

Living SJ:

A synthesized report on community
issues in Greater Saint John,
New Brunswick

July 2014

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Introduction

What is Living SJ?

Living SJ is a process to identify and champion the most significant social priorities in the Greater Saint John Area with strategic actions, investments and measureable targets.

Our vision: A strong community working together to improve the Quality of life¹ for all citizens of the Greater Saint John Area.

Our mission: Develop a plan to engage the community and influence leadership to optimize social impact.

Living SJ will engage the community (non-profits, business leaders, all levels of the government, funders, academic institutions and community members) for the next five years to renew our collective commitment to achieving exceptional “quality of life” for ALL.

Why is Living SJ important for Greater Saint John?

Significant strides have been made to improve the wellbeing of residents in our community, but still there remain critical areas of need that require attention and action. Key stakeholder groups have stepped up to help Saint John define its social priorities, align action and achieve results to improve the quality of life for families, particularly those most vulnerable.

Objectives for Living SJ

- Develop a clear understanding of our community’s current social challenges and progress (collect and communicate the evidence);
- Engage the community in identifying quality of life (social) priorities for the future of our region;
- Establish a Social Renewal Strategy to address key priorities, with measurements and shared responsibility among all sectors of the community;
- Steward strong and sustainable solutions to address our priorities; and
- Provide for ongoing accountability of results to funders, partners and the community.

¹ Quality of life is represented by eight domains that provide an indication of an individual’s quality of life including: emotional well-being, interpersonal relations, material well-being, personal development, physical well-being, self-determination, social inclusion and rights. (<http://www.communitylivingbc.ca/projects/quality-of-life/what-is-quality-of-life/>).

Structure of Living SJ

In 2012, Vibrant Communities Saint John, the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative, the Human Development Council, the United Way of Greater Saint John and the Greater Saint John Community Foundation began meeting regularly to discuss the need for a social plan for our community, to better address our pressing social challenges. This partnership broadened to include City, Urban and Community Studies Institute, University of New Brunswick, Department of Social Development and others and operates as a **Living SJ Staff Planning Team** to develop the process and framework for Living SJ.

A Living SJ Leadership Team consisting of educators, non-profits leaders, funders, business leaders, all levels of government and the community was established in the fall of 2013 to oversee the development and implementation of a social renewal strategy.

A Community Advisory Team of non-profits and community organizations was established in the winter of 2014 to provide advice and support to Living SJ on the engagement, priorities and implementation.

Living SJ is also in alignment with our region's economic development plan True Growth 2.0 and the City of Saint John's PlanSJ. The Living SJ teams and other stakeholders will convene, challenge and inspire the community to change the way we do business and track our progress. This means integrating a culture of continuous learning into our work, exploring how we can work differently together and basing our actions on evidence and promising practices.

Purpose of this document

As part of the development of the Living SJ Social Renewal Strategy, a literature review was developed to identify the scope of existing social issues within the Greater Saint John Area. The review draws from local, provincial, national and global reports, strategies and plans relevant to community issues and solutions. The data and research from the literature review have been compiled and synthesized into this report.

For more information please visit www.livingsj.ca.



Children and Families

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

The Children & Families priority area concerns issues specifically related to children (under the age of 15 years) and families of any configuration, which may include any combination of the following:

- Social programming/services (prenatal, playgroups, education, etc.)
- Housing
- Healthcare
- Childcare
- Teenage Pregnancy
- Access to recreation
- Education (e.g., Early Childhood Education, PALS)
- Child poverty
- Inclusion for persons with disabilities
- Transportation
- Family violence

The Current Situation

Child Poverty

More than one in seven Canadian children live in poverty. Living in poverty can affect children's cognitive development, academic success, social and emotional well-being and physical health.² Further, children who experience poverty are more likely to be poor as adults.

New Brunswick's child poverty rate is now above the Canadian average (14.5%), as compared with 2011, when it was below the Canadian average and had the second lowest child poverty rate in the country.³ There are 22,000 children living below the poverty line in the province - a number

² The Barriers for People in Poverty – Partnership to End Poverty (n.d.).

³ Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012).

significantly increased from the previous year (14,000).⁴ In addition, young adults are also encountering poverty and are more likely to be poor today than they were three decades ago. According to the Low Income Cut Off Measure, an estimated 550,000 Canadians under the age of 18 live in low-income households.⁵

Saint John has one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada, with 28.3% of children attending school living in poverty. This is almost double the provincial average of 16.2%. Lone-parent families are also experiencing high levels of poverty in the city with just over 60% living below the poverty line – the highest rate in Canada.⁶

Exploring the incidence of child and youth poverty in the priority neighbourhoods highlights extremely high rates in Crescent Valley, with 77% of children less than six years of age living in poverty.⁷ Some of the concerns echoed by low-income families in the neighbourhood center around access to comprehensive childhood education, care for young children and sustainable afterschool programming for youth.

Vulnerable Families

Poverty and income inequality is far more prevalent among certain configurations of families and by those in certain demographic cohorts. In New Brunswick, there are more than 29,000 lone mothers and 45.4% of them live in poverty. Half of lone mothers in the province have an income of \$25,900 or less.⁸ Within Saint John, lone mothers head 20% of families,⁹ and they are most prevalent in the priority neighbourhoods.

A child born in a First Nations community is twice as likely to live in poverty, four times more likely to drop out of school, eight times more likely to be unemployed, and nine times as likely to know prison or addiction compared to a non-First Nations child down the street.¹⁰ A recent study revealed disturbing levels of income inequality, as in 2006, the median income for Aboriginal peoples was \$18,962—30% lower than the \$27,097 median income for the rest of Canadians.¹¹

Data shows that having a child with a disability affects parent's employment status. Almost two in five (38.4%) reported working fewer hours in order to care for a child with a disability; about one in four parents had not accepted employment. More than six in 10 mothers compromised on their work schedule in contrast to one in 10 fathers.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Child Poverty – The Conference Board of Canada (2013).

⁶ Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS) Report (2012).

