

Poverty Reduction Strategy

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Gander**

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Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Commitment

- **By 2014, transform Newfoundland and Labrador from a province with the most poverty to one with the least.**
- **The vision is of a province where poverty has been eliminated**

How Did the Strategy Come About?

- In the 2005 *Speech from the Throne* and Budget, Government committed to develop a comprehensive, government-wide poverty reduction strategy
- Extensive Research and Consultation led to *Reducing Poverty: An Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*
- Action Plan released in 2006

Overview

- An integrated, Government-wide approach
- Overall goals, principles and key directions established based on research and public input guide the strategy
- A series of initiatives has been brought forward through three budget processes
 - total ongoing commitment exceeds \$100 million annually
- Departments are talking “poverty reduction”

What do we Mean by Poverty?

- **A lack of money to live comfortably and participate fully in the social and economic life of the province**
- **Reflects on a person's:**
 - **Ability to earn an income**
 - **Access to education and training**
 - **Access to adequate housing**
 - **Access to essential goods and services**
 - **Health status**

Approach of the Provincial Government

- **Long-term and integrated approach with a variety of policy and programs in place**
- **Government-wide committee of eleven Ministers**
 - **Identifies priorities to tackle poverty**
 - **Supports active engagement with the broader community**

Role of the Provincial Government

- **Develop and implement coordinated, integrated initiatives focused on poverty– over 60 so far**
- **Review existing programs and services**
- **Assess policy/program impacts on individuals and families**
- **Conduct research and ensure links to other provincial strategies**
- **Continue dialogue with people in low income and the community to better understand needs and keep strategy relevant**

What we want to achieve: Key Directions

- ***Prevent poverty*** - Prevent people from living in poverty
- ***Reduce poverty*** - Increase the proportion of the population with incomes above poverty-level
- ***Alleviate poverty*** - Decrease the depth of poverty and improve the quality of life for those who are poor

Goals

Five main goals of *Action Plan*:

1. Improved access and coordination of services for those with low incomes
2. A stronger social safety net
3. Improved earned incomes
4. Increased emphasis on early childhood development
5. A better educated population

Policy mix needed to meet each goal

- For example, to improve earned incomes, Government is:
 - ❑ Better supporting low wage earners
 - ❑ Removing disincentives for Income Support clients to work
 - ❑ Building on the strengths of our education system

Initiatives focused on Improving Income from Earnings

- Increased supports for all low wage workers:
 - ❑ Low income prescription drug program (Access and Assurance programs) to expand coverage to those working for low wages
 - ❑ \$10/hr minimum wage by 2010
 - ❑ Devolution of Labour Market Development Agreement

Initiatives focused on Improving Income from Earnings

- Increased supports for all low wage workers (continued):
 - Revised Dental Plan for Youth (aged 13-17)
 - Expanded program so that youth in low income families receive the same dental benefits as families receiving Income Support
 - Early Learning and Child Care Plan goals of:
 - Increase in number of quality, licensed childcare throughout the province
 - Increase in number of subsidies for low-income families
 - Recruitment and retention of early childhood educators

Initiatives focused on Improving Income from Earnings

- Increased supports for working Income support clients:
 - ❑ Increased earnings exemptions and overlapping rent
 - ❑ Increased labour market participation for persons with disabilities
 - ❑ Job start benefit
 - ❑ Expansion of the Employment Transitions program (for single parents)

Initiatives focused on Improving Income from Earnings

- Changes for Social Housing tenants:
 - Adjust Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) for working clients
 - calculation is on net rather than gross income
 - percentage is 25% rather than 30%

Examples of Other Initiatives

- Elimination of school fees and provision of free text books for all grades K-12
- Increases and indexation of Income Support
 - Income Support rates were increased by 5% in 2006
 - Income Support rates indexed (increase annually based on inflation)
- NLHC's Rent supplementation program
 - Increase the number of available rent supplements by 500

Examples of Initiatives

- Increased funding and expansion of Community Youth Networks
 - Currently 28 sites that help youth achieve their full potential
- Funding for the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Program
 - Supports participation in sports and recreation activities
- Funding for Kids Eat Smart
 - To support work with communities and schools to enhance nutrition

Examples of Initiatives

- Enhancements and expansions to civil legal aid and family justice services
 - Increase in family law support services, including increasing the availability of civil legal aid
 - Enhanced enforcement and compliance of court ordered support
 - Extending Child, Youth and Family Services Civil Legal Aid to the Western Region
- Changed the Human Right Code to prevent discrimination based on source of income, such as Income Support and Student Aid

Action Plan consultation commitment

- Second consultation process was launched October 16th, 2008
 - Minister-led roundtables and public sessions in 15 locations throughout the province
 - In collaboration with community-based groups, focus groups with individuals living in and vulnerable to poverty
 - Toll-free line, e-mail, web feedback and written submissions
 - Consultation booklet in your kits

Consultation Process

- Designed to get feedback from as many people as possible on:
 - Whether Government is doing the right things
 - What else Government needs to be doing
 - Priorities for the future
 - How we can all best work together to meet shared poverty-related goals

Next Steps

- Finish intensive consultation process and use results to shape 2009 initiatives and future goals and objectives
- Biennial Progress Report
- Ongoing Implementation of the *Action Plan*, including ongoing engagement with community partners
 - Ongoing development of new initiatives and improving existing programs and services
- Ongoing work on improving access and coordination of government programs and services
 - Guide to Government programs and services released October 16th, 2008
 - Ongoing work on improving models to assess combined impacts

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Feedback:

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