

# NEW BRUNSWICK'S DISABILITY ACTION PLAN FOR PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

Accountable Path Forward to an Equal Opportunity!

JULY 2020



Premier's Council on Disabilities  
Conseil du premier ministre pour les  
personnes handicapées

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**New Brunswick's  
Disability Action Plan  
for Persons with a Disability**

**July 2020**

Published by: Premier's Council on Disabilities  
250 King Street, Suite 140  
P.O. Box 6000  
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Dear Premier Higgs,

As Chairperson of the Premier's Council on Disabilities, I am pleased to present the 2020 NB Disability Action Plan report.

Over the years, significant progress has been made on disability awareness, the need for inclusive public and private sector services, as well as on opportunities for persons living with different disabilities in New Brunswick.

The struggle has been long and difficult, but thankfully greater inclusion has taken place due to the persistent efforts of disability consumers, their families, community advocates, service providers, health and rehabilitation professionals, educators, private sector businesses and employers, government officials and politicians, and our supporters amongst the public at large.

However, we still have a long way to go to achieve full citizenship and equitable access for all persons with a disability, in a predictable and consistent manner.

Persons with a disability will no longer accept systemic discrimination or lack of timely access to appropriate needed support services required to have a life with dignity and safety. Timely access to these services must be possible no matter what type of disability they have; no matter where they live in New Brunswick; no matter which official language they speak; no matter what age they might be; and no matter how they became disabled.

We need a provincial Disability Action Plan with meaningful principles as a foundation and clear objectives, measurable targets and timelines, clear responsibility centres, and regular public accountability.

Government can not do it all by themselves. However, they do have a leadership role to play in delivering public services and must work in partnerships with other community and private sector stakeholders to raise the bar for the inclusion and support of persons with disabilities. This new proposed Disability Action Plan is an effort to provide a pathway to go forward. This Disability Action Plan is intended to be flexible and open to improvements as we continue the journey together. **Yes we can! Yes we will!**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Dickinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Randy" being more prominent than the last name "Dickinson".

Randy Dickinson, Chairperson  
Premier's Council on Disabilities

## What We Heard

With the completion of the latest version of the Disability Action Plan Strategy and the Employment Action Plan, the Council believes it is time to develop a new action plan strategy to address disability-related issues.

As part of the Council's ongoing efforts to consult with the disability community and the many stakeholders around the province, it hosted eight regional public meetings in the lead up to the Disability Stakeholders Summit. The public meetings were held in Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John, Edmundston, Bathurst, Miramichi, and Tracadie. More than 150 people attended the regional meetings and provided their feedback on disability issues.

The council also distributed a survey on their social media, their website, and to their disability stakeholders email contact list. In response to the survey, the Council received feedback and comments from 220 individuals. In addition, Council had one-on-one meetings with numerous stakeholders throughout the process to develop this action plan.

During the Disability Stakeholders' Summit held in June 2019, which involved another 220 stakeholders, a number of issues were discussed relating to opportunities for inclusion of citizens with disabilities in the economic and social life of the province of New Brunswick. In addition to the plenary sessions, eight different topics were offered in the workshop groups. Then, matters such as education, poverty, transportation, recreation, employment, housing, disability supports, and barrier-free access were examined.

Note takers were onsite at both the Legislative Breakfast and the workshops, to capture as much of the discussion and dialogue as possible. Prepared questions were available at each table to guide the discussion during the Legislative Breakfast. These same questions were used to guide the discussion at the public meetings and during each of the eight breakout sessions conducted as part of the Summit.

The Premier's Council on Disabilities took all the instructive information gathered from their various consultations, provincial wide questionnaires, and Disability Stakeholders' Summit to inspire the preparation of this new Action Plan on Disability Issues for consideration by the Government of New Brunswick.

## Background

The Premier's Council on Disabilities (PCD) is the consultation body for the Government of New Brunswick responsible for stakeholder consultation and engagement, research and study, and information sharing on issues related to the barriers of persons with disabilities. The Council envisions a New Brunswick where all persons are accepted, included and valued. We strive to provide dynamic leadership to improve the quality of life for all persons affected by disability in New Brunswick.

The Premier's Council on Disabilities help to coordinate the Government of New Brunswick (GNB) approach to Disability Issues. This is done by working with other government departments and key stakeholders. The Council's partnerships within government and with the not-for-profit sector are key factors as we collectively engage each other to improve the supports and outcomes for persons with disabilities, and their families, in New Brunswick.

The PCD Act defines "person with a disability" which means a person who has long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the person's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

To consider the largest range of potential opportunities for NB's growth, the PCD organized a series of engagement opportunities and meetings with stakeholders around the province between early February 2019 and March 2020, to create a new provincial NB Disability Action Plan Strategy.

As part of the PCD engagement strategy for Persons with Disabilities, the Premier's Council organized a Disability Stakeholders' Summit for key provincial stakeholders, a provincial survey, several public meetings across the province, and one on one meetings with interested and key disabilities stakeholders, to identify and brainstorm how to break down barriers for persons with a disability.

The Disability Action Plan (or DAP) is a multi-year strategy that includes recommendations involving key disability stakeholders with a focus on: employment, education, poverty, housing, disability supports, accessibility, transportation, and recreation and wellness.

The DAP includes recommendations for action to respond to issues identified during the council's consultation and engagement process.

For persons with a disability to reach their full potential, we need to ensure that they receive the same access as all other citizens.

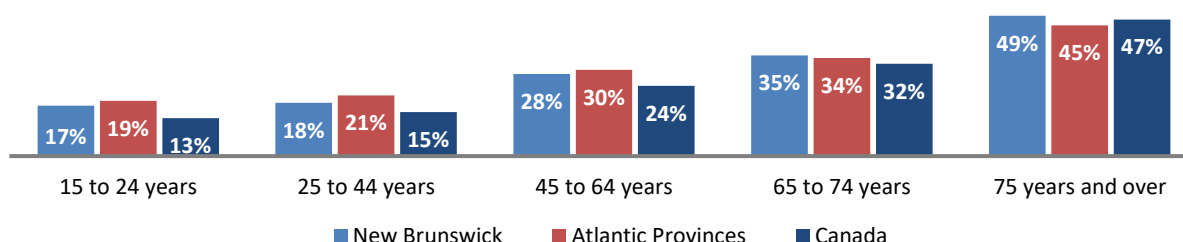
The Premier's Council prepared various drafts of this report to be shared with our partners for further input and revisions before this report was due for submission to government.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the many community stakeholders who provided a significant amount of feedback leading up to the release of this document. To monitor the actions taking place on all of these recommendations and to hold the implementation process accountable, the Premier's Council on Disabilities is committed to working with people with disabilities, their families, disability agencies, government departments, and other community organizations.

### **Key statistics for disabilities in NB & CANADA: Results from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability**

In 2017 there were an estimated 161,590 New Brunswickers aged 15 years and over that had one or more disabilities. This represented 26.7% of the province's population aged 15 years and over, the second highest percentage among the provinces and territories, and well above the 22.3% seen at a national level. While the high number of individuals with disabilities in New Brunswick was in part a reflection of the province's relatively old population, even when age is controlled for, New Brunswick still ranks near the top in terms of prevalence of disabilities.

#### **Prevalence of Disability by Age Group, 2017**



Within New Brunswick and across the country, disabilities were more prevalent among women than men. This trend persisted across most broad age categories but was most pronounced among youth.

Both immigrants and individuals that were part of a visible minority group were less likely to have a disability than non-immigrants / individuals that were not part of a visible minority group. Within New Brunswick, among individuals aged 15 years and over, 22.1% of immigrants and 12.6% of individuals that were part of a visible minority group had one or more disabilities, compared to 27.1% of non-immigrants / individuals that were not part of a

visible minority group. Nationally, 19.2% of immigrants and 15.0% of individuals that were part of a visible minority group had one or more disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

Among New Brunswickers with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 24.7% were classified as having a 'very severe' disability, 22.6% as having a 'severe' disability, 17.1% as having a 'moderate' disability, and 35.6% as having a 'mild' disability.<sup>2</sup>

The most common types of disabilities among the New Brunswick population were those related to pain, flexibility, mobility and mental health.