⁷ Poverty & Plenty II – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2008).

⁸ Fact Check: Poverty in New Brunswick – Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, Government of New Brunswick (2012).

⁹ National Council of Welfare (NCW) (2006).

¹⁰ Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012).

¹¹ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012).

Teen Pregnancy

Teenage mothers experience a higher rate of pregnancy-related complications and are less likely to complete their education and more likely to have limited career and economic opportunities.¹² Teen pregnancy is a root of much intergeneration/child poverty. Furthermore, their babies are at increased risk of preterm birth, low birth weight and death during infancy.¹³

According to the Horizon Health Network, in 2010/11, the percentage of births by teenage mothers in Health Region 2 (which includes the Saint John CMA) was 8.1% (representing 141 births). This an increase in teen births from 7.7% in 2009/10.¹⁴ Saint John had the highest teen pregnancy rate in the province, recorded at 28% in 2009 (Fredericton had a rate of 19%).¹⁵ Lack of subsidized birth control in the province and access to family physicians have been considered impediments to timely access to birth control.¹⁶

Food Security

Food bank usage is at the highest level recorded, with 882,000 Canadians having used food banks each month in 2012.¹⁷ Of those households needing assistance by food banks, one in five had employment income.¹⁸ New Brunswick has been encountering an upward trend with food bank usage, especially among single-parent families. Food banks are utilized more so by single-parent families (22.8%), over two-parent families (18.9%).¹⁹

In March 2012, 19,524 New Brunswick residents received food from a food bank, and over a third (32%) of those were children. The number of recipients has risen since 2011, by 985 recipients. Similarly, "More than half (51.9%) of NB's food banks reported an increase in the last year and 9.0% of households assisted said they were receiving help for the first time. In keeping with a national upward trend, between 2008 and 2012 food bank use in New Brunswick rose 24.8%."²⁰ Within the City of Saint John there has been a staggering increase in food bank use. Food banks are now helping 68% more people each month in 2013 than they were in 2008.²¹

In a 2009 Government of New Brunswick report, residents of the province stated that their low-income status prevented them from being able to purchase healthy groceries due to the significant percentage

¹² Hofferth SL. Social and economic consequences of teenage childbearing. In: Hoff erth SL, Hayes CD, eds. *Risking the future: adolescent sexuality, pregnancy and childbearing*. (1987).

¹³ Health Indicators - Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, New Brunswick Department of Health (2011).

¹⁴ Vital Signs – Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2011).

¹⁵ Health Indicators - Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, New Brunswick Department of Health (2011).

¹⁶ Family and Community Services (2004).

¹⁷ Just the Facts – Canada Without Poverty (2013).

¹⁸ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012).

¹⁹ Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ HungerCount – Food Banks Canada (2013).

of their income required to do so. Residents also highlighted that being unable to provide healthy food for their children had an impact on their children's ability to successfully learn in school. Concerns were raised around the opportunity their children would have to reach their full potential and a cycle of poverty that might result.²²

Education and Literacy

Approximately 25% of children experience some difficulties that prevent them from taking full advantage of the education offered by school.²³ In New Brunswick, family income appears to have an impact on high school completion rates and on access to post-secondary education. The New Brunswick postsecondary participation rates at age 19 highlight that 79.7% of high school graduates from the highest family income quartile participate in post-secondary education, whereas for high school graduates in the lowest family income quartile, this number is 55.8%.²⁴

An "Education Opportunity Gap" has been identified between students who attend the schools serving the oldest neighbourhoods of Saint John and their provincial counterparts. The elevated poverty rate has a significant effect on academic success. Numerous academic studies have highlighted that student performance is strongly linked to household incomes in the neighbourhood the school serves.²⁵ In addition, many children from low-income families who don't have adequate nutrition have trouble concentrating, and subsequently have trouble learning.²⁶ For children and youth unable to function in the "regular" school system, alternative education options need to be more accessible and available.

On a provincial level, New Brunswick was among the bottom four of our 13 provinces and territories in 2012 testing for The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, which studies literacy, numeracy and problem solving. Within the city of Saint John, One in five children are not beginning their formal schooling with the language and literacy skills needed to succeed.²⁷ In a BCAPI study that included all high school students who entered Grade 9 from 2005-2008 in Saint John, only 5 out of 10 students who live in five priority neighbourhoods completed their high school program in four years.²⁸

Childcare

International data from the OECD showed that Canada was the lowest Early Childhood Education and Care spender among 14 wealthy countries in 2006. Federal funds earmarked for regulated childcare

²² A Choir of Voices: The "What Was Said" Report. A Dialogue on Poverty – Government of New Brunswick (2009).

²³ Child Well-being in Rich Countries: A Comparative Review. Innocenti Report Card #11 – UNICEF (2013).

²⁴ Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012).pg.10

²⁵ Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS) Report (2012).

²⁶ A Choir of Voices: The "What Was Said" Report. A Dialogue on Poverty – Government of New Brunswick (2009).

²⁷ Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS) Report (2012).

²⁸ High School Graduation Rates for Students who Live in Saint John Priority Neighbourhoods-BCAPI (n.d.)

were reduced after 2006-2007 — from \$950 million to \$600 million in the next year. Generally, Canada's funding growth has been too limited and inconsistent to create significant improvements.²⁹

The expansion of regulated childcare in the 2008-2010 period was at the lowest level since 2001. In 2010, there were spaces enough to cover only 21.8% of 0-5 year olds, and 19.9% of 0-12 year olds. Not only has space been an issue, but also many licensed daycares/afterschools have not been at full capacity because parents in low-middle income households cannot always access funding to help support childcare. Finding appropriate childcare has become a significant issue for low- and middle-income households in insecure employment. It is further challenging for lone mothers who face the challenge of being the sole provider while also having to find adequate childcare and secure housing.³⁰

The New Brunswick Child Care Coalition, studying 80 mothers in six communities across the province, shared the four most common barriers experienced in accessing childcare in New Brunswick. Cost, quality, lack of spaces and lack of infant care surfaced as the top barriers.³¹ Within Saint John, the lack of childcare spaces for children 0 to 2 years has been a particular concern.

