



Belonging and Thriving



A POVERTY REDUCTION ACTION PLAN FOR PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

(2019-2024)



PrinceEdwardIsland.ca/povertyreduction



THE CREATION OF THIS POVERTY
REDUCTION ACTION PLAN WOULD NOT
HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE
POVERTY REDUCTION ADVISORY COUNCIL

THIS GROUP BROUGHT INCREDIBLE
**DEDICATION,
ENERGY, PASSION,
KNOWLEDGE,
COMPASSION, AND
THOUGHTFULNESS**
TO EVERY STEP OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

POVERTY REDUCTION ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS INCLUDE:

Roxanne Carter-Thompson (Chair)

Ray Murphy

Marcia Carroll

Dave Poirier

Richard Deveau

Tayte Willows

Dr. Gulrose Jiwani

Regina Younker

Pamela Large Moran

Susan MacKenzie (ex-officio member)

Marilyn LeFrank

Mark Spidel (ex-officio member)

Andrea MacDonald



Thank you everyone who contributed throughout the public engagement process. 1427 Islanders from diverse backgrounds took the time to share their stories.

4 Setting the stage
Why we need to address poverty

6 Action Plan
Development Process

8 Vision and Guiding Principles

10 Achieving the Vision - Goals and Actions

10 To help Islanders in need

14 To support the most vulnerable

16 To build on our supportive communities and partners

20 To improve the well-being of children and youth

24 Building on Work in Progress

27 Making it Happen

30 Monitoring the Plan



SETTING THE STAGE

Why we need to **address poverty**

Over the past decade, Prince Edward Island (PEI) has experienced major economic and social changes. From near recession a decade ago, the economy has recovered and is growing strongly. The structure of our economy and labour market has seen major shifts. This has created opportunities in many areas but also challenges in some others. Our population has grown at record rates and become much more diverse. As a society, we are responsible to ensure that all Islanders¹ share in the benefits of these trends, especially for those of us who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

¹ Islanders: people who live in Prince Edward Island, whether or not they were born here, or if they are citizens at this time.

The well-being of a population is determined by a number of factors: income and social status; community support networks; education; employment and working conditions; social and physical environments; personal health and coping skills; healthy child development; gender; and culture. Poverty is a complex issue the world over and is impacted by these social determinants of health.

Poverty takes many forms and touches everyone's life – directly or indirectly. PEI is not immune to poverty. According to the 2016 census, more than 23,000 (one in six) Islanders were below the Low Income Measure in 2015. The same was true for one in seven Canadians (4.8 million people).

In the spring of 2018 Islanders shared their experiences with poverty in a public engagement process. They said that people living in poverty often make hard choices. They must regularly decide among basic needs. People living in poverty can often have poorer health, experience food and housing insecurity and in general experience a lower quality of life than those not living in poverty. Islanders living in poverty do not have the ability to thrive on what they have. Islanders told us they want to see a PEI where everyone can reach their full potential.

When more people participate in the work force, the economy is strengthened. People in better health need fewer services, medications and treatments. Access to transportation allows people to participate in their communities, by volunteering, playing sports, and visiting friends and family. Higher levels of education allow more businesses to compete in a global market. When everyone belongs and can participate, PEI is stronger.

Across PEI, community and service organizations are contributing to the overall social and economic well-being of Islanders. These organizations play a crucial role in transforming the lives of Islanders and fostering inclusion.



They support Islanders during difficult times and offer various levels of support, such as preparing for the workforce and accessing programs and services. These organizations educate, advocate, and provide vital services.

The federal government recently released a poverty reduction strategy, *Opportunity for All*, with a target to reduce poverty 20% by 2020 and 50% by 2030. Federal policies and program enhancements have had major impacts on workers, parents, seniors, and youth. The Canada Child Benefit, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and the Canada Worker Benefit will assist many Islanders and by reaching this target.

The provincial government has implemented many initiatives to improve the quality of life for all Islanders and specifically those living in low income. Some examples are recent increases in minimum wage; income tax relief; major changes to social assistance such as increased income and asset exemptions, increases to food rates, and shelter rates; and increases to seniors and low-income home repair programs.

Prince Edward Island's *Belonging and Thriving: A Poverty Reduction Action Plan for Prince Edward Island (2019-2024)* builds on the strong work currently underway and includes many new significant actions to support the most vulnerable and to further enhance social and economic well-being for all Islanders.

The province is investing approximately \$68 million over the next five years to implement the Action Plan.

As a result of the Action Plan, **tens of thousands of Islanders will directly benefit.** The Action Plan will also work to protect all Islanders from falling into poverty and enhance dignity and quality of life for all.

