

PREVENTING POVERTY. PROMOTING PROSPERITY.

Nova Scotia's Poverty Reduction Strategy

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Message from the Premier

I would like to start by thanking everyone who has had a hand in the creation of Nova Scotia's Poverty Reduction Strategy. In particular I would like to thank the Poverty Reduction Working Group for their months of hard work and commitment and for sharing their insights.

Nova Scotians pull together every day to help family, friends, and neighbours in need. We can do it again to fight poverty and promote prosperity. Nova Scotia's culture of generosity and hard work combined with a concrete strategy will equal success.

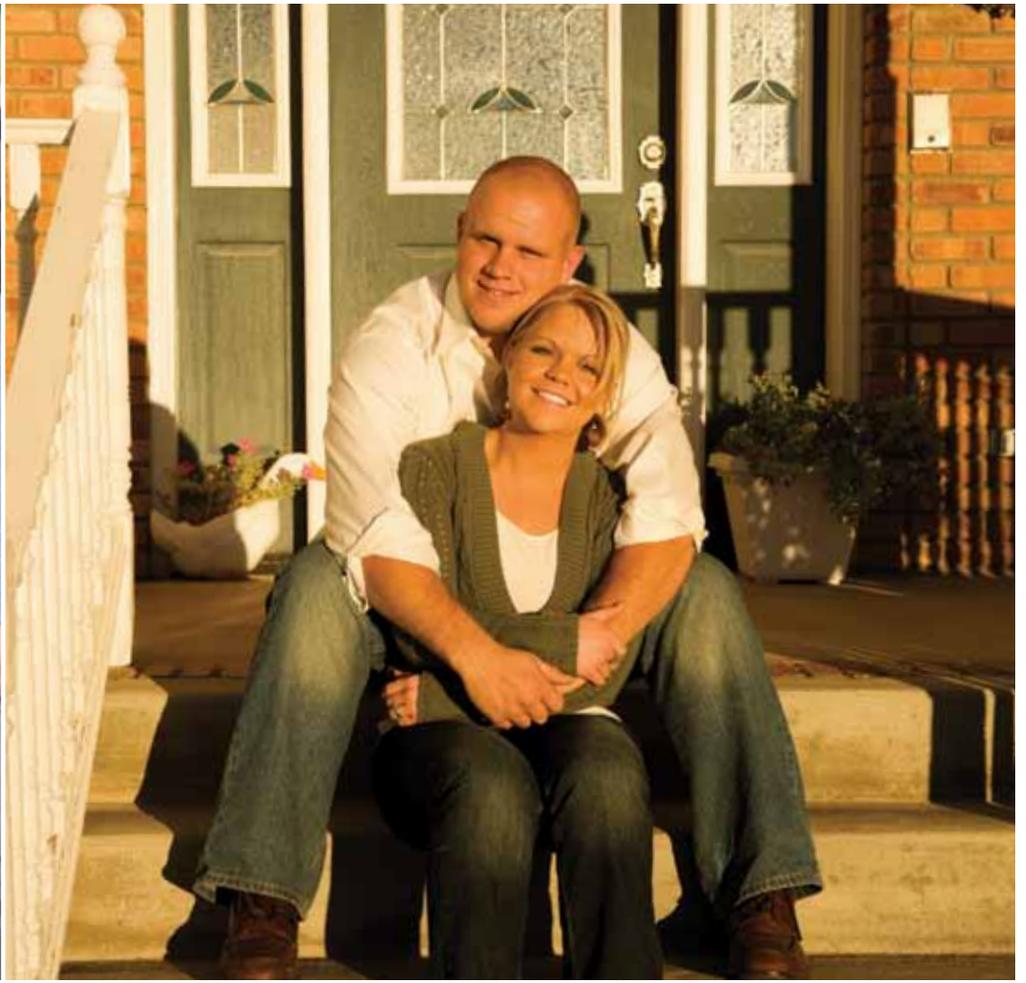
This government has shown time after time that a community-wide, collaborative, coordinated approach is the only way to solve the major problems facing our province today.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy is an integral part of our Social Prosperity Framework. It is also based on the principles of collaboration, coordination, and shared responsibility. The province's social prosperity ministers will adhere to these principles as we oversee the implementation of this strategy across government.

It is a long-term plan for a Nova Scotia where resources are used wisely, and government and community action is coordinated to advance long-term goals.

No longer will any of us talk in isolation within the confines of our programs or departments. We will come together for those in need in Nova Scotia, and we will need everyone's support.

The Honourable Rodney MacDonald
Premier of Nova Scotia



Executive Summary

Our poverty reduction strategy provides a framework for addressing the needs of those most vulnerable and those at risk of falling into poverty, while promoting the prosperity necessary for Nova Scotia to grow.

Building on progress

We are already making significant strides in our fight against poverty. For example, the percentage of Nova Scotians living in low-income circumstances is the lowest it's been in a decade—and lower than the Canadian average.

But we need, and plan, to do more.

We are committed to reducing the number of people living in poverty. When we help one, we help us all.

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Setting our vision, objectives, and actions

Our vision for 2020 is clear: to break the cycle of poverty by creating opportunities for all Nova Scotians to participate in the prosperity of the province and enjoy a better standard of living.

Change does not come overnight. This is a multi-year plan that begins right now—with new investments of \$155 million. This builds on additional government investments totalling almost \$200 million in programs over the past three years.

Summary of new investments

Goal 1: Enable and reward work

Training	*\$88 million
End treatment of tax refunds as income for IA clients	\$400,000

Goal 2: Improve supports for those in need

Increase income assistance rates	\$2 million
Housing	\$59 million

Goal 3: Focus on our children

Expand Nova Scotia child benefit, low-income pharmacare	\$2.5 million
Create more subsidized portable child-care spaces, increase subsidy	\$3.5 million

* Includes federal contribution.

Actions—immediate, short term, and long term—have been identified for each of our four goals: enable and reward work, improve supports for those in need, focus on our children, and collaborate and coordinate.

Enabling and rewarding work

- ▶ Current economic circumstances demand a focus this year on strategic and targeted investments in training and creating jobs. This year, we will invest \$88 million in training.
 - \$81 million transferred from the federal to the provincial government, which Employment Nova Scotia (a new division of the Department of Labour and Workforce Development) can use to meet the specific needs of our labour market
 - \$7 million targeted toward recommendations from the Poverty Reduction Working Group such as helping groups traditionally under-represented in our work force and supporting equitable access to literacy, adult education, and training

We will also invest \$400,000 this year in removing disincentives to work. Specifically, income tax refunds will no longer be treated as income for income assistance clients.

This builds on work already under way, such as expansion of community college programming, school programs to prepare students for the world of work, and workplace training programs; help to make post-secondary education more affordable; and increases in the minimum wage.

Improving supports for those in need

► Our major priorities this year are to

- begin the review of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program
- increase income assistance allowances in line with the rate of inflation
- substantially increase the availability and quality of public and affordable housing
- begin developing a provincial long-term housing strategy

The Poverty Reduction Working Group, and many others, has identified the need to review the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program. The review will examine ways to help more people find work and become financially self-sufficient and to better address the needs of people in greatest need.

In the interim, government will increase income assistance by the rate of inflation, requiring a \$2-million investment.

Housing is one of our basic and most costly necessities. With federal funding available, we have the opportunity to more than double our money and invest \$59 million over three years to expand and upgrade affordable housing. This is part of the province's Building for Growth plan and is estimated to have the added benefit of creating or maintaining 1600 jobs.

Seniors and people with disabilities will be among those receiving assistance. As well, construction and upgrades are also an opportunity to make public and affordable housing energy efficient, reducing heating costs and supporting our commitments under the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act.

In line with this work, we will develop a long-term housing strategy for Nova Scotia, as identified by the Poverty Reduction Working Group. We also commit to developing a sustainable transportation strategy, as recommended by the Poverty Reduction Working Group.

These immediate and longer-term efforts build on work already under way. For example, since 2003, more than 1,100 affordable housing units have been created or preserved.

Focusing on our children

Our future prosperity—including our ability to significantly reduce poverty—depends on how effectively we support children today.

The number of children living in low-income families has fallen from 19.3 per cent in 1997 to 8.7 per cent in 2006.

Our first priority this year is to invest \$2.5 million to make the Nova Scotia Child Benefit and the Low Income Pharmacare for Children Program available to more families (benefiting about 3,700 more children).

We will invest \$3.5 million to create more subsidized child-care spaces and to increase the subsidy. As well, all subsidized spaces will now be portable—meaning that they are approved for the child rather than the child-care centre. This has been a priority for low-income families, as it protects their day care if they need to move to find work.