Compared to the country as a whole, New Brunswick's typical working-age population with disabilities was somewhat more likely to have disabilities related to mental health, flexibility, mobility, dexterity or hearing, but somewhat less likely to have disabilities related to seeing or learning.

Prevalence of specific disability types varied significantly by age group. Among youth, mental health-related disabilities were by far the most common disability type, affecting 11.2% of the population aged 15 to 24 years within the province (and 7.8% Canada-wide).

As of 2017, 44.7% of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over had completed some form of post-secondary education, compared to 52.1% of persons without disabilities. Nationally these percentages were 48.4% and 57.7% respectively. These numbers are likely in part a reflection of the fact that persons with disabilities are generally older than persons without disabilities (and older individuals are less likely to have obtained post-secondary credentials).

At the time of the 2016 Census (May 2016), only 55.4% of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years in New Brunswick were employed, compared to 76.5% of persons without disabilities. Nationally, 59.3% of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years were employed, compared to 80.1% of persons without disabilities.

Among employed persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years in New Brunswick, 37.3% required one or more workplace accommodations (34.4% nationally).

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<sup>1</sup> All data found in this document pertaining to immigrants, visible minority groups, education, and income were accessed through the [Community Data Program](#).

<sup>2</sup> Severity classes are based on the number of disability types that a person has, the level of difficulty experienced in performing certain tasks, and the frequency of activity limitations. The names assigned to each class are simply intended to facilitate its use and are not intended as labels or judgement concerning the person's level of disability. In other words, the classes should be interpreted as follows: people in class 1 have a less severe disability than people in class 2; people in class 2 have a less severe disability than people in class 3; and people in class 3 have a less severe disability than people in class 4.

As of 2017, an estimated 15,270 non-employed persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years in New Brunswick had potential to work<sup>3</sup>. Among the provinces and territories, New Brunswick had the highest proportion of non-employed persons with disabilities without work potential.

Employment rates among persons with disabilities varied significantly by disability type. At the time of the 2016 Census, employment rates for persons with disabilities in the province were lowest among those with developmental (22.8%) and memory (33.7%) disabilities and highest for those with hearing (58.0%) and seeing (56.3%) related disabilities (along with “unknown” disabilities).<sup>4</sup>

In 2015, persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years in New Brunswick had a median after-tax income of \$26,879, ranking 9<sup>th</sup> among the provinces and territories (ahead of the other Atlantic Provinces and Quebec), and well below the national median for this group of \$28,452.

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<sup>3</sup> Potential to work refers to those who were officially unemployed, not in the labour force but stated they would be looking for work in the next 12 months or not in the labour force but who did not report that they were housebound, completely prevented from working, or that no accommodation would enable them to work.

<sup>4</sup> When interpreting this data, it's important to consider that individuals may fall into several disability-type categories. For example, the labour force characteristics presented for persons with “pain-related” disabilities reflect the population of any individual with a pain-related disability, including those who in addition to pain-related disabilities also have disabilities related to mental health, mobility, flexibility, etc.

<sup>5</sup> When interpreting this data, it's important to consider that individuals may fall into several disability-type categories. For example, the labour force characteristics presented for persons with “pain-related” disabilities reflect the population of any individual with a pain-related disability, including those who in addition to pain-related disabilities also have disabilities related to mental health, mobility, flexibility, etc.

# Values and Principles

The following values and principles will guide all aspects of the implementation and evaluation of the Strategy for Persons Living with Disabilities in New Brunswick.

## ***Equality and Non-Discrimination***

Equality is a right guaranteed to all Canadian citizens. Citizenship refers to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society. Citizenship implies participation in and contribution to the systems and the "core" services in which all Canadians can participate and to which most Canadians have access. Persons with disabilities must be recognized for their abilities, their personal contribution, and their inherent worth.

## ***Inclusion – Equity of Opportunity***

New Brunswickers with disabilities need support to reach a level playing field where they can demonstrate their full potential as contributing citizens. Physical and attitudinal barriers must also be diminished. Support is simply a means to enhance abilities and potentials. The major 1998 federal/provincial *In Unison* governmental report commits our senior governments to collaborative action to ensure that supports are available, portable and affordable. Such supports include, but are not limited to, personal supports, education and employment supports, as well as income supports.

### **Equality vs. Equity**



**Equality = Sameness**  
Giving Everyone the Same Thing  
*It only works if everyone starts from the same place.*



**Equity = Fairness**  
Access to Same Opportunities  
*We must first ensure equity before we can enjoy equality.*

## ***Empowerment and Self-determination***

Persons with disabilities require the means to maximize their independence and enhance their well-being. Individuals must have control over their lives; support mechanisms must recognize and encourage each individual's freedom of choice. Support systems must allow each

individual to select among a range of options for living and working in the community. Self-reliance and independent living are implied goals.

### ***“Nothing about us without us!”***

Individuals and their families must be full partners in developing the policies that affect them. Consultation with consumers must occur as a matter of course.

### ***Rights and Responsibilities***

Persons with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other Canadians. This freedom also includes the implications and consequences of risk-taking; a disability does not relieve someone of responsibility for their life and their actions.

### ***The Right to an adequate standard of living***

Persons with disabilities often face greater challenges and have more difficulty addressing basic survival needs. Special support may be necessary to meet essential safety and security needs. Income support may be required to ensure a life that includes well-being, comfort and dignity.

## **Examples of some disability groups with unique challenges**

### **Deaf Culture**

Deaf Culture is the heart of the Deaf community everywhere in the world. Language and culture are inseparable. They are intertwined and passed down through generations of Deaf people. The Deaf community is comprised of culturally Deaf people in the core of the community who use a sign language (e.g. American Sign Language or Langue des Signes Quebecois) and appreciate their heritage, history, literature, and culture. Sign language is central to any Deaf person, child or adult for their intellectual, social, linguistic and emotional growth but to truly internalize the language, they must have the culture that is embedded in the language. Culture consists of language, values, traditions, norms and identity (Padden, 1980). Values in the Deaf community include the importance of clear communication for all both in terms of expression and comprehension. Norms refer to rules of behaviour in the Deaf community. For Deaf people, it includes getting someone’s attention appropriately, using direct eye contact and correct use of shoulder tapping. Norms of behavior often cause cross-cultural conflicts between Deaf and hearing people when the individuals are unaware of how their norms may be affecting their interactions and perceptions of each other’s intents. When trying to communicate from different cultural perspectives, shared meanings can be difficult to achieve. Deaf Culture is a way of life, an independent life, including the ability to make decisions, to be free to go where they want to go, free to visit friends who share common ground. When active in the Deaf community, they become contributing members of both Deaf and hearing society. It makes their life full and meaningful (NB Deaf and Hard of Hearing Associations).

## **Indigenous people with a disability**

The disability rate for indigenous persons nationally is about 50% higher than for non-indigenous persons.

This higher disability rate magnifies the challenges of poverty, employment, health, housing, and economic and social inclusion faced by indigenous persons and First Nations communities.

The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) made 94 Calls to Action. The Calls to Action urged governments, non-government organizations, educators, and the public to take meaningful steps towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, by renewing relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

In partnership, we need to create a process to raise awareness and create opportunities for indigenous persons with disabilities to fully contribute to their own economic, social and human rights.

## **Autism**

Autism means many things to many people. The term is often used as shorthand for “Autism Spectrum Disorder” (ASD), the term used in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). ASD refers to a neurodevelopmental condition that affects the way a person communicates with and relates to people and the world across the lifespan. ASD is characterized by differences in social communication and social interaction, as well as restrictive and repetitive behaviours. It can impact behaviour, social skills, understanding of non-verbal communication, thought processes in consuming and/or distributing information, self-care skills, and the processing and perception of sensory information.