PROGRAMS OFFERED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF PEI TOUCH THE LIVES OF MANY LOW-INCOME ISLANDERS

In 2017/18:

- Almost 5,500 Islanders benefited from increases to *Social Assistance* food rates, personal comfort allowances, and shelter rates
- Over 10,000 Island students benefited from school breakfast and snack programs
- Close to 700 Islanders benefited from increases to seniors and low-income home repair programs
- 185 Islanders benefited from the *Prosper Employment Program*
- 60 students benefited from the *SEAM* and *STAR* programs to help youth gain valuable skills and work experience
- 30,000 Islanders no longer pay provincial income tax
- 19,700 Islanders benefited from the *Generic Drug Program*, while 4,700 Islanders benefited from the *Catastrophic Drug Program*
- 57,000 free doses of the flu vaccine were distributed across PEI
- Almost 1,400 Islanders with disabilities benefited from *AccessAbility Supports*
- More than 1,000 Islanders received free tuition
- Almost 1,000 Island families and almost 1,500 children benefited from increases to the *Child Care Subsidy Program*
- 150 families benefited from the introduction of *Grandparents and Care Providers Program*
- Almost 300 seniors benefited from the introduction of the Seniors Independence Initiative

In order to have the greatest impact on poverty, collaboration across governments, community organizations, and individuals is critical. We must all work together to ensure everyone has the opportunity to belong and thrive.





Action Plan Development Process

A Collaborative Approach

The Poverty Reduction Action Plan has been developed using a whole-of-community, collaborative process. It brought together people affected by poverty, community members, not-for-profit groups, other government sectors (including municipalities), academia, researchers, and the private sector. The development process included:

- engaging those affected by poverty, community groups, service providers, and the public;
- analyzing provincial poverty related trends;
- reviewing action plans and approaches used elsewhere in Canada; and
- drawing on previous consultation efforts in PEI and current strengths and resources that can be used going forward.

To support the development of the Plan, a workshop was held in March 2018 with service providers from across the province to provide advice about how best to develop the public engagement process. In the spring, people living in PEI were given the opportunity to highlight barriers and challenges faced by those living in poverty, identify priorities for actions, and explore ways to work together to reduce poverty. This community-based approach included a public survey, a service provider survey, 10 small group conversations with service providers and those with lived experience of poverty, and six public community conversations. Altogether 1427 people in PEI participated. Additionally, 50 people brought their ideas to a solutions workshop in August 2018.



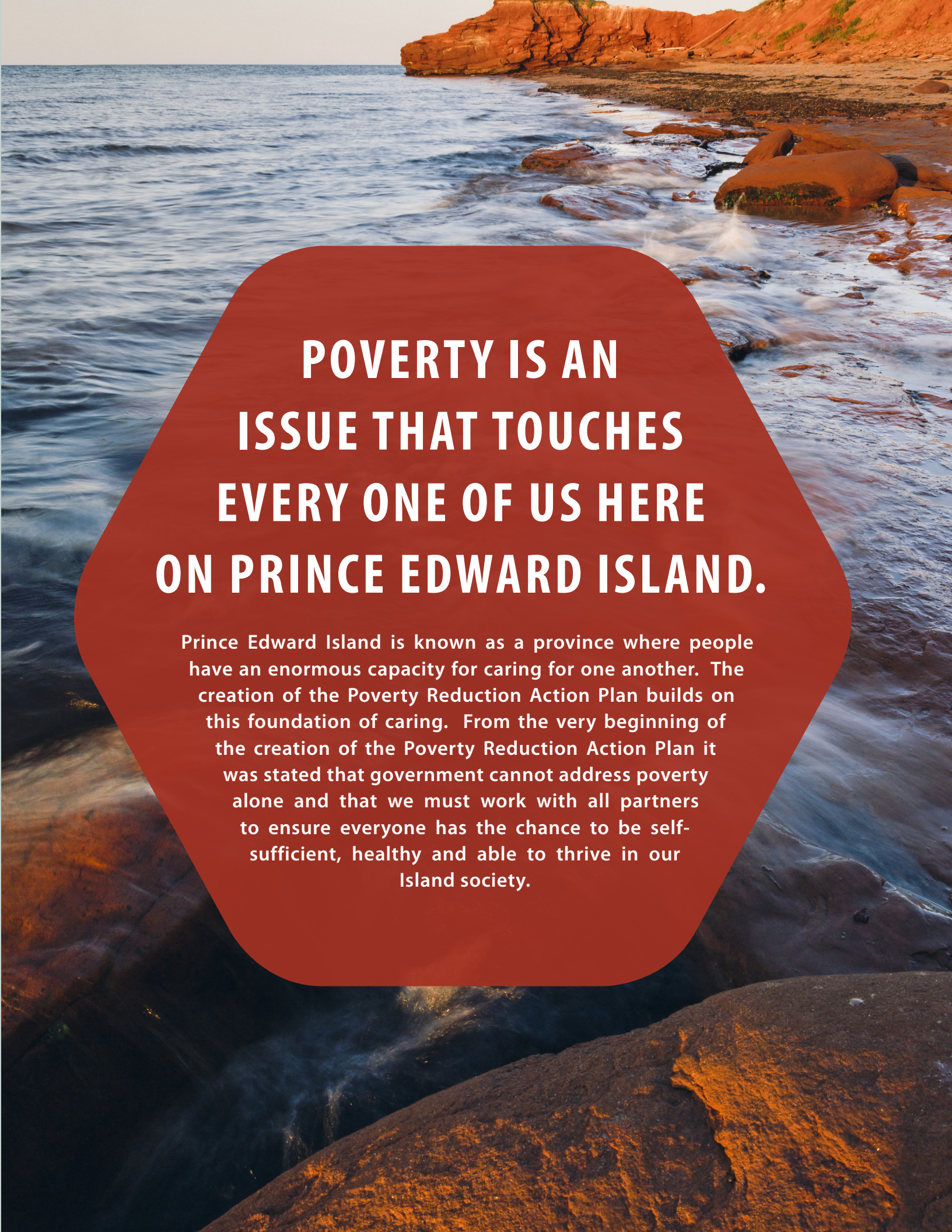
In November 2017, the PEI Government committed to developing a collaborative Poverty Reduction Action Plan. In February 2018, the Poverty Reduction Advisory Council was created to guide the work. The Council had representation from community members and organizations who worked collaboratively with a group representing 10 provincial government departments.