Future directions also include developing a provincial learning disabilities strategy, expanding programs that give families more access to recreation, and improving access to primary health care.

This builds on work that continues to receive considerable investment and attention across government. We will fully align our efforts with the province's child and youth strategy. As well, pharmacare programs, introduced within the past three years, are helping children get the prescriptions they need to stay healthy.

Coordinating and collaborating

Over the past three years, government has made additional investments of almost \$200 million in programs to help Nova Scotians in need. Through better coordination and collaboration, we believe we can do more with this investment and increase awareness about these programs.

To lead this effort, ministers from nine government departments, supported by their deputies and senior staff, will form a committee to guide, direct, and share accountability for this strategy. A new position—a coordinator of Poverty Reduction—will also be created.

We also want to increase public awareness. Specifically, we will use a community development model to allow opportunity for public involvement in the fight against poverty. We will also continue to encourage business to become actively engaged.

Measuring and reporting our progress

The Poverty Reduction Working Group stressed the importance of measuring and reporting our progress. We agree. We have set some benchmark measures associated with each goal, and we will immediately begin work to establish more, and more refined, measures. We will also periodically report progress to the public, beginning next year.

We also encourage people to share their thoughts, time, or opportunities in the fight against poverty—because this is all about making the province a better place to live for all Nova Scotians.

Introduction

Supporting those in need

Nova Scotia's greatest resource is its people. They are hard working, talented, and resilient. Some individuals and families, however, struggle at certain times or throughout their lives. At times, entire communities face challenges. The more we can do to assist them in their times of need, the stronger it makes our economy and our society. We simply cannot afford to waste any resources, especially during tough economic times. Opportunity equals prosperity.

This strategy provides a framework for addressing the needs of those most vulnerable and those at risk of falling into poverty, while promoting the prosperity necessary for Nova Scotia to grow. It brings existing programs and new initiatives together under one umbrella, making a coordinated, integrated approach possible. Finally, it demonstrates accountability and transparency and includes measurement and reporting of progress. We are committed to reducing the number of people living in poverty in this province. When we help one, we help us all.

Building on progress

A lot of support already exists for Nova Scotians trying to live and succeed in this province. Almost \$200 million ([See Appendix, page 40](#)) in new investments have been made in the last few years alone.

The percentage of Nova Scotians living in low-income situations is the lowest it's been in a decade and is lower than the Canadian average.

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We recognize, however, that government, businesses, individuals, and community partners can do more. Preventing poverty promotes prosperity. It is as simple as that. The key to making Nova Scotia the best place in Canada to live, work, do business, and raise families is ensuring opportunity for every one of its people to live well and contribute. It is essential that we as a society give Nova Scotians in need opportunities to succeed and, during tough times, protect those on the path to success, while enabling the economy to thrive.

Thinking long term and right now

It is not an easy task. We have to think long term and right now. We have to consider the needs of individuals and the needs of the entire province.

The Nova Scotia government, like governments around the globe, is facing challenges. Like families trying to balance their household budgets, we can't do everything at once. Revenues are down, and it is difficult to cover current spending commitments. Despite this reality, our government recognizes the need to act now. While the investments necessary to implement this strategy will be made over time, we will begin investing in year one in priority areas where we can essentially double our money by accessing matching federal funds. We will also invest to help more children living in low-income families—a key priority to help children get a better start in life and break the cycle of poverty. However, it is going to take more than money to accomplish what needs to be done. It is going to take a new way of thinking that will ensure that any money invested is effective. We need to coordinate and collaborate as a society. This strategy will be the guide.

Broadening our focus in tough times

When government started this process, the focus was on a multi-year strategy that would improve life and provide opportunities for low-income Nova Scotians. A downturn in the global economy has broadened that focus. Nova Scotia is one of two provinces in Canada to release a poverty reduction strategy in the most challenging economic times we have experienced in years. An increasing number of Nova Scotians now find themselves dangerously close to financial hardship. All it would take to slide into poverty is the loss of a loved one, a marriage, or a paycheck. Because of this new reality, this strategy includes a map for helping not only Nova Scotians struggling to make ends meet on low incomes, but those at risk of slipping into low-income situations. The more people contributing, the better it is for the economy, and for all Nova Scotians.

Working together

We can do it, if we all work together. We need everyone's involvement. With the help of the federal government, municipal governments, business, community groups, all Nova Scotians, and a strong economy we will increase opportunity.

We want to thank the Poverty Reduction working group for their tremendous help in the development of the strategy. We are listening and responding to the people and organizations that are on the ground in the fight against poverty. This includes reviewing the research and reports done by different organizations, holding consultations with provincial groups involved in the issue of poverty, and reaching out to the broader community for their input via a survey.

The result is a strategy that will be the framework for more effective coordination of existing programs; improved supports for those at greatest risk of long-term poverty; a better system for enabling and rewarding work; and more support for families. This includes increased access to affordable housing, more job training, and more money in the pockets of families.

However, change won't come overnight. This strategy will include short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals. This is a multi-year plan that begins right now.

Who needs help?

All Nova Scotians may need help at one time or another. The challenges facing individuals and families are unique and varied. The needs of the thousands of Nova Scotians who live in rural areas are very different from those of their counterparts in more urban areas. The supports needed by our seniors are different from those needed by our children. Similarly, we have Nova Scotians who simply need employment retraining to get back on their feet, while thousands of people require assistance their whole lives. Finally, we have individuals who don't need immediate help, but will if the province doesn't prosper economically, businesses close, and opportunities disappear.

This tough economic climate places even more pressure on the most vulnerable and increases the threat to those just getting by.

Nova Scotia is already active in the fight to help people struggling with poverty. Over the course of the past three fiscal years—2006–2007, 2007–2008, and 2008–2009—government has invested about \$200 million of new money in a variety of programs to help low- and modest-income Nova Scotians.

We have made inroads in lowering the incidence of poverty in Nova Scotia, reducing the number of people living in low income by more than 40 per cent, to the lowest point it has been in 25 years. The stable and steady economic growth of the first part of the decade helped more Nova Scotians find jobs and improve their standard of living.

The number of people living in low-income situations in Nova Scotia dropped from 128,000 in 1997 to 76,000 in 2006.

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How do we build on this progress?

We start by taking a closer look at who is poor, how poor they are, and how poverty is affecting their daily lives. The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of Nova Scotia's low-income population.

No one measure can adequately capture what it means to be poor. No consensus has been reached on a single measure to identify the magnitude of poverty.

One measure that is currently being reported in Canada with a regularity and reliability that allow us to follow trends and make provincial comparisons is Statistics Canada’s Low Income Cut-off (LICO).

Produced by Statistics Canada on a yearly basis, the LICO is a relative measure of poverty. It represents the income level at which a family may struggle because it has to spend a greater proportion of its income on necessities than the average family of similar size. The LICO is set based on average Canadian incomes and spending patterns and changes as average income in Canada changes.

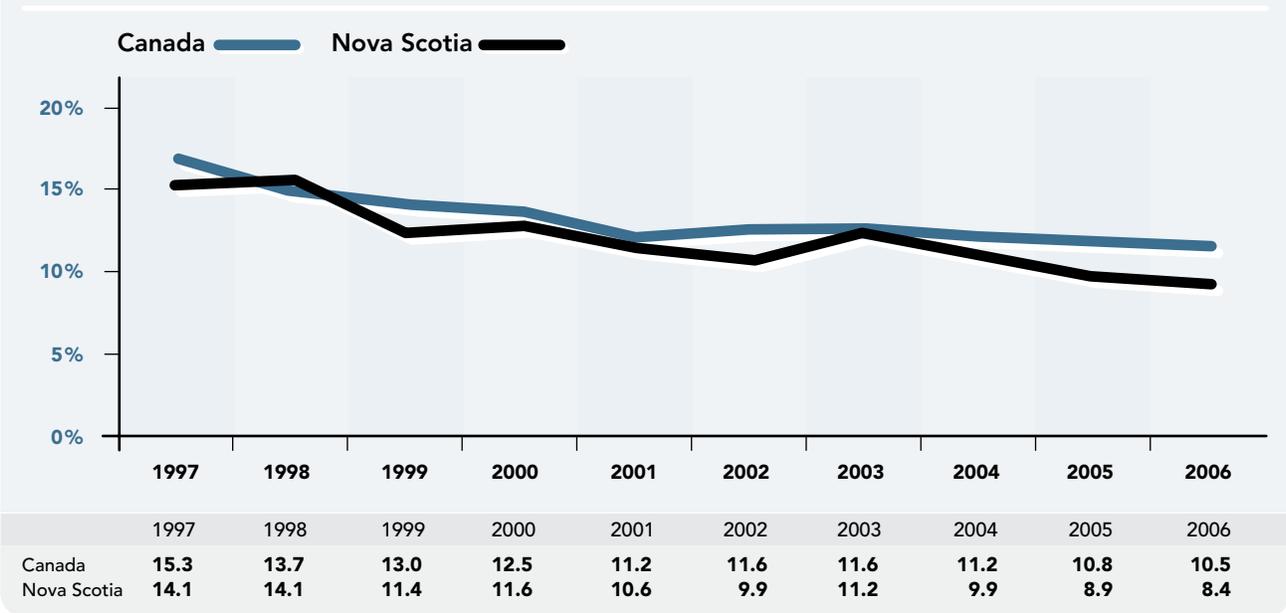
Table 1 shows the after-tax LICO rates for 2006. LICO takes into account differences in family size and community size; for families of the same size, living in communities of the same size, the LICO is the same across the country. For example, a family of three persons living in Halifax—an urban centre with a population of just under 400,000—would be considered low income if their after-tax income was less than \$22,516. For the same three-person family living in Yarmouth, the low-income cut-off is \$19,932.