The use of the word “spectrum” highlights that, while all people with autism will experience certain differences characteristic of the diagnosis, the degree to which each person on the spectrum experiences these differences throughout their lifespan varies in intensity and frequency. Just like all people, each person with autism is different, and has unique strengths and challenges (Autism Connections Fredericton).

## General Objectives

- To ensure that persons with different types of disabilities will have equitable access to needed services.
- To promote the awareness and enforcement of basic human rights for persons with disabilities in a timely and cost-effective manner.
- To ensure that service providers are held accountable for the quality assurance and fair delivery of all programs and services and that all of these be available to persons with disabilities.

## ***Accessibility and Barrier-Free/ Universal Design***

Accessibility often describes the degree to which a device or a service is accessible by as many people as possible. Accessibility is most often strongly associated to universal design, which is the process of creating products and places that are usable by people with the widest possible range of abilities, operating within the widest possible range of situations, whether a person has a disability or not.

Accessibility also includes a focus on people with disabilities and their human right to achieve their full potential as citizens and members of their community. Several definitions of accessibility refer directly to access-based individual human rights, laws, and regulations that enable people with disabilities to access information and services that minimize all the barriers they face. These include, but are not limited to, physical, political, social, and economic barriers. In many countries this has led to initiatives, laws, and regulations intended to achieve these objectives.

## ***Poverty***

The rate of poverty among people with disabilities has historically been much higher compared to the general population. Also, as compared to those without a disability, people with disabilities require more supports, equipment, and programs to reach their full potential as citizens. These requirements cost money to which many people with disabilities simply do not have access.

The rate of disability increases as a population ages. The aging of the provincial population means that every person will either be disabled or have a high potential of becoming disabled, and most will likely live in poverty at some point in their lives.

From a policy and program perspective, it is best to think of disability and poverty as a population issue rather than simply a condition of a designated group of individuals.

The high and increasing level of disability in New Brunswick means that a successful poverty reduction strategy needs to have a significant focus on persons with a disability.

## ***Disability Supports***

Disability supports address service needs for personal assistance in daily living to facilitate the personal development of individuals with disabilities, as well as their participation and inclusion in their communities. Disability supports need to be flexible and based on the needs of the individual to be most effective in achieving desirable outcomes. The persons with disabilities involved and/or their caregivers need to be actively engaged in the development, negotiation, and direction of their own personalized and flexible disability supports.

As individuals possess different disabilities, there may be a need for different types or levels of disability supports that must be tailored to the individual. Some families will have the necessary financial means to cover the costs of their own disability supports or will have access to insurance to help offset these costs. However, for many persons with disabilities, assistance may be required from public and community resources. This assistance for disability supports can provide them with the tools they need to function independently and with dignity, to be able to fully participate in their community. It will be very important to carefully assess the needs of each individual by using their input and personal objectives to best design a suite of supports to achieve their goals in a manner that is sustainable and fair to all concerned.

## ***Education***

To be successful today, every citizen needs to have strong literacy and numeracy skills with an appropriate education to help prepare them to interact successfully with their social peers and to attain their goals of self-sufficiency.

For persons with different disabilities, it is crucial that they have full and complete access to all levels of educational opportunities in order to offset any barriers that may be created by their disabilities. It is equally important that persons with disabilities have complete access to all forms of post-secondary education that are available in the province and elsewhere. We need to ensure that teachers and other support staff are properly trained and prepared to respond to the support requirements necessary to ensure a good education for all students with disabilities. We also want to see that facilities and programs are designed and constructed to be barrier-free for students, staff, and visitors with different disabilities.

Education opens doors for people. Persons with disabilities can thrive and succeed when provided with the quality education to which they are entitled.

## ***Housing***

Having a safe, suitable, and affordable place to live is one of the things that most citizens would take for granted as a basic necessity for life. However, for persons with certain disabilities, barrier-free access is a determining factor in where they can and cannot live. This obstacle often limits their possible choices of residences, based on both affordability and accessibility. Newer developments that include more barrier-free options are often priced out of reach for the majority of consumers with disabilities due to their fixed incomes. The current amount of available non-profit public housing choices is inadequate to meet the vast demand from low-income consumers and families across the province.

Affordable and accessible housing needs to be situated in areas adjacent to schools, shopping, medical services, banking, recreational opportunities, and other community related programs. The defined location of housing is critical to not allow the lack of affordable and accessible transportation to become a barrier to participation in the community. Some persons with disabilities will also need access to support services, such as homemakers and attendant care, to be able to live independently in their choice of housing in the community.

## ***Employment***

Persons with a disability can make good employees, and they must be employed in the same fashion as all other people trying to enter the labor force. However, people with disabilities have always had much more difficulty finding employment and keeping their position(s).

Being employed is often necessary for a person, with or without disabilities, to have the resources to fully participate in their society. Even so, labor participation rates and employment rates for people with disabilities is far too low in New Brunswick.

When government examines the policies relating to employment, these issues should be explored:

- what the future employment needs of the province look like;
- working with employers to identify the types of accommodations that can be made (ex. flexible hours, job sharing, job coaching, mentorships, peer support);
- increasing opportunities for youth (ex. summer programming, co-op placements);
- and
- establishing work-site physical accessibility.

A continued effort should be made to increase the level of awareness of employers about the valuable contribution individuals with a disability can make to the workforce (i.e. hiring an individual with a disability is not a burden).

## ***Transportation***

Transportation provides the vital lifeline for people with disabilities to access employment, education, healthcare, and community life. Transportation services also enable individuals with disabilities to live independently within their communities.

Without adequate transportation, full inclusion of persons with a disability in community life is impossible. Even so, in New Brunswick, transportation services are very often not accessible to individuals with disabilities. This is the case in rural areas especially, where there are rarely new transportation supports and policies developed or implemented, and where adequate funding is seldom available.

We must purposefully take the steps needed to increase and improve access to more consistent, affordable, and accessible transportation options for persons with a disability throughout New Brunswick.

## ***Recreation and Wellness***

People with disabilities need to have regular access to recreational and active-living opportunities to maintain their physical and mental well-being, as such access has proven to be a benefit for all citizens. Some persons with disabilities may require adaptive programming or special equipment to participate in such activities, due to the nature and degree of their disability. However, if the disability allows, some individuals can participate in the same programs and recreational activities that their counterparts without disabilities take pleasure in. Unfortunately, there are barriers. To this day, we still have many recreational facilities that were built without enough consideration for the needs of participants and spectators with different disabilities. The other reality for many persons with disabilities is that they have limited income and are unable to afford transportation, participation and admission fees, required equipment, etc. to participate in many typical recreational and active-living experiences.

We would like to compliment the facilities and programs across the province who have made fundamental efforts to increase the number of people with disabilities who are able to participate in their services and programs by making them more barrier-free and by offering support if needed by any participants with disabilities.

## Accountability/ Outcome measures

Every partner involved in the design and delivery of supports to citizens with disabilities should have a process to evaluate whether they are making progress. These ideas are only the first steps to begin making our system more accountable to citizens with disabilities. More effort is required to design a fair and reasonable way of achieving actual inclusion for all citizens.

- 1) The Council recommends that all government departments and agencies include a specific section in their annual reports that describes the impact of the services they have provided to persons with disabilities in the past year.
- 2) The new Disability Action Plan Committee will present an annual public Status Report on the progress made during the year in question.
- 3) The Council would attempt to see that data is collected and reported on the following systemic outcome measures:
  - a comparison of **workforce participation** rates of persons with and without disabilities (employment rates, unemployment rates, percentage in full time/part-time, percentage in self-employment, etc.);
  - a comparison of **education levels** achieved of persons with and without disabilities;
  - the percentage of youth with a disability who are employed or attending post-secondary education within 12 months of graduation from high school;
  - the percentage of students requiring **disability-related education supports**;
  - the level of participation in **public policy processes** by persons with disabilities and their advocates;
  - the percentage of persons with disabilities provided with opportunities to participate in community-based **recreation, arts, culture, and active living**;
  - the percentage of persons requiring **special or accessible transportation** that are satisfied with the transportation options in their community;
  - the numbers of new clients with disabilities requiring **suitable, affordable and accessible housing** that were able to obtain such housing in the past year;

- the percentage of persons requiring **financial support** that are satisfied and able to live in dignity;
- the percentage of persons satisfied with the **health care support** (including mental health) they have access to and/or receive;
- the percentage of persons with disabilities that require **home or attendant care** that are satisfied with the support they receive;
- the percentage of persons requiring **technical aids, devices, or special equipment** that feel they have been able to access appropriate disability supports;
- the collection of program data and client outcome measures should be an automatic component for all disability services.

<b>Acronyms</b>	
<b>DAA</b>	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
<b>DH</b>	Department of Health
<b>DSD</b>	Department of Social Development
<b>DTI</b>	Department of Transportation and Infrastructure
<b>ECO</b>	Executive Council Office
<b>ESIC</b>	Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation
<b>FIN</b>	Department of Finance
<b>JOAG</b>	Department of Justice and Office of the Attorney General
<b>NBHC</b>	NB Health Council
<b>NBHRC</b>	New Brunswick Human Rights Commission
<b>PCD</b>	Premier's Council on Disabilities
<b>PETL</b>	Postsecondary Education, Training and Labour
<b>PO</b>	Office of the Premier
<b>TB</b>	Treasury Board
<b>THC</b>	Tourism, Heritage and Culture
<b>WEB</b>	Women's Equality Brand

## Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation		Lead
1	Create an Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Committee by November 2020, with a mandate to work together to share information and actions related to the review and implementation of this Disability Action Plan. Each department/government agency shall appoint one senior staff member to serve for a term of 18 months with the committee expected to meet quarterly. External stakeholders could be invited to attend meetings as required to participate in discussions involving Plan implementation and/or deliver information updates.	PO ECO PCD
2	It is recommended that GNB adopt a Disability Policy Lens as a useful tool to assist government when developing or reviewing government programs and policies by 2021.	PO ECO PCD
3	By 2022, it is recommended that GNB identify and adopt a comprehensive set of benchmarks and indicators to measure outcomes for persons with a disability and inform decision making.	PCD PETL NBHC DSD
4	A New Brunswick Accessibility Act should be in force by the end of 2021.	PO ECO PCD
5	It is recommended that the Department of Social Development remove persons with disabilities from the regular categories and policies under social assistance to create an entirely separate Disability Benefits Program by 2022.	DSD
6	GNB to develop a strategy to better assess, recommend, recycle and fund assistive technology by 2023.	DSD EECD PETL

Recommendation		Lead
7	GNB to develop and implement a provincial strategy to attract and retain home support workers that is based on wages that support an adequate standard of living by the end of 2022.	PETL DSD WEB DH
8	<p>It is recommended that the Department of Social Development update the equipment list to include the following under the Health Services Program by 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Sight loss equipment</li> <li>b) Assistive technology &amp; Communication equipment</li> <li>c) Hearing loss &amp; cochlear implants equipment</li> </ul>	DSD
9	It is recommended that all Health Canada approved drug therapies are listed as first-line therapies on the NB provincial drug formulary, for those living with a disability such as Muscular Dystrophy and Multiple Sclerosis, by April 2021. Early intervention allows for less disease activity and disability.	DH
10	GNB to develop a plan by 2025 to raise awareness on the need to have access to interpreters in the health care, justice, etc. sector where a critical service may be accessed by a Deaf consumer.	DH JOAG DSD
11	GNB to expand the Integrated Service Delivery model used to serve children and youth and adopt a similar model for ensuring timely access and delivery of services to adults with disabilities, particularly those with more complex needs by 2022.	DH DSD DPS
12	GNB to develop and adopt an inclusion policy and appropriate programming for the early learning and childcare sector that supports the full inclusion of children with a disability in early learning and ensures that parents have equal access to daycare throughout New Brunswick, by 2021.	EECD
13	In consultation with stakeholders, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will look at developing clear guidelines for requirement of a psycho-educational assessment to increase availability and ensure children needing the assessment receive it within 6 weeks, by March 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2021.	EECD PETL DSD DH

<b>Recommendation</b>		<b>Lead</b>
14	It is recommended that EECD have a strategy to develop coordinated services for prevention of mental illness for children and youth and to address mental health challenges being experienced by children and youth by 2023.	EECD DH
15	In collaboration with school districts and community partners, EECD will look at developing strategies and resources to ensure the clear and consistent understanding and implementation of Policy 322 throughout NB public schools by the end of 2020.	EECD
16	It is recommended that GNB develop, adopt and implement a provincial policy on transition from high school for youth with a disability, for both the anglophone and francophone sectors by 2022.	EECD PETL
17	GNB to identify and address barriers to accessing postsecondary education by 2023.	PETL
18	It is recommended that EECD review the implementation of a culture linguistic component in the early childhood intervention transition plan for Deaf students from K-12 by 2021.	EECD
19	GNB to develop and implement a dedicated strategy to enhance access to mental health services for people with mental health concern (including people with a co-occurring disability) by December 2021.	DH DSD
20	GNB to create a provincial committee to develop a long-term plan to ensure mental health and addiction services supports are readily available to those with a mental health illness by 2023. This committee will also look at issues around mental health and the law.	JOAG DH

Recommendation		Lead
21	It is recommended that the Department of Social Development increase the number of supportive housing options for people with disabilities, including an increase in the quantity of affordable and accessible housing supports options by 2023.	DSD
22	It is recommended that the Department of Social Development create a resource document in multiple formats to clarify the process to access housing support from government, including eligibility requirements and details on the process by 2021.	DSD
23	The Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture to develop a new sport and recreation plan for NB by 2021.	THC
24	GNB to collaborate with stakeholders to review the <i>Pan-Canadian Strategy on Disabilities and Work</i> to assess its potential for adoption as the strategic framework for promoting the employment of persons with disabilities in New Brunswick.	PETL PCD
25	GNB will continue to support the Employment Assistance Services (EAS) Network.	PETL
26	The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour to coordinate with stakeholders to design and implement an enhanced service delivery model and more flexible employment supports to assist in the labor market integration and retention of persons with disabilities by 2022.	PETL
27	Revisiting and improving the Equal Employment Opportunity Program by removing barriers to employment and by providing more opportunities and advancements to persons with a disability, to increase their participation in the public service. It is also crucial to have GNB as the model employer by 2021.	TB
28	Consult on amending the <i>Employment Standards Act</i> to prohibit the use of sub-minimum wage stipends for persons with a disability (and others), by the end of 2022.	PETL

Recommendation		Lead
29	Create sustained public awareness through media and other campaigns on the potential of people with a disability to work and the labour market needs of New Brunswick employers by 2021.	PETL PCD
30	Establish experiential learning programming with income supports for persons with a disability by 2021.	PETL
31	Create a Transportation Access Implementation Committee to oversee the recommendations contained in the rural and urban transportation plan for New Brunswick and the 2020 Overcoming Poverty Together Report by 2021.	ECO ESIC
32	GNB to lead a project to identify how to best utilize current and coming innovations in personal transportation to better support persons with a disability as they live, work, and raise a family in NB by 2020.	DTI ESIC
33	GNB to amend the Motor Vehicle Act to allow municipalities to impose a fine of \$172.50 for misuse of accessible parking.	DPS
34	GNB should continue to support the NB Vehicle Retrofit Program and ensure adequate funding is allocated for this program.	DTI
35	GNB to work with Indigenous communities and stakeholders to address the specific issues around access to services for Indigenous people with a disability wherever they live in the province by 2023.	DAA
36	The Department of Social Development should create a Working Group with the Deaf community and agencies to develop a strategy on communication and awareness by 2021.	DSD