**Front: Roxanne Carter-Thompson, Marcia Carroll, Dr. Gulrose Jiwani, Dave Poirier.
Middle: Pamela Large-Moran, Regina Younker.
Back: Susan MacKenzie, Richard Deveau, Mark Spidel, Ray Murphy, Andrea MacDonald.
Missing: Marilyn LeFrank, Tayte Willows.**

During the development of the Action Plan, consideration was given to the ways poverty affects different people. An inclusive look at poverty was used, considering gender, family violence, sexual violence, age, family makeup, abilities, culture, Indigenous background, immigration status, and other population lenses.

Through the process of listening to Islanders, looking at trends, and learning from poverty reduction work taking place across the country, it became very clear that Islanders experience poverty in different ways and different approaches will be required to respond to the needs.





**POVERTY IS AN
ISSUE THAT TOUCHES
EVERY ONE OF US HERE
ON PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.**

Prince Edward Island is known as a province where people have an enormous capacity for caring for one another. The creation of the Poverty Reduction Action Plan builds on this foundation of caring. From the very beginning of the creation of the Poverty Reduction Action Plan it was stated that government cannot address poverty alone and that we must work with all partners to ensure everyone has the chance to be self-sufficient, healthy and able to thrive in our Island society.



Vision

EPEKWITK

Prince Edward Island,
where *everyone*
belongs and thrives

ACHIEVING THE VISION

The Poverty Reduction Action Plan will work to protect all Islanders from falling into poverty, assist Islanders to overcome poverty, and promote dignity and quality of life for all.

GOALS:

1. To help Islanders in need
2. To support the most vulnerable
3. To build on our supportive communities and partners
4. To improve the well-being of children and youth



GUIDING PRINCIPLES



DIVERSITY OF VOICES

Engaging a variety of sectors, communities, and individuals, including those with lived experience, in the design and implementation of the action plan.

ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES

Addressing the inter-related root causes of poverty to overcome poverty today and prevent poverty tomorrow.



COLLABORATING

Sharing responsibility among diverse sectors, communities, and individuals to identify tailored solutions and work together to overcome poverty.



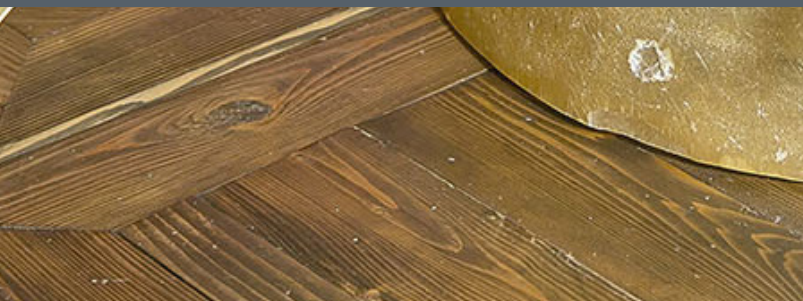
ASSET BUILDING

Building on communities' and individuals' strengths, rather than focusing on deficits.



LEARNING TOGETHER

Monitoring progress of the plan, sharing knowledge, and adapting approaches as we learn, to ensure that the plan helps overcome poverty.



ACHIEVING THE VISION



1

GOAL #1: *To help Islanders in need*





ACTIONS UNDER THIS GOAL WILL SUPPORT ISLANDERS EXPERIENCING POVERTY DUE TO MULTIPLE BARRIERS THAT LIMIT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITIES AND THE WORKFORCE

TO HELP ISLANDERS IN NEED

By removing barriers through better access to needed supports and services, and creating opportunities like education, training, skill development, and connecting to the workforce, Islanders will be better prepared to move out of poverty. Adequate income supports and benefits will improve Islanders' well-being and enable them to meet their needs.

"Because of changes made to the Social Assistance program, I was able to go and buy a few treats for my grandchildren and never had to think about it. I also was able to buy fresh fruit for my refrigerator no questions. I was so excited. To top it off, I still had money in my account on the 10th of the month."

The Action Plan builds on the good work already happening to help Islanders in need. For example:

- The Canadian Mental Health Association provides supports to help Islanders improve their mental wellness;
- Harvest and Prosper is a skills-based employment program linking Islanders to in-demand jobs;
- The Housing Action Plan, released in July 2018, focuses on the availability and affordability of housing; and
- Food rates for *Social Assistance* recipients have been increased.

