



# InclusionNB

Creating Opportunities • Créer des possibilités

## **A Call to Action for an Inclusive New Brunswick**

Priorities for New Brunswickers with an intellectual  
or developmental disability and their families

# INTRODUCTION

Inclusion NB is a provincial, non-profit organization that supports people with an intellectual or developmental disability and their families. New Brunswick has the second highest disability rates in the country at 35.3%. It is estimated that 22,000 New Brunswickers have an intellectual or developmental disability.

New Brunswickers need a commitment to a strong social agenda over the next four years. In a time where people with a disability are often left feeling frustrated with the lack of access to the supports to meet their basic needs, we urge the development of a broad, cross-departmental disability agenda to address the multi-layered issues in a holistic way.



## 1. LIFT NEW BRUNSWICK FROM THE BOTTOM

Many New Brunswickers with an intellectual or developmental disability rely on Social Assistance for their income, yet they live in **deep poverty**.

**New Brunswick's Social Assistance rates are among the lowest in the country.** A single person with a disability receives a maximum of \$1,118 per month or \$13,416 per year (including supplements) to meet their basic needs. In addition, New Brunswick **has some of the strictest criteria in the country** to access provincial disability income benefits, leaving many people with a disability to live on basic social assistance of \$860 per month or \$10,320 per year. This includes the minimal increase of \$200 announced last year by the provincial government, which is not tied to inflation.

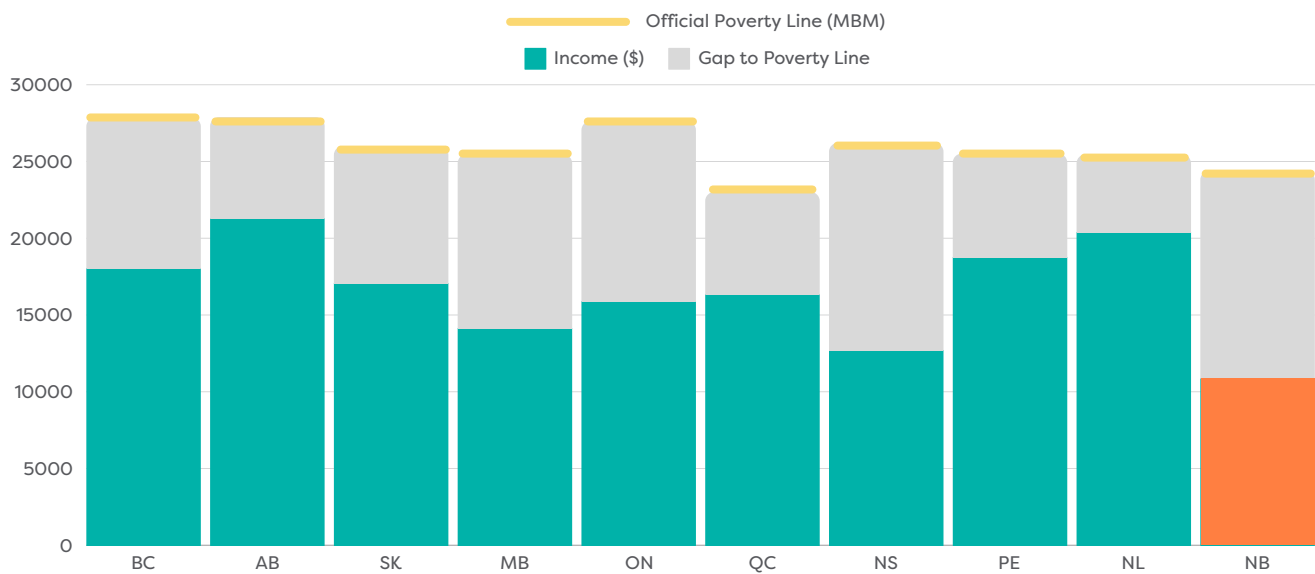
**New Brunswick's poverty line ranges from \$23,754 to \$25,497 for a single person**

**New Brunswick's current wage exemption, which is a full exemption on the first \$500 of net income earned per month, plus a 50% exemption on the balance, is too low.**

### What's Happening Federally

In June of 2023, the Government of Canada passed the new *Canada Disability Benefit Act*. This Act will create a supplemental federal benefit for eligible Canadians with a disability and is expected to be implemented by June of 2025. The federal government recently announced in their budget a maximum \$200 per month for those who are eligible. **This, too, falls significantly short of what is required to lift many New Brunswickers with a disability out of deep poverty.**

New Brunswick has an opportunity to demonstrate **national leadership** by exempting the upcoming Canada Disability Benefit as a source of income for those eligible for provincial disability social assistance benefits and provincial disability services funding.



Source: Welfare in Canada, 2022, Maytree

#### Priorities:

1. Increase provincial Social Assistance rates for people with a disability to a minimum of \$1,600 per month and develop less restrictive eligibility criteria for disability status.
2. Introduce a right of appeal and process for determinations of eligibility for disability status (available in other provinces).
3. Exempt the Canada Disability Benefit for individuals to allow them to combine federal and provincial benefits to help people meet their daily living needs.
4. Enhance the current provincial policy on employment incentives to increase the wage exemption to the first \$800 of net income earned per month, plus a 50% exemption on the balance.

## 2. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

In June of 2023, a provincial housing strategy outlined new initiatives aimed at making housing more affordable and accessible for New Brunswickers. However, the strategy does not articulate how people with a disability will benefit or address how housing developments will be inclusive by design.

Housing Accessibility addresses the physical and sensory accommodations that many people require to live in community. **Equally important is Housing Inclusivity.** A housing situation is inclusive when the residence is a home-by-choice, and not the result of forced congregation of people in a housing unit, development, or neighbourhood as the sole option.

**Inclusive housing is safe, affordable, and accessible – but it is also dispersed.**

There are already many barriers to accessing affordable, safe, and dispersed housing for New Brunswickers with a disability. This has been exacerbated with increasing rents, low vacancy rates, and longer waitlists for public housing. Ultimately, this leads to a higher number of people with a disability living in precarious housing situations.

The NB Housing Corporation recently announced a new **Direct-to-Tenant** benefit for families and seniors on the housing waitlist. **Individuals with a disability require a Direct-to-Tenant benefit that reflects the ever-growing crisis of housing.** The current housing benefit does not reflect the higher cost of living with a disability and needs to recognize the precariousness of those seeking housing through benefits which are set at a higher percentage of median market rent. This is particularly true for people with a disability living in deep poverty who receive social assistance benefits.

***Housing Inclusivity: Housing that is safe, affordable, physically accessible, close to activities, amenities, and services and welcoming of all people within diverse and dispersed mixed- income developments, structures, and neighbourhoods.***

### **Priorities:**

1. Adopt and implement Inclusion NB's definition of housing inclusivity in the provincial housing strategy (above).
2. Commit to a Direct-to-Tenant Disability benefit for working-age adults with a disability with customized eligibility criteria and benefit rates.



## **BETTER ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – ALL AGES, ALL STAGES**

### **Early Learning**

While the investment of both the federal and provincial governments to reduce childcare costs in New Brunswick has increased access to quality childcare for some families, we are seeing reduced access for families with a child with a disability. As enrolments increase, early learning centres **have been turning away children who may require additional support**. This is a discriminatory practice, and it also severely limits these parents' ability to participate in the labour force.

#### **Priority:**

Develop and adopt a provincial policy on inclusive early learning and childcare to ensure equal access for children with a disability.

### **K-12 in our Public Schools**

New Brunswick is leading the way both nationally and internationally with regards to inclusive education policy and legislation. Yet, there are significant inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of Policy 322 (Inclusive Education). Often, when the system fails a child, inclusion is blamed. We need to focus on how we support our teachers, schools, and classrooms to meet the needs of all children.

- We also continue to see inconsistencies in how resources are funded and deployed, at the right time and intensity. There has been significant progress in schools where there are adequate, diverse supports in the form of trained paraprofessionals such as Behaviour Intervention Mentors, Speech Language Pathologists, Social Workers, etc.

**This challenge will continue to grow as our population grows - from 2020 to 2024, the student population of New Brunswick will increase by 10,000.**

#### **Priority:**

Commit to adding more professionals in schools – Classroom Teachers, Speech Therapists, Social Workers, Educational Assistants, etc. and provide on-going education and training on the effective implementation of Policy 322. Specifically, commit to the funding levels and training outlined in the 2021 “Moving Forward” Report to support inclusive education for all students.



## 4. MODERNIZE DISABILITY SUPPORTS AND SERVICES AND PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES TO INSTITUTIONAL CARE

In New Brunswick, the legislation surrounding the design and delivery of disability services and income support benefits is outdated. It does not reflect how we must think about disability – as people having basic human rights to be treated fairly and with dignity.

New legislation should be guided by key principles that support the rights of people with a disability to realize their potential for physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. People with a disability have the same right as other New Brunswickers to be valued and contributing members of society, yet these rights are not always upheld.

Modernized legislation developed from a human rights' perspective ensures that these rights are reflected in the design and delivery of disability services and income support. This enables people to make decisions about their lives – where to live, what to do, how to be supported – and to have these decisions respected. Additionally, modernized legislation reflects current models and definitions of disability rather than outdated medical models. It is time to modernize disability services and income support legislation to enable full participation, inclusion, and autonomy for people with a disability.

### An example of outdated policy and practice happening every day in New Brunswick

As highlighted in the New Brunswick Seniors' Advocate's recent report on long-term care, there are **hundreds of younger adults with a disability living in institutional settings**. This includes nursing homes designed to serve **seniors' needs** in their last years of life. Placing these young adults in dispersed housing throughout communities of their choice, with age-appropriate support, will result in a better quality of life. This will also create much needed availability for seniors waiting in New Brunswick hospitals for long-term care.

#### Priorities:

1. Develop and introduce new and modern legislation to govern the design and delivery of disability services and income support benefits for New Brunswickers with a disability.
2. Eliminate the practice of placing younger adults in institutional settings. Develop, adopt, and fund a **Home First** policy to support adults under 65 with a disability to live where and with whom they choose, with the support that they need and choose.

## ABOUT INCLUSION NB

Inclusion NB creates opportunities for people with an intellectual or developmental disability and their families to live full and valued lives in all aspects of society. We work to ensure that all people have the option to choose the supports they need to live meaningful lives and participate in their communities as valued and contributing members.

### Our Vision

All individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability live full and valued lives in all aspects of society.

### Our Mission

Leading the creation of opportunities for individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability and their families to live full and valued lives in all aspects of society.

### Our Values

- All people have equal rights to opportunity in the manner and extent of their choosing.
- All people can contribute and bring value to our society.
- Communities must be open and inclusive.
- People deserve their own voice and the support to exercise their rights.

## WHO WE ARE

Inclusion NB works to create opportunities for people with an intellectual or developmental disability across the lifespan to have a full and valued life in all aspects of society.

We operate a variety of programs that support people with an intellectual or developmental disability, and their families, in the areas of:



Early learning  
and childcare



Inclusive education



Transition from  
school to work



Employment and labour  
market facilitation



Social inclusion and  
community involvement



Individual and  
family support



Human rights  
and social policy



Inclusion training and  
professional learning



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