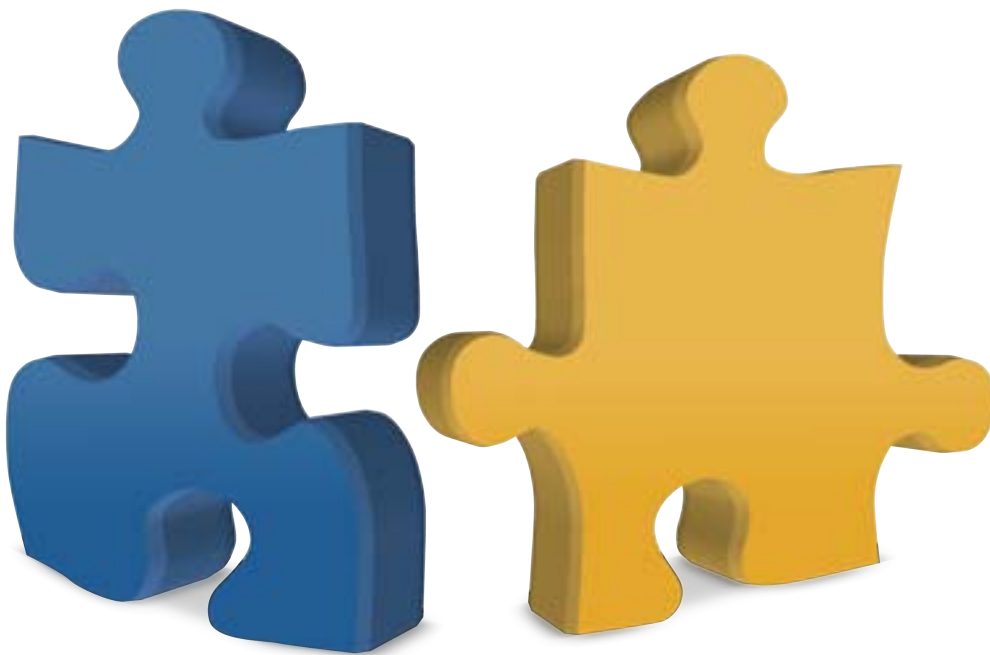


Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation

Overcoming Poverty Together

The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 2014-2019

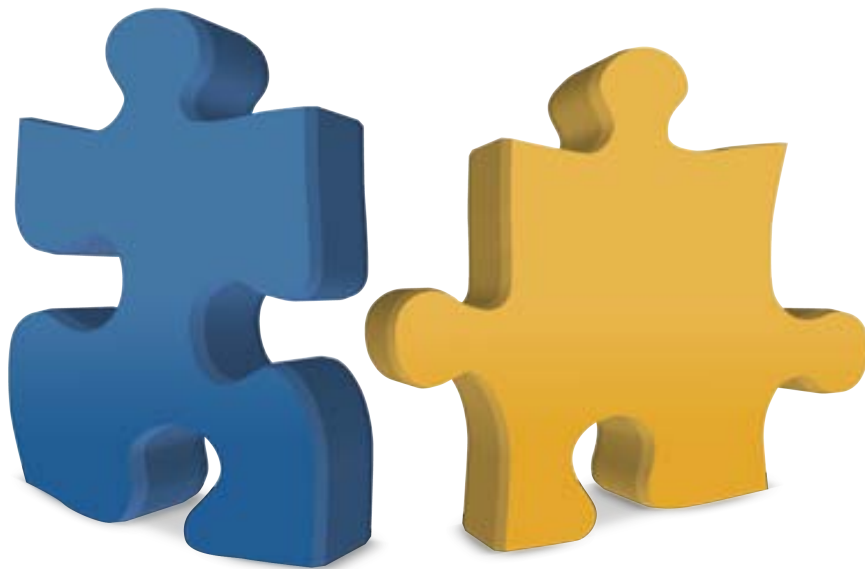


Ensemble  pour vaincre
la pauvreté
Overcoming  Together
Poverty 2014-2019

Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation

Overcoming Poverty Together

The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 2014-2019



Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation

**Overcoming
Poverty Together**

**The New Brunswick
Economic and Social Inclusion Plan
2014-2019**

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Message From The President

The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation is pleased to present New Brunswick's second economic and social inclusion plan *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, 2014-2019*.

Allow me to begin by thanking everyone from across the province who participated, directly or indirectly, in developing this new plan. Reading over the plan, you will see that individual and collective engagement is expressed in many ways in the province, and that everyone is ready to take action in order to improve the quality of life of all citizens. For their part, the Community Inclusion Networks (CINs) have provided invaluable support to the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) Board of Directors and staff in fostering and maintaining the public engagement process. On behalf of all New Brunswickers, I want to sincerely thank all these people who have worked tirelessly for many months to ensure the success of the public dialogues and the creation of the new plan.

The growing enthusiasm for strengthening economic and social inclusion was evident from the early days when the first plan was being prepared in 2008-2009, and the momentum has continued during the development of the second plan.

The main advantage of the *Overcoming Poverty Together* plan is that it unites around a common goal the four main groups of stakeholders: those who live or have lived in poverty, non-profit organizations, business people, and government (including the Official Opposition). This partnership approach was proposed by the participants in the first public engagement process. It was and remains a unique model of collaboration in economic and social inclusion in Canada and elsewhere.

The first incarnation of the plan in 2009 was innovative and bold, with realistic and achievable goals. In concrete terms, it contained 22 priority measures, the majority of which have been completed.

The passage of legislation – the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Act – and the establishment of a Crown corporation – the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation – were the government's primary responsibilities under the first plan. Hence, solid and sustainable footings were laid for implementing the plan and ensuring continuity over the years. The Act reinforces the relevance of the plan. Many of the achievements that stemmed from the first plan had an immediate impact on New Brunswickers: establishment of twelve Community Inclusion Networks, social assistance reform, vision and dental care plan for children in low-income families, provincial prescription drug plan, early childhood services, framework for a social enterprise model, professional training, and many others.