For more examples, see page 24



Key Actions: To help Islanders in need	Lead & Proposed Partners	Beginning
Conduct a comprehensive review of the <i>Employment Standards Act</i> . <i>Potential reach: Island workforce</i>	Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture	2018/19
Partner with community to support the creation of a women's shelter. <i>Potential reach: 100 women per year</i>	Social Development and Housing Community Groups	2018/19
Double the new rent supplements planned in the next year from 275 to 550. <i>Potential reach: Additional 275 Island families per year</i>	Social Development and Housing	2019/20
<i>Increase Social Assistance rates:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase shelter rates by 6% ; and • Increase the food rates by 10%. <i>Potential reach: 5,000 Islanders per year</i>	Social Development and Housing	2019/20
Transform the <i>Social Assistance Program</i> to improve the social and economic well-being of recipients by better supporting those who can attach to employment and those who face multiple barriers to employment through enhanced employment supports and increased rates. <i>Potential reach: 5,000 Islanders per year</i>	Social Development and Housing	2019/20
Through government, community and industry partnerships, increase investments in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job readiness programs to prepare clients to enter the workforce; • Pre-employment programs for clients with multiple and complex challenges that impact their potential for employment; and • Training programs for high demand jobs. <i>Potential reach: Double the current reach to 500 Islanders with multiple barriers per year</i>	Provincial Government led by Skills PEI Community Groups Industry	2019/20
Enhance PEI's Provincial Student Loan <i>Payment Relief</i> program by providing borrowers the option not to make payments for up to 30 months while their income is below \$30,000. <i>Potential reach: Additional 50 Islanders per year</i>	Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture	2019/20
Increase minimum wage to \$12.25/hour. <i>Potential reach: 5,000 Islanders per year</i>	Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture	2019/20
Create an <i>Ostomy Supplies Program</i> that would provide assistance to low income Islanders with ostomies. <i>Potential reach: Double the current reach to 500 Islanders per year</i>	Health & Wellness	2019/20
Invest in developing new affordable housing units. <i>Potential reach: 200 Island families per year</i>	Social Development and Housing	2019/20

"I am now very financially stable and successful but I was once a homeless 15 year old who then got married and had two children, by 25 I was a single mom with two children to care for and went back to college to make a better life for me and my children. I am fully aware of what it is like to be poor and have limited options but I am all for a hand up not a hand out. I really have no interest in supporting a basic income increase or min wage increase but I would love to see more supports for those trying to change their circumstances for a better life supporting themselves..."
 (Public Survey Respondent)



Additional Actions: To help Islanders in need

Action Item	Lead & Proposed Partners	Beginning
Examine and support community-based housing pilot projects to include co-operative and social enterprise models. ²	Social Development and Housing	2019/20
Collaborate with community organizations to support vulnerable populations with unique housing needs to ensure successful housing placements.	Social Development and Housing Housing Council Community Groups	2019/20
Create a formal office to assist Islanders with housing issues.	Social Development and Housing	2019/20
Create a Virtual Hub to connect people with information about food security projects and programs.	Agriculture and Land Community Groups	2019/20
Support a Food Awareness campaign to increase Islanders' knowledge of local food, how it is produced and the importance of PEI farmers, fishers and food producers in community food security.	Agriculture and Land Food Sectors Communities	2019/20
Establish an employers' advisory council and explore efficient use of the labour force to increase year round employment.	Skills PEI Community Groups	2019/20
Develop a coordinated referral process to ensure people are matched with the appropriate employment support program.	Skills PEI	2019/20
Increase access to bridging programs for training credentialing and mentorship programs for Newcomers to make it easier and more affordable to work in their field.	Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture	2019/20
Complete a provincial fair taxation review looking at the impacts of taxation policies on low income Islanders.	Finance	2019/20
Enable Social Programs' Support Coordinators to adjust benefits to allow for tailored client plans.	Social Development and Housing	2019/20
Identify vulnerable populations and the factors that influence their health status and relationship with the health system.	Health & Wellness	2019/20
Improve success of return-to-work programs by increasing access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational rehabilitation and job training; • Timely post-diagnosis treatment of a mental health disorder; • Affordable occupational therapy and physiotherapy; and • Affordable and accessible child care. 	Provincial Government Community Groups	2020-2024
Enhance community-based peer connector roles to support people living in poverty.	Community Groups Social Development and Housing	2020-2024
Explore options to support people in low income with health-related costs, based on evidence.	Health PEI Health & Wellness	2020-2024
With a strong federal funding partner, pursue the creation of a robust national <i>Pharmacare program</i> , which builds on the strengths of PEI's existing drug programs.	Health & Wellness	2020-2024
Increase employers' awareness of wage subsidies and internships for job and skills training programs.	Provincial Government Community Groups	In Progress
Encourage the federal government to enhance <i>Employment Insurance</i> benefits for low-income earners.	Provincial Government Community Groups	In Progress

2. Social enterprise is one where an organization which typically addresses social, economic, environmental or cultural issues, is supported by profits generated by the organization.



ACHIEVING THE VISION

2



GOAL #2: *To support the most vulnerable*

"As a client of AccessAbility Support, I feel like I am now being asked questions about everything... all aspects of my life. It's not just about the dollars and cents, it's more about what I want as goals and dreams."





A SMALL GROUP OF ISLANDERS FACE CHALLENGES SO SIGNIFICANT THAT THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES THROUGH EMPLOYMENT. THIS POPULATION NEEDS A WIDER AND DEEPER RANGE OF SUPPORTS.

TO SUPPORT THE MOST VULNERABLE

Families, communities, and government play a vital role in ensuring these vulnerable Islanders have their basic needs met, enjoy good quality of life, and live in dignity.

“We are all the same – we all want a reasonable standard of living, reasonable level of financial security, safe and clean housing, and adequate food.” (Written comment from a Charlottetown Public Conversation Participant)

The Action Plan builds on the good work already happening to support the most vulnerable Islanders. For example:

- The PEI Council of People with Disabilities works to improve the status of persons with disabilities; and
- *AccessAbility Supports* (formally *Disability Supports Program*) was created to better meet the needs of Islanders with disabilities.

For more examples, see page 25

These vulnerable individuals will benefit from many of the actions proposed in this plan. However, the following actions will further benefit this population.

Key Actions: To support the most vulnerable		Lead & Proposed Partners	Beginning
Implement the <i>Secure Income Program</i> for Islanders with severe limitations to entering the workforce to meet essential needs and enhance dignity.		Social Development and Housing	2019/20
Additional Actions: To support the most vulnerable			
Action Item	Lead & Proposed Partners	Beginning	
Collaborate with the Food Bank Association to strengthen existing emergency food and outreach programs to establish standards and support the efficient collection, storage, and distribution of donated foods to Islanders who need this resource.	Provincial Government Foodbank Association Community Groups	2019/20	
Enhance case management approaches for low-income people related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary care services, including integrated, holistic supports; and • Community-based service providers. 	Health PEI Community Groups	2020-2024	
Increase access to mental health services in the areas of greatest need and impact on vulnerable populations using a collaborative approach.	Health PEI Health & Wellness	2020-2024	
Review legislation related to at-risk populations to identify gaps in protection and supports.	Provincial Government Community Groups	2020-2024	



ACHIEVING THE VISION



GOAL #3:

*To build on our supportive
communities and partners*





**ACTIONS TO PREVENT POVERTY
WILL SUPPORT ALL ISLANDERS
AS MANY LIFE TRANSITIONS
CAN LEAVE ANYONE
VULNERABLE TO POVERTY**

TO BUILD ON OUR SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERS

By growing resilience, Islanders will be better prepared to respond to life changes without experiencing poverty (starting a family, chronic disease, death of a spouse, retirement, etc.). People become resilient by having a healthy start and development, maintaining good health throughout their lives, attaining education and training, developing a strong sense of belonging in their community, and preparing for retirement. Supportive communities strengthen the social fabric that fosters resiliency.

“Transportation for rural PEI – affects all aspects of poverty – can’t get to work, to health services, etc.” (Written comment from an O’Leary Public Conversation Participant)

The Action Plan builds on the good work already happening through our supportive communities and partners. For example:

- The United Way works to improve the lives of Islanders and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action;
- WorkPEI is a website that links job seekers with employers;
- *Be Aware and Get Your Share* ensures Islanders are aware of the various provincial and federal benefits they may be eligible for; and
- The *Rural Growth Initiative* supports rural community development.

For more examples, see page 26



Key Actions: To build on our supportive communities and partners	Lead & Proposed Partners	Beginning
Introduce a 211 service – a confidential service to provide people with current information on government and community-based social programs and supports. <i>Potential reach: All Islanders</i>	Community Groups Provincial Government	2018/19
Support the <i>PEI Community Sector Network</i> and identify a Minister responsible to lead work to support this sector.	Provincial Government Community Groups	2018/19
Expand the mandate of community grants under the <i>Rural Growth Initiative</i> to foster innovation and effective poverty reduction initiatives at the community level, including community assessments and asset mapping. <i>Potential reach: Approximately 12 additional community grants per year</i>	Fisheries and Communities Community Groups	2019/20
Move to multi-year grant funding for community partners providing essential services to Islanders on behalf of government.	Provincial Government Community Groups	2019/20
Work with community service providers to develop a provincial transportation action plan. <i>Potential reach: All Islanders</i>	Transportation, Infrastructure & Energy Community Groups	2019/20



I'm a single mother of two. I was referred to the Adventure Group's Life Management Program through Social Assistance in January 2018. I was given many tools and learning opportunities to prepare for my future and start a career. I was provided with amazing support and encouragement to push forward and begin a new chapter in my life. Since the program, my life has changed drastically. I'm now the Coordinator at a career development organization. I moved into my own apartment, I got my license as well as a vehicle. I participated on a working group focusing on the action plan's governance structure. I have more confidence and belief in myself than I ever had. I've built strong relationships and no longer feel alone or unworthy. My children are well provided for and I'm able to wake up daily without the stress or worry of how I will make ends meet. I couldn't be more thankful for where I am today and without the Life Management Program I think my life would be very different at this point in time.