Table 1 – Low-income after-tax cut-off rates, 2006

Community Size Family Size	Rural Area	Urban under 30,000	Urban 30,000–99,999	Urban 100,000–499,999	Urban 500,000 and more
1 person	\$11,492	\$13,152	\$14,671	\$14,857	\$17,568
2 persons	\$13,987	\$16,008	\$17,857	\$18,082	\$21,381
3 persons	\$17,417	\$19,932	\$22,236	\$22,516	\$26,624
4 persons	\$21,728	\$24,867	\$27,741	\$28,091	\$33,216
5 persons	\$24,742	\$28,317	\$31,590	\$31,987	\$37,823

Based on Statistics Canada’s Low-Income Cut-Off, in 2006, 8.4 per cent of Nova Scotians were living in low-income situations. As the following chart shows, this is the lowest incidence of low income of the past decade and is lower than the Canadian average of 10.5 per cent.

Figure 1 – Prevalence of low income (after tax), Nova Scotia and Canada, 1997 – 2006



Looking at a longer cycle (Figure 2), the prevalence of low income within Nova Scotia has been rising and falling since 1980, driven in large part by fluctuations in the economy. Although the current prevalence of low income is the lowest of the past 25 years, comparable rates were posted in the late 1980s. Following declines during the 1980s, the prevalence of low income was on the rise throughout the better part of the 1990s, peaking in 1997 and 1998 at 14.1 per cent. As described in Figure 2, the more recent trend is downward.

Figure 2 – Prevalence of low-income (after-tax) Nova Scotia, 1980 to 2006



Gains have also recently been made in reducing child poverty. Governments have placed a high priority on children and poverty, and improvements in the Child Tax Benefit, together with the implementation of federal and provincial child benefits—Universal Child Care Benefit, the National Child Benefit Supplement, and the Nova Scotia Child Benefit—have helped low-income families with children.

► **When all is said and done, research suggests that those most vulnerable to poverty in Nova Scotia include**

- persons with work-limiting disabilities
- single, unattached individuals, including youth
- lone-parent families, especially female lone parents
- older individuals
- Aboriginal peoples
- African Nova Scotians
- recent immigrants
- people with poor educational attainment, particularly those who have not achieved a high school education

People who fall into more than one of these groups are at even greater risk of living in poverty for long periods. Some, like persons with work-limiting disabilities, experience longer periods of time in low income. Others, like students, struggle for shorter periods of time. Women in these groups face particular challenges and tend to experience greater poverty for longer periods. Children born into low-income families have a much greater chance of poor educational, health, and well-being outcomes. Low-income parents often face barriers that make it difficult for them to find secure, well-paying jobs and be active in their community.

Although the term “working poor” can mean many things, it generally refers to people who work in full-time, part-time, or seasonal jobs and whose income keeps them continually struggling to make ends meet. They face job instability, are often unable to access benefits, and are often unable to pay all of their bills. While some of them are eligible for income assistance and the support it brings, others have little access to direct support from the social safety net.

Not everyone in this group is captured in the low-income data from Statistics Canada. Yet, many from this group are at risk of falling into poverty while they are working and may face greater risks of poverty later in life. They have no extra money to set aside for their children's education or retirement or for emergency situations like a job loss or unexpected home repairs. They have little or no prospect of pension income from their employment.

Lower-middle class and seemingly middle-class families can also struggle. They may also be financially over-extended. As a result, they could find themselves a paycheque or two away from losing their homes and savings.

This sort of financial vulnerability can result in a weakened overall quality of life and sense of well-being. Perhaps the biggest cost to the individual, and one that ultimately affects everyone, is the cost associated with lost potential. Low-income individuals and families often do not have as much opportunity to develop their capabilities, such as pursuing higher education, as people with higher incomes. This has a direct cost for the individual and society as a whole.

From a governmental perspective, the costs are both direct—increased costs for income support programs and reduced tax revenue, for example—and indirect, contributing to budget increases for health care, justice services, and education, to name a few.

The social and financial costs alone make this a shared concern. We know there are links between poverty and crime, between poor health and low income, between labour market shortages and untapped potential. And we stand to gain that potential from the many Nova Scotians who want to contribute their ideas, their talents—and their tax revenue—if we can help them move to self-reliance.

Where do we want to be?

So, it is clear that the success and prosperity of the province depends on its people. This strategy will help us create a Nova Scotia that offers everyone a fair shot at getting the most out of their opportunities. It is a province that people are proud to call home, with safe streets and respected laws, with excellent health care and education. It is a province with a growing economy and a bright future. It is a place where every child receives an education that prepares him or her for the challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities of adulthood.

Our vision for 2020 is to break the cycle of poverty by creating opportunities for all Nova Scotians to participate in the prosperity of the province and enjoy a better standard of living.

This is in step with the vision the Poverty Reduction Working Group suggested in their recommendations to government. They stated:

“We believe that investing in people is essential to creating stronger communities, a better future and a prosperous Nova Scotia. We envision a province where community, business and governments work together and invest in the measurable alleviation, reduction and prevention of poverty.”

Government listened. Taking direction from the New Nova Scotia and Weaving the Threads, the province’s social prosperity framework, this strategy will serve as the guideline for current and future efforts to address the needs of our low-income population and those at risk of falling into low-income situations, while promoting the economic growth necessary to remain a supportive society. It will organize our thinking and become the guide for designing programs and policies. It will provide a way to better integrate and coordinate our efforts. And it will measure and report on its success.

- ▶ **Our guiding principles are based on what we heard from the working group and what Nova Scotians value:**
 - comprehensive, long-term commitment
 - strengthened programs and services and innovative solutions
 - independence, self-sufficiency, inclusion and diversity
 - sustainable, secure, equitable and predictable supports for Nova Scotians in need
 - responsive and flexible to changing demands
 - purposeful collaboration
 - evidence based, demonstrating accountability and transparency and measuring progress

