



Ensemble Together

**The Impact of
New Brunswick's
2009–2014 Economic
and Social Inclusion Plan**

Summary

Table of Contents

- Co-chairs message1
- Executive summary.2
- Introduction8
- Highlights and Summary of the 22 Priority Actions. 13



June 2015

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Economic and Social Inclusion Plan
Summary**

Published by:

Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation

10003



Co-chairs message

More than five years have passed since the adoption of *Overcoming Poverty Together: New Brunswick's Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 2009-2014 (OPT1)*, following an innovative public engagement process.

The initial intention of bringing together four sectors has been respected throughout the development, and more importantly, during the implementation of the plan.

During these years, we have seen significant improvements in the lives of thousands of New Brunswickers, thanks to this initiative. The unique character of the plan, combined with the tireless efforts of all participants involved, have made this strategy a model that is being considered in other jurisdictions.

Another aim of OPT1 has been to foster a provincial movement on citizen engagement and participation in the economic and social inclusion of communities. A quick look at the success stories of projects that have emerged from the plan will convince you of the benefits of this initiative.

As co-chairs of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) board of directors, and coming from the four sectors, we are pleased to see a change of culture in the way poverty is addressed in the province. Mobilization comes from all levels: local, regional and provincial. The approach to poverty reduction was established in an organic way using a bottom-up approach. OPT1 provided and continues to provide respectful and engaging support to communities and people in taking charge of their own lives and developing their skills.

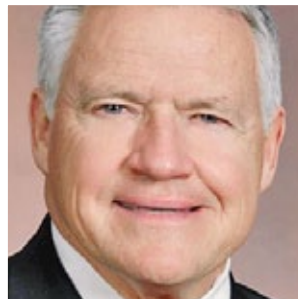
We wish to thank all the persons, volunteer organizations, government, business people and other stakeholders who participated in the creation and the implementation of OPT1. Thanks to your dedication, our province has made remarkable progress in improving the lives of New Brunswickers.



Monique Richard
Co-chair
Citizens



Derek Oland
Co-chair
Business



Hon. Ed Doherty
Co-chair
Government



Roger Martin
Co-chair
Non-profit

Executive summary



The *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 1 2009-2014* (OPT1) was a unique and collaborative plan that brought together a cross-section of New Brunswickers, including persons living in poverty and the non-profit, business and government sectors to develop and adopt a provincial poverty reduction plan. OPT1 lays out a comprehensive and holistic approach to overcoming poverty based on the public engagement initiative launched in October 2008.

“OPT1 was designed as collaborative effort but with an even broader reach, incorporating the community, business and government sectors as well as private individuals. Simply bringing all of these groups to the same table has been a challenge, but it has been the greatest achievement of OPT1. Through their service on boards of the Community Inclusion Networks (CINs) and Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) itself, people who would otherwise never have met each other are making contacts, creating synergies and partnerships and developing strategies.”

Sue Rickards, roundtable participant

Of the 22 priority action items, seven were aimed directly at reducing income poverty while two were uniquely aimed at reducing deep income poverty. Seven items were aimed at achieving both targets while six were foundational items related to delivery and accountability activities.

In November 2009, OPT1 was launched. The process was successfully maintained as a non-partisan exercise. As part of OPT1, 22 action items (Section – Action Plan and 22 Priority Actions Progress) were identified as key activities to overcoming poverty in New Brunswick and toward achieving the following global objective:

By 2015, New Brunswick will have reduced income poverty by 25% and deep income poverty by 50% and will have made significant progress in achieving sustained economic and social inclusion.

As of December 2014, 95% of the action items were either completed or ongoing and 5% were in progress). 21 of the 22 actions items were either completed or ongoing and one is in progress.

Performance indicators

To measure the collective efforts facilitated and co-ordinated by ESIC to attain the goal of reducing poverty by 25% and deep poverty by 50%, 12 performance indicators were identified (Section – Performance Indicators). For common understanding and analysis, the following are the agreed-upon definitions of poverty and deep poverty.

- **Poverty:** 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. Source: *Economic and Social Inclusion Act*.
- **Deep poverty:** the condition of those whose income is less than 50% of the Low Income Measure. Source: *ESIC*.

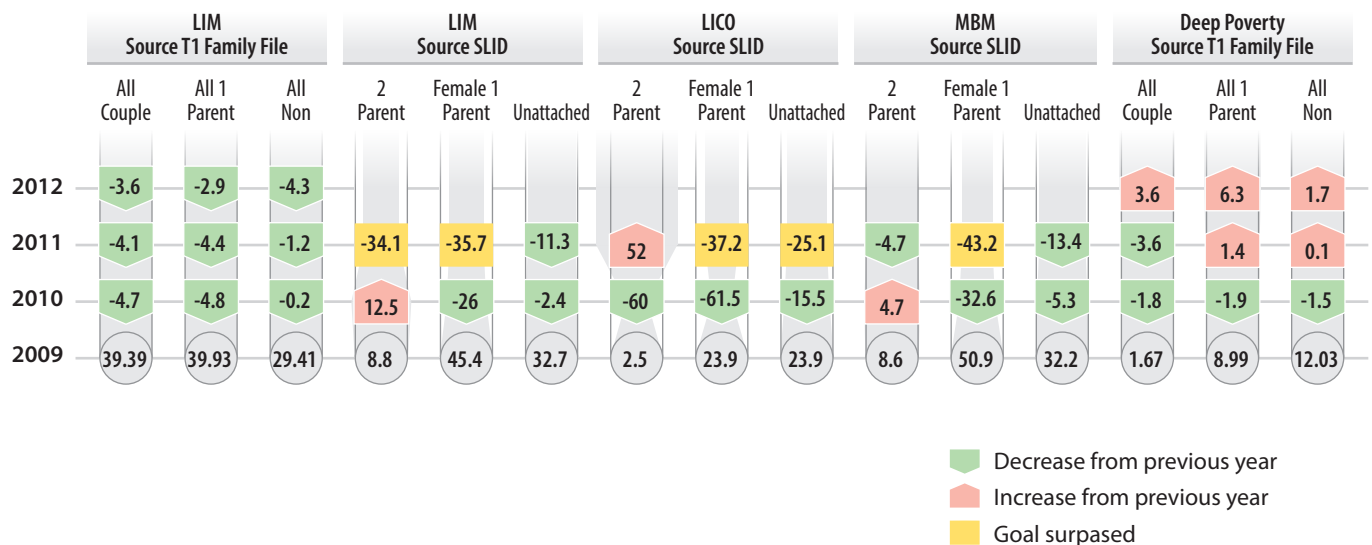
While this report evaluates the impact of OPT1 for 2009-14, income measure data are only available up to 2012 due to the limitations of statistics release dates. It is important to note that the statistical information available is prior to the commencement of the majority of key priority actions and projects led by the CINs.

All jurisdictions across the country are subject to the same data release constraints. The following provides some general guidelines:

- Income data (T1 Family File) has a lag of 18 months to two years. Therefore, 2013 data will be available in late 2015, and 2014 data will be available in 2016.
- Survey data (Canadian Income Survey) has a lag of about two years. Therefore, 2013 data will be available in 2015, and 2014 data will be available in 2016.

According to the most recent data available from the *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID)* for 2009-11 and the *T1 Family File Tax Data* for 2009-12 (Performance Indicators Section), all low-income measures show a reduction in the incidence of people living in poverty in the province for the exception of Two-Parent Low Income Cut-Off After-Tax (LICO) (Source: *SLID*) and Low Income Measure (LIM) Before Tax (Source: *T1 Family File*).

Figure 1 - Incidence of Low Income in New Brunswick (Appendix G – Income Measure Definitions)
 Source: *Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics – Program 3889 – Inactive*
 Source: *Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File) – Program 4105.*



By some indicators, the goal of reducing poverty by 25% has been achieved:

- Female lone-parent families, where the incidence of poverty has seen a:
 - **43% reduction** from 2009 to 2011 for Market Basket Measure (MBM);
 - **36% reduction** from 2009 to 2011 for After-Tax LIM; and
 - **37% reduction** from 2009 to 2011 for After-Tax LICO.
- Two parent-families, where the incidence of poverty has seen a:
 - **34% reduction** from 2009 to 2011 for After-Tax LIM.
- Unattached individuals, where the incidence of poverty has seen a:
 - **25% reduction** from 2009 to 2011 for After-Tax LICO.

Efforts to reduce deep income poverty by 50% have not achieved the same reductions as the income poverty goal and have in fact seen a slight increase. According to the T1 Family File Tax Data for 2009-12, the incidence of Before and After Tax LIM has seen a mild increase for all family types as indicated in the diagram above (Section Performance Indicators).

OPT1 highlights

In addition to the 22 action items, ESIC played a leadership role in several activities aimed at increasing economic and social inclusion for all New Brunswickers. The following provides a snapshot of these key activities.

CINs

One of the key success factors of OPT1 has been the ESIC's ability to facilitate and foster New Brunswick's communities to build on their existing competencies and capabilities to address regional economic and social inclusion challenges. The foundation of the plan is based on building capacity in the community through the creation of the CINs. By the end of 2011, 12 CINs were established.

The CINs established partnerships with numerous community groups and organizations, and they had a tangible impact on their communities. The following highlights their impact as of Dec. 1, 2014.

- Community participation: 44,027 participants
- Total CIN projects: 212
- ESIC project investment: \$2,445,902
- Community project investment: \$8,259,057
- Community Investment per ESIC dollar invested: \$3.40 to \$1

Advisory committees

The ESIC Board of Directors established a number of advisory committees to address some of the more complex priority action items. These committees created the environment and momentum needed for changes in the social assistance system and prescription drug coverage as expressed during the public engagement process. The Social Enterprise Advisory Committee created a broader dialogue about the economic potential of social enterprises for communities. The following provides a description and key highlights of the advisory committees established as part of OPT1 (Appendix B).

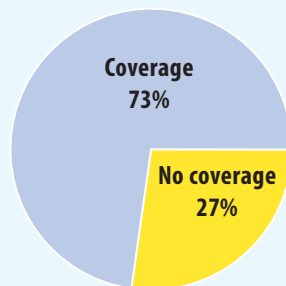
Advisory Committee on Health Benefits

The ESIC Board of Directors established the Advisory Committee on Health Benefits (Appendix B) to develop a mechanism to provide a drug plan for all uninsured New Brunswickers and to develop a vision and dental plan for all low-income New Brunswick children.

The New Brunswick Drug Plan

Since May 1, 2014, the NB Drug plan has provided access to drug coverage to uninsured New Brunswickers as a voluntary plan. Before its introduction, a number of residents could not get coverage due to pre-existing conditions or could not afford to buy private drug coverage.

As of Dec. 31, 2014, 2,438 individuals had enrolled in the plan (Source: *Department of Health*). Most, 1,778 (73%) individuals are in the lowest-income range. This demonstrates that low-income earners are participating in the program and reflects the need for the program.



“The prescription drug program is yielding very positive results for New Brunswickers with health problems and financial constraints. In my opinion this program is the largest social public policy initiative for New Brunswickers since Medicare itself and the Equal Opportunity Program.”

**Dr. Dennis J. Furlong, physician,
committee chair and former
minister of Health**

Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision

On Sept. 1, 2012, the dental and vision plan, *Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision*, took effect to provide the necessary coverage for specified dental and vision benefits to children 18 years old and younger in low-income families.

As of December 2014, 2,498 children had access to the program (Source: *Department of Social Development*).

Advisory Committee for Social Assistance Reform

The ESIC Board of Directors established the Advisory Committee on Social Assistance Reform (Appendix B) to provide advice and feedback to the Department of Social Development as it redesigned the social assistance program. The following highlights a few of the many changes seen in the reform moving from a rule-based to an outcome-based system (Appendix B):

- increases in social assistance rates;
- wage exemption changes;
- changes to health card policy;
- changes to household income policy; and
- protection for roomers and boarders.

Advisory Committee for Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds (SECIFs)

The ESIC Board of Director created an Advisory Committee for Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds (SECIF) (Appendix B) in January 2011. Its mandate was to develop a strategic framework for SECIFs.

In 2013-14, ESIC worked with the departments of Finance and Healthy and Inclusive Communities to develop new support programs, including the creation of the Community Economic Development Investment Fund (CEDIF) to allow individuals and corporate investors to invest in a registered local community fund; and, to improve the New Brunswick Small Business Investor Tax Credit program. This increased access to capital for small businesses.

With the support of ESIC, the CINs are acquiring the skills and competencies to further develop this sector, which is experiencing growth on a global scale. The total project value of SECIFs within the CINs is \$455,183, with more than 1,500 participants.



Open Sky co-operative, Sackville

Transportation

A significant portion of the province does not have access to community or public transportation because it is not available or affordable, which creates a barrier for economic and social inclusion. Based on this reality, ESIC supported numerous transportation projects.

Community investments in CIN transportation projects as of Dec. 1, 2014, totalled \$2,202,092, while the ESIC investment was \$890,066, making the community investment per ESIC dollar invested a \$2.5 to \$1 ratio.

From 2010 to Dec. 1, 2014, 47 inclusive community transportation projects had been implemented in the 12 CIN regions, providing much needed transportation to more than 5,800 people.

ESIC leadership

Providing leadership in the movement of poverty reduction, ESIC is uniquely equipped to identify new opportunities to improve economic and social inclusion of New Brunswickers. To this end, ESIC has led and supported a number of initiatives outside of the 22 priority action items that are aligned and complementary to the spirit of OPT1. Following are examples of key activities in which ESIC has played a leadership role:

- *Get Your Piece of the Money Pie* – New Brunswick's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program;
- Financial Literacy in partnership with Prosper Canada;
- *2012 Provincial Transportation Conversation*;
- *Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Masters Series*;
- *Building Better Connectors* – professional development for community builders in NB; and
- Social Enterprise Support.

Introduction



In October 2008, a public engagement initiative was launched to create and adopt a poverty reduction plan for New Brunswick. This approach was chosen to ensure poverty reduction becomes a collaborative effort: individuals living in poverty as well as the non-profit, business and government sectors.

Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 2009-2014 (OPT1) was launched in November 2009. It was successfully maintained as a non-partisan exercise given that the participants from the four sectors at the final forum agreed that the implementation of a poverty reduction plan could play a key role in the economic and social inclusion for all New Brunswickers.

One of the first actions taken under the poverty reduction plan was the adoption of New Brunswick's *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* by the Government of New Brunswick in April 2010, which led to the establishment of the ESIC. These components created the framework to launch and maintain the plan as a non-partisan exercise.

ESIC was established as a Crown corporation responsible to co-ordinate and implement the plan as well as being a catalyst for change (Appendix C – ESIC Operational Structure). ESIC brings together all four sectors to ensure that economic and social inclusion remains at the forefront of the province's priorities regardless of what government is in power (Section ESIC Leadership for ESICs Responsibilities).

“We wanted to implement the plan using an engaging and inclusive approach. It was developed through a comprehensive public engagement process, which highlighted the ability and desire of communities, businesses and individuals with lived experience in poverty to contribute to the creation of a world-class plan. Ensuring these groups, which do not typically find a place in poverty reduction policy, were also involved at all levels in the governance and decision-making regarding OPT1 has created a legitimacy, excitement and effectiveness rarely seen in such circles.”

**James Hughes, President,
Economic and Social Inclusion
Corporation, 2010-2011**

Mandate

To develop, oversee, co-ordinate and implement strategic initiatives and plans to reduce poverty and assist thousands of New Brunswickers to become more self-sufficient.



Vision

Through the collaboration of governments, businesses and non-profit sectors, persons living in poverty and individuals; 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.

By 2015, New Brunswick will have reduced income poverty by 25% and deep income poverty by 50%, and it will have made significant progress in achieving sustained economic and social inclusion.

As part of OPT1, 22 action items were identified as key activities to overcoming poverty. The business, non-profit and government sectors together with individuals who live or have lived in in poverty agreed to implement 22 priority actions (See Section Action Plan and 22 Priority Actions Progress for detailed breakdown and status of each action item). These actions are categorized as follows:

- Opportunities for Being (meeting basic needs);
- Opportunities for Becoming (life-long learning and skills acquisition);
- Opportunities for Belonging (community participation); and
- Delivery and Accountability.

OPT1 has been a key component of New Brunswick's economic and social inclusion plan to create an environment where all persons, groups, communities and stakeholders are engaged and are an integral part of the solution to move the province forward. This approach has been a grass roots non-partisan exercise, which has proven to be productive and effective. Achieving economic and social inclusion for all New Brunswickers is critical to our collective success as a province and to our communities' future.

With ESIC's leadership and the dedication of the CINs, New Brunswick is seeing positive outcomes as they relate to economic and social inclusion. The innovative and comprehensive approach to overcoming poverty has been critical to improving New Brunswickers' quality of life. Although gains have been made, much remains to be accomplished as outlined in ESIC's *Overcoming Poverty Together 2014-2019 (OPT2) (Appendix D – OPT2 Highlights)*. In partnership with stakeholders, ESIC will continue to provide leadership in the province's efforts to reach its goal of reducing low-income poverty by 25% and deep poverty by 50%.

“I was a novice on the topic of poverty and was stimulated by the immense learning opportunity. I was struck by the complexity of any solution and the vast amount of effort that is required by all segments of society. It was true privilege for me to serve on the ESIC Board of Directors.”

**Gerry Pond, board member and
co-chair, Business Sector 2009-2014**

Overall progress in economic and social inclusion

Based on the Poverty Reduction strategy and its 22 action items (Action Plan and Priority Actions Progress Section) outlined in OPT1, ESIC identified 12 Performance Indicators (Performance Indicators Section) to measure and monitor, over time, the impact of this integrated and collaborative approach to economic and social inclusion.

Poverty

According to the most recent data available from the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID) for the period 2009-11 and the T1 Family File Tax Data for the period 2009-12, statistics indicate a decline in the percentage of people living in poverty in New Brunswick with the exception of those living in deep poverty.

Based on the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics:

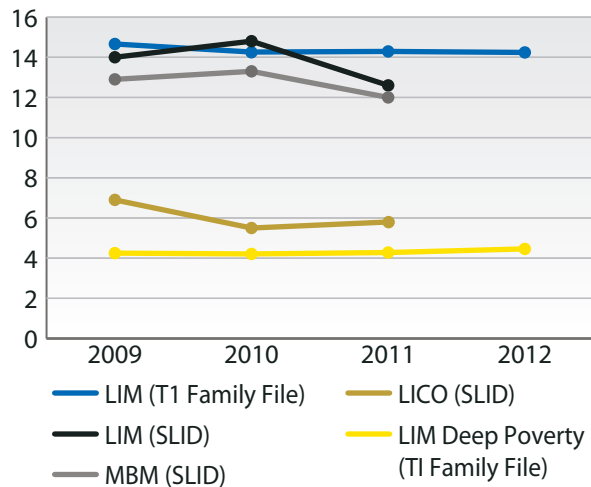
- **16% reduction** from 2009 to 2011 for After-Tax Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO);
- **7% reduction** from 2009 to 2011 for Market Basket Measure (MBM); and
- **2.5% reduction** from 2009 to 2011 for After-Tax Low Income Measure (LIM).

Based on the Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File):

- **10% reduction** from 2009 to 2012 for After-Tax Low Income Measure (LIM); and
- **4.9% increase** from 2009 to 2012 for Deep Poverty After-Tax Low Income Measure (LIM).

Figure 2 – Overall incidence of Low Income in New Brunswick

Source: Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics - Program 3889 – Inactive and Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File) – Program 4105.



Deep poverty

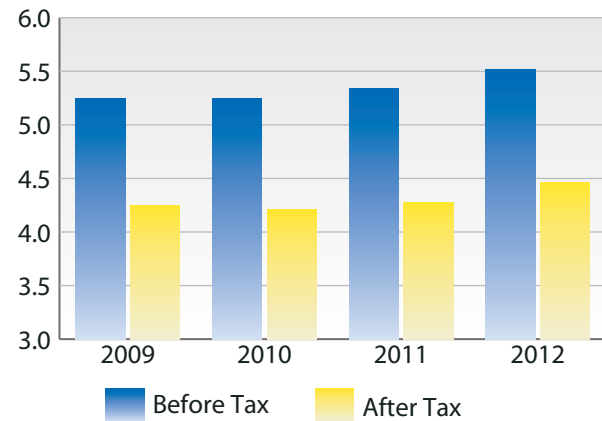
Persons living in deep poverty represent some of the most vulnerable in society. Deep poverty reflects those whose income is less than 50% of the Low Income Measure. Again, adjustments for family sizes reflect the fact that a family's needs increase as the number of its members increase. Similarly, the LIM allows for the fact that it costs more to feed a family of five adults than a family of two adults and three children (Source: *Statistics Canada*).

As shown in Figure 3, the incidence of after-tax deep poverty for all family types showed a slight increase between 2009 and 2012 based on the Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File). Many factors influence a person living in poverty, but they can have a greater impact on persons living in deep poverty (Appendix F – Before and After-Tax Low Income Measure Defined).

- **5.1% increase** from 2009 to 2012 for Deep Poverty Before-Tax Low Income Measure (LIM); and
- **4.9% increase** from 2009 to 2012 for Deep Poverty After-Tax Low Income Measure (LIM).

Figure 3 – Percentage of New Brunswickers living in deep poverty for all family types – before and after tax

Source: *Annual Income Estimates for Census Families and Individuals (T1 Family File) – Program 4105*



Core housing needs

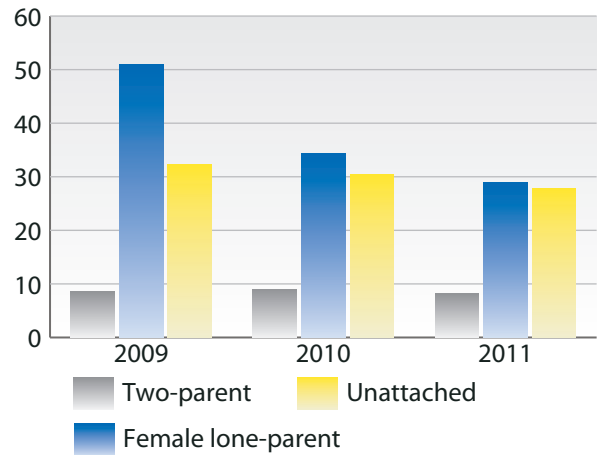
According to Census Canada, the National Household Survey (NHS) and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), there has been an increase in core housing needs for two parent families and unattached individuals with a reduction for lone parent families.

As shown in Figure 4, the incidence of New Brunswickers experiencing core housing need by family type has seen the following trends based on Statistics Canada.

- **9.9% reduction** from 2009 to 2012 for children in lone parent families;
- **5.5% increase** from 2009 to 2012 for children in two parent families; and
- **16.4% increase** from 2009 to 2012 for unattached individuals.

Figure 4 – Percentage of New Brunswickers experiencing core housing needs by family type

Source: Statistics Canada – Census of Canada, the National Household Survey and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics.



Highlights and Summary of the 22 Priority Actions



OPT1 was a unique and collaborative plan that has brought together a cross-section of New Brunswickers including persons living in poverty as well as the non-profit, business and government sectors to develop and adopt a provincial poverty reduction plan. OPT1 laid out a comprehensive and holistic approach to overcoming poverty based on the public engagement initiative launched in October 2008.

As part of OPT1, 22 priority action items were identified as key activities to overcoming poverty in New Brunswick and achieving the global objective of:

By 2015, New Brunswick will have reduced income poverty by 25% and deep income poverty by 50% and will have made significant progress in achieving sustained economic and social inclusion.

Based on the objective stated above, the action items identified in OPT1 worked directly toward achieving this goal. Of the 22 action items, seven were aimed directly at reducing income poverty while two were uniquely aimed at reducing deep income poverty. Seven action items were aimed at achieving both targets while six were related to delivery and accountability activities including the creation of the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC), the *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* and the Community Inclusion Networks (CINs).

As of December 2014, 95% of the 22 actions were completed and/or were ongoing and 5% were in progress. The 5% represents the *Early Learning and Child Care Act*, which received Royal Assent on Dec. 13, 2013. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development continues to work on the comments received during the public review of the regulations.

The Action Plan and 22 Priority Actions Progress section presents highlights that have had a significant impact on economic and social inclusion in the province and provides an update on all 22 action items.

Highlights

ESIC has selected the following action items to highlight based on the broad impact they have had on achieving economic and social inclusion for the most vulnerable persons.

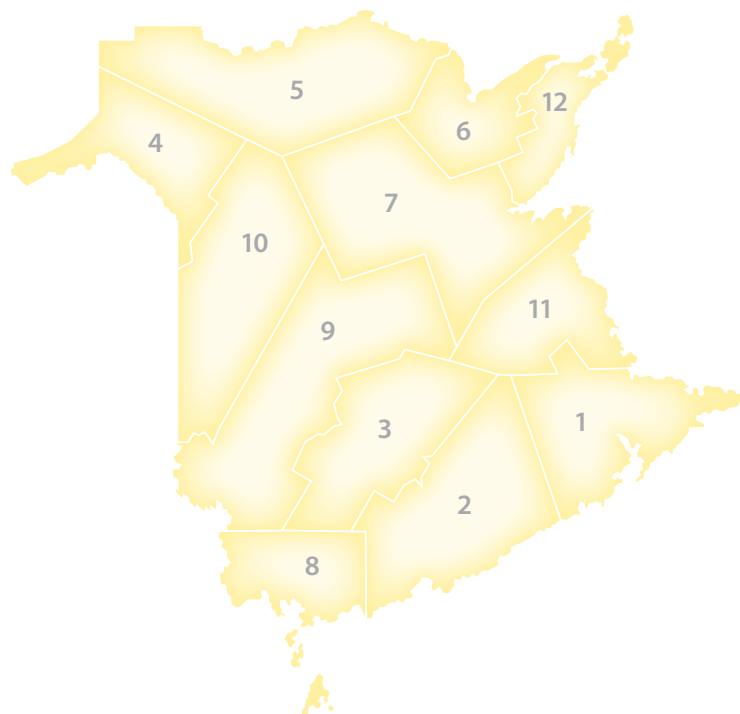
Community Inclusion Networks

One of the key reasons for the success of OPT1 has been ESIC's ability to facilitate and foster New Brunswick communities to build on their competencies and capabilities to address regional economic and social inclusion challenges. The foundation of the plan is based on building capacity in the community through the establishment and work of the CINs.

Following a call by ESIC in November 2010 for interested parties to host 12 regional CINs, groups and individuals from all sectors with an interest in promoting socio-economic inclusion joined together to establish a CIN in their respective region. By the end of 2011, 12 CINs were established. By definition, a CIN is a group recognized by

ESIC to implement the objectives of the provincial plan that are also set out in the CIN's plan within a prescribed geographic area as defined by ESIC.

The CINs' objectives are to identify, through a collaborative process, regional poverty issues and priorities, and to develop and implement a regional poverty reduction plan that aligns with OPT1. The *Economic and Social Inclusion Act* set the framework for the CINs to be established either independently or through the support of existing community-oriented organizations. Modelled on ESIC's structure, the CIN's board of directors, composed of representatives from the business, government and non-profit sectors as well as individuals and citizens who care about the development and well-being of their communities, oversee the activities of the CIN. The following table lists the CINs that were established.



Region 1 – Westmorland Albert Community Inclusion Network Co-operative Ltd.
Greater Moncton, Westmorland County and Albert County

Region 2 – Vibrant Communities Saint John and Sussex
Greater Saint John, Sussex, Queens East and King East

Region 3 – Greater Fredericton Community Inclusion Network
Fredericton, York South, Tracy, Oromocto, Gagetown, Sunbury County, Queens North, Minto and Chipman

Region 4 – North West Community Inclusion Network
Edmundston and Grand Falls

Region 5 – Restigouche Community Inclusion Network
Restigouche County

Region 6 – Chaleur Community Inclusion Network
Bathurst and surrounding area

Region 7 – Northumberland Community Inclusion Network
Miramichi and surrounding area

Region 8 – Vibrant Community Charlotte County
Community Inclusion Network
Charlotte County

Region 9 – Inclusion Network of Central New Brunswick
Doaktown, Harvey, McAdam, Nackawic

Region 10 – Carleton Victoria Community Inclusion Network
Carleton County and Victoria County

Region 11 – Kent Community Inclusion Network
Kent County

Region 12 – Community Inclusion Network Acadian Peninsula
Acadian Peninsula

ESIC works closely with the CINs, providing them with the necessary resources to support the implementation of their regional plans. The CINs have access to many training opportunities offered by ESIC and other sources. ESIC also offers financial resources and support to the CINs. It grants \$62,500 per year to each CIN to cover operating expenses, which may include wages, rent, supplies, travel expenses, etc.

The CINs are at the heart of building community capacity and raising the level of engagement through collective and collaborative impact. They play a co-ordination role with local organizations and support them in the development and implementation of various community projects that promote economic and social inclusion with the aim of reducing poverty. The CINs organize regular meetings with the stakeholders in their regions to rally their partners and engage the members of their community around economic and social inclusion. Through their presence in the regions, the CINs draw on local assets and strengths to build their communities. This collaboration extends beyond the boundaries of each network. The CINs have established their own information and resource-sharing networks. The sharing of their experiences strengthens the ties and affinities between all regions of New Brunswick. The CINs are becoming a central point of contact to connect their community groups and initiatives focused on poverty reduction.

Since their creation, the CINs have established partnerships with numerous community groups and organizations and have had a tangible impact on their communities. The following highlights the achievements they made as of Dec. 1, 2014.

- Community participation: 44,027 participants
- CIN projects: 212
- ESIC project investment: \$2,445,902
- Community project investment: \$8,259,057
- Community investment per ESIC dollar invested: \$3.40 to \$1

The CINs provide a new model for economic and social inclusion. Rather than relying on the various levels of government to eradicate poverty, ESIC in partnerships with the CINs have empowered communities and individuals to participate and contribute to collectively reducing poverty in New Brunswick. ESIC's role is to support the CINs and their communities by accompanying them on the path toward economic and social inclusion. The CINs make this happen by responding to the unique realities of their region to ensure the programs delivered have a significant impact on the being, becoming and belonging of all New Brunswickers. The CINs' ability to build on existing community strengths is the key to mobilizing and empowering New Brunswickers to be part of the solution.



First meeting between ESIC staff, CIN co-ordinators and members

Advisory committees

The ESIC Board of Directors established a number of advisory committees to address some of the more complex priority action items. The advisory committees created the environment and momentum required for changes in the social assistance system and prescription drug coverage as expressed during the public engagement process. The Social Enterprise Advisory Committee created a broader dialogue around the economic potential of social enterprises for communities. The following provides a description and key highlights of the advisory committees established as part of OPT1 (Appendix B).

Health benefits advisory committee

The ESIC Board of Directors established the Advisory Committee on Health Benefits (Appendix B) to develop a mechanism to provide a drug plan for all uninsured New Brunswickers and develop a vision and dental plan for all low-income New Brunswick children. This committee started its work on developing a mechanism to provide a vision and dental coverage in January 2011 and drug plan for uninsured New Brunswickers in July of 2011. Consultations were held with stakeholders for both programs to ensure all interests were represented.

The New Brunswick Drug Plan

The Advisory Committee on Health Benefits conducted consultations between March and May 2012. In-person consultation sessions were held with stakeholders, including patient advocacy groups, health professional associations, private health insurers and the business community. The committee also developed background material and launched a website, *Drug Plan for Uninsured New Brunswickers*, where the public and stakeholders had the opportunity to share their views online.



“When learning about the programs from different provinces, I knew what the committee was working on was the best program New Brunswick could afford at the time. I realized that New Brunswick was a lot better off than other provinces. It was the intention to ensure all New Brunswickers had the best eye and dental plan and an insurance plan for health coverage for all individuals living in poverty and the working poor.”

Juanita Black, ESIC board and Health Benefits advisory committee member

The committee's report, *An Insurance Plan for Prescription Drugs for Uninsured New Brunswickers*, was approved by the ESIC Board of Directors and tabled in the legislative assembly on Dec. 18, 2012. The report's recommendations formed the basis of the drug plan, which helps prevent New Brunswickers from experiencing financial hardship because of prescription drug costs. The Department of Health led the design and the implementation of the plan.

It is available to all New Brunswickers without drug insurance. Before it was launched, 70,000 families did not have drug coverage.

Since May 1, 2014, the NB Drug Plan has provided access to drug coverage to uninsured New Brunwickers as a voluntary plan. Before the plan, a number of persons could not get coverage due to pre-existing conditions or could not afford to buy private drug coverage.

In *Moving New Brunswick Forward*, the provincial government committed to: "Reviewing the New Brunswick Drug Plan to ensure that its costs are reasonable for individuals, its coverage is sufficient, and small businesses are not subject to an employer mandate."

Amendments to the *Prescription and Catastrophic Drug Insurance Act* were introduced on Dec. 9, 2014, to make a number of policy changes to the New Brunswick Drug Plan. The amendments removed the mandatory requirements, which were to come into force on April 1, 2015. This means that it will not be mandatory for New Brunwickers to have prescription drug insurance, and private group drug plans will not be required to meet minimum coverage standards. In addition, the provincial government does not intend to introduce mandatory contributions for employers.

The plan will continue as a voluntary plan until the review is completed. On April 1, 2015, two new premiums took effect, making the plan more affordable for low-income earners. The co-payment percentage is maintained at 30%, but maximum co-payment amounts per prescription will vary from \$5 to \$30 based on income.

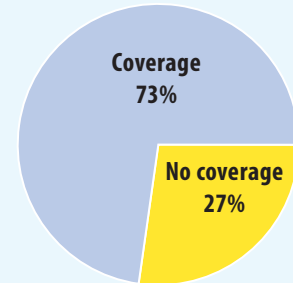
Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision

On Sept. 1, 2012, the dental and vision plan *Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision* took effect to provide the necessary coverage for specified dental and vision benefits to children 18 years of age and younger in low-income families.

The vision care program covers basic services such as the complete annual check-up and lenses and frames up to \$220 every two years. The dental care program covers basic services, including the usual check-ups, X-rays, tooth extractions and certain preventative treatments up to \$1,000 per year.

Children registered with the Department of Social Development are automatically enrolled. Children from low-income families could also benefit from this program, which was extensively promoted throughout the school system, through the CINs and other relevant organizations.

As of Dec. 31, 2014, 2,438 individuals have enrolled in the plan (Source: *Department of Health*). Most, 1,778 (73%) individuals, are in the lowest income range. This demonstrates low-income earners are participating in the program and reflects the need for the program.

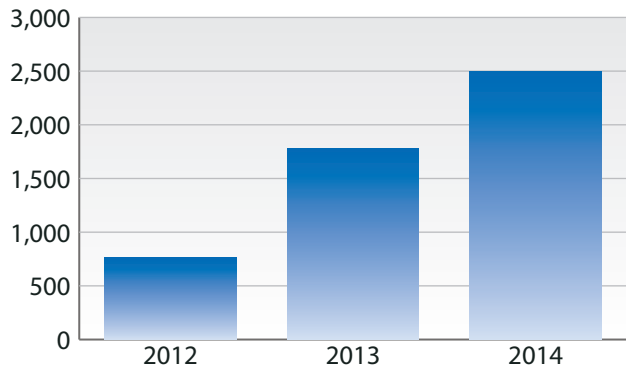


New  Nouveau
Brunswick

**A dental and vision plan for
children of low-income families**

As of December 2014, 2,498 New Brunswick children had registered to the Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision program (Source: Department of Social Development).

The following diagram shows the number of applicants to the *Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision* program from September 2012 to December 2014.



Source: Department of Social Development

Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds (SECIFs) advisory committee

ESIC's board of directors created the Advisory Committee for Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds (SECIFs) (Appendix B) in January 2010. Its mandate was to develop a strategic framework on social enterprise and the community investment funds. Social Enterprise (SE) is a form of business that occupies the space on the spectrum of economic activity between the non-profit sector and the for-profit sector. It is fertile ground for innovation. SE bridges an entrepreneurial gap; non-profit organizations are turning to business activity to generate income for their social purposes, while businesses are recognizing the non-profit sector builds the human foundation for a strong economy.

Social Enterprises as defined by the Advisory Committee for Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds is: "Businesses/organizations (for profit, not-for-profit, cooperatives, credit unions and labour unions) that:

- sell goods or services in the market place;
- have as their primary purpose to create social, environmental and/or cultural value;
- use (a minimum) 51% of any profits to enhance programs and/or services to improve our communities, and;
- have demonstrated evidence of the above."

Under OPT1, SE and community investment funds were among the most promising approaches for helping the province address the multi-dimensional issues associated with poverty. For ESIC, this approach was an essential tool for catalyzing those who are disconnected, promoting entrepreneurship, increasing employment, training workers and filling economic niches.



Resnet – Computer Recycling
Social Enterprise in Edmundston

The committee first examined and inventoried a number of social enterprises and best practices in the province. This process made it possible to define the location, purpose, challenges and activities of social enterprises in New Brunswick.

In the spring of 2012, the committee conducted a comparative social enterprise survey in New Brunswick, which contributed to the construction of a progressive framework for social enterprise in the province. The committee presented its final report, *Learning and Earning: Building a Social Enterprise Policy Framework*, to ESIC's Board of Directors and presented its findings to the provincial government.

In June 2013, a working group composed of four sub-committees was established to review the relevance and practicality of adapting proposed government actions identified in the report to the New Brunswick context; and, to create a long-term policy framework with articulated goals, actions and timelines for building a supportive environment for social innovation in New Brunswick.

In 2013-14, ESIC worked with the departments of Finance and Healthy and Inclusive Communities to develop new support programs, including the creation of the Community Economic Development Investment Fund (CEDIF). Momentum was created, and in its 2014-15 budget, the provincial government announced the creation of a CEDIF program and changes to the New Brunswick Small Business Investors Tax Credit to allow participants of social enterprises and co-operatives with active business incomes to be eligible.

In addition, this program allows for individuals and corporate investors to invest in a registered local community fund thus strengthening the local economy. This provides increased access to capital for small businesses and creates new financing avenues for the province as well as help communities develop new viable projects.

Many CINs have already participated in the development of social enterprise projects. With the support of ESIC, the CINs are acquiring the skills and competencies for the development of this sector that is experiencing growth on a global scale.

The total project value of SECIFs within the CINs is \$455,183, with more than 1,500 participants.

Building on the work of the committee and working group, ESIC will continue to work with provincial government agencies and stakeholders to create opportunities for the non-profit sector and practitioners as well as working with the CINs and community organizations in building partnerships and developing new projects.

Social assistance reform advisory committee

The ESIC Board of Directors established the Advisory Committee on Social Assistance Reform (SAR) (Appendix B) to provide advice and feedback to the Department of Social Development as it redesigned the social assistance program. The following highlights just a few of the many changes seen in the reform moving from rules based to an outcome based system (Appendix B).

Increases in social assistance rates

Basic social assistance rates increased by seven per cent over six months: four per cent in October 2013 and three per cent in April 2014.

Single employable individuals who do not have barriers to employment were not eligible for these increases. In 2010, this group received an increase of 82 per cent when the interim assistance rate was eliminated.

Many people receiving social assistance are able to work with the right help and support. Clients are able to receive support and guidance in their pursuit of employment in addition to receiving monthly social assistance payments.

The social assistance rate structure has been simplified by merging the two existing rate schedules into one. This translated into an additional two-per-cent increase for families with high shelter costs.

“The willingness of everyone to work together to try to figure out how the committee members could make a difference was key. Changing systems is challenging work, yet everyone understood the importance of trying to get it right. I also appreciated the participation of people who have lived in poverty. They had first-hand experience with policies that had been barriers and their passion to ‘fix it’ helped to drive the work”.

**Brenda Murphy, ESIC board member
and SAR advisory committee**



Advisory Committee meeting on Social Assistance Reform

Wage exemption changes

The most significant social assistance reform was the revision of the wage exemption policy to allow recipients to keep more of their earnings as they make the transition to employment from social assistance. A client's benefits are now reduced by 70 cents for every additional dollar he or she earned beyond the fully exempted amount. The previous policy reduced a client's benefits by one dollar for every dollar earned.

Health card reform

In December 2009, the provincial government extended the health card program provided to social assistance clients for up to three years after they leave social assistance for a job. The benefit was previously good for up to 12 months for clients leaving social assistance. Clients can now renew their benefits for up to 36 months.

Changes to the Household Income Policy

In February 2010, the provincial government improved the Household Income Policy under the social assistance system. These improvements allow social assistance recipients who are in non-spousal relationships to share accommodations with clients or non-clients and receive separate cheques.

Protection for roomers and boarders

In April 2010, amendments to *the Residential Tenancies Act* came into effect. They provide protection for roomers and boarders by ensuring that equal rights and responsibilities are afforded to these tenants as currently given to tenants of other rental units.

Transportation

A significant portion of the province does not have access to community or public transportation because it is not available or affordable, which creates a barrier for economic and social inclusion. Based on this reality, ESIC supported numerous transportation projects.

Many communities have been giving serious thought to establishing transportation services that meet their regions' distinct needs. Many stakeholders, including those who currently have transportation capacities, and transportation experts are pitching in to find practical, comprehensive, and inexpensive solutions to create transportation opportunities in their communities.

Community Transportation Project



McAdam bus project

The needs and capacities in terms of transportation vary from one region to the next, and even between communities in the same region. That is why every CIN has established its own transportation priorities. Some regions already

have this type of service in place, and others are in the final stages of development. Refer to the CIN section for specific examples of transportation projects going on around the province.

As of Dec. 1, 2014, 47 community transportation projects focusing on individuals in poverty have been offered in communities across New Brunswick, providing much needed transport to more than 5,845 persons in need.

Community investments in CIN transportation projects as of Dec. 1, 2014, totalled \$2,202,092 while the ESIC investment was \$890,066 making the community investment per ESIC dollar invested a \$2.5 to \$1 ratio.

22 Priority Actions Progress

The following table provides a summary update on all 22 actions as part of the OPT1 plan.

| 22 PRIORITY ACTIONS | STATUS |
|--|-----------------------|
| OPPORTUNITIES FOR BEING (meeting basic needs) | |
| Reform the New Brunswick Social Assistance system | Completed |
| Create a prescription drug program for non-insured citizens | Completed |
| Minimum Wage Increases | Completed and Ongoing |
| Provide stable funding for homeless shelters within five years | Completed |
| Include protection for roomers and boarders in the <i>Residential Tenancies Act</i> | Completed |
| Provide funding for community transportation alternatives (such as Dial-a-Ride) | Ongoing |
| Develop and implement an integrated service delivery model focused on low income people | Ongoing |
| OPPORTUNITIES FOR BECOMING (life-long learning and skills acquisition) | |
| Invest in early learning and childcare to ensure that a minimum of 20% of infants and 50% of two to five-year olds may access a registered early learning space | Ongoing |
| Provide a literacy mentor, through collaboration with the business and non-profit sectors to every student in grades one and two who is struggling to read, so that every child may graduate with adequate literacy and numeracy skills through the leadership of Elementary Literacy/Litteratie au primaire | Ongoing |
| Introduce an <i>Early Learning and Child Care Act</i> | In Progress |
| The McCain Foundation will fund five additional integrated early learning sites | Completed |
| Advance the community schools concept with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy, life skills, experiential learning, trades and co-operative education and extra-curricular activities | Ongoing |
| Continue training teachers to expand educational programs to accommodate diverse learning styles | Completed and Ongoing |

| 22 PRIORITY ACTIONS | STATUS |
|--|---|
| OPPORTUNITIES FOR BELONGING (COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION) | |
| Develop a comprehensive housing strategy that enables mixed income neighbourhoods, affordability, supported housing options, and co-op housing | Completed |
| Explore the concept of social enterprise and community investment funds | Completed |
| Strengthen the ability of low-income people to enter the skilled work force through the provision of training, education and volunteer opportunities as part of the transition to work as well as job training | Strategy is completed and training is ongoing |
| Reduce Barriers to Continuing Education making it more accessible and affordable | Ongoing |
| Develop a public awareness campaign which is critical to the success of the poverty reduction strategy | Ongoing |
| Pass the Economic and Social Inclusion Act | Completed |
| Create the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation | Completed |
| Create three advisory committees of ESIC | Completed |
| Create Community Inclusion Networks | Completed |