Additional Actions: To build on our supportive communities and partners

Action Item	Lead/Proposed Partners	Beginning
Increase and sustain public awareness and understanding of the causes and impacts of poverty.	Social Development and Housing Community Groups	2019/20
Explore the development of a provincial social enterprise framework including a 'start-up zone' for non-governmental organizations and support for social enterprise ventures and cooperatives.	Provincial Government Community Groups	2020-2024
Strengthen programs that support employment for seniors.	Skills PEI	2020-2024
Improve adult literacy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use existing spaces, such as libraries, to create an open, welcoming space for adult learners to connect to learning opportunities; • Increase support for adult literacy programs to improve employment readiness and other life skills; and • Support food literacy (healthy food options, basic cooking, creating a shopping list and food production, including school gardens). 	Provincial Government Municipalities Community Groups	2020-2024
Strengthen <i>Community Accounts</i> (single, on-line source for community, regional, and provincial data) to support communities to identify their assets and areas for opportunity.	Finance	2020-2024
Increase efforts to provide education and awareness programming on preparing for retirement.	Social Development and Housing	2020-2024
Expand the <i>Seniors Independence Initiative</i> by raising individual annual caps and increasing flexibility of the program to meet client needs.	Social Development and Housing Health & Wellness	2020-2024
Strengthen trauma-informed care by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing trauma-informed care³ for all service providers who serve people who have experienced trauma to foster safety and empathy; and • Enhancing trauma-specific care training⁴ for service providers working with people who have experienced trauma. 	Provincial Government Community Groups	2020-2024
Enhance addictions treatment and rehab/recovery services within a trauma-informed, concurrent disorders model in community health care settings.	Health PEI Health & Wellness	2020-2024
Explore the increased potential for technologies (e.g., Telehealth, web-based applications, e-health innovations, etc.) to improve health services for isolated people, expand access to in/out-of-province specialty services, and increase access for those who prefer digital services.	Health PEI Health & Wellness Federal Government	2020-2024
Increase the number of collaborative multi-disciplinary practices to provide comprehensive care.	Health PEI	2020-2024
Increase health care providers' awareness of Indigenous health issues, traditional medicines and cultural supports to enhance integration and effectiveness of their treatments and interventions.	Health PEI Health & Wellness Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI	In Progress

3. Trauma-informed care is a framework of practice that is built around understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma.

4. Trauma-specific care training directly addresses the impact of trauma on an individual's life and supports trauma recovery.



ACHIEVING THE VISION



GOAL #4:

*To improve the well-being of
children and youth*





EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL WILL SUPPORT ALL ISLAND CHILDREN AND YOUTH, ESPECIALLY THOSE MOST VULNERABLE

TO IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Investing in children, including poverty reduction measures, directly affects their growth, development and well-being throughout their lives. This leads to better health, emotional and social skills performance in school and training, and it means that the next generation will be more able to thrive, lead, and participate in their communities.

The Action Plan builds on the good work already happening to improve the well-being of children and youth. For example:

- Family Resource Centres provide programs and resources for all children and families;
- *Early Learning and Child Care Investments: PEI Action Plan* aims to increase the number and suitability of child care spaces in the province;
- The *SEAM* and *STAR* programs help youth gain valuable skills and work experience; and
- School breakfast and snack programs help to provide a better start to the learning day for Island students.

For more examples, see page 26

*“Prendre des actions concrètes en partant de la petite enfance afin de mettre une fin à ce cycle.”
/ Take concrete actions starting from early childhood in order to put an end to the cycle.
(Written comment from an Abrams Village Public Conversation Participant)*



Key Actions: To improve the well-being of children and youth	Lead & Proposed Partners	Beginning
In response to the <i>2017 Children's Report</i> and the <i>2016 Review of the Child Protection Act</i> , establish a mechanism to lead and coordinate collaborative actions to improve outcomes for children and ensure that services to children and families are responsive, flexible and reflect the voice of the child. <i>Potential reach: All Island families and children</i>	Provincial Government	2018/19
Implement a provincial non-profit school food initiative. <i>Potential reach: 20,000 Island students over 4 years</i>	Education and Lifelong Learning	2018/19
Formalize and expand the <i>SEAM / STAR Program</i> to support high school students returning to school to enhance lifelong success. <i>Potential reach: 100 Island high school students per year</i>	Skills PEI	2019/20
Create a social inclusion allowance for children on <i>Social Assistance</i> to provide opportunities to participate with peers in community activities. <i>Potential reach: 1,500 Island children per year</i>	Social Development and Housing	2019/20

I was very surprised and happy to find out that my son does not have to pay even \$1 towards his tuition at UPEI this year. Because I'm low-income, he was able to receive the Canada Student Grant and the new Island Advantage Bursary. Add in the George Coles Bursary, and his entire tuition for the year - which costs over \$6,000 - is free! This is a huge relief for me and my son. It also gives me a bit of hope that my son will actually have a better financial start in life than I had.