Goals

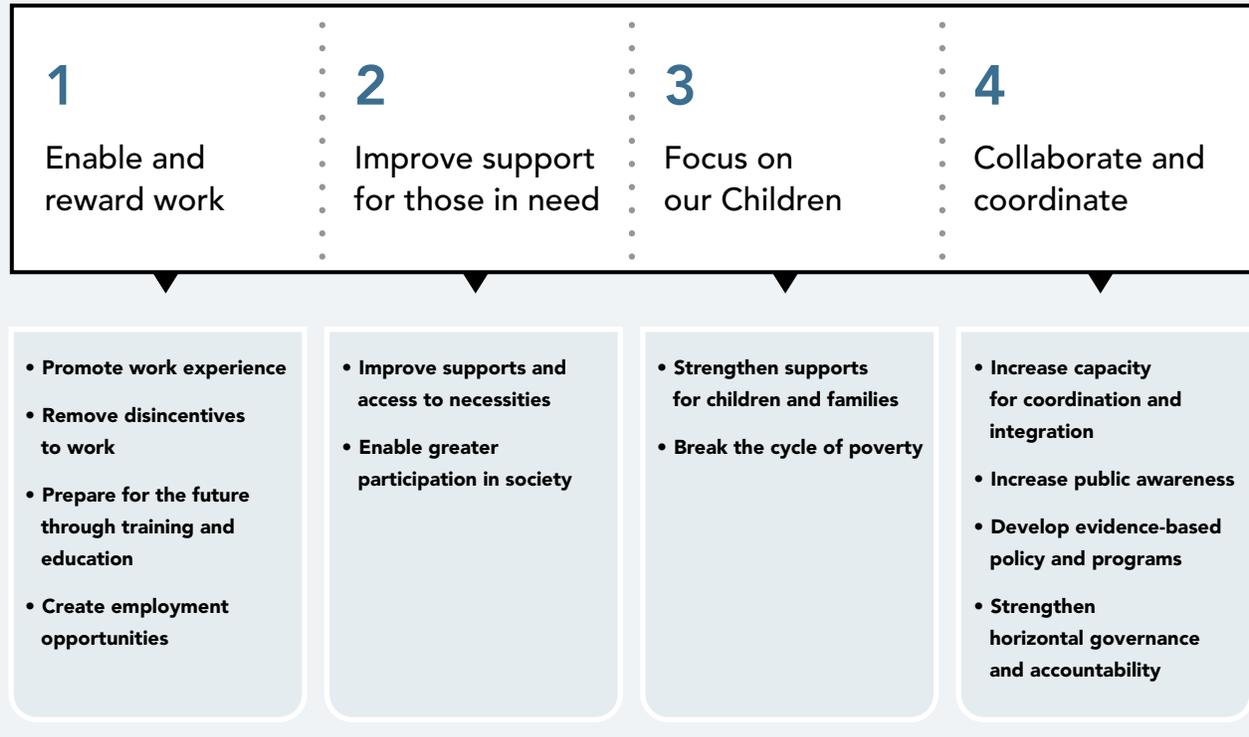
The Poverty Reduction Working Group recommended that government efforts focus on collaboration and coordination and on the alleviation, reduction, and prevention of poverty. In real terms, that means working more effectively within government and with partners, improving the lives of those most in need by providing more support, reducing the number of people living in poverty by creating employment and education opportunities, and preventing more people from falling into poverty.

The key to this is a strategy document that can guide immediate, short-term, and long-term efforts.

- ▶ **As a result, four goals have been identified for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. They are:**
 - enable and reward work
 - improve supports for those in need
 - focus on our children
 - collaborate and coordinate

These goals will guide us as we look at what government is already doing to reduce poverty in Nova Scotia and promote prosperity and what it will do over the next decade. Steps will be taken toward each goal in year one. More significantly, these goals will provide areas of focus for a long-term commitment. Future directions have been included. But these are not the end. If we are to be successful we will need to be responsive and flexible to the changing needs of low-income Nova Scotians. This is a living document that will be revisited in years to come. We will develop measures, report on progress and identify those actions which will move us closer to meeting our goals and realizing our vision.

Poverty Reduction Strategy



Enable and reward work

What it means

The key to leaving poverty behind and becoming self-sufficient, or avoiding poverty altogether, is employment. A job generates more than just income. It provides hope and dignity. Being employed means being a part of the community and making a contribution. We believe most low-income Nova Scotians could become self-sufficient or remain self-sufficient with the right mix of income support and education and/or employment training. This goal is about coordinating and continuing to invest in these efforts to better support Nova Scotians able to work.

- ▶ The main objectives of this goal are to
 - prepare for the future through training and education
 - promote work experience
 - remove disincentives to work
 - create employment opportunities

What we are doing

Preparing for the future through training, education, work experience

Our schools must provide opportunities that will help students reach their potential by acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed in today's world. That includes preparing students for the world of work.

- Skilled Trades Centres have been established at 10 high schools, functioning as construction sites, work areas, and classrooms. Centres are planned in more trades in the coming years.
- Co-operative education is now offered in 70 per cent of high schools, providing more than 3,000 students with hands-on learning opportunities through neighbourhood employers.
- Options and Opportunities (O2) takes disengaged students, re-engages them in learning, and connects them with employers to show them how schoolwork leads to better employment.

These innovative and hands-on programs contribute to Nova Scotia having one of the lowest high school dropout rates in the country.

Most high school graduates move on to post-secondary education, where they learn more and, ultimately, earn more.

About 92 per cent of Nova Scotia Community College graduates have jobs within a year. Diploma graduates earn an average starting salary of \$34,183, and those with advanced diplomas start, on average, at \$43,500.

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One of the barriers to continuing education is affordability. Again, we have made significant investments to remove this barrier, investing \$180 million over three years to freeze university tuition until 2010 for all students attending university in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia was the only province to report a tuition decrease for 2008–2009.

As well, low-cost loans, bursaries, and grants help make a university or college education more attainable. More than \$100 million is invested annually in bursaries (\$66 million), loans (\$40 million), scholarships for African Nova Scotian students, and programs to help students pay off their loans.

Of course, the classroom is not the only place to learn. The Department of Labour and Workforce Development maintains workforce and workplace training programs with 69 businesses. These programs train workers in reading, writing for work, basic computer skills, mathematics, supervisory skills, problem solving and interpersonal skills, and other topics.

About 2000 people benefited from more than 220 workforce and workplace training programs in 2007–2008, more than double what was available five years earlier.

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The increase is directly related to government’s efforts to keep people from falling into poverty. When a major employer is forced to lay off many workers, a team of provincial, federal, and community agencies assesses the workers’ skills, identifies necessary upgrading, and establishes appropriate training programs. In some cases, the team liaises with employers in other parts of the province who need workers, speeding up the return-to-work process.

► **Government also has programs to help income assistance recipients enter or re-enter the workforce.**

- Educate to Work pays for tuition and books for diploma and certificate programs at the Nova Scotia Community College.
- Career Seek allows eligible people to continue to receive income assistance while they attend a post-secondary education program of more than two years.
- The One Journey: Work and Learn initiative provides opportunities for skills development and employment.

Removing disincentives to work

People need and deserve to earn a living wage for their work. To this end, government has committed to increasing minimum wage rates annually to \$9.65 per hour by 2011. The Minimum Wage Review Committee will continue to meet regularly to monitor economic indicators over the next three years. This will help ensure that further recommendations or alterations are considered on a timely basis.

People are less likely to work if they lose money by doing so. Harvest Connection helps income assistance recipients gain work experience and additional income by harvesting. Participants are able to earn up to \$3,000 before it affects their eligibility for income assistance.

The Employment Support and Income Assistance Program (ESIA) exempts the Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB). This means that the refundable tax credit can be used to supplement the earnings of low-income workers without reducing their Income Assistance benefits. WITB provides up to \$1,000 for couples and single parents and up to \$500 for single individuals.

Creating employment opportunities

A strong, competitive, and sustainable economy is crucial in the fight against poverty, quite simply because it creates and saves jobs. Strategic investments through Nova Scotia Business Incorporated, the Community Economic Development Investment Fund, the Community Development Trust, the Business Retention and Expansion project, the Industrial Expansion Fund, the community-based regional development authorities, and many other initiatives maintain jobs and create the new ones that will ensure that Nova Scotia grows and prospers.

► **Examples include**

- the Research and Development Co-operative Development program, which provides a provincial wage subsidy and employer contribution to hire co-op students in the sciences, engineering and business programs during their work terms, particularly in rural communities where employers have difficulty recruiting
- the Student Career Skills development program, which provides a wage subsidy and study-related work experience to returning post secondary students
- the Co-operative Employment Program, which provides a wage subsidy for co-op students

What we will do next

The economic downturn makes our priority for year one very clear. We need to support people looking for work through strategic and targeted investments in training, as well as creating and maintaining jobs.

In particular, our training priorities reflect the priorities identified by the Poverty Reduction Working Group, targeting groups who are at risk of living in poverty and are generally under-represented in our work force and supporting equitable access to literacy, adult education, and training for all Nova Scotians.

Almost \$100 million for training

Government will invest almost \$100 million in employment training and opportunities for Nova Scotians through two significant federal-provincial agreements.

Under the Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement, Ottawa is transferring responsibility—and \$81 million a year—for programming to the province.

A new division of our Department of Labour and Workforce Development is being created—Employment Nova Scotia. The division will develop services that meet the specific needs of Nova Scotia’s labour market, within the eligibility established by Canada’s Employment Insurance Act.

Under the Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement, the Government of Canada will transfer approximately \$85 million over six years to the province. Approximately \$16 million will be invested in 2009–2010.

This funding will help people who are not eligible for Employment Insurance benefits and groups who are under-represented in our workforce—Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, immigrants, African Nova Scotians, Acadian and francophone Nova Scotians, older workers, women, social assistance recipients, people formerly self-employed, and workers who have less than a grade 12 education—to increase their employment opportunities.