For-profit childcare continues to grow and is accelerating, accounting for 28% of all centre spaces Canada-wide in 2010. However, for-profit operation has been linked to poorer quality childcare, which is not beneficial to child development, especially for low-income children. The data show that between 2008-2010, much of childcare expansion was for-profit, which accounted for more than 2/3 of the growth in a number of provinces.³²

Potential Barriers

Housing and Homelessness

Canada is one of the few countries in the G20 without a national housing plan.³³ In Canada, 3.1 million households pay more than 30% of their income on housing, making them housing insecure.³⁴ Beyond being a basic necessity of life, housing is a building block for stable lives so children can get a proper education. Stable housing is a strong contributor to crime prevention and school achievement.³⁵

In New Brunswick there are a lot of individuals/families who can be defined as the "hidden homeless" and the "at risk homeless". The "hidden homeless" are those people that are continuously moving among temporary housing arrangements provided by strangers, friends or family or who find

²⁹ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The Mothers Voices Project: Final Report- New Brunswick Child Care Coalition (2010).

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Wellesley Institute, Precarious Housing in Canada Report (2010).

³⁵ Hope is a Home: New Brunswick's Housing Strategy – New Brunswick Housing Corporation, Department of Social Development (2010).

abandoned buildings to sleep in. The “at risk homeless” include individuals or families who are at imminent risk of eviction from their current housing, who pay too high a proportion of their income for housing, or who live in unacceptable housing.³⁶

In Saint John’s priority neighbourhoods where poverty is highest, not only are there economic challenges associated with renting and owning, but the housing stock is generally old and in poor condition.³⁷ The insufficient mixed-income housing within the priority neighbourhoods has also been identified as an area of concern.³⁸

For low and moderate- income households, housing is arguably their greatest single expenditure. Households with incomes under \$30,350 spend almost 35% of that on shelter as compared to households with annual incomes of \$110,000 at 10.1%.³⁹ The depth of housing gap – the gap between what they would need to pay for acceptable housing and what they can afford to pay - is also significantly greater for renters, especially those in lone parent households.⁴⁰

Low Wage Employment / Unemployment

The minimum wage in New Brunswick (\$10/hour) is slightly lower than the average across the country (\$11.04) and it does not lift most families safely from the poverty line. Lone-parent families of any size and two-earner families with more than two children will live below the poverty line on a minimum wage.⁴¹

Low Education / Job Skills

A higher level of education increases an individual’s chances of moving out of poverty and research has highlighted that a parent’s lack of education frequently acts as a deterrent to his/her children’s success in school. As a result, the cycle of poverty continues into the next generation.⁴²

Currently, New Brunswick (notably, Region 2) has lower literacy and education than Canadian counterparts,⁴³ and university completion rates (15.3%) are below provincial and national averages. Affordability is a major barrier to post-secondary education for youth of low and moderate incomes.⁴⁴

³⁶ Hope is a Home: New Brunswick’s Housing Strategy – New Brunswick Housing Corporation. Department of Social Development. (2010).

³⁷ Vibrant Communities Saint John: Dismantling Poverty Traps – Community Stories – Caledon Institute of Social Policy (2006).

³⁸ The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative Report on Future Roles and Areas of Focus –Deloitte (2011).

³⁹ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012).

⁴² Education to Employment: Pathways Out of Poverty – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2006).

⁴³ Teen Pregnancy Statistical Report (2010).

⁴⁴ Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, Plans SJ (2012).

Benefits of Supporting Children and Families

Poverty

It is estimated that poverty costs Canada \$72 to \$86 billion per year. Child poverty impairs long term national interests, leading to higher healthcare costs, spending on social support services, lost productivity and limited opportunities. Child poverty also compromises too many people's dignity, mental health and well-being.

Targeting poverty reduction strategies for children and youth specifically will have significant intergenerational effects. As research has highlighted, children who experience poverty will be more likely to remain poor as adults, continuing the cycle's destructive path - unless effective policy measures are implemented to prevent this trend.

Housing

Housing is a building block for stable lives so children can get a proper education. Housing circumstances affect the physical and mental health of individuals and families. Stable housing contributes to strengthening cohesion within a community and can foster inclusiveness amongst residents through building relations among neighbours/ businesses and organizations. It also has a positive impact on labour force attainment and is vital to community revitalization.⁴⁵

Childcare

Quality childcare can ensure that all young children have the very best opportunity to thrive. It can allow parents to work to support their families and support women's equality by providing more opportunities for workforce participation. Besides the economic benefits of parent's workforce participation, it can help build strong local communities by generating ongoing economic activity.⁴⁶

Education and Literacy

Higher levels of education correlate with better health outcomes and higher rates of civic engagement, from voting to volunteering. Family educational attainment is more predictive of children's futures than race, health, and family assets. Children of educated parents tend to pursue higher levels of education, be healthier, be better prepared for school, and engage in more activities.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Hope is a Home: New Brunswick's Housing Strategy – New Brunswick Housing Corporation. Department of Social Development. (2010).

⁴⁶ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012)

⁴⁷ Insulating the Education Pipeline to Increase Postsecondary Success – The Forum for Youth Investment (2010).

Partners Supporting Children and Families

There are a number of initiatives, strategies and plans being implemented which impact children and families. On a federal level, **The Pan-Canadian Healthy Living** strategy focuses on preventing chronic disease and promoting good health by helping sectors align and coordinate work efforts to address common risk factors as physical inactivity and unhealthy eating. The Government of Canada has also committed to the New Brunswick Healthy Living Project, **NB Plays!**, which will provide training to frontline after-school hours program leaders to help children and youth in the province become more active and lead healthier lives. The **Canada-New Brunswick Affordable Housing Agreement** has been increasing the number of affordable housing units for seniors, families, non-elderly singles, disabled households and persons with special needs.