Additional Actions: To improve the well-being of children and youth

Action Item	Lead/Proposed Partners	Beginning
Enhance promotion of parenting programs to ensure more families benefit.	Provincial Government Family Resource Centres Community Groups	2019/20
Increase awareness of student financial supports (e.g. <i>Debt Reduction Grant Program, Island Advantage Bursary, Canada Learning Bond</i>).	Education and Lifelong Learning	2019/20
Enhance supports for school-aged youth who are at risk of remaining in low income in adulthood to include transitional supports from school to employment or to higher education/vocational training.	Skills PEI Education and Lifelong Learning	2020-2024
Develop more services and supports that are child and youth focused to increase social inclusion, skill building, self-esteem and health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe spaces for youth to go for activities and recreation; • More after-school programming; • Services for youth transitioning out of foster care; and • Sports, arts, technology and other social inclusion activities for children and youth in low income. 	Provincial Government Municipalities Community Groups	2020-2024
Enhance investments in timely access to physical assessments for children with complex needs to identify the learning needs (e.g. computers, adaptable equipment technology, learning adaptations) to provide needed supports and increase success in education and training.	Health PEI Health & Wellness	2020-2024
Implement the <i>Social Emotional Learning Program: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS®)</i> in K-6 schools in the province.	Education and Lifelong Learning	2020-2024
Make further investments for literacy interventions and supports to foster learning and future success.	Education and Lifelong Learning	2020-2024
In alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, increase access and retention of Indigenous students to health care training programs.	Provincial Government UPEI Holland College Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI	2020-2024
Work with federal partners and others to enhance programs that promote employment opportunities, and connect students with industry representatives/role models to promote positive development.	Provincial Government led by Skills PEI Federal Government Industry	In Progress
Continue enhancing curriculum-based life skills (including financial literacy) and employability skills to support self-sufficiency in adulthood.	Education and Lifelong Learning	In Progress
Support the ongoing development of a publicly-managed early learning and child care system ensuring a response to the need for spaces and ensuring quality and healthy child development outcomes are met.	Education and Lifelong Learning	In progress
Increase internet access in rural areas to support online learning and continuing education.	Provincial Government	In Progress
Incorporate reconciliation in school and post-secondary institutions' curriculum by understanding and learning about the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada.	Education and Lifelong Learning Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI	In Progress
Incorporate social justice ⁵ education in school curriculum as a means to reduce and address stigma about poverty and other barriers to full participation in the community.	Education and Lifelong Learning	In Progress

5. Social justice: Justice and equality in the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society





Building on **Work in Progress**

There is important work happening across PEI to support individuals, families and communities. In addition to the examples provided earlier, the following highlights some of this support. The Poverty Reduction Action Plan builds on these initiatives.

To help Islanders in need

Housing

A number of community-based programs offer short and long-term housing for people experiencing special needs – Reach Foundation, Inclusions East, Harvest House, Queens County Residential Services, Family Violence Prevention Services, Native Council of PEI. Others support people in their search for appropriate housing, such as Salvation Army and the PEI Association for Community Living.

The City of Charlottetown has adopted an affordable housing incentive program to encourage new and redeveloped affordable housing in the city to help meet residents' needs.

Employment & Income

Employment support is provided by many groups such as the John Howard Society, Career Development Services, Rural Community Learning Initiative, Mi'kmaq Confederacy's Employment Services, Women's Network, Career Bridges, and Career Development Association.

Other organizations stand up for Islanders on issues related to income such as the Cooper Institute, Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Mackillop Centre for Social Justice. Businesses and industry play a role in creating a society where people and communities can thrive. Some organizations represent these sectors, such as Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Independent Business, sector councils, and unions.

Social Assistance enhancements were made in spring 2018, which increased the amount that people can earn without reducing their benefit levels, allowing people to have more assets or savings and receive medical, dental and optical benefits for 24 months for those leaving social assistance for a job.

SkillsPEI helps Islanders connect to jobs through programs supported under the Canada-PEI Labour





Market Development Agreement and the Workforce Development Agreement. These are part of the full range of employment supports PEI provides, from counseling and job search assistance, to longer-term skills training.

Food Security

Community organizations address food security through advocacy, education, training, and food distribution. The Food Security Network, PEI Food Exchange, Farm Centre and food banks are a few examples.

The provincial government provides grants through Departments of Agriculture and Land, and Health and Wellness for food security initiatives.

Health

Community organizations provide support, education, and advocacy, such as Catholic Family Services Bureau, Canadian Cancer Society, Heart and Stroke, and Diabetes Canada. Health promotion and prevention is supported through go!PEI, KidSport, and Jump Start.

The Catastrophic Drug and Generic Drug plans reduce drug costs for Islanders. Free flu shots are available to all Islanders through their choice of physician, nurse practitioner, public health nursing, or community pharmacist. There is also a strategy in place to improve adult immunization rates including the HPV and pneumococcal vaccines.

The Mental Health and Addictions Strategy focuses on increasing services in the community to prevent and treat mental health issues and addiction. The Suicide Prevention Strategy will increase peoples' chances of surviving and thriving. The Seniors' Health and Wellness Action Plan will help PEI seniors lead active, engaged, independent, and productive lives.

Medicare coverage was recently expanded for gender confirming surgical procedures, ensuring that transgender Islanders have access to important, medically-necessary procedures. Pathways for accessing transgender health services continue to be developed and clarified.

To support the most vulnerable

Community-based organizations provide services and supports for people with mental, physical, and neurological disabilities. For example, Community Inclusions, Harbourview Training Centre, Community Connections, Camp Gencheff, PEI Association for Community Living, Tremploy, and PEI Citizen's Advocacy are just a few who are supporting people to be engaged in their communities. Other organizations provide transportation to those in need, such as Pat & the Elephant and Transportation West.

Health PEI supports people with complex needs by identifying and collaborating with service providers and resources in the community.