- ▶ **To put Labour Market Agreement funds to work as quickly as possible, an interdepartmental team has developed the following investment strategy.**
 - Expand literacy and skills training; adult high school programming; increase apprenticeship opportunities; increase access to community college for income assistance recipients; enhance English as a second language (ESL) training for immigrant professionals.
 - Provide and enhance sector-specific training, including apprenticeship.
 - Expand mentorship opportunities and vocational supports, including English as a Second Language.
 - Provide and improve labour market and business development services.

Several provincial government departments and agencies will oversee LMA-sponsored programming, which will be delivered by a host of community-based agencies and educational institutions.

Creating employment opportunities

The province is investing in one of the largest infrastructure programs in our history—Building for Growth. Beginning now, the \$1.9-billion program is expected to create and maintain 20,000 jobs over the next three years. Building for Growth also includes \$24 million in training targeted at people wanting to work in infrastructure-related jobs and individuals affected by the economic downturn.

Government is also adding \$175 million to the Industrial Expansion Fund, which provides loans and other assistance to business. The goal is to help Nova Scotia businesses survive and thrive during this economic downturn, securing and creating thousands of jobs, particularly in rural communities.

Remove disincentives to work

ESIA regulations will be changed so that income tax refunds are no longer treated as income. This change puts more money in the hands of ESIA recipients. It will now be treated as an asset.

Future directions

Prepare for the future through training and education

A remaining \$7.1 million allocated for 2008–2009 will be invested in similar workforce development programming in coming years.

While our labour market efforts can lead to immediate benefits, long-term “*ready for work*” efforts will be effective only if we start early.

The province’s aggressive investments in post-secondary education will continue, and tuition will steadily decrease. Current funding agreements for universities run until 2010–11, when Nova Scotia tuitions will decline to the national average.

Also, the province wants to continue Nova Scotia Community College’s expansion, as funding is available, since demand is already outstripping its ability to accommodate potential students. Enrolment has increased 45 per cent since 2000 and will continue to grow. More graduates equal more prosperity for Nova Scotia. The college notes that every dollar paid by a student to get a college diploma is returned as \$4.70 in increased future earnings.

Promote work experience

Government will also continue to expand co-op and other forms of community-based learning to provide students with practical work experience opportunities and increase the involvement of communities in mentoring students.

For example, nearly half of our high schools offer Options and Opportunities. Programs like this provide support that helps youth experience the positive benefits of education, as recommended by the Poverty Reduction Working Group.

We will also enhance opportunities for hands-on learning by implementing new curricula for family studies and technology education. These programs not only help keep students in school, they are important to developing a skilled and adaptable workforce.

Government will also increase labour force attachment by continuing to develop and adopt an Integrated Labour Market Strategy focusing on job retraining and employment skills. We will also work to identify shortages in the labour market and develop job-matching mechanisms to ensure that employers and workers are aware of opportunities.

Remove disincentives to work

We will look at Income Assistance clients’ experiences with the labour market and identify ways we can encourage greater participation. In addition, we will expand programs like One Journey and Educate to Work.

Improve supports for those in need

What it means

This goal means that we will work to improve the quality of life for low-income Nova Scotians facing longer-term poverty, enabling them to reach their potential and contribute to their communities. This may include people struggling with work-limiting disabilities, those too elderly to actively work, or people with mental health issues and addictions that prevent them from entering and staying in the workforce. Approximately 45 per cent of Income Assistance clients have disabilities and often have multiple barriers to entering the labour market. One thing they all have in common: they are all experiencing chronic, long-term poverty. More can be done to address the depth of their poverty and in the process help them improve their quality of life, make a contribution, and be included in the economic and social life of the province.

► **The main objectives of this goal are to**

- improve support and access to necessities
- enable greater participation in society

What we are doing

Increasing support for basic necessities

The Employment Support and Income Assistance Program is one tool government uses to help more than 40,000 Nova Scotians most in need secure a place to live, food to eat, and other necessities. Supports under the program have gone up steadily for the last few years.

- A total of \$19 million has been invested in increasing Income Assistance rates over the last five years. Since 2002 the personal allowance rate increased at a rate of 15.5 per cent to keep pace with inflation, and shelter allowances increased 26 per cent for people who are single and 4 per cent for families.
- Government has committed to annually adjusting personal allowances based on the Consumer Price Index.
- Dental rates have increased to 80 per cent of the current Nova Scotia Dental Association fee guide.
- The program now exempts the Working Income Tax Benefit and the federal Registered Disability Savings Plan.

Improving access to necessities

Government has also worked to increase access to affordable housing for those in need. In the last three years, the provincial government, in partnership with Ottawa, has directed more than \$100 million of new money to safe, affordable housing. It has been invested in creating and preserving affordable housing around the province for people on low incomes and into programs that help low- to moderate-income homeowners make their homes more accessible, comfortable, and energy efficient.

Since 2003 over 1,100 affordable housing units have been created or preserved around Nova Scotia.

► **Currently, three partnerships exist with the federal government:**

- Under the Affordable Housing Program Agreement, \$56.2 million was invested across the province. The majority of the money has gone into increasing the supply of affordable housing. However, roughly \$9 million has been set aside to be used over a 10-year period to subsidize rents. Essentially, government pays a portion of the rent leaving the low-income tenant with a rent they can afford.
- Under the \$23-million Affordable Housing Trust, the provincial government is constructing and preserving housing units across the province. To date some 70 units are available, with another 100 on the way.
- As part of the \$7.8-million Aboriginal Off-Reserve Trust, the province has worked with members of the Aboriginal off-reserve community to come up with affordable housing solutions. The result was investments in programs for housing repairs, new home ownership, rental preservation, and support services to the off-reserve community.

Community Services also provides more than \$10 million annually in funding to emergency shelters, recovery houses, and transition houses.

Enabling greater participation in society

The Poverty Reduction Working Group was very clear that any strategy produced had to include improved supports for all people with disabilities. Poverty often includes a lack of ability to participate in one's community. Low-income people with disabilities can be particularly vulnerable to this. That is why we have

- expanded the Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP) and the Accessible Transportation Assistance Program (ATAP) to provide over 100,000 rides a year for seniors, persons with disabilities, and others in need.
- developed the Community Based Transportation Association and the Nova Scotia Dial-a-Ride Service and continue to support the development of community-based services under the Federal Public Transit Transfer program, a program delivered to municipalities and non-governmental organizations that currently operates 11 services in Nova Scotia.

What we will do next

We have three major priorities to get under way this year: a review of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program, a sizable investment in the most basic and costly necessity—housing—and the development of a provincial, long-term housing strategy.

The Employment Support and Income Assistance Program touches on each of our four goals in our strategy. Most significantly, it is part of our efforts to support those in need, yet it is also critical in our efforts to enable and reward work.

The Poverty Reduction Working Group, and many others, have identified the need to review this program. They have also commented on the need to change individual elements of the program. However, we believe this work cannot be approached piecemeal; rather, it needs to be approached comprehensively and strategically, in line with our vision and goals.

The Department of Community Services will immediately begin work on a redesign of the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program.

The Department of Community Services recognizes that a major shift in the ESIA program is needed to achieve more effective client services and to increase the number of clients who successfully regain their independence. Over the past seven years we have helped thousands of people make the transition from Income Assistance to the labour market. For other people, though, it is recognized that a transition to complete independence may not be possible.

The review will build on the successes of the ESIA program by examining ways to help more people become financially self-sufficient and better address the needs of persons less able to work because of disabilities, addictions, or mental health issues. As such, the project will focus on improving supports and services for disabled clients while streamlining supports and services for individuals who can participate in training or employment opportunities. We want to remove barriers to independence and ensure the menu of services available is flexible to meet the varied needs of all clients.

The creation of the new Department of Labour and Workforce Development provides unique opportunities for this project. Defining how the Department of Community Services and the Department of Labour and Workforce Development will interact will result in an enhanced model of service delivery. It will be one that is client focused, easy to navigate, has more opportunities, and provides a seamless continuum of supports.

A process allowing for input from stakeholders will be developed.

Government plans to make \$59 million available for affordable housing over the next three years. One of the focuses will be the creation of more housing for the people who have the hardest time accessing adequate, affordable housing—single, often disabled adults. We intend to take advantage of the opportunity to match federal funding.

► **The cost-shared federal-provincial money will be used to**

- create rental housing for seniors and disabled persons around the province
- repair and upgrade public housing
- repair and provide energy upgrades to co-ops and non-profit housing
- preserve and create affordable homes and rentals

When we build new, or upgrade housing, we will help the province meet its commitments under the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act and the Climate Change Action Plan, in fact, priority will be given to increasing our efficiency and improving our energy and water consumption. This will reduce costs for heating homes and reduce our impact on the environment.

The Department of Community Services will also adjust income assistance personal allowances to keep pace with inflation.