Recommendation		Lead
37	The GNB website should be more accessible not just in terms of technology but also language and ease of navigation. The province will explore more accessible ways to communicate with citizens by 2023.	SNB
38	The Department of Social Development should actively support people with a disability to open a Registered Disability Savings Plan if they are eligible for the federal Disability Tax Credit.	DSD FIN PCD
39	GNB to create an Ad-Hoc interdepartmental committee by the end of 2020 to oversee and enforce a provincial autism strategy for adults with autism as well as make ongoing recommendations for change. The committee will be made up of autism stakeholders and relevant government departments.	DSD DH
40	GNB to review current funding model to support the delivery of improved services and programs related to Autism by 2021.	DSD DH
41	All departmental staff of the Government of New Brunswick should be reminded about the disability related information resources available from the Premier's Council on Disabilities through the various online service directories. This would assist the departments to be able to direct clients with disabilities to other resources in addition to provincial government programs.	DSD DH EECD PETL THC DTI ESIC PCD
42	GNB to consult on the creation of Service Animal Legislation in NB that provides access to public places to persons with disabilities who use service animals by reason of disability.	ECO PCD PETL NBHRC
43	GNB to consult with the disability community to ensure appropriate supports are in place during safety and emergency situations.	PO DPS DSD

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Please note that the following recommendations are not listed in order of priority. They are also not a final list of all options for actions under provincial government jurisdiction.**

While lead departments are identified, it is assumed that other departments, government agencies and community agencies involved in disability services and issues will be involved in achieving effective solutions to these matters.

### **Full Citizenship**

#### **Objectives:**

**To make all communities in New Brunswick inclusive places for persons with disabilities.**

**To educate the public at large about the vision and principles of full citizenship for all persons and to understand the positive potential and abilities of citizens with disabilities.**

**To involve consumers in all aspects of the planning and delivery of public services and facilities.**

- 1. Create an Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Committee by November 2020, with a mandate to work together to share information and actions related to the review and implementation of this Disability Action Plan. Each department/government agency shall appoint one senior staff member to serve for a term of 18 months with the committee expected to meet quarterly. External stakeholders could be invited to attend meetings as required to participate in discussions involving Plan implementation and/or deliver information updates.**

**Lead: Office of the Premier  
Executive Council Office  
Premier's Council on Disabilities**

- 2. It is recommended that GNB adopt a Disability Policy Lens as a useful tool to assist government when developing or reviewing government programs and policies by 2021.**

**Lead: Office of the Premier  
Executive Council Office  
Premier's Council on Disabilities**

**Actions:**

- GNB will undertake a consultation process to develop an effective disability lens (September 2021).
- GNB will create a disability lens for creating, reviewing and amending provincial laws, policies and programs (November 2021).
- GNB will undertake an education and awareness process for senior management and policy staff with the purpose and use of the disability lens (December 2021).
- GNB will consult with the PCD and other stakeholders prior to cutting programs or services for people with disabilities. More consultation with the disability community is needed when programming is being developed, not just after programs are already in place.

**3. By 2022, it is recommended that GNB identify and adopt a comprehensive set of benchmarks and indicators to measure outcomes for persons with a disability and inform decision making.**

**Actions:**

- GNB will collaborate with stakeholders to identify the benchmarks and indicators in key priority areas, as well as sources and data collection methods.
- GNB will report on progress on key indicators annually beginning in 2023.

**Lead: Premier's Council on Disabilities  
Post-Secondary, Education, Training and Labour  
NB Health Council  
Department of Social Development**

## **Accessibility and Barrier-Free**

### **Objectives:**

**To enhance the mandatory provisions under the legislation and regulations of the provincial building code to require consistent minimum universal design-barrier free access standards in all public facilities and buildings open to the public.**

**To promote awareness of the population demographics to create more support for the business case that justifies expenses related to renovations or new construction to address barrier free access concerns.**

### **4. A New Brunswick Accessibility Act should be in force by the end of 2021.**

**Lead: Office of the Premier  
Executive Council Office  
Premier's Council on Disabilities**

### **Actions:**

- Schedule public hearings by the Law Amendments Committee of the Legislature to hear from interested witnesses and to receive submissions from persons with disabilities and their advocates and other interested stakeholders as to what should be in the specific content for a subsequent Accessibility Act for New Brunswick (August 2020);
- Create a provincial task team including government, community representatives, persons with a disability and business sector to research and develop an Accessibility Act for the province. The Act will have a cross-disability focus and be inclusive of the accessibility requirements of all disability types (September 2020).
- Active and ongoing engagement of the public and key NB accessibility stakeholders;
- Identification and utilization of key outcome indicators to measure the impact of this proposed accessibility legislation;
- Regular public reporting on the status of persons with a disability in NB; and
- Identify the appropriate principles and objectives of the proposed legislation; and to develop a process to identify future baseline required minimum accessibility standards similar to other Canadian jurisdictions on Goods and Services; Information/Communication; Employment; Health, Education; Built Environment (buildings, rights of way, and outdoor spaces); and Public Transportation and Transportation Infrastructure;

- Include within proposed legislation a 5-year Accessibility Plan that is renewable;
- Establish a timeline for meeting the target of a more accessible province from the proclamation of this new accessibility legislation to allow reasonable time to meet the specified targets;
- Establish an on-going process to promote the newly created provincial accessibility standards and to monitor outcomes with a compliance mechanism.
- Other matters that may become apparent based on the input from the disability community at the public hearings of the Law Amendments Committee.
- The NB Community College should move forward with training accessibility assessors to help developers, builders, contractors, etc. be able to obtain consistent advice on accessibility standards to be followed in new construction and renovation projects.

## Poverty

### Objectives:

**To reduce the overall level of poverty among persons and families with disability.**

**To create a new income program for persons with disabilities.**

**To ensure that persons with disabilities have enough income to meet their basic needs and a reasonable standard of living in the community.**

5. **It is recommended that the Department of Social Development remove persons with disabilities from the regular categories and policies under social assistance to create an entirely separate Disability Benefits Program by 2022.**

**Lead: Department of Social Development**

### Actions:

- A stakeholder working group will be created with both community advocates and department officials to draft a proposal for consideration by government by September 2021.
- Create a distinct income support program for people with a disability that removes the traditional welfare model of support in favour of a model based on increasing capacity, reducing poverty and enhancing contributions of people with a disability within NB society (April 2022). The new program will address the following issue;
  - Incorporate eligibility criteria within the new income program that is less restrictive than current criteria for Extended Benefits and that recognizes

the significant disadvantages that people with a disability face in achieving financial self-sufficiency;

- Create a new application and eligibility process for the disability income program that is fair, transparent, and that provides for a right to appeal eligibility decisions;
- Improve incentives for people to work by expanding the wage claw-back provisions to acknowledge current employment realities of people with a disability (including seasonal and part-time employment).
- Improve incentives for people to work by providing on-going health benefits coverage for people with a disability who earn income from employment such that they no longer receive income benefits and do not have access to an employer sponsored health plan.
- Create incentives within the new disability income program for people to explore and try self-employment as an option for earning income;
- Strengthen supports to families to enable and to encourage them to maintain the family member with a disability in the family home rather than spending more public funding to place them in residential care by third parties.

## **Disability Supports**

### **Objectives:**

**To improve access to disability supports.**

**To ensure that consumers are actively involved in the development and delivery of disability support programs.**

**To ensure that the type of disability involved, the age of the person, personal or household income, or where they live will not be barriers to obtaining necessary disability supports.**

**Supports and services need to be based on individual needs and not only on diagnosis.**

- 6. GNB to develop a strategy to better assess, recommend, recycle and fund assistive technology by 2023.**

**Lead: Department of Social Development**

**Department Early Education and Childhood Development**

## **Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour**

### **Actions:**

- The departments and stakeholders should create a framework, a plan for implementation and then a strategy to promote the program.
- Undertake a complete consultation process with professionals and stakeholders on an assistive technology strategy (December 2021).
- Streamline the program to purchase Assistive Technology for clients with disabilities to give priority to the recommendations of the rehabilitation specialists who are trained professionals and know best what their clients require to be as independent and self-sufficient as possible, to prevent or at least reduce long-term care costs (April 2022).
- Update the eligible equipment lists and other potential disability supports to reflect new technology and other delivery mechanisms that in some cases could be more effective and less expensive than previously approved items (June 2021).
- Establish an effective process to consider specific special cases where equipment or treatment items are not on the approved list that can be considered and approved in a timely manner on a case-by-case basis (April 2022).
- Determine funding opportunities for the requests for communication devices from those who do not qualify for current funding programs to address these applications (April 2023).
- Streamline the assessment process to ensure that the right professional (those who are trained in that area of expertise) is making the recommendations.

### **7. GNB to develop and implement a provincial strategy to attract and retain home support workers that is based on wages that support an adequate standard of living by the end of 2022.**

**Lead: Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour  
Department of Social Development  
Women's Equality Branch  
Department of Health**

### **Actions:**

- Establish an Ad Hoc government and community working group to make recommendations regarding a support worker hiring and retention strategy (September 2020).

- Undertake and release a jurisdictional review on strategies used in other jurisdictions to hire and retain support workers (March 2021);
- Undertake consultations to gather input from key stakeholders and prepare a report with recommendation to submit to government (June 2021-December 2021).

**8. It is recommended that the Department of Social Development update the equipment list to include the following under the Health Services Program by 2023:**

- a) Sight loss equipment**
- b) Assistive technology & Communication equipment**
- c) Hearing loss & cochlear implants equipment**

**Lead: The Department of Social Development**

**Actions:**

- The Department of Social Development will expand the funding support available to meet the needs of pre-school age children with significant hearing loss, to cover the cost of hearing aids. Also review funding restrictions for cochlear implants.
- The equipment list to include low- and high-tech assistive devices as well as aids for daily living designed for persons with a disability such as those with vision loss.
- Consider an opportunity to have professionals and experts to review the equipment list periodically.
- That an administrative framework be developed collaboratively between the Department of Social Development and disability organizations using similar assistive devices programs for persons with a disability existing in other jurisdictions.
- To review supports available for service animals

**9. It is recommended that all Health Canada approved drug therapies are listed as first-line therapies on the NB provincial drug formulary, for those living with a disability such as Muscular Dystrophy and Multiple Sclerosis, by April 2021. Early intervention allows for less disease activity and disability.**

**Lead: Department of Health**

**10. GNB to develop a plan by 2025 to raise awareness on the need to have access to interpreters in the health care, justice, etc. sector where a critical service may be accessed by a Deaf consumer.**

**Lead: Department of Health  
Department of Justice and the Office of Attorney General  
Department of Social Development**

**Action:**

- GNB will consult with stakeholders and the Deaf community to develop the plan.

**11. GNB to expand the Integrated Service Delivery model used to serve children and youth and adopt a similar model for ensuring timely access and delivery of services to adults with disabilities, particularly those with more complex needs by 2022.**

**Lead: Department of Health  
Department of Social Development  
Department of Public Safety**

**Action:**

- Undertake research on integrated models to support adults with complex needs (April 2021);
- Create a Model Framework Design Committee with appropriate government professional and community stakeholders (June 2021);
- Create a pilot project to model in 1 or 2 regions New Brunswick regions (April 2022);
- Initiate an evaluation process (June 2022)

## **Education**

**Objectives:**

**To ensure that the inclusive public-school system continues to evolve so that all students with any disability are supported to reach their full potential.**

**To ensure that any educational reforms (policy and programming) are aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and support an inclusive education model in which children and youth with a disability learn in common learning environments with their age peers.**

**To increase the number of students with disabilities who go on to successfully complete post-secondary education options.**

**To ensure that teachers and other staff in the education system are properly trained and supported to enable all students to enjoy an inclusive education.**

- 12. GNB to develop and adopt an inclusion policy and appropriate programming for the early learning and childcare sector that supports the full inclusion of children with a disability in early learning and ensures that parents have equal access to daycare throughout New Brunswick, by 2021.**

**Lead: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**

**Actions:**

- EECD will establish a provincial Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) inclusion policy by December 2020.
- EECD will undertake a campaign to educate the ELCC sector and families on the provincial policy by December 2021.

- 13. In consultation with stakeholders, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will look at developing clear guidelines for the requirement of a psycho-educational assessment to increase availability and ensure children needing the assessment receive it within 6 weeks, by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021.**

**Lead: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development  
Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour  
Department of Social Development  
Department of Health**

**Action:**

- Guidelines will address the conditions and measures needed to improve timely access to an academic and social assessment report by a psychologist either employed by the school district or privately contracted if necessary to prepare specific recommendations to successfully accommodate students with significant needs.

- 14. It is recommended that EECD have a strategy to develop coordinated services for prevention of mental illness for children and youth and to address mental health challenges being experienced by children and youth by 2023.**

**Lead: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development  
Department of Health**

**Actions:**

- Create an Ad Hoc Working Group to develop an early learning and childcare and k to 12 strategy on mental wellness and addressing mental health needs of children and youth (September 2020).
- Working Group will look at other strategies already created in other jurisdictions. (i.e. consider the Bob Rumball Centre for the Deaf in Ontario).
- Develop a 3-year strategy by March 2023.

**15. In collaboration with school districts and community partners, EECD will look at developing strategies and resources to ensure the clear and consistent understanding and implementation of Policy 322 throughout NB public schools by the end of 2020.**

**Lead: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**

**Actions:**

- EECD will collaborate with districts and community partners to identify areas for clarification of Policy 322 in both sectors (November 2020).
- EECD to create a Policy 322 implementation measurement tool (December 2020)

**16. It is recommended that GNB develop, adopt and implement a provincial policy on transition from high school for youth with a disability, for both the anglophone and francophone sectors by 2022.**

**Lead: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development  
Department of Post-Secondary, Education, Training and Labour**

**Action:**

- GNB will consult with stakeholders including disability groups on the development of the policy.

**17. GNB to identify and address barriers to accessing postsecondary education by 2023.**

**Lead: Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour**

**Actions:**

- Establish a process to identify current barriers to accessing post-secondary education and to review the effectiveness of measures taken in recent years to address these barriers (January 2022).
- Identify the need for assistance that offsets disability-related costs of post-secondary education (October 2022);
- Develop recommendations for a student loan system that provides flexible repayment options, that considers individual circumstances, needs, and income levels (December 2022 to February 2023);
- GNB will consult with stakeholders including disability groups to identify barriers to accessing postsecondary education.

**18. It is recommended that EECD review the implementation of a culture linguistic component in the early childhood intervention transition plan for Deaf students from K-12 by 2021.**

**Lead: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**

**Action:**

- GNB will consult with stakeholders including the Deaf community to address this recommendation.

## **Mental Health**

**19. GNB to develop and implement a dedicated strategy to enhance access to mental health services for people with mental health concern (including people with a co-occurring disability) by December 2021.**

**Lead: Department of Health  
Department of Social Development**

**Actions:**

- Establish a government/community Working Group to develop the strategy that will identify Standards, training requirements and processes for implementation, requirements for creating an expert level resource, strategies and processes for improving hospital care, and recommendations for establishing collaborative inter-professional teams. These must address the unique mental health needs of people who have other primary disabilities (co-occurring mental health issues) September 2020).
- Create a new provincial mental health strategy. This would include stronger community partnerships; timely access to mental health services before the situation devolves into a suicidal crisis; expand the Mental Health Court; work in partnerships with other stakeholders to offer on-going awareness on mental health issues and how to identify the warning signs for depression and suicide and how to link to services (December 2021).

**20. GNB to create a provincial committee to develop a long-term plan to ensure mental health and addiction services supports are readily available to those with a mental health illness by 2023. This committee will also look at issues around mental health and the law.**

**Lead: Department of Justice and Office of the Attorney General Office  
Department of Health**

**Action:**

- GNB will consult with stakeholders including disability groups on the development of the plan.

## **Housing**

**Objectives:**

**To increase the number of accessible and affordable housing units in the province.**

**To promote universal barrier free design concepts in all new housing projects including renovations of existing housing stocks where feasible.**

**21. It is recommended that the Department of Social Development increase the number of supportive housing options for people with disabilities, including an increase in the quantity of affordable and accessible housing supports options by 2023.**

## **Lead: Department of Social Development**

### **Actions:**

- More transferable portable housing subsidies are required. Available housing should not be relegated to only certain areas of the city.
- Promote barrier free housing options with housing developers to increase the supply of accessible housing by 10% over the next 3 years.
- Invest in affordable, accessible housing and prioritize dedicated portable rent supplements and funding for housing modifications for persons with a disability.
- Add 60 new portable rent supplements for persons with a disability each year for three years.

## **Lead: Department of Social Development**

**22. It is recommended that the Department of Social Development create a resource document in multiple formats to clarify the process to access housing support from government, including eligibility requirements and details on the process by 2021.**

## **Lead: Department of Social Development**

### **Actions:**

- Consult with community stakeholders on the format requirements for a housing resource for persons with a disability (December 2020).
- Create and release the resource in multiple formats (June 2021).

## **Recreation and Wellness**

### **Objectives:**

**To increase the number of persons with disabilities of all types and ages participating regularly in healthy recreation and wellness activities.**

**To ensure that all public recreational programs and facilities are doing what is necessary to enable the inclusive participation of persons with disabilities.**

**23. The Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture to develop a new sport and recreation plan for NB by 2021.**

## **Lead: Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture**

### **Actions:**

- GNB will identify steps to increase the rate of people with disabilities involved in active living through improved access to inclusive recreation and sports activities.
- GNB will consult with stakeholders including disability groups on the development of the plan.

## **Employment**

### **Objectives:**

**To increase the overall employment rate of persons with a disability**

**To increase the participation of persons with a disability in post-secondary education and training**

**To enhance pre-employment and income support policies and initiatives to actively encourage and facilitate access to employment for persons with a disability**

**To develop engagement strategies with employers to increase their recruitment and retention of persons with a disability**

**24. GNB to collaborate with stakeholders to review the *Pan-Canadian Strategy on Disabilities and Work* to assess its potential for adoption as the strategic framework for promoting the employment of persons with disabilities in New Brunswick.**

**Lead: Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour  
Premier's Council on Disabilities**

### **Actions:**

- **PETL and PCD to work with employers, service providers and disability stakeholders to complete a review and make recommendations on the Pan-Canadian Strategy on Disability and Work by the end of 2021.**

**25. GNB will continue to support the Employment Assistance Services (EAS) Network.**

**Lead: Department of Post-Secondary Training and Labour**

**Actions:**

- **Working NB should support the EAS Network's efforts and activities to:**
  - a) **Share knowledge and collaborate on training, give access to professional development staff, support opportunities to come together for learning, exchanges for best practices and provincial collaboration for consistent and quality delivery of employment services for persons with disabilities in New Brunswick**
  - b) **Work with employers in their communities to help remove barriers to employment for persons with disabilities.**
- **The EAS network should assist and make recommendations to PETL on matters related to exploring efficiency, capacity and opportunities in the provision and delivery services for agencies serving people with a disability.**

**26. The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour to coordinate with stakeholders to design and implement an enhanced service delivery model and more flexible employment supports to assist in the labor market integration and retention of persons with disabilities by 2022.**

**Lead: Department of Post-Secondary Training and Labour**

**Actions:**

- **PETL should consult with disability stakeholders on the development of the model. Finalize the new service delivery model for Implementation by December 2021.**

**27. Revisiting and improving the Equal Employment Opportunity Program by removing barriers to employment and by providing more opportunities and advancements to persons with a disability, to increase their participation in the public service. It is also crucial to have GNB as the model employer by 2021.**

**Lead: Treasury Board**

**Actions:**

- Increasing the number of people with disabilities working in GNB, the largest employer in New Brunswick. This would serve as a model to other employers to do better in their hiring and retention of employees with disabilities;
- Review the deliverables of the program to identify targets that would reflect the proportion of the NB population who have a disability.
- Promote the EEO program to increase the number of people with a disability working in government departments and agencies by creating awareness and offering sensitivity training to Managers.
- Under Employment Programs like EEO; general government hiring; and the contracts with community agencies; we recommend a 10 % increase in placements year over year. We would encourage a system where a placement of an individual with a more significant disability could get extra credit in reporting statistics.

**28. Consult on amending the *Employment Standards Act* to prohibit the use of sub-minimum wage stipends for persons with a disability (and others), by the end of 2022.**

**Lead: Department of Post-Education Training and Labour**

**Action:**

- PETL to consult with disability stakeholders on the development of the amendment.

**29. Create sustained public awareness through media and other campaigns on the potential of people with a disability to work and the labour market needs of New Brunswick employers by 2021.**

**Lead: Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour  
Premier's Council on Disabilities**

**Actions:**

- Consult with disability stakeholders and business sector to develop key messages and develop an awareness-raising campaign (November 2021).

**30. Establish experiential learning programming with income supports for persons with a disability by 2021.**

**Lead: Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour**

**Actions:**

- Review current experiential learning programming to determine accessibility to and used by persons with a disability;
- Identify gaps in access to programs and consult stakeholders on EL programming needs of persons with a disability;
- Design access opportunities for people with a disability;
- Identify opportunities for filling unmet labour supply needs for employers.

## Transportation

### Objectives:

**To increase the number of carriers who offer affordable and accessible transportation services for travelling in our communities and across New Brunswick.**

**To develop programs of financial incentives to enable non-profit community organizations and private taxi companies to acquire and operate accessible vehicles for public transportation for seniors and/or persons with disabilities.**

**To provide funding for community transportation alternatives**

**31. Create a Transportation Access Implementation Committee to oversee the recommendations contained in the rural and urban transportation plan for New Brunswick and the 2020 Overcoming Poverty Together Report by 2021.**

**Lead: Executive Council Office  
Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation**

### Actions:

- Establish a committee with government, business and community stakeholders to address key actions that look at issues of transportation availability, accessibility and affordability for persons with a disability (September 2020).
- Identify next steps to implement transportation recommendations and to provide guidance in the development of regional transportation plan to ensure that the transportation needs of persons with a disability are addressed (May 2021).

**32. GNB to lead a project to identify how to best utilize current and coming innovations in personal transportation to better support persons with a disability as they live, work, and raise a family in NB by 2020.**

**Lead: Department of Transportation and Infrastructure  
Economic Social Inclusion Corporation**

**Actions:**

- Addressing transportation deficits and needs is the key missing link to improving employment, housing, and community inclusion for persons with a disability.
- Transportation advances driven by technology are now in use or are being pilot tested in a variety of sites across North America. These include online ride sharing (e.g. Uber and Lyft), automated driver assists cars, and self-driving cars and buses. Some small municipalities are using new technology (e.g. Uber in Innisfil, ONT) to provide public transit for citizens, including persons with a disability, instead of through a public transit/bus system. Research on current best practices is needed to determine what will work in NB.
- Work with the Economic Social Inclusion Corporation which has developed a new transportation strategy for NB that would benefit from this parallel project.
- Improvements in transportation for persons with a disability will be available and of benefit to all other citizens of NB.

**33. GNB to amend the Motor Vehicle Act to allow municipalities to impose a fine of \$172.50 for misuse of accessible parking.**

**Lead: Department of Public Safety**

**34. GNB should continue to support the NB Vehicle Retrofit Program and ensure adequate funding is allocated for this program.**

**Lead: Department of Transportation and Infrastructure**

**Other**

**35. GNB to work with Indigenous communities and stakeholders to address the specific issues around access to services for Indigenous people with a disability wherever they live in the province by 2023.**

**Lead: Department of Aboriginal Affairs**

**Action:**

- GNB to continue to advance the health-related Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action that are within its jurisdiction.

**36. The Department of Social Development should create a Working Group with the Deaf community and agencies to develop a strategy on communication and awareness by 2021.**

**Lead: The Department of Social Development**

**Action:**

- The Department of Social Development to review their policy of communication with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community to allow for more inclusive ways of communicating with their clients.

**37. The GNB website should be more accessible not just in terms of technology but also language and ease of navigation. The province will explore more accessible ways to communicate with citizens by 2023.**

**Lead: Department of Service New Brunswick**

**Actions:**

- GNB will follow a set of standards that ensures accessibility to all. The following standards should be followed: <https://www.w3.org/standards/webdesign/accessibility>
- Communicate with disability groups to make sure that the standards do in fact meet the needs of the population that they serve.

**38. The Department of Social Development should actively support people with a disability to open a Registered Disability Savings Plan if they are eligible for the federal Disability Tax Credit.**

**Lead: Department of Social Development  
Department of Finance  
Premier's Council on Disabilities**

**Actions:**

- Introduce law reform initiatives to provide more accessible options for appointing RDSP Plan holders for adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability who cannot enter into RDSP agreements independently (November 2020).
- Create a communication plan around opening a Registered Disability Savings Plan to highlight the benefits included (April 2021).

**39. GNB to create an Ad-Hoc interdepartmental committee by the end of 2020 to oversee and enforce a provincial autism strategy for adults with autism as well as make ongoing recommendations for change. The committee will be made up of autism stakeholders and relevant government departments.**

**Lead: Department of Social Development  
Department of Health**

**Actions:**

- Response from GNB to the observations and recommendation in the Autism Connection Fredericton Report- "A Provincial Focus on Adult Services for Persons with Autism".

**40. GNB to review current funding model to support the delivery of improved services and programs related to Autism by 2021.**

**Lead: Department of Social Development  
Department of Health**

**Action:**

- Find opportunities to provide additional financial support for Autism Connections Fredericton and other centers who can demonstrate through programs and services that they are vital and in need of additional support and who are able to prove their vitality and need in the community for additional resourcing.

**41. All departmental staff of the Government of New Brunswick should be reminded about the disability related information resources available from the Premier's**

**Council on Disabilities through the various online services directories. This would assist the departments to be able to direct clients with disabilities to other resources in addition to provincial government programs.**

**Lead: Department of Social Development**

**Department of Health**

**Department of Early Childhood Education**

**Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour**

**Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture**

**Department of Transportation**

**Economic, Social and Inclusion Corporation**

**Premier's Council on Disabilities**

**Action:**

- The PCD will create a communication plan and information package to disseminate to all GNB departments.

**42. GNB to consult on the creation of Service Animal Legislation in NB that provides access to public places to persons with disabilities who use service animals by reason of disability.**

**Lead: Executive Council Office**

**Premier's Council on Disabilities**

**Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour**

**Human Rights Commission**

**Actions:**

- Review training and certification requirements for service animals in NB and consulting with the consumers and the major National providers of service animals.
- Consult on the options for regulating service animal certification, training and access.

**43. GNB to consult with the disability community to ensure appropriate supports are in place during safety and emergency situations.**

**Lead: Office of the Premier**

**Department of Public Safety**

**Department of Social Development**

## Conclusion and Next Steps

The Premier's Council Stakeholders Engagement Strategy and this report touch on most of the issues, challenges, gaps, needs, requirements, and observations, that arise when we look at improving the status quo for persons with a disability in this province. Doing things the same way in the future will, most likely, leave us with the same outcomes, which we all agree need to somehow be improved for the many people we serve.

The PCD is now taking steps to find ways we can ensure that this work is done better, to improve our collective strategic impact, and to support a more nimble focus on the needs of clients as people. This would be an innovation from previous service delivery approaches that are too often dominated with repetitive paperwork and eligibility hoops that prevent many individuals with disabilities from actually getting the supports they need in a timely fashion.

In this report, we offer concrete recommendations on how to tweak of the workings of the many service delivery systems to improve effective and efficient outcomes for more persons with a disability and to strengthen meaningful partnerships amongst government, the community sector, and private sector.

As a necessary first step, the Premier's Council will enhance the level of engagement between the many disability stakeholders that must be involved in doing this work differently and more effectively, including through this new provincial Disability Action Plan.

The Department representatives of the lead Departments responsible for each recommendation have been contacted to share this report with their superiors before the report is to be released publicly.

The Premier's Council will take responsibility to follow up with each Department individually and with the government collectively to hold everyone accountable for action on these recommendations.

We will report annually to the public and review and update the plan as required.

**Please note that this report should not be considered a complete or final list of all issues relating to persons with disabilities. We also expect to see committed partnerships with other levels of government, the involvement of the private sector and the non-profit disability organizations.**

**Thank you all for your continued support and partnership in working towards our common goal to reducing barriers for persons with a disability in NB.**

## References

1. Statistics Canada 2017- *Canadian Survey on Disability*
2. Brief on Equal Access to Mental Health Services and Well-Being for People with an Intellectual or Development Disability, *NBACL March 2019*
3. Brief on Access to Transportation for People with a Disability, *NBDEN 2019*
4. A Provincial Focus on Adult Services for Persons with Autism “Navigating the Cliff”- *Autism Connection Fredericton*
5. From Surfaces to Services- An Inclusive and Sustainable Transportation Strategy in NB 2017-2037- *ESIC*
6. NB Health Services Review Stakeholders Input- *CNIB*
7. Mental Health submissions- *CMHA*

## Appendix A- History of the Premier's Council on Disabilities

### Premier's Council on Disabilities

#### History

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons which provided a focus for some important efforts to take place in New Brunswick.

During a provincial conference in the fall of 1981, involving many consumers with a disability, parents, organizations serving persons with a disability and government representatives, it was decided that a permanent body was needed to maintain the momentum generated by the International Year of Disabled Persons.

The unanimous resolution of the conference prompted provincial legislation that created the Premier's Council on Disabilities in 1982. The Premier's Council is a body for consultation, study and information sharing, which was created to advise the provincial government on matters relating to the status of persons with a disability.

The Premier's Council encourages and monitors government's compliance with the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Council's partnerships with government and not-for-profit sectors continue to collectively move the agenda for persons with disabilities and their families in New Brunswick forward.

#### Structure

The Premier's Council consists of a Chairperson and twelve members appointed by the Lieutenant- Governor in Council.

### ***Information & Resources***

- The Premier's Council produces several Information Directories including:
- The Directory of Services Offered to Persons with Disabilities in New Brunswick;
- Transportation Services and Vehicle Retrofit for Persons with Disabilities;
- Career Counseling, Job Placement Services and Career Training Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities;
- Financial Assistance for Persons with Disabilities;
- Housing and Barrier-free Access for Persons with Disabilities;
- Medical Funding Assistance for Persons with Disabilities;
- Sports and Leisure Funding for Persons with Disabilities

Sources for funding assistance for Assistive Technology, barrier-free access, income assistance, medical expenses, housing, funding for community and non-profit organizations, recreation.

### ***Role in The Disability Action Plan***

- Acts to deliver on the recommendations in the DAP for which it is the lead;
- Works very closely in collaboration with departments, community groups, and persons with disabilities around the province on recommendations and actions within the plan. The Council also requests and collects updates from lead Departments for preparation of the annual status reports.

### ***Disability Action Plans***

The first Disability Action Plan – *Action Plan for the Decade of Disabled Persons* was released by the Premier's Council in 1985 as a result of a major provincial conference. Since then nine editions of the DAP for New Brunswick containing nearly 500 recommendations have been submitted, delivered upon, and have had leadership from seven Premiers and their Governments.