The capacity building of citizens and their communities is the driving force behind the achievement of these projects. The plan was designed so that everyone can make a direct and tangible contribution with respect to improving their own situation. From the start, the plan supports the communities on their journey toward collective empowerment.

It is important to remember that the Board of Directors of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation was conceived in such a way that citizens who live or have lived in poverty as well as representatives of the non-profit sector, the business sector, and the government could gather around the same table to address the problem of poverty in an innovative and realistic manner. This unique partnership model has generated positive results in all regions of the province.

Under the *New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Act*, the Economic and Social Inclusion Plan must be renewed every five years through a public engagement process. In September and October 2013, ESIC, in collaboration with the CINs began the plan's renewal process, holding twelve public dialogues, two regional meetings, and a provincial meeting with various organizations. Comments were collected by e-mail and on ESIC's website. Briefs were also submitted within the framework of this exercise.

In all, close to 750 people travelled in order to attend one of the meetings organized during the process. Participants included citizens, professionals in the social field, representatives of community organizations, business people, and elected officials. Nearly 5,000 comments were received over the course of this exercise, and more than 13,000 hours were spent, in one way or another, on preparing the new plan. These few statistics point clearly to the fact that citizen engagement is pervasive and remains essential in New Brunswick. This collective undertaking shows that we are on the right path when it comes to helping tens of thousands of New Brunswickers improve their quality of life.

In closing, I must emphasize that the new plan presented in this document reflects, as closely as possible, the some 5,000 comments received during the public engagement process leading to the renewal of the plan. I now invite all New Brunswickers to join together, to move from words to action, and to rise to the challenge of making New Brunswick an even better place to live for each and every one of its citizens.



Léo-Paul Pinet
President
Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation

Message From The Co-Chairs

With the goal of building on the successes in the development and implementation of the first economic and social inclusion plan, we are proud to have supported and participated in the preparation of the new plan.

One of the main advantages of this initiative to reduce poverty in New Brunswick is the ability to unite around a common goal four sectors which have a great impact on this plan: people who live or have lived in poverty, business, non-profit organizations, and government (including the official opposition).

The participation of these four sectors is crucial to the success of the plan. Those who live or have lived in poverty provide a realistic view of poverty in New Brunswick. Their contribution at the decision making level is invaluable in the direction and execution of the plan. Businesses also feel strongly about this initiative because an abundant, skilled workforce helps companies compete in the marketplace, which benefits everyone. The non-profit sector is a key component of the plan as they provide first-hand expertise in community development. Through its financial support to the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation and the Community Inclusion Networks, government's direct involvement remains essential in the development of policies and the delivery of programs and services.

In recent years, thanks to the *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan*, we have seen a cultural shift take place in the province. The inclusive, cross-sector approach has been successful. Stakeholders realize the positive impact province-wide cooperation has brought to the quality of life of New Brunswickers. Thus, we strongly believe that the continued engagement of these sectors will be intensified in the second plan. The talent, ability, willingness, determination and commitment of all citizens will again be called upon in the next five years. We are confident that together, we can overcome poverty.

The four co-chairs



Monique Richard
Citizens

Brian Duplessis
Non-profit

Gerry Pond
Business

Hon. Dorothy Shephard
Government

Executive Summary

Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, 2014-2019, builds on the momentum of New Brunswick's initial economic and social inclusion plan launched in 2009. It serves as a roadmap for the province to move towards economic and social inclusion for all.

The plan is based on information gathered during the *Overcoming Poverty Together 2 (OPT2)* public engagement. This process provided an opportunity for New Brunswickers to come together to discuss issues surrounding economic and social inclusion. These discussions led to a five-year action plan for the province to pursue. It is not a "how to" plan but, rather, a "what can be done collectively" plan to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for all people living in our province. This is what gives the plan its uniqueness.

The public engagement process, held in September and October 2013, consisted of 12 public dialogue sessions conducted by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, in conjunction with the Community Inclusion Networks. Additionally, three meetings with regional and provincial stakeholder organizations, and mini-dialogue sessions hosted by CINs, took place during that period. Comments and briefs were also collected online.

Nearly 750 people took part in the public dialogue sessions. Approximately 50 organizations sent in briefs and participated in regional and provincial stakeholder meetings. Close to 500 comments were received online. The entire process gathered almost 5000 comments, in total, which form the basis of this plan.

The overarching principle of *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, 2014-2019* is the coming together of citizens, non-profit organizations, businesses and government to collaboratively create opportunities for socioeconomic development and reduce poverty. It was recognized that factors affecting economic and social inclusion must be collectively identified and considered by all sector partners in the implementation and execution of policies and initiatives. Through this collaborative approach, an improved quality of life for all New Brunswickers will be achieved.

The plan has a unique collective and collaborative approach, based on the premise that everyone is part of the solution. Similarly, the plan is inclusive as it embraces diversity, with each measure intended to apply to all New Brunswickers. In keeping with this spirit, everyone's voice is important. Those with distinctive experiences with poverty, such as aboriginal communities, youth, seniors, immigrants, persons living with disabilities and mental health issues, must be reflected in the implementation and fulfilment of this plan.

Many comments expressed during the *OPT2* process are being addressed at various levels in other plans and strategies already in place in New Brunswick. As such, it was determined that this plan should highlight priority actions not otherwise being addressed and serve as a complement to existing plans and strategies concerned with similar subject matter.

Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, 2014-2019 places emphasis on community capacity-building. It recognizes that each individual and community has a role to play in fostering economic and social inclusion and suggests that communities be empowered to tackle poverty reduction and other issues in New Brunswick. The plan includes 28 priority actions, divided into four pillars:

Pillar 1 – Community Empowerment, includes actions addressing community development, communication and networking and volunteerism.

Pillar 2 – Learning, includes actions addressing child and youth education and adult education, training and preparation for work.

Pillar 3 – Economic Inclusion, includes actions addressing participation in the labour market and business activity.

Pillar 4 – Social Inclusion, includes actions addressing food security and healthy food availability, housing and transportation.

Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, 2014-2019 remains committed to actions set out in the first economic and social inclusion plan. Continuing to develop and implement person-centred integrated service-delivery, reviewing minimum wage, reducing barriers to continuing education, addressing availability of registered early learning spaces and promoting awareness of economic and social inclusion are also priorities of this plan.