Government will also review existing provincial housing policies to determine how effective they are in reducing poverty and develop a long-term housing strategy for Nova Scotia linked to the goals of the poverty reduction strategy, as recommended by the Poverty Reduction Working Group.

The Department of Health will implement its Aboriginal Health Transition Fund—Adaptation Plan, which is funded by Health Canada. A key deliverable in Nova Scotia’s Adaptation Plan is the development of an Aboriginal Health Policy Framework; while this Policy Framework will not remain a static document, it is anticipated that Mental Health and Addictions will be a priority policy focus. By focusing on these two health priorities, it is expected that the Policy Framework will serve to strengthen Mental Health and Addictions programming and services for Mi’kmaq and other Aboriginal people throughout Nova Scotia, thereby supporting individuals in leading healthier lives and enabling First Nations and Aboriginal communities and their members in taking advantage of economic opportunities.

Future directions

The work started in year one will continue into the future. All initiatives will continue to be guided by the objectives of the goal to improve supports for those in need.

Improve support and access to necessities

Government will complete the redesign of the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program.

In an effort to make it easier for those in need to access government resources and services, the province will develop, in collaboration with community groups, information products that describe the full range of supports available for low-income Nova Scotians. Government will also work to make navigation of the system easier and better coordinate programs and services across departments. An evaluation plan will also be developed to ensure that programs and services are periodically evaluated.

As part of our efforts to better serve vulnerable populations, government will work with the Department of Finance, Community Counts, and others, such as the Disabled Persons Commission to develop a more in-depth profile of the disabled population and other low-income, high-risk groups in Nova Scotia.

Enable greater participation in society

Government will explore ways to make it easier for low-income and disabled Nova Scotians to get around. Service Nova Scotia will work with their community partners to explore opportunities to better meet the transportation needs of these groups, especially in rural areas of the province. Based on their findings, the province will develop a sustainable, multi-jurisdictional, multi-faceted transportation strategy, as recommended by the Poverty Reduction Working Group.

Government will also work with the Disabled Persons Commission to enhance awareness and access to provincial programs and services.

Focus on our children

Our future prosperity—including our ability to significantly reduce poverty—depends on how effectively we support children today. They need and deserve the best start in life to help them grow into happy, responsible, self-reliant, and contributing adults, leading loving families of their own.

- ▶ **The main objectives of this goal are to**
 - break the cycle of poverty by focusing on our children
 - strengthen supports for children and families

What we are doing

Breaking the cycle of poverty

Effectively supporting children and youth is a key priority across government. And we are seeing results, with a sharp drop in the number of children living in low-income situations.

The number of children living in low-income families has fallen from 19.3 per cent in 1997 to 8.7 per cent in 2006.

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To build on this progress over the long term, we released *Our Kids Are Worth It, Our Strategy for Children and Youth* (see www.gov.ns.ca/coms/department/documents/First_year-Our_kids_are_worth_it.pdf) in December 2007. Similar to this strategy, *Our Kids Are Worth It* is focused on the need for better coordination and collaboration within government and between governments and community partners.

- ▶ **A wide range of programs within the child and youth strategy supports this coordination and collaboration. Programs that are just as relevant to the poverty reduction strategy include the following:**
 - The Healthy Beginnings home visiting program is supported by a \$3.5-million annual investment. This early intervention program connects at-risk families to community resources to support healthy childhood development. More than two-thirds of program funding supports children in low-income families.
 - The Parenting Journey (pilot project) builds on Healthy Beginnings. Experts work with families on healthy child and youth development, parent-child relationships, and other challenges the family is facing.
 - Family Help (pilot project) provides families with print and video resources, supported by telephone coaches trained to answer questions and provide advice at any time to help with a child's particular behavioural challenge.
 - Our 10-year child-care plan (see www.gov.ns.ca/coms/families/ELCCProgram.html) focuses on providing quality, accessible, and affordable child care. To date, we have created 1,050 new child-care spaces, more than half of which are subsidized. As well, we have lowered the income threshold so more parents qualify for subsidies, and we have increased our subsidy contribution so parents pay less.
 - Early and targeted action is being taken to help support students, who participate in provincial assessments, including English-second language students, who are struggling in math and literacy. We have also invested \$4.1 million over the past three years in projects designed to support African Nova Scotian education in priorities such as inclusive curriculum and early literacy and numeracy skills.
 - Health Promoting Schools delivers a range of programs in schools and their communities. Related initiatives support healthy eating—such as school breakfast programs and the school food and nutrition policy—physical activity, youth sexual health, tobacco reduction, and injury prevention.

- Schools Plus is an innovative pilot program involving teams of professionals from across government who provide coordinated services and activities to help meet the needs of children at risk, their families, and the wider community.
- Five youth navigators are now working with teens and families with complex needs across the province. Their role is to help teens navigate the system, connecting them with social workers, mental health experts, school boards, income assistance workers, police, probation workers, and other community and government agencies.

► **Other programs include**

- Kidsport Nova Scotia and Everybody Gets to Play: Supported by a \$400,000 annual investment these programs ensure that no child is left on the sidelines because of household income. Government also invests \$120,000 a year in recreational programs in First Nation communities.
- The Adolescent Centre for Treatment Program, providing rehabilitative mental health treatment in a 24-hour residential setting: Government invested an additional \$1.5 million in this program in 2008 so youth with chronic or persistent mental health or behavioural disorders can receive help sooner, increasing their chances of having safe, happy, and productive lives.

Time to Fight Crime Together, the province's crime prevention strategy, also has a focus on children and youth—in particular, on keeping young people in at-risk communities engaged in positive activities and helping those who get off track to get back on track as quickly as possible ([see www.gov.ns.ca/just/documents/CrimePrevention.pdf](http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/documents/CrimePrevention.pdf)).

► **Examples of some programs include**

- Children at the Critical Hour (Catch) Program, an early intervention program based on the principles of the restorative justice program
- the Rites of Passage Project, helping youth ages 8 to 14
- the Whitney Pier Youth Club
- Enfield Earthkeepers, giving youth ages 11 to 16 age-appropriate jobs in their community

Strengthening supports for children and families

Families need access to affordable prescription drugs to help keep our kids healthy. In 2007, government invested \$30 million to create the Nova Scotia Family Pharmacare Program, available to anyone who applies ([see www.gov.ns.ca/health/Pharmacare/family_pharmacare/family_pharmacare.asp](http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/Pharmacare/family_pharmacare/family_pharmacare.asp)). As well, the Low Income Pharmacare for Children Program was launched in 2006 to provide prescription drug coverage for children under 18 within families receiving the Nova Scotia Child Benefit.

This past year government also budgeted almost \$92 million in Heat Smart. The program provides Nova Scotians with home heating assistance over the winter, along with help to save energy and money for years to come.

What we will do next

Strengthening supports for children and families

If we truly want to break the cycle of poverty we have to start with our children. An investment in our children is an investment in the future.

To this end, government will increase income thresholds for families receiving the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, allowing more low-income Nova Scotians to qualify. Approximately 3,700 additional children will now be eligible to receive the support, bringing the total number to 41,900.

Government will increase the income thresholds for the Low Income Pharmacare for Children Program to reflect the threshold change to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit. This will make the 3,700 children newly eligible for the child benefit also eligible for low-income pharmacare.

Government will further support low-income families with small children by investing \$3.5 million in subsidized child care through the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Plan. The money will reduce the amount low-income parents have to pay while creating more subsidized spaces in licensed child care or Family Home day cares. All subsidies will also become portable, meaning families can apply them to a spot at the child-care centre of their choice, as long as it has signed a subsidy agreement with the Department of Community Services. This not only supports families, but also supports the goal of enabling work.

These steps are in keeping with the recommendations of the Poverty Reduction Working Group. They recommended that the province continue to increase supports to families during early years and make child-care spaces more portable.

We will create more subsidized child-care spots and families will pay less.

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Future directions

Strengthen supports for children and families

As a priority, government will continue to review the Nova Scotia Child Benefit. We will also increase the availability of affordable child-care options and supports to families during early years.

We will evaluate consolidating existing pharmacare programs in an effort to make it less confusing for lower-income families trying to access prescription drugs for themselves and their families.

We will also continue to review and enhance programs to ensure that low-income individuals and families have access to recreation programs and other important quality-of-life services.

Break the cycle of poverty

We will align with the Child and Youth Strategy to ensure that all programming aimed at children and youth includes strategic interventions to break the cycle of poverty at a young age.

It has become clear that to achieve our goals, collaborative work among departments and with the community is essential. Many issues that face the education system and the role education plays in the fight against poverty cannot be addressed by one department alone.