Provincially, the early childhood services through the **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development** is focusing on children from birth to age eight. They are working to improve the quality of childcare and early childhood education. Accessibility and inclusion are two other elements of their plan. 10,000 new childcare spaces will be created in the next three years and strategies to support children with significant needs will be prioritized.

Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision is the Department of Social Development's 2012 dental and vision plan for children aged 18 and under in low-income families. The program is expected to benefit about 22,000 children province-wide. The **Office of the Child and Youth Advocate** acts as the advocate for the rights and interests of children and youth in general. It reports on the availability, effectiveness, responsiveness and relevance of child and youth services in the community. In addition to these, there is the Disability Action Plan and the New Brunswick Wellness Strategy that will provide support systems for children and families in the province.

On a municipal level, the **Plan SJ: Municipal Plan (2011)** does not identify specific goals or priorities for children and families but it embodies strategies that will impact these groups. There are enhancements to accessibility in street crossings and walk ways, as well as changes to permits relating to daycare and childcare facilities and recreation facilities.

The City of Saint John (2012) has focused on the following services that will impact children and families in their strategic plan: playground services; parks services; outdoor facility services; indoor recreation facility services; community centre services; neighbourhood improvement & recreation program services; and, trails, connectivity & access services.

The Greater Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy: Poverty Reduction... Moving Forward 10 Years of Reducing Poverty by Vibrant Communities Saint John has identified three priorities -

Workforce Participation, Neighbourhood Revitalization and Housing and Children and Families for investment and action within the city.

Objectives around children and families (combining children and single parents) are:

- Ensure children and youth living in poverty experience equal access to opportunities and supports for physical, intellectual, emotional and social development.
- Invest in early learning programming for parents and children to strengthen their foundation for school readiness.
- Ensure children and youth are engaged with the community in reaching their full potential.
- Promote greater integration of community-wide services and resources so there is “Every Door is the Right Door” for parents, children and youth.

Programs focused on single parents, childcare and parenting include: the Greater Saint John Teen Pregnancy Committee, Family Resource Centre and the Vibrant Women Mentoring Program. School completion is another component of the poverty reduction strategy for single parents and incorporates programs from the Saint John Learning Exchange, the John Howard Society and First Steps Housing Project.

First Steps has been working to enable homeless pregnant and parenting young mothers to achieve safety and stability, develop their parenting skills, complete their education and become economically self-sufficient.

Programs from the poverty reduction strategy that focuses on children and youth specifically include the Early Learning Centre, Partners Assisting Local Schools/Community Schools, Early Childhood Development Coalition with many partners including the Family Resource Centre, Early Learning Centre, the YMCA, Family and Child Education (FACE).

The Early Childhood Coalition is working to provide a consistent, supportive and quality early learning environment in each of Saint John’s priority neighbourhoods/schools that enables parents, early childhood providers and other community partners to work together for the optimal development of children.

BCAPI (Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative) is also supporting initiatives related to children, youth and single parents who live in poverty. Objectives include, increasing opportunities for success in school and employment, and providing adequate resources in low-income neighbourhoods and schools to enable low-income families to improve their well-being. Other programs assisting children and families in Saint John include: Positive Recreational Opportunities for Kids (P.R.O. Kids), POWER UP!, Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring and Sistema.

Conclusion

Deep inequality has a profound impact on Saint John and has been correlated with shorter life expectancies, educational and behavioural challenges and limited access to physical activity among children.⁴⁸

The 2012 Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick outlines some recommendations for the federal and provincial government to increase the well-being of children and families. It starts with the need for poverty reduction and a call to introduce a federal action plan to reduce and eradicate poverty, secured in legislation that identifies key roles for all levels of government.

There is a need for an enhanced child benefit for low-income families. A public system of high quality early childhood education and childcare services that are affordable and available to all children (0-12 years) will be a foundational step in supporting future generations. Priorities need to look at those who families who are most vulnerable including lone-mothers, Aboriginal communities, new Canadians, peoples with disabilities.

Closing the education achievement gap will be a necessary step in breaking the poverty cycle among children and youth and will require resources (social, financial, educational and recreation) directed specifically for low-income children, youth and parents. In addition, while there have been strides around reducing teen pregnancy in the city over time, it still stands out as a significant root issue.

For families to move out of poverty, barriers to workforce participation need to be removed. Childcare subsidy needs to cover the true cost of care, full prescription drug coverage needs to be available especially for the lowest wage earners and the minimum wage needs to be brought up to a living wage. Saint John's vitality rests on the well-being of today's children and families. It will be imperative that organizations, businesses and governments work together strategically to address some of the key challenges affecting the wellness of the city's residents.

Resources

A Choir of Voices: The "What Was Said" Report. A Dialogue on Poverty – Government of New Brunswick (2009).

Child Poverty – The Conference Board of Canada (2013).

Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012).

Child Well-being in Rich Countries: A Comparative Review. Innocenti Report Card #11 – UNICEF (2013).

Education to Employment: Pathways Out of Poverty – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2006).

⁴⁸ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012)

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Health Indicators - Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, New Brunswick Department of Health (2011).

High School Graduation Rates for Students who Live in Saint John Priority Neighbourhoods-BCAPI (n.d.)

Hofferth SL. Social and economic consequences of teenage childbearing. In: Hofferth SL, Hayes CD, eds. Risking the future: adolescent sexuality, pregnancy and childbearing. (1987).

Hope is a Home: New Brunswick’s Housing Strategy – New Brunswick Housing Corporation, Department of Social Development (2010).

HungerCount – Food Banks Canada (2013).

Insulating the Education Pipeline to Increase Postsecondary Success – The Forum for Youth Investment (2010).

Just the Facts – Canada Without Poverty (2013).

The Mothers Voices Project: Final Report- New Brunswick Child Care Coalition (2010).

National Council of Welfare (NCW) (2006).

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Teen Pregnancy Statistical Report (2010).

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The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative Report on Future Roles and Areas of Focus –Deloitte (2011).

Vibrant Communities Saint John: Dismantling Poverty Traps – Community Stories – Caledon Institute of Social Policy (2006).