Public Dialogue St. Andrews, October 7, 2013

Introduction

This plan, entitled *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, 2014-2019*, builds on the momentum of New Brunswick's initial economic and social inclusion plan launched in 2009.

This new plan is based on information gathered during the *Overcoming Poverty Together 2 (OPT2)* public engagement process, during which New Brunswickers discussed issues to address together to promote economic and social inclusion and reduce poverty. The process provided an opportunity to restate values and actions identified in the first plan and identify new priority actions to be taken in the future.

Economic and social inclusion means the ability of a person to participate fully in the economic and social activities of society. (The Economic and Social Inclusion Act)

Poverty refers to the condition of a person who lacks the resources, means, opportunities, and power necessary to acquire and maintain economic self-sufficiency or to integrate into and participate in society. (The Economic and Social Inclusion Act)

Connection to the First Economic and Social Inclusion Plan

The first economic and social inclusion plan was based on a public engagement process that defined a roadmap for the province to promote economic and social inclusion and address poverty reduction. Highlights of activities since the announcement of the first public engagement initiative can be found at the end of this document (see Appendix 1).

Cooperation between the four identified sectors, namely citizens, non-profit, business and government (including the Official Opposition), is at the center of all actions aimed towards poverty reduction, giving this plan its unique quality.

One of the initial actions taken from the first plan was to adopt legislation designed to facilitate the economic and social inclusion of all New Brunswickers. By doing so, the province of New Brunswick put in place a powerful non-partisan mechanism to address the issue of poverty.

What has evolved in the almost five years since the release of the Economic and Social Inclusion Act has been the structural capacity to promote economic and social inclusion and address poverty reduction. To implement the first economic and social inclusion plan, the Act established an autonomous structure to facilitate participation of all sectors. The establishment of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation and Community Inclusion Networks provided continuity for the plan and opened access to diverse resources beyond the reach of government alone.

ESIC and the 12 CINs have been working at the community level to address issues related to poverty. Significant outreach and programming have been delivered to promote economic and social inclusion. Always central to every approach has been the involvement of the four sector partners.

The first economic and social inclusion plan recognized poverty as a societal challenge requiring the attention of all sectors. The overarching principle of this new plan continues to be the coming together of citizens, non-profit organizations, businesses and government to collaboratively create opportunities for socioeconomic development and reduce poverty. Innovative strategies in policy development, a community-based approach to service delivery and a shared responsibility to promote the transition from poverty to self-sufficiency to inclusion remain central to this plan.

The Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) develops, adopts, implements and evaluates New Brunswick's provincial economic and social inclusion plan every 5 years.

The Community Inclusion Networks (CINs) identify regional issues and priorities, and develop and implement a regional plan that is in line with the provincial plan. The CINs develop revised regional plans every two years which reflect the movement of regional priorities regarding economic and social inclusion.

ESIC will continue on-going coordination efforts from the first *Economic and Social Inclusion Plan*. Actions that were not completed, such as continuing to develop person-centred integrated service-delivery, reviewing minimum wage, reducing barriers to continuing education, addressing availability of registered early learning spaces and generating promotion and awareness of economic and social inclusion remain priorities for this plan.

While many of the issues raised during the *OPT2* process were similar to those uncovered during the first public engagement process, the conversation has evolved. New emphasis has been placed on community capacity-building and recognizing the fact that each individual has a role to play in fostering economic and social inclusion. More so, it has been acknowledged that communities must be empowered to tackle poverty and other issues in New Brunswick.



Public Dialogue Florenceville-Bristol, September 30, 2013

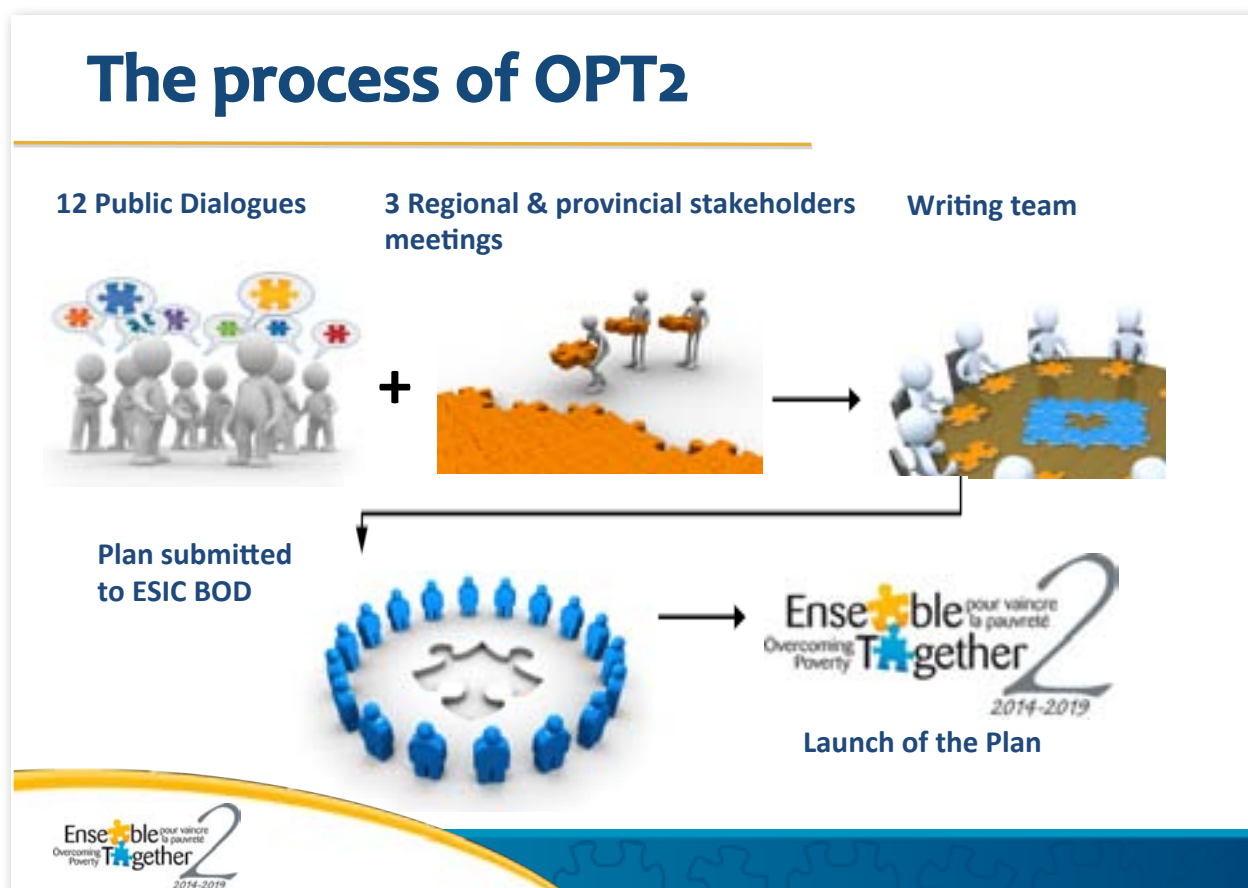


Public Dialogue Fredericton, October 9, 2013

Process

The New Brunswick *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* states that a new economic and social inclusion plan shall be adopted every five years through a public engagement process led by ESIC. The process for OPT2 began in the fall of 2013 in collaboration with the CINs and consisted of the following phases:

- ✦ Gathering of comments through public dialogues, meetings with regional and provincial stakeholders, and online submissions (see Appendix 2);
- ✦ Analysis of the information and development of the plan;
- ✦ Analysis and approval by ESIC's Board of Directors.



Nearly 750 people took part in public dialogue sessions in twelve regions throughout the province. Approximately 50 community organizations sent in briefs and participated in sessions held for regional and provincial agencies. Close to 500 comments were received online.

The entire process gathered almost 5,000 comments, categorized into the pillars outlined in this document. Within these areas, a list of priority actions has been developed to capture the essence of the discussion and to recommend possible steps towards achieving economic and social inclusion.

Subject matter experts from all sector partners supported the preparation of this plan by offering their feedback and expertise. The plan was approved by ESIC's Board of Directors in the spring of 2014.

Spirit of the Plan

Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, 2014-2019 is a roadmap for the province to move towards economic and social inclusion for all. It is not a “how to” plan but, rather, a “what can be done collectively” plan to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for all people living in our province. This is what makes this plan distinct.

New Brunswickers were asked to identify what we could do as a province, as a community and as citizens to contribute to economic and social inclusion and to reduce poverty (see Appendix 3). The plan has a unique collective and collaborative approach, based on the premise that everyone is part of the solution. People in every sector are invited and encouraged to determine their role in the realization of each priority action in this plan. *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, 2014-2019* is for everyone.

Public, private and non-profit partners as well as citizens need to come together to look at the impact of services and programs designed for people living in poverty. Factors that affect economic and social inclusion should be collectively identified, considered and, ultimately, shape the implementation and execution of policies and initiatives. Through this collaborative approach, we are better able to achieve an improved quality of life for all.

Just as this plan is collective and collaborative, it is also inclusive. It embraces diversity as each measure is intended to apply to all New Brunswickers. In keeping with this spirit, everyone’s voice is important and must be heard. Those with distinctive experiences with poverty such as aboriginal communities, youth, seniors, immigrants, persons living with disabilities and mental health issues, must be reflected in the implementation and fulfilment of this plan. As such, continued outreach and discussion is necessary.

Participants in the OPT2 process clearly stated the importance of collaboration between sector partners in the implementation of priority actions identified in this plan to promote economic and social inclusion and reduce poverty. The need to share information gathered during the OPT2 process and to work in partnership to address the issues raised are fundamental to this plan moving forward.

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.

Global Objective

In keeping with the first Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, continued focus will be put towards fostering the economic and social inclusion of all New Brunswickers and reducing poverty through increased community capacity and collaboration of the four sector partners. Ongoing emphasis will be placed on reducing income poverty by 25% and deep income poverty by 50%.



Public Dialogue Campbellton,
September 24, 2013



Public Dialogue Burt's Corner,
October 1, 2013



Public Dialogue Bathurst, September 25, 2013

Pillars

The areas of focus identified in this plan reflect the views shared during the OPT2 process. Comments were categorized into one of four central pillars that structure and reinforce this plan. These pillars are:

1. Community Empowerment
2. Learning
3. Economic Inclusion
4. Social Inclusion

Positive efforts made in each of these areas will help meet the overall goal of this plan.

Many comments expressed during the OPT2 process are being addressed at various levels in other plans and strategies already in place in New Brunswick (see Appendix 4). As such, it was determined that this plan should highlight 28 priority actions that might not be otherwise addressed and serve as a complement to other plans concerned with similar subject matter. In this document, the priority actions are located within each pillar and listed in their entirety (see Appendix 5).

Pillar 1: Community Empowerment

Throughout the OPT2 process, community development was frequently raised as a means to generate economic and social inclusion in New Brunswick. Community mobilization, networking, communication and support of volunteerism were recognized as ways to strengthen the capacity of communities. Community empowerment is a process whereby communities gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their existence. Community empowerment seeks to strengthen individuals and groups of people by building on their assets and capacities and mobilizing them to effect change in the community.

There were many suggestions and ideas for initiatives that communities would like to pursue, reflecting a genuine willingness to engage and be part of the solution. Empowering communities to implement ideas through the provision of resources and support will result in a more economically and socially inclusive New Brunswick.

A. Support for Community Development

More than 70% of New Brunswick's population has a somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging to their community¹, revealing that community factors greatly in the lives of New Brunswickers. Community development could be maximized through supporting mobilization efforts, providing the means to sustain existing initiatives and cooperation of local and regional

From the public dialogue sessions...

*"What do we need in our community?
How do we attain it?"*

*"Having a realistic community goal based on a needs
assessment will help bring the communities together."*

*"As a community, it's necessary to involve
business people, social sector stakeholders, and
health professionals, finally every leader that
can suggest solutions and create bridges."*

1 New Brunswick Health Council. New Brunswick Population Health Snapshot 2012. (2011 Data)

partners. Community access to tools for the purpose of implementing innovative economic and social inclusion projects will strengthen community development in New Brunswick.

The commitment of the four sector partners is essential for community development. Through the mobilization of community assets brought by each of these partners, initiatives will be designed that reflect the values of individuals that make up these communities.

The capacity to take initiative, welcome challenges and be self-determined is at the core of an entrepreneurial spirit. To foster this spirit, people must be encouraged to put their ideas into action, to innovate, to engage in the community and to make decisions that have a positive impact on the community. Promoting the implementation of initiatives that help develop this entrepreneurial spirit will better equip individuals and communities to face life's economic and social challenges².

Priority Actions

1. **Foster community development through community asset mobilization.**
2. **Foster an entrepreneurial spirit to promote economic and social inclusion.**

B. Communication & Networking

Communication is an essential component of community development. Various communication methods can be used to help people become better aware of their community life. Through effective communication, people learn about available programs, services and events in their community. They also develop a better understanding of emerging issues and acquire the knowledge needed to address these issues.

The opportunity to better communicate and share information about community activities was highlighted throughout the OPT2 process. Participants recognized that many programs and services aimed at improving economic and social conditions for people living in poverty exist in their communities. However, the information must be available, accessible and understandable for all. Also identified was the opportunity of using communication tools to reinforce the role played by everyone in the community.

Participants shared examples of initiatives carried out in communities across New Brunswick. These success stories need to be publicized and celebrated!

Priority Actions

3. **Share and communicate information to improve coordination of community activities and regional initiatives that foster economic and social inclusion.**
4. **Support creation of a “one-stop shop” to inform people about government and non-profit organization programs related to economic and social inclusion.**
5. **Celebrate communities' best practices and success stories.**

2 Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Francophone sector

C. Volunteerism

Volunteers contribute greatly to actions designed for economic and social inclusion and poverty reduction. More than 48% of New Brunswickers currently volunteer their time to a group or organization each year³. The effectiveness of efforts to reduce poverty relies heavily on the commitment of these citizens who volunteer their time and skills to create vibrant communities. It is essential to recognize the value of volunteering and to strengthen support for these efforts.

Participants recognized that there is a need to ingrain the spirit of volunteerism in our families and communities, and to encourage volunteerism in schools, post-secondary institutions and the workplace.

Strengthening support for volunteer efforts that connect people from all areas of society and that coordinate volunteer activity was identified as an opportunity for increasing the volunteer capacity of a community.

Priority Actions

6. **Promote the spirit of volunteerism in our communities.**
7. **Support the alignment of community volunteer organizations and initiatives.**

From the public dialogue sessions...

“Take the time to show young people how to get involved.”

“Help people in your community with basic life skills, i.e. how to fill out a resume, how to interview, how to look for a job.”

“Many people want to help but do not know how to or where to go. We must show them the way.”

Pillar 2: Learning

Learning, education and training are essential for individuals and communities to reach their full potential, to promote economic and social inclusion and reduce poverty. There are many groups and organizations dedicated to the delivery of education and learning programs. These should be connected, coordinated, aligned and promoted for maximum impact.

Participants in the OPT2 process clearly stated that actions related to learning were fundamental to reducing poverty. A significant number of thoughts were shared about early childhood education, the importance of community schools, the need for children to develop life-long skills and competencies and the critical role of parents, families and the community in the education of children and youth.

From the public dialogue sessions...

“Reading and numeracy at an early age is very important, it is a base.”

“Bringing families into the school environment before the child enters the system helps to establish a friendly relationship.”

Literacy starts for a child well before he or she learns to read and write. By playing with books and by recognizing that letters can be found everywhere, like on posters on the walls, in envelopes received by mail or on an electronic tablet, the child shows interest in literacy.

3 Statistics Canada. 2010. Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating

The ability of all children and youth to have a stable home and support to ensure their success in school and in life were also identified as key elements to reducing poverty and promoting economic and social and inclusion for the next generations. Literacy training and greater access to life skills and labour market readiness programs for youth, adults and particularly those receiving social assistance, were also mentioned.

79.9% of youth 12 to 19 years old have a somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging to their community⁴. (NBHC)

A. Child & Youth Education

We must work together to ensure that resources are available to support our children's education so that they become well-rounded individuals who contribute to their community. Capacity in public schools must be strengthened to address specialized learning requirements of all children and youth.

Learning is first and foremost the responsibility of parents, families and legal guardians. Parental involvement and recognition of their role as primary educators and as key players in the development, learning and education process of their child is fundamental. A holistic approach, centered on the child, parents, family and legal guardians, needs to take root before the child's entry in the school system and continue throughout the course of a child's life. Parents, families and guardians, along with the education system and community organizations, must work together to give children and youth the required tools to generate success in learning environments.

Literacy is essential to the healthy development of a child. Literacy at an early age allows a child to develop vocabulary, imagination and better communication skills. When adults and families create an environment that supports literacy, they instil an awareness and awakening in their children.

The community-based approach taken by the New Brunswick school system is innovative. Schools and communities working together enrich the education of children, youth and community members. The opening up of schools to the community helps students develop their identity, their academic experience and their ties to community. This community-based vision of schools is also beneficial to the community as partnerships ensure its growth and sustainability⁵.

Mentoring and afterschool programs, both community-based and school-based, provide an opportunity for children and youth to develop and build new skills, increasing their self-confidence and enhancing their academic experience. Children and youth are able to use the knowledge and skills they acquire in these programs to help them overcome challenges they may face in the school system and in their daily lives.

Priority Actions

- 8. Reinforce and build upon capacity of parents, families, caregivers and communities to support children and youth in their learning.**
- 9. Support and promote literacy in early childhood development and education.**
- 10. Extend and strengthen the concept of innovative school models, such as entrepreneurial community schools and community-based school programming.**
- 11. Promote afterschool programming and mentoring opportunities that assist with skill development and support participation of children and youth living in low income families.**

⁴ New Brunswick Health Council. 2012. Population Health Snapshot. 2012. (2011 Data)

⁵ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Écoles Communautaires. Soyez au cœur de la réussite des enfants.

B. Adult Education, Training and Preparation to Work

Programs in post-secondary education, adult education, literacy, financial literacy, skills development and workplace preparation should be provided at a local level in learning-friendly environments, to reach people in the community where they live. Currently, a number of communities deliver these programs through a multi-sectoral approach. These programs need to be extended throughout the province so that all New Brunswickers can benefit.

By making workplace training programs more readily available, individuals can develop skills to help them better transition to the labour force and improve their quality of life. The availability and continuity of training programs after entering the labour market is essential to ensure long-term success.

Priority Actions

12. Support community-based initiatives in literacy, financial literacy, adult education, skill development and workplace entry preparation.
13. Support learning initiatives related to career development and employment counselling services for people with low incomes.

Pillar 3: Economic Inclusion

Participants in the OPT2 process recognized that every individual has the potential to contribute to the economy in a variety of ways. Each person can get involved through labour force, social enterprise or support of local businesses.

Priority actions need to be implemented to ensure economic inclusion of all New Brunswick citizens. As such, the annual indexation of minimum wage, the adoption of more inclusive pay equity legislation, the promotion of inclusion in the workplace and the support of local businesses and social enterprises have been identified as key elements to facilitate economic inclusion.

Economic inclusion can be achieved through employment opportunities, income sources, and influence over resources and it can be achieved by removing barriers that hold back opportunities.

A. Participation in the Labour Market

As a result of the first economic and social inclusion plan, New Brunswickers took important steps to work together to increase minimum wage. This plan is committed to continuing efforts in this area. The next step is to ensure that minimum wage is subject to review and indexed annually.

The concept of living wage refers to the income needed for an individual or family to meet their basic needs, to maintain a safe and decent standard of living in their community and to save for future needs and goals⁶. Put forward in several jurisdictions, this concept needs to be further explored to determine if it could be implemented in New Brunswick.

6 Vibrant Calgary. 2009. Living Wage Fact Sheet.

The Province of New Brunswick has a *Pay Equity Act* ensuring that, in the public sector, employees receive equal pay for work of equal or equivalent value. The possibility to extend the enforcement of this Act to the private sector and, particularly, to businesses with which the government has service agreements should be considered. This would fully recognize the value of women's contribution in the workplace, therefore making tremendous strides towards economic and social inclusion. The creation of an independent and neutral commission responsible for the promotion and respect of pay equity principles also needs to be considered to ensure enforcement and evolution of the *Act*.

From the public dialogue sessions...

"We could have a person in businesses in charge of establishing contacts with the communities."

"We need to ensure that women have adequate incomes. This includes pay equity and other pay equality measures, particularly in the private sector."

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. When people with disabilities do contribute, there are structures in place that undermine inclusion, impacting the potential for fulfillment and success. Similarly, people living with mental illness, or those for whom traditional work environments cause a challenge, are often excluded from the labour market. Society benefits from the contributions these people bring to the workplace and these individuals benefit from the many positive effects brought about by participating in the work force. Breaking down barriers by supporting workplace environments to better promote inclusion is essential to take advantage of these possibilities.

Priority Actions

14. Explore concept of a living wage.
15. Consider the creation of comprehensive pay equity legislation.
16. Promote and support inclusion in the workplace.
17. Support flexible work place conditions to generate opportunities for people with barriers to employment and/or unique work practices and availability.

B. Business Activity

The value of local businesses and their role in the New Brunswick economy was mentioned throughout the OPT2 process. Nurturing entrepreneurship is the first step in promoting the creation of local businesses and establishing connectivity between these businesses and their community.

According to participants, businesses rooted in their community have an investment and have a vested interest in the success of their community and its members. By supporting local businesses, New Brunswickers are, in turn, supporting their community and themselves. Therefore, buying from local businesses isn't just a value, but an economic choice that provides benefits to the community.

From the public dialogue sessions...

"Companies should have a social component; including, buy local, community involvement and the government should encourage these companies. "

"We have to buy locally wherever possible to promote local economic development."

The need to create a supportive climate that encourages social enterprises was acknowledged as a way to promote economic and social inclusion. Social enterprises are defined as businesses/organizations (for profit, not-for-profit, cooperatives, credit unions and labour unions) which participate in the marketplace for the purpose of creating a social and economic impact in the community.

Priority Actions

18. Foster entrepreneurship.
19. Promote the support of local and micro businesses.
20. Promote and support development, creation and sustainability of a social enterprise ecosystem.

Pillar 4: Social Inclusion

Social inclusion means that everyone, regardless of challenge or ability, is given the opportunity to participate, feel welcome and be heard. An inclusive society will put in place measures aimed at reducing barriers that limit or prevent people from fully participating in their community.

A significant portion of the comments received during the OPT2 process focused on the importance of implementing measures that help people feel included in their community. Areas of focus were ideas regarding the need to promote the sharing of food knowledge, the evolving role of emergency food programs, the accessibility to quality and safe housing options in mixed neighbourhoods and the development of effective alternative community transport services.

A. Food Security and Healthy Food Availability

It was mentioned that community food initiatives such as community gardens, teaching kitchens, cooking clubs and after-school programs are inviting, inclusive places where people come together to share and learn about meal preparation, cooking and gardening.

Food security is often defined as the ability of all people, at all times, to have access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable and culturally appropriate foods, produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just⁷.

In the OPT2 process, people acknowledged that emergency food programs such as food banks, community kitchens and school breakfast programs are still essential for some people to meet their basic food needs. In fact, nearly 20,000 New Brunswickers use food banks every month and nearly 60% of food banks across the province have reported an increase in use in recent years⁸.

As a society, we need to act collectively to implement sustainable measures addressing the challenges of food security. Although some of the suggested priority actions are intended to overcome the

From the public dialogues...

“Soup kitchens are not food security: food security is having enough money to have three healthy meals a day.”

problems of food insecurity, they are not presented as long-term solutions. The real long-term solution to food insecurity is the elimination of poverty and the implementation of initiatives that promote economic and social inclusion for all people.