For example, the Department of Education will work with community partners to develop a provincial learning disabilities strategy. As another example, Nova Scotia will continue to work with other provinces to implement strategies for improving literacy and numeracy in public schools.

Government will work with school boards, education partners, the child-care sector, and community services to identify opportunities to use school space for early learning programming for young children and their families.

We will also support families struggling with mental health and addiction issues by increasing access to quality methadone maintenance treatment services and continue with the development of supports like the Adolescent Centre for Treatment (ACT) Youth Day program and a mobile mental health crisis service in the Halifax area.

We will continue to invest in and improve access to Primary Health, strengthen Mental Health and Addiction Services, and complete a focused review of mental health services, including health human resources, a bed strategy, and community-based services.

Collaborate and coordinate

What it means

Poverty research, best practices, and common sense all point to the need for all levels of government and community partners to work together to combat poverty and promote opportunity for all members of society. Coordination and collaboration are driving forces toward social prosperity, and they are necessary if our efforts to help those in need in Nova Scotia are to be effective.

Government has made additional investments of almost \$200 million in the past three years on programs to help Nova Scotians in need. Can we do more to ensure that people know about all of these programs? Can they be coordinated better? Is there overlap? We believe the answer is yes.

► The main objectives of this goal are to

- increase capacity for coordination and integration
- increase public awareness
- base policy and program development on evidence
- strengthen horizontal governance and accountability

What we are doing

Increase capacity for coordination and integration

Community involvement was essential in developing the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Government gathered relevant research from different organizations and consulted interest groups and the wider public. We also supported the establishment of a Poverty Reduction Working Group as another way to ensure public input and strengthen the relationships that are necessary to appropriately address poverty.

In December 2008, the Premier signed a Collaboration Agreement with the Nova Scotia Volunteer Community Advisory Council. This Agreement gives volunteer organizations across Nova Scotia the full support of government. It represents a commitment to create open, transparent and collaborative ways to work together on issues, policies and programs that will have positive outcomes for volunteers.

Strengthen horizontal governance and accountability

On a provincial level, collaborative initiatives spanning government departments and non-government sectors in Nova Scotia are increasing. The Child and Youth Strategy, the Crime Prevention Strategy, and the Community Development Policy, under the umbrella of the Social Prosperity Framework, demonstrate the commitment of government to develop and implement policies and programs that integrate departmental initiatives and strengthen government connections with community-based organizations and the voluntary sector.

Our relationship with the federal government is key to making long-term, sustainable progress on poverty in Nova Scotia. We have already worked successfully with Ottawa on increasing access to affordable housing.

► **Beyond our housing agreements, other federal-provincial partnerships include**

- The Federal/Provincial Social Services Support Committee, which reports directly to deputy ministers and focuses on poverty reduction through social inclusion and horizontal integrated policy development.
- The Canada-Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement, which enables the two levels of government to work together to support labour market programs for persons with disabilities.
- The Mi'kmaq–Nova Scotia–Canada Tripartite Forum, which supports collaboration on social development for Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. The Department of Health actively participates on the Tripartite Forum's Health Work Group and recently released the 'Exploring Health Priorities in First Nations Communities in Nova Scotia' report - in which Mental Health was identified as the number one health priority, closely followed by Addictions. The Department of Health has been working with health system partners to advance these two priorities for inclusion in program and project planning as a means to assist Mi'kmaq and other Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia to lead healthier lives and to take advantage of employment opportunities.

What we will do next

Government will immediately put a structure in place to ensure that government works effectively as a team to implement the strategy.

A ministerial committee will be formed to guide and direct the strategy implementation. The committee will comprise the same ministers involved in the province's Social Prosperity Framework from the following departments; Community Services, Economic and Rural Development, Education, Finance, Health, Health Promotion and Protection, Justice, Labour and Workforce Development and Treasury and Policy Board.

The committee will be supported by a group of senior officials made up of the deputy ministers of the departments involved. They will also have a dedicated staff position.

Base policy and program development on evidence

Government will create a Coordinator of Poverty Reduction to act on the direction of the ministerial committee and meet with the ministers and deputy ministers to review progress. Consistent with the strategy's direction, the coordinator will also be responsible for supporting evidence-based policy and program development.

Increase public awareness

Government will use a community development model to allow opportunity for public involvement as we fight poverty. We will help Nova Scotians better understand the causes, reality, and consequences of poverty and gather their feedback on how we are doing in our efforts to help those in need.

Finally, there will be regular reviews of how work is going on the implementation of the strategy, including periodic reporting to the public.

Future directions

We will build on helping low-income Nova Scotians in a holistic, coordinated way. We will also continue focusing our energies, to change how we work within government and with others, to make lives better for our most vulnerable Nova Scotians.

Increase capacity for coordination and integration

Government will continue to advocate for a national anti-poverty strategy and a national housing strategy and work with all levels of government to coordinate programs and services.

Through Community Economic Development policy, government will encourage the business sector to become actively engaged in poverty reduction.

Increase public awareness

We will also implement an innovative and targeted communication and awareness campaign about the causes and consequences of poverty in an effort to help the public understand the importance of this issue and its true cost to the province.

Measuring Our Success

Once a Poverty Reduction Strategy is in place and strategies are being implemented, how will we know if they are working? Having clearly defined goals will go a long way to ensuring that the Poverty Reduction Strategy is achieving results. The next step is to attach measures to these results, so we can track our progress and be responsive to changing conditions. This will help keep us on track for achieving our goals in a genuine, measurable way.

The report from the Poverty Reduction Working Group stresses the importance of measuring and reporting on our progress. We agree.

But measuring poverty and its consequences is not without its challenges. Although there is no consensus on the measurement of poverty, some measures, such as the Low-Income Cut-off (LICO), are widely used to monitor trends in low income. In other instances, data is incomplete or not yet powerful enough to provide a sufficient level of detail. This holds true for the LICO, which currently provides data only at a provincial level. In other areas, such as the measurement of social inclusion, capturing and reporting data will likely require the development of new indicators. What's more, research in the measurement of poverty is bringing forward new and different approaches, including the development of the Market Basket Measure and a deprivation index.

In short, a key priority of this strategy will be working to improve our capacity to measure and track progress. Measures will be used to track performance, to signal emerging trends, and to allow the province to focus its efforts, research alternatives, and create and implement strategies. No one measure can satisfy this need—a suite of measures will be developed and built from the target and goals identified.

The following outlines our first steps. Over the course of the next year, a full complement of measures will be developed to better inform our progress and set benchmarks and targets where possible. Government will report on these measures beginning in 2010–11.

Goal: Enable and reward work*Initial measure*

Uptake in the Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB).

What does this measure tell us?

The WITB is a refundable tax credit intended to provide tax relief for eligible working low-income individuals and families who are already in the workforce and to encourage other Canadians to enter the workforce. Uptake in the WITB, ideally as a percentage of the eligible population, would provide an indication of labour force attachment for low and modest-income Nova Scotians.

▶ **Objectives**

- Promote labour force attachment
- Remove disincentives to work
- Prepare for the future through training and education
- Create employment opportunities

Benchmark

Forthcoming

Goal: Improve supports for those most in need*Initial measure*

Poverty-gap (or low-income gap) for persons with work-limiting disabilities.

What does this measure tell us?

The low-income gap refers to how far below the poverty line a family's income falls in relation to the LICO. Strategies will be developed to decrease the gap. Currently, Statistics Canada does not breakdown low-income data by disability, so effort will be required to develop and implement this measure.

▶ **Objectives**

- Improve supports and access to necessities for those most in need
- Enable greater participation in society

Benchmark

To be developed

Goal: Focus on our children

Initial measure

Prevalence and number of children under 18 living in low-income

What does this measure tell us?

Based on the LICO, the measure tells us the prevalence (as a %) and number of children under 18 living in families with low-income.

▶ *Objectives*

- Strengthen supports for children and families
- Break the cycle of poverty by focussing on our children

Benchmark

16,000 children under 18 representing 8.7% of the population

Goal: Coordinate and collaborate

Initial measure

% of the population informed about the causes and consequences of poverty

What does this measure tell us?

One of the key priorities of this strategy is to increase awareness among Nova Scotians about the causes and consequences of poverty, who is poor and what it means to be poor in our province. Through existing surveys, a benchmark can be established about awareness within the public, and strategies can be developed to increase this awareness.

▶ *Objectives*

- Increase public awareness
- Strengthen horizontal governance and accountability
- Increase capacity for coordination and integration
- Develop evidence-based policy and programs

Conclusion

This document marks a new beginning in the struggle to combat poverty in Nova Scotia. It is an important step down what is now a well-marked path with a clear destination.

We can break the cycle of poverty by creating opportunities for all Nova Scotians to participate in the prosperity of our province and enjoy a better standard of life—if we all work together.

Change won't happen overnight, but it will come. This is an investment in the long term. It's about more than what we can do right away. This is the map that will guide initiatives and investments over the next decade. It will also take more than just money. How much we spend is not as important as how we spend it. But we need everybody to play a part.

We will continue focusing our energies, to change how we work within government and with others, to make lives better for our most vulnerable. We need Nova Scotians to ask what they can do to help. That may consist of sharing your thoughts, your time, or your opportunities.

This is about making the province a better place to live for all Nova Scotians—today and tomorrow.

You can share ideas, or ask questions, by contacting:

Poverty Reduction Strategy

PO Box 696

Haltifax, NS B3J 2T7

E-mail: poverty@gov.ns.ca

Appendix – Examples of Direct, Additional Poverty Related Investments. Fiscal Year 2006 – 2007

A = Alleviate R = Reduce P = Prevent

Fiscal Year 2006 – 2007 Incremental New Program Investments	A	R	P	Investment
Funding to Income Assistance Program - Personal Allowances (Community Services)	■			\$4,200,000
Funding to Shelter Allowance for Income Assistance Households (Community Services)	■			\$1,440,000
Wage Incentives - 30% Income Tax Refund Exemption - Income Assistance (Community Services)	■	■		\$360,000
Funding to Dental Coverage for Income Assistance Recipients (Community Services)	■			\$160,000
Low-Income Prescription Drug Coverage for Children (Community Services)	■	■		\$2,000,000
Funding for Bursary Program for Youth in Care (Community Services)		■	■	\$200,000
Youth at Risk Project (Community Services)			■	\$200,000
Funding to the Housing Emergency Repair Programs (Community Services)	■			\$3,500,000
Funding for Family Resource Centres (Community Services)			■	\$234,000
Phoenix House - Youth at Risk (Community Services)			■	\$350,000
Funding for Affordable Housing Programs (Community Services)		■	■	\$19,300,000
Funding for Affordable Housing Trust (Community Services)		■	■	\$2,500,000
Funding for Early Learning and Child Care (Community Services)		■	■	\$10,125,000
Funding for Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$43,000
Funding for Family Literacy (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$34,000
Funding for Seniors' Literacy (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$3,400
Funding for Workplace Essential Skills (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$50,100
Funding for Literacy Support Initiatives & Literacy Success Strategy (Education)		■	■	\$548,200
Funding for Options and Opportunities Program (Education)		■	■	\$125,300
Funding for Implementation of the BLAC Report Recommendations (Education)		■	■	\$146,000
Funding for NSCC Transition Year Program for African Nova Scotians (Education)		■	■	\$22,900
Funding for Family Court Services (Justice)			■	\$18,600
Funding for Maintenance Enforcement Program (Justice)	■	■		\$3,600
Funding for Methadone Maintenance Treatment (Health)		■		\$500,000
Mobile Mental Health Crisis Teams (Health)			■	\$25,200
Mental Health Standards (Health)		■	■	\$38,600
Youth Forensics Program (Health)			■	\$49,800
Healthy Eating Nova Scotia Strategy (Health Promotion & Protection)		■	■	\$96,000
Kidsport Nova Scotia (Health Promotion & Protection)			■	\$60,000
Youth Health Centres (Health Promotion & Protection)			■	\$60,000
Total				\$46,393,700

Appendix – Examples of Direct, Additional Poverty Related Investments. Fiscal Year 2007 – 2008

A = Alleviate R = Reduce P = Prevent

Fiscal Year 2007 – 2008 Incremental New Program Investments	A	R	P	Investment
Funding to Income Assistance Program - Personal Allowances (Community Services)	■			\$1,600,000
Funding for Low-Income Prescription Drug Coverage for Children (Community Services)	■			\$1,000,000
Funding for Senior Citizen Home Repair Programs (Community Services)	■			\$3,000,000
Funding to the Access-A-Home Program (Community Services)	■			\$100,000
Funding for Family Resource Centres (Community Services)			■	\$155,000
Children and Youth at Risk Projects (Community Services)			■	\$3,000,000
Funding for Affordable Housing Programs (Community Services)		■	■	\$7,690,000
Funding for Affordable Housing Trust (Community Services)		■	■	\$5,600,000
Funding for Aboriginal Off-Reserve Affordable Housing Trust (Community Services)		■	■	\$1,100,000
Funding for Early Learning and Child Care (Community Services)		■	■	\$8,643,000
Funding for NSSAL (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$10,200
Funding for NSSAL Link CCA (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$340,000
Funding for Family Literacy (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$13,000
Funding for Seniors' Literacy (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$10,000
Funding for Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$77,600
Basic Personal Exemption and other Provincial Credits (Finance)		■		\$10,100,000
Funding for Options and Opportunities Program (Education)		■	■	\$121,800
Funding for Literacy Success Strategy and Reading Recovery Programs (Education)		■	■	\$79,600
Grants for Students from Low Income Families (Education)			■	\$461,000
Funding for Implementation of the BLAC Report Recommendations (Education)		■	■	\$165,000
Funding for Family Court Services (Justice)			■	\$602,200
Funding for Maintenance Enforcement Program (Justice)	■	■		\$273,000
Funding for Methadone Maintenance Treatment (Health)		■		\$400,000
Implementation of Family Pharmacare Program (Health)			■	\$2,500,000
Funding for Mental Health Standards (Health)		■	■	\$142,800
Funding for Youth Health Centres (Health Promotion & Protection)			■	\$20,000
Healthy Beginnings: Enhanced Home Visiting (Health Promotion & Protection)		■	■	\$525,000
Total				\$47,729,200

Appendix – Examples of Direct, Additional Poverty Related Investments. Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009

A = Alleviate R = Reduce P = Prevent

Fiscal Year 2008 – 2009 Incremental New Program Investments	A	R	P	Investment
Funding to Income Assistance Program - Personal Allowances (Community Services)	■			\$ 1,500,000
Winter Works Program for Income Assistance Recipients (Community Services)	■	■		\$ 750,000
Funding for Children and Youth at Risk Projects (Community Services)			■	\$ 2,000,000
Wheelchair Recycling Project (Community Services)	■			\$ 800,000
Funding for Affordable Housing Programs (Community Services)		■	■	\$ 5,000,000
Funding for Affordable Housing Trust (Community Services)		■	■	\$ 14,900,000
Funding for Aboriginal Off-Reserve Affordable Housing Trust (Community Services)		■	■	\$ 6,700,000
Funding for Early Learning and Child Care (Community Services)		■	■	\$ 5,850,000
Funding for Family Court Services (Justice)			■	\$ 453,000
Funding for Manintenance Enforcement Program (Justice)	■	■		\$ 239,500
Mental Health Court (Justice)	■		■	\$ 300,000
Funding for Literacy Support Initiatives - P-12 (Education)		■	■	\$ 11,500
Funding for Youth Pathways and Transitions Strategy (Education)		■	■	\$ 27,400
Funding for Co-operative placements in the workplace (Education)		■	■	\$ 11,000
Skilled Trades 10 partnership with NSCC (Education)		■	■	\$ 30,500
Funding for Options and Opportunities Program (Education)		■	■	\$ 234,900
Funding for English Second Language Programs (Education)		■	■	\$ 31,300
Funding for NSCC Transition Year Program for African Nova Scotians (Education)		■	■	\$ 5,800
Funding for Literacy Success Strategy and Reading Recovery Programs (Education)		■	■	\$ 63,100
Invest in Youth (Labour & Workforce Development)			■	\$ 5,800
Bridging the Aboriginal Community to Careers and Employers (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$ 12,000
Integrated Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategy (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$ 20,000
Funding for NSSAL (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$ 77,300
Funding for Family Literacy (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$ 10,200
Implemented Parents as Career Coaches (Labour & Workforce Development)		■	■	\$ 8,000
Implemented Heating Assistance Rebate Program (Finance)	■	■		\$ 45,850,000
Funding for Methadone Maintenance Treatment (Health)		■		\$ 570,600
Funding for Community-based Mental Health and Addiction Services (Health)		■		\$ 63,800
Adolescent Centre for Treatment (ACT) Program (Health)			■	\$ 126,000
Funding for Mobile Mental Health Crisis Teams (Health)			■	\$ 18,500
Implemented Family Pharmacare Program (Health)			■	\$ 15,850,000
Total				\$ 101,420,200
Total Incremental Investment since 2006 Total				\$ 195,543,100