To build on our supportive communities and partners

Organizations across the province partner in many ways to assist communities, families and individuals by providing services, connecting people to information, and raising money. Some examples include La Société Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, PEERS Alliance, Saint Vincent De Paul, PEI Senior Citizens' Federation, Community Legal Information Association, the Adventure Group, Family Resource Centres, service clubs, community schools, Triple P Parenting, PEI Association of Newcomers to Canada, and many more.



To improve the well-being of children and youth

Government's *Grandparents and Care Providers Program* provides \$700 per month per child, as well as social worker support to help grandparents with the day to day experiences of raising children, and access to other programs for children. Also, the *Child Care Subsidy Program* helps Island families with the cost of child care.

Community organizations such as PEI Literacy Alliance, East Prince Youth Development Centre, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Big Brothers Big Sisters offer education, training, and support related to life skills, and coping with stress. Other organizations work closely with childcare centres and public schools, such as the Early Childhood Development Association and the Home and School Federation.

Island Advantage Bursaries help young people with the cost of post-secondary education by supporting 1,000 low and middle-income Island students.

Student Well-Being Teams work in schools advising, consulting and providing direct service to children and youth who are struggling with mental, social and physical health issues.

The provincial government has also introduced the Bridge model which brings service providers together to offer programs and support to Islanders who are at high risk of harm.

Academia, justice and legal organizations, advocacy and education groups, municipal programming, faith groups, human rights organizations all play a role in creating a province where everyone belongs and thrives.



A sunset over a beach with an orange hexagonal overlay containing text.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

A few early steps will lay a strong foundation to make the actions more effective. When you build a house, starting with a strong foundation gives the best results. These are the foundation actions needed to get the best results to reduce poverty in Prince Edward Island.



MAKING IT HAPPEN

Foundations

A few early steps will lay a strong foundation to make the actions more effective. When you build a house, starting with a strong foundation gives the best results. These are the foundation actions needed to get the best results to reduce poverty in Prince Edward Island.

Foundation Action	Why
Develop a <i>Poverty Reduction Act</i>	Legislation will make it clear who is responsible for poverty reduction, when planning and reporting will take place, and when the Plan will be reviewed and updated.
Name a Lead Minister Responsible for Poverty Reduction	This will make it clear who will move the work from plan to action.
Establish a Poverty Reduction Council (Community/Government Partnership)	The Council will play a leadership role in carrying out the Plan, provide advice, coordinate with local partners, and report on the progress of the Plan.
Develop a data plan to support poverty reduction	High quality data and information help us plan what to do, where best to focus resources, and to see where we are making a difference.





MAKING IT HAPPEN

Working Together

A community-government partnership will be created to align with the spirit of collaboration that underpins the Poverty Reduction Action Plan. This partnership builds on representatives from various sectors committing to work together to achieve the shared vision and goals.

The partnership involves a Minister Responsible for Poverty Reduction, and a Poverty Reduction Council made up of people with lived experience of poverty, various non-government sector representatives, and provincial government departments.





Monitoring the Plan

The Poverty Reduction Council will lead the implementation and monitoring of the Poverty Reduction Action Plan in these ways:

- Develop an evaluation framework to monitor progress and determine impact.
- Coordinate and support local action.
- Submit an annual report to the Minister Responsible for Poverty Reduction and a public report every two years on progress.
- Provide policy recommendations to government.

Poverty reduction legislation (*The Poverty Reduction Act*) will require renewal of the Poverty Reduction Action Plan every five years.

Targets and Measures

This action plan acknowledges the targets set in the federal government's poverty reduction strategy, *Opportunities for All*, to reduce poverty by 20% by 2020 and 50% by 2030⁶.

The PEI Plan will **impact tens of thousands of Islanders** by building on the strong work that is currently underway and introducing new actions with a focus on supporting the most vulnerable Islanders and creating conditions to further enhance social and economic well-being for all Islanders.

Monitoring the progress of the Poverty Reduction Action Plan will focus on:

- Number of Islanders experiencing poverty
- Attachment to employment
- Number of Islanders with access to affordable housing
- Youth engagement in learning and work
- Number of Island children experiencing food insecurity
- Number of Islanders reporting strong or very strong sense of belonging

6. Based on the Market Basket Measure/ Canada's Official Poverty Line: a measure of low income based on local costs of needed items





People of Prince Edward Island will experience their best well-being, will thrive and prosper when they are not held down under the weight of poverty. By directly impacting tens of thousands of Islanders, more people will be able to experience social inclusion, participation, and prosperity. More Islanders will thrive lifelong without falling into poverty, more Islanders will move out of poverty, and Islanders in greatest need will have improved quality of life, resources, choices and dignity.

People were clear during the public engagement phase that action is needed now, and that everyone has a role to play. At one public meeting, a participant said, “Government can’t do this . . . alone”. It is clear that many sectors in PEI are ready to work together toward less poverty and a better future for our province.



Belonging and Thriving

A POVERTY REDUCTION ACTION PLAN
FOR PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
(2019-2024)



EPEKWITK
Prince Edward Island,
where *everyone*
belongs and thrives

This action plan is meant to benefit Islanders,
it is now up to all of us to make the changes we need to.

PrinceEdwardIsland.ca/povertyreduction