7 Department of Health. 2012. *The Public Health Nutrition Framework for Action 2012-2016*

8 Food Banks Canada. 2013. *Hungercount 2013. A comprehensive report on hunger and food bank use in Canada, and recommendations for change. (2013 Data)*

Emergency food programs in New Brunswick make huge efforts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of our communities. Unfortunately, these services are still needed and we must act collectively to provide support to them. Everywhere, it was recognized that the staff and volunteers in these centres and programs do remarkable work. By better equipping these people, and by sharing knowledge and resources related to the management and coordination of food, food hygiene, food safety, and availability of healthy foods, efforts to reduce food insecurity are strengthened.

By promoting the transition from food banks to community-based food centres, basic food needs are met and opportunities to create support networks are fostered. Community food centres provide people with access to quality food in a proper setting that builds food skills, gives opportunities for participants to have influence and make decisions, values all those involved and creates strong social connections.

The difference between a community food-based centre and a food bank is that participants are actively involved in decision-making. They serve as volunteers, Board members, cooks, gardeners, etc. A community-based food centre is a place where people come together to learn, share and advocate for good, healthy food.

In New Brunswick, only 41% of students in grades 6-12 have breakfast each day⁹. Given the importance of breakfast and the adverse effects that hunger has on physical and mental health and the healthy development of children and youth, it is essential to work with partners and stakeholders from all sectors to provide students with breakfast programs in all public schools. Regardless of where they live and the social and economic situation of their families, New Brunswick students should have access to community based programs that offer nutritious food and foster healthy eating habits.

Priority Actions

- 21. Promote and support community-based initiatives related to food preparation, food safety and access to healthy food.**
- 22. Promote transition of food banks to community-based food centres.**
- 23. Encourage initiatives that address availability of nutritional food and food management and coordination in emergency food programs.**
- 24. Promote the establishment of community based breakfast programs in all public schools.**

⁹ New Brunswick Health Council 2012. Children and Health Snapshot 2012. (2009-2010 Data)

B. Housing

The importance of having an affordable, comfortable home, in a safe and inclusive community was stated throughout the OPT2 process. To create sustainable housing, partners from all sectors need to work together to develop and support innovative solutions that meet the long-term needs of individuals, families and communities. Community-rooted initiatives are ways to address homelessness, create affordable housing, foster mixed neighbourhoods, revitalize older neighbourhood and repair and renovate buildings. Housing initiatives may take different forms, such as, public/private partnerships, cooperatives, social enterprises, non-profit housing, community housing or assisted living.

Priority Actions

25. Support sustainability and quality of existing affordable housing options.
26. Encourage innovative community-based housing solutions for affordable, accessible, quality, mixed housing communities.

C. Transportation

Lack of access to transportation poses significant challenges for many New Brunswickers. Whether creating barriers to employment and training, limiting participation in sports and community activities, or restricting access to health and other essential services typically less available in rural areas, transportation challenges lead to exclusion.

A rural and urban transportation strategy could increase accessibility to essential services, promote the development of local and regional businesses and improve the quality of life in rural and urban areas. All four sector partners must be involved in creating this strategy to ensure its effectiveness and relevance to those who require transportation the most.

Community transportation initiatives are a way to address the transportation challenges that exist in communities. Individuals, the public/private sector and non-profit organizations have an opportunity to work together to build, support and promote alternative community transportation. This partnership is a creative approach to face the transportation realities in New Brunswick.

Priority Actions

27. Develop a comprehensive rural and urban transportation strategy for the province.
28. Promote and support community-based alternative transportation systems.

From the public dialogues sessions...

"Transportation needs to improve to help access to healthy and affordable food sources (e.g. grocery stores)."

"Although our communities are far apart, if we could look at improved transportation that is coordinated across the province, it would help people to access services (e.g. medical), work opportunities and meetings."

Measuring The Impact Of The Plan

ESIC will continue measuring on-going and in progress actions from the first Economic and Social Inclusion Plan, in addition to measuring new priority actions outlined in this plan. Evidence-based indicators will be used to monitor economic and social inclusion progress.

As required by the Act, ESIC must submit a corporate annual report and, every two years, submit a report concerning the progress of the implementation of the plan.



Public Dialogue Pokemouche,
September 18, 2013



Public Dialogue Richibucto,
September 16, 2013



Public Dialogue Miramichi, September 17, 2013

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6. Vibrant Calgary. 2009. Living Wage Fact Sheet. Available online: www.vibrantcalgary.com/uploads/pdfs/VCC_Living_Wage_Fact_Sheet_August_2009.pdf
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8. Department of Health. 2012. The Public Health Nutrition Framework for Action 2012-2016 Available online: www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/en/Publications/PublicHealthNutritionFrameworkforAction.pdf
9. New Brunswick Health Council. 2012. Children and Youth Snapshot 2012. (2009-2010 Data). Available online: www.nbhc.ca



Public Dialogue Saint John, October 8, 2013

Appendix 1

Highlights of Activities

Additional information can be found in ESIC's Progress Reports and Annual Reports (www.gnb.ca/poverty).

Date	Highlights of Actions
2008	
October	Announcement of the public engagement initiative to adopt a poverty reduction plan for NB
2009	
January to April	Public Dialogues
June to September	Round Table discussions
November 12-13	Final forum to adopt <i>Overcoming Poverty Together: The N.B. Economic and Social Inclusion Plan</i>
December	Extension of health card for up to 3 years for persons exiting social assistance
2010	
January	Elimination of the interim social assistance rate program
January	Application of household income policy to social assistance recipients in spousal relationships
April	Establishment of the <i>Economic and Social Inclusion Act</i>
April	Provision of stable funding for homeless shelters within five years. Funds also provided in 2011 & 2012
April	Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act to protect boarders
April	Minimum wage increase to \$8.50/hr.
May	Appointment of ESIC's President and four Co-Chairs
June	Appointment of Board Members
June	First Board of Directors meeting
September	Minimum wage increase to \$9.00/hr.
October	Investment in early learning and child care spaces
August to January 2011	Hiring of ESIC staff
2011	
January	First meetings of three Advisory Committees
February to October	Creation of 12 Community Inclusion Networks (CINs)
April	Minimum wage increase to \$9.50/hr.
August	Linkage of benefits such as health, child care and home heating to household income to the extent possible
November	Commencement of ESIC funding for Community Inclusion Network projects in Community Transportation and Community Learning

2012	
April	Minimum wage increase to \$10/hr
June	Hosting of Community Transportation conference by ESIC
June	Presentation of Advisory Committee for Health Benefits – Dental and Vision Report to government
June	Presentation of Advisory Committee for Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds (SECIF) Report to government
September	Launch of <i>Healthy Smiles Clear Vision</i> program for children in low income families
October	Presentation of Social Assistance Reform Advisory Committee Report to government
2013	
May	Development of GNB Interdepartmental Transportation Working Group
October	Restructure and increase of Social Assistance rates
October	Overhaul of the household income policy
October	Provision of more opportunities for people transitioning to work to keep earned income
October	Reform of wage exemptions to include a working income supplement
September to October	Public Dialogues – <i>Overcoming Poverty Together 2</i>
September to October	Regional and Provincial stakeholder meetings
October to April 2014	Development of the <i>Economic and Social Inclusion Plan: Overcoming Poverty Together 2014-2019</i>
October	First meeting of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Persons Living In Poverty
December	Announcement of New Brunswick Drug Plan
2014	
February	Announcement of Community Economic Development Initiative Funds and Small Business Tax Credit based on the SECIF Report
May	Announcement of <i>Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation Overcoming Poverty Together 2014-2019</i>
May	Launch of New Brunswick Drug Plan

Appendix 2

Public Dialogue Sessions Schedule

Location	Date (September – October 2013)
Richibucto	September 16
Miramichi	September 17
Pokemouche	September 18
Saint-Léonard	September 23
Campbellton	September 24
Bathurst	September 25
Stakeholders meeting - Bathurst	September 25
Florenceville-Bristol	September 30
Burt's Corner	October 1
Moncton	October 2
Stakeholders meeting - Moncton	October 2
St. Andrews	October 7
Saint John	October 8
Fredericton	October 9
Stakeholders meeting - Fredericton	October 24

Appendix 3

Questions – Public Dialogues

Question 1:

What can we do together as a province to reduce poverty and contribute to economic and social inclusion?

Question 2:

What can we do together as a community to reduce poverty and contribute to economic and social inclusion?

Question 3:

What can you do as a citizen and/or an organization to reduce poverty and contribute to economic and social inclusion?



Public Dialogue Moncton,
October 2, 2013



Public Dialogue Saint-Léonard, September 23, 2013

Appendix 4

Plans and Strategies

Several comments expressed by the participants in the process of public engagement are addressed in the following strategies and plans.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. *Putting Children First: Positioning Early Childhood for the Future, 2012-2015.*

Department of Education and Early Childhood. *Action Plan for Inclusion 2013-2015. Government's Response to Recommendations: Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools.*

Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. *New Brunswick Labour Force and Skills Strategy, 2013-2016.*

Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability Steering Committee. *An Employment Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick, 2012-2017.*

Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. *Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick, 2010-2014.*

Department of Economic Development. *Economic Development Action Plan, 2012-2016.*

Department of Social Development. *Social Assistance Reform.*

Public Health. *New Brunswick Public Health Nutrition Framework for Action, 2012-2016.*

New Brunswick Housing Corporation, Department of Social Development. *Hope is a Home: New Brunswick's Housing Strategy, 2010-2015.*

Department of Health. *Action Plan for Mental Health in New Brunswick, 2011-2018.*

Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities. *Live Well, Be Well - New Brunswick's Wellness Strategy, 2009-2013.*

Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons. *Disability Action Plan. The Time for Action is Now. May 2012.*

Appendix 5

List of Priority Actions

Community Empowerment

1. Foster community development through community asset mobilization.
2. Foster an entrepreneurial spirit to promote economic and social inclusion.
3. Share and communicate information to improve coordination of community activities and regional initiatives that foster economic and social inclusion.
4. Support creation of a “one-stop shop” to inform people about government and non-profit organization programs related to economic and social inclusion.
5. Celebrate communities’ best practices and success stories.
6. Promote the spirit of volunteerism in our communities.
7. Support the alignment of community volunteer organizations and initiatives.

Learning

8. Reinforce and build upon capacity of parents, families, caregivers and communities to support children and youth in their learning.
9. Support and promote literacy in early childhood development and education.
10. Extend and strengthen the concept of innovative school models, such as entrepreneurial community schools and community-based school programming.
11. Promote skill-based mentoring and afterschool programming and support participation of children and youth living in low income families.
12. Support community-based initiatives in literacy, financial literacy, adult education, skill development and workplace entry preparation.
13. Support learning initiatives related to career development and employment counselling services for people with low incomes.

Economic Inclusion

14. Explore concept of a living wage.
15. Consider the creation of comprehensive pay equity legislation.
16. Promote inclusion in the workplace.
17. Support flexible work place conditions to generate opportunities for people with barriers to employment and/or unique work practices and availability.
18. Foster entrepreneurship.
19. Promote the support of local and micro businesses.
20. Promote and support development, creation and sustainability of a social enterprise ecosystem.

Social Inclusion

21. Promote and support community-based initiatives related to food preparation, food safety and access to healthy food.
22. Promote transition of food banks to community-based food centres.
23. Encourage initiatives that address availability of nutritional food and food management and coordination in emergency food programs.
24. Promote the establishment of community based breakfast programs in all public schools.
25. Support sustainability and quality of existing affordable housing options that.
26. Encourage innovative community-based housing solutions for affordable, accessible, quality, mixed housing communities.
27. Develop a comprehensive rural and urban transportation strategy for the province.
28. Promote and support community-based alternative transportation systems.



Public Dialogue St.
Andrews, October 7, 2013



Public Dialogue Saint John, October 8, 2013

Ensemble pour vaincre
la pauvreté
Overcoming Poverty Together
2014-2019