Wellesley Institute, Precarious Housing in Canada Report (2010).



Education

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Operational Definition

This paper addresses education, defined here as all programs of instruction and training focused on intellectual development and skills acquisition from “cradle to career.” This includes:

- Formal K to 12 – College and University school system
- Early learning programs for parents and pre-school children
- Adult education and workforce training
- Community-supported enrichment programs

The importance of education in enhancing the quality of life

Access to education is critical to every individual’s development, happiness and prosperity and to the economic development, vitality and prosperity of communities. Research has shown conclusively that intellectual stimulation is essential to child development from a very early age, and that children who do not receive this fall rapidly behind their age-mates, sometimes to the extent that they never catch up.⁴⁹ Beyond personal fulfillment, this is of concern because level of educational attainment is very closely correlated with income. The more credentialed earn more, and those without a high school diploma and increasingly, without postsecondary training, have their earning potential and thus their life chances severely limited. At the same time, research shows that children from lower income households have a harder time completing high school and obtaining postsecondary qualifications. For these reasons, various community organizations and government departments have implemented a variety of programs which target children and their parents to assist them in succeeding at school and in training for a career.

The formal K – 12 school, college and university curriculum is the core of our education system and the primary route to academic success and productive employment. However, educational enrichment programs also play a vital role in helping children realize their full potential and ultimately becoming productive members of the community. Public libraries and supplementary reading programs contribute to improved literacy and language development. Likewise, rather than being “frills,” exposure to and participation in sports, art, music and drama classes and clubs have

⁴⁹ See Alexander and Ignjatovic for a review of some of this literature.

been shown to improve communication skills, build self-esteem and promote creative thinking, and help children stay in school. Social networks generated through sports, arts and cultural activities provide a sense of belonging, reduce social isolation and engender a sense of community.⁵⁰ Children who participate in these activities are thus better prepared to break the cycle of poverty that can be tenacious in grabbing hold of the children of economically-disadvantaged families and holding them throughout their adult lives.

Mentorship programs, and participation in sport and cultural activities can also be a diversion from criminal behaviour and addictions for some young people, as well as means for them to develop personal coping skills and social skills.⁵¹ Overall, investment in healthy childhood development is economically prudent as well as humane. The Province of New Brunswick currently spends around \$9,087 a year per child in the K - 12 public school system. This is a modest sum compared to the \$41,883 a year it costs the Province to treat a youth aged 14 -21 for drug addiction at the Portage Centre. A young person placed in remand or secure custody through the NB Youth Court costs the tax payer \$122,361 a year.⁵² If some of these children could find an alternative purpose in life, positive role models and forge healthy relationships in school and through community-based activities, the whole of society benefits.

Access to and involvement in lifelong learning can also reduce healthcare costs later in life. Men and women over age sixty-five who participate in music, art, dance and poetry programs report better overall health, fewer doctor visits, less use of medications, fewer falls, less depression, less loneliness and higher morale.⁵³

For all of these reasons, various educational enrichment programs for children and adults have been implemented by a number of government agencies and community organizations to serve the public.

Overview of education in Saint John

Educational attainment

Overall, the population of New Brunswick and of Saint John is more highly educated today than it was fifty years ago.⁵⁴ In 1961, 1.8% of New Brunswick residents had a university degree. In 2011, 15% of the population was university-educated. Another 32% of the population holds a college diploma or is certified in a trade, double the percentage who held this qualification in 1981, and slightly higher than the Canadian average. In addition, the percentage of New Brunswick residents who left school without a high school diploma has shrunk significantly over the past 50 years.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ See Wright et al, 2007; Cooley and Associates, 2002; and Matassaro, 1997.

⁵¹ Ruiz paper in Conference Board of Canada, 2008.

⁵² Source: Department of Public Safety based on New Brunswick Public Accounts, 2008-09 cited in Executive Council Office presentation on Major Challenges for the Decade Ahead: Province of New Brunswick, 2010 -11.

⁵³ Research cited in Vermont Council on Culture and Innovation:24; c.f. Koenraad Cuypers et al and Dewa et al, cited in Canadian Arts Coalition, 2011.

⁵⁴ This paragraph and the next taken from Folster and Bourgeois, 2013.

⁵⁵ Source: Census of Canada 1961 - 2011.

Nonetheless, New Brunswick continues to lag behind the rest of Canada in educational attainment. The number of New Brunswick residents without a high school diploma remains slightly higher than the Canadian average, although this is possibly a function of the province's higher median age and outmigration. While the percentage of New Brunswick residents with a university degree has risen dramatically since 1961, it has not kept pace with the increase across the country. The gap between the Canadian average and the number of New Brunswick residents who have earned a degree has widened steadily from a 1.1% disparity in 1961, to a gap of 6.5% in 2011.

As outlined in Table 1 below, Saint John residents as a group have slightly higher levels of educational attainment than the province as a whole.⁵⁶ This is perhaps to be expected in an urban area. More adults over 25 have completed high school and obtained community college certificates or university degrees. However, almost across the board, levels of attainment of all types of qualifications are lower than the Canadian average. The exceptions are the percentage of the population with community college diplomas and certification in the trades, where Saint John and New Brunswick very slightly outperform the country as a whole, by about half a percentage point.

Table 1. Pop aged 25 and over by highest level of educational attainment, Saint John (CMA), 2011

| Highest level of Education | Saint John CMA | | NB | | Canada | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|-------|--------------|-------|
| | number | % | number | % | number | % |
| TOTAL POP AGED 25 AND OLDER | 87,665 | 100.0 | 533,225 | 100.0 | 22.9 million | 100.0 |
| No certificate, diploma or degree | 13,995 | 16.0 | 120,590 | 22.6 | 3,956,620 | 17.3 |
| High School diploma | 24,565 | 28.0 | 133,360 | 25.0 | 5,300,080 | 23.1 |
| Post-secondary cert, dip or degree | 49,100 | 56.0 | 279,275 | 52.4 | 13,678,765 | 59.6 |
| Trades certificate (total) | 10,660 | 12.2 | 66,140 | 12.4 | 2,744,380 | 12.0 |
| Trades cert other than apprenticeship | 5,155 | 5.9 | 36,870 | 6.9 | 1,596,595 | 7.0 |
| Registered Apprenticeship Certificate | 5,505 | 6.3 | 29,275 | 5.5 | 1,147,790 | 5.0 |
| College diploma | 19,655 | 22.4 | 107,410 | 20.1 | 4,487,520 | 19.6 |
| University certificate below bachelor | 2,695 | 3.1 | 16,590 | 3.1 | 1,100,325 | 4.8 |
| University degree (total) | 16,095 | 18.4 | 89,130 | 16.7 | 5,346,530 | 23.3 |
| Bachelor degree | 11,150 | 12.7 | 60,635 | 11.4 | 3,347,425 | 14.6 |
| University certificate above bachelor | 1,465 | 1.7 | 8,050 | 1.5 | 571,525 | 2.5 |
| Medicine, dentistry, vet, optometry | 550 | 0.6 | 2,595 | 0.5 | 151,715 | 0.7 |
| Master's degree | 2,530 | 2.9 | 14,580 | 2.7 | 1,068,190 | 4.7 |
| Earned doctorate | 395 | 0.5 | 3,275 | 0.6 | 207,680 | 0.9 |

Source: 2011 Census of Canada, National Household Survey *NHS Focus on Geography Series – Saint John*.

A cursory examination of levels of educational attainment by community in the Saint John CMA indicates variation in levels of educational attainment, and levels of unemployment roughly correlated to levels of educational attainment.

Table 2. Pop aged 15 and over by highest level of educational attainment, persons (n) and percentage of population (%), and unemployment rate (%), selected SJ Census Divisions, 2011

| Highest level Education | Saint John CY | | | Rothesay TV | | | Quispamsis TV | | | Grand Bay – W TV | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---|----|-------------|---|----|---------------|---|----|------------------|---|----|
| TOTAL POP AGED ≥15 (n) | 57,525 | | | 9,700 | | | 13,865 | | | 4,230 | | |
| TOTAL ≥15 LABOUR FORCE | 36,295 | | | 6,360 | | | 9,710 | | | 2,925 | | |
| Unemployment rate (ue in %) | 9.7 | | | 6.4 | | | 6.0 | | | 5.0 | | |
| | n | % | ue | n | % | ue | n | % | ue | n | % | ue |

⁵⁶ Saint John is defined here as the Saint John Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), unless otherwise stated.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------|--|------|-------|--|------|-------|--|------|-------|--|-----|
| No cert, diploma or degree | 13,100 | | 15.2 | 1,145 | | 19.3 | 1,835 | | 11.3 | 675 | | 7.0 |
| High School diploma | 17,830 | | 12.3 | 2,800 | | 8.1 | 3,370 | | 8.3 | 1,195 | | 5.7 |
| Trades cert (total) | 6,255 | | 10.7 | 705 | | 6.0 | 1,340 | | 4.7 | 505 | | 0 |
| College diploma | 10,965 | | 6.7 | 2,025 | | 4.9 | 3,160 | | 6.9 | 1,110 | | 5.1 |
| Uni cert below bach | 1,410 | | 5.9 | 385 | | 0 | 505 | | 6.6 | 70 | | 0 |
| Uni degree (total) | 7,960 | | 4.5 | 2,635 | | 4.1 | 3,655 | | 2.6 | 675 | | 0 |

Source: 2011 Census of Canada, National Household Survey.

Early childhood development and education

There is a large body of research and science that points to the need to create nurturing environments where children can develop along a healthy trajectory physically, cognitively, emotionally, behaviourally, and socially. Healthy child development is foundational to education achievement, life success and community well-being. When adverse childhood experiences occur, healthy child development can be derailed causing serious lifelong consequences. Families who live in poverty are at greatest risk. However, when parents, communities and governments learn together and work together to ensure “at risk” children have the right start in life, more children succeed in school, and stronger communities are built.

New Brunswick does not have a systematic approach to early childhood development and education such as exists in the K-12 Education system. In Saint John there are a variety of government and community groups offering different programs to parents and their children including public health and new parents, child care centres, parent and child programs in neighbourhoods, all operating with limited resources and often restricted by the age and situation of the clients and sharing a common challenge of reaching the most vulnerable. Noting the piecemeal fashion in which early childhood education is delivered throughout Canada, Alexander and Ignjatovic pinpoint a gap in good quality day care, support and services between age one – when mothers on maternity leave must return to work, and age five – when the child enters kindergarten in the public school system.⁵⁷ This gap occurs at a critical period in a child’s development. Alexander and Ignjatovic estimate that to bring Canada up to par with investment in early childhood education in other advanced economies would require an additional 3 to 4 billion dollars a year.⁵⁸

There were 622 regulated child day care facilities (518 day care centres and 104 community day care homes) providing 20,319 spaces for New Brunswick children at end of March 2011. That means there were regulated child care spaces for 21% of New Brunswick children aged 12 and under in 2011, up from 7% in 1996.⁵⁹

Expressed in economic terms, the transactional costs for families finding safe, nurturing and affordable daycare for their children in New Brunswick are enormous. The search conducted by each parent or set of parents in isolation with imperfect information gleaned from friends and/or community agencies can be very challenging. For a large percentage of parents, it is a necessary undertaking, to allow them to work or attend school to provide for their children.

⁵⁷ Alexander and Ignjatovic:2.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Children and Regulated Child Care Spaces,” from the November 2013 newsletter of the Women’s Equality Branch of the Province of New Brunswick.

Early Childhood Development has now come under the mandate of the Department of Education (and Early Childhood Development). This is a significant step to integrating and driving the efforts of different partners in a more systematic and comprehensive way. The Saint John Early Childhood Development Coalition has been coordinating the efforts of many partners to better support children and their families during the early years. However investments in early childhood are still minimal to developing a needed and comprehensive approach.

Education Kindergarten through Grade 12

A recent study found that 76% of New Brunswick children aged 3-5 years old reportedly look at books, magazines or comics on their own every day. This number drops dramatically after school entry, when only 48% of seven year olds in New Brunswick read for pleasure every day, well below the national average. Those seven year olds whose parents read aloud to them daily tend to read more on their own than those who do not have this stimulation.⁶⁰ This highlights the need for extra attention at this critical juncture in a child's development.

There is also ample research indicating that poverty has a significant negative impact on a child's chances of academic success, and consequently his or her lifelong economic prospects. Numerous academic studies have suggested that student performance is strongly linked to household incomes. This has serious implications for Saint John. In 2009, the child poverty rate in Saint John (CMA)–based on the pre-tax Low Income Measure (LIM), an indicator of relative poverty–was 23.6%, down from 23.9% in 2008 and 27.5% in 2000. The 2009 figure was lower than the provincial average (24.5%) and higher than the national rate (23.2%).⁶¹ According to Statistics Canada, Saint John has one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada, with 28.3% of children attending school living in poverty. This is almost double the provincial average of 16.2%.⁶²

Further, a 2012 evaluation of the local school districts' PALS program found that in five out of the seven PALS schools under examination, the child poverty rate is above 50%. In three of these seven PALS schools, the child poverty rate is above 65%. No other district in the province of New Brunswick has as many schools with over half of students coming from low-income households. The child poverty rate for neighbourhoods/schools served by PALS are as follows. Municipal and provincial rates for the same year are included for comparison: Prince Charles School – 65.2%; Centennial – 53.7%; Glen Falls – 48.4%; Hazen White-St. Francis – 68.5%; St. Patrick's – 43.5%; Lorne – 53.7%; SJB-King Edward – 68.8%; Saint John CMA – 18%; Province of New Brunswick – 16.2%.⁶³

The impact of the introduction of French immersion in the English-language school system in New Brunswick in 1973 is visible in the jump in French-English bilingualism among 0-19 year-olds and 20-45 year olds post-1973.⁶⁴ It is not yet clear what impact the cancellation of French immersion for children in kindergarten – grade two in New Brunswick in 2008 will have on bilingual rates in the city

⁶⁰ Hill Research Strategies, November 2011: pp. 26 - 30.

⁶¹ Statistics Canada figures as reported in Greater Saint John Community Foundation, 2011:4.

⁶² Statistics Canada (2006) figure as reported in PALS. Evaluating the success of the PALS program, 2012: 7

⁶³ PALS. Evaluating the success of the PALS program, 2012: 7.

⁶⁴ Statistics Canada. [Focus on Geography Series, 2011 Census: Province of New Brunswick](#), Table 17 New Brunswick Rate of English-French bilingualism by mother tongue and age groups, 2011 Census.

and the province. However, the rate of reported French-English bilingualism has fallen in New Brunswick and the rest of Canada over the past ten years, except in Quebec.

Secondary school completion

During the 2011-12 academic year, 859 New Brunswick students from grades 7- 12 dropped out of school, for a dropout rate 1.7%, down from 2.0% in 2010-11. The dropout rate students in Anglophone schools was 1.9%, compared to 1.1% in Francophone schools. The dropout rate is higher among boys than girls (1.8 to 1.5%).

Of those who dropped out between September 2011 and September 2012, 76.5% listed “personal problems” as their primary reason for leaving. These personal problems included: a lack of interest in school, non-attendance, pregnancy, family difficulties, and childcare arrangements. 11.5% of drop-outs cited academic problems as the main factor in their decision to leave school. Very few cited “financial problems” as their reason for leaving (0.2%).⁶⁵

As recorded in Table 3 below, during the 2011-12 academic year, a total of 170 students dropped out from the seven high schools in the Saint John area.⁶⁶ A much smaller, but equally concerning number of middle school students also dropped out. Statistics maintained by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development indicates that the dropout rate has risen at some area schools over the past decade.⁶⁷

Table 3: number of drop outs from Saint John area high schools in academic year 2011-12

| School | Number of students who dropped out | Dropout rate (%) |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Harbourview High | 29 | 3.0 |
| Kennebecasis Valley High | 28 | 2.5 |
| Rothsay High | 6 | 1.0 |
| Saint John High | 37 | 3.3 |
| Simonds High | 40 | 3.8 |
| St. Malachy's High | 29 | 2.8 |
| Centre Scolaire Samuel-de-Champlain | 1 | 0.4 |
| TOTAL | 170 | |

As measured in 2006, a number of neighbourhoods in the city core have much higher levels of high school non-completion than the city as a whole, with Crescent Valley leading with a 43% non-completion rate.⁶⁸ In 2006, the city of Saint John had a more favourable high school completion rate than the province as a whole, but the drop-out rate still exceeded the national average. Likewise, these neighbourhoods had lower levels of individuals with post-secondary education than the city as a whole, which in turn had lower levels than the province and Canada as a whole. Lower levels of educational attainment were echoed in lower levels of employment and lower income rates in these five neighbourhoods.⁶⁹ A closer look at 2011 census data is required to determine if high school completion rates have improved in various neighbourhoods in the city and surrounding area.

Table 5: High School Non-Completion Rates in Saint John area (2006)

⁶⁵ New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Education Dropout Statistics September 2011-September 2012: 4.

⁶⁶ Ibid: 19 & 24. Schools included: Harbourview High School; Kennebecasis Valley High; Rothsay High; Saint John High; Simonds High; St. Malachy's High; and Centre Scolaire Samuel-de-Champlain.

⁶⁷ See New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013: 24.

⁶⁸ These neighbourhoods are: Crescent Valley; Old North End; Lower West Side; Waterloo Village; and the South End. Source: Asher et al, 2008:74.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

| COMMUNITY | HIGH SCHOOL NON-COMPLETION RATE in 2006 (%) |
|---|---|
| Crescent Valley | 43 |
| Waterloo Village | 40 |
| Old North End | 34 |
| Lower West Side | 27 |
| South End | 24 |
| City of Saint John | 23 |
| Saint John CMA (Census Metropolitan Area) | 19 |
| Suburbs of Saint John | 10 |
| New Brunswick | 27 |
| Canada | 21 |
| Fredericton | 13 |
| Moncton | 20 |
| Dieppe | 16 |

Source: Asher et al, 2008:74.

Dropping out of school has a dramatic limiting effect on employment opportunities and long-term economic welfare.⁷⁰ For this reason, a number of community organizations in Saint John have established programs to support children and young people at risk of dropping out of school, and to assist those who have dropped out to complete a GED.

Over the one-year period between April 1, 2011 and March 31, 2012 330 individuals wrote their GED tests in Saint John and 151 of them were successful (46%). Of the 330 individuals, 25 were from the New Brunswick Community College, of which 14 passed (56%). Between April 1, 2012 and September 30, 2012 in Saint John, 117 individuals wrote their GED tests, 53 were successful (45%). The pass rates for Saint John are very slightly lower than the pass rate for the province as a whole (50% pass rate in New Brunswick).⁷¹

Post-secondary education

The University of New Brunswick at Saint John offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in the Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Education and Nursing. It is also home to New Brunswick's only English-language medical school, and to Saint John's College, which offers English as a second language training. With the exception of students at Saint John's College who are for the most part foreign students, the majority of the student body of UNBSJ is drawn from Saint John and the surrounding area.

The New Brunswick Community College campus in Saint John offers certification in business, healthcare, education and various trades as well as academic studies to complete a high school diploma. There are also a number of private professional schools in the city offering training in office administration, hair styling, et cetera. As might be expected in a city of this size, there are some types of training for which local students are required to go elsewhere. For example: Fine Arts, Law, various specializations in the Arts and Sciences, and certain trades. These courses are offered elsewhere in the province and the region. Therefore, those Saint John residents seeking a post-secondary education in almost any field can obtain it at home or close by.

However, a key issue with respect to post-secondary education in the city is not just existence of programs or their quality, but their accessibility, both financial and logistical. In New Brunswick, family income appears to have an impact on access to post-secondary education. 46.3% of 19 year-

⁷⁰ Human Development Council, 2012.

⁷¹ Source: Linda O'Brien, Manager CALS program, New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Training and Labour.

olds whose families are in the lowest income quartile are enrolled in post-secondary education versus 76.2% of their age-mates whose families are in the highest income quartile.⁷²

University students in New Brunswick pay the second highest undergraduate tuition fees in the country after Ontario. Even though Ontario has higher tuition rates (\$6,640 a year versus \$5,853 in New Brunswick), post-secondary students in New Brunswick are burdened with more debt, and 69% of New Brunswick post-secondary students graduate with debt.

A perennial challenge for the city is retaining those postsecondary graduates it produces. A college or university education in Canada is subsidized by tax payers by several tens of thousands of dollars. There is a significant cost to public purse in educating a graduate who is then forced to leave to find work, or join the local ranks of the underemployed and unemployed. Between 1931 and 2011, New Brunswick had a net outmigration of 164,492 people.⁷³ In addition to the lost investment in training, this represents a loss in productivity and tax revenue to the province, as well as the erosion of community and family ties.

Among the issues related to facilitating the successful completion of post-secondary education among Saint John residents are the following:

- The adequacy of the existing financial and other necessary supports (for example, childcare and possibly mentors) to assist economically or otherwise disadvantaged young people in completing a post-secondary education.
- The causes of and solutions to the high drop-out rate among first-year university students. Currently, more than 20% of New Brunswick university students drop out before obtaining a degree, and 24% of community college students.⁷⁴
- Stemming the outmigration of the educated workforce.

Adult education and life-long learning

Taken as a group, New Brunswick residents read less than other Canadians, although we have collectively improved substantially in this regard over the past decade. 75% of New Brunswick residents said they read at least one book in 2010.⁷⁵ This is up from 61% in 1992. However, the corollary is that 25% of residents did not read even one book in 2010. Further, it is estimated that over half the adult population in New Brunswick has literacy skills below the level that allows them to function adequately at home, at work and in their communities.⁷⁶

New Brunswick fared poorly in the most recent survey of literacy and numeracy skills among adults conducted by the Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD).⁷⁷ The OECD survey determined that literacy levels in Canada were on par with average literacy skills in other OECD member countries (i.e., industrialized advanced economies), but that Canadians' numeracy skills were below the OECD average. In both areas, skills had deteriorated since 2003 and in both

⁷² Human Development Council, 2012:12.

⁷³ Folster and Bourgeois, 2013.

⁷⁴ c.f. Living SJ, 2014: pg.4.

⁷⁵ Hill Research Strategies, 2012:4.

⁷⁶ PETL, 2009:5.

⁷⁷ Results of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) as reported in TD Economics, 2013; c.f. Statistics Canada publication no. 89-555-x.

areas, New Brunswick tested well below the Canadian average as well as the OECD average, and below its own 2003 results. Perhaps not surprisingly, the OECD study found that higher levels of academic attainment correlate to higher literacy and numeracy skills.

The OECD study found that in Canada and in New Brunswick, immigrants and aboriginal Canadians scored lower on both literacy and numeracy tests. The fact that the test was given in French or English only may have a bearing on this result, but they are concerning nevertheless. In addition and likewise concerning is the finding that Canadian females have weaker numeracy skills than their male counterparts.

In a discussion of the skill level of the Saint John workforce, it is also worth noting that there has been a slight decline in the level of French-English bilingualism among New Brunswick residents in recent years. After 40 years of access to French Immersion education in the public school system, only 11.2% of Anglophone Saint John residents speak French.

Table 6. Functional French-English bilingualism in Saint John (CMA), New Brunswick and Canada (%)⁷⁸

| | 1961 | | 1971 | | 1981 | | 1991 | | 2001 | | 2011 | | |
|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | NB | CAN | NB | CAN | NB | CAN | NB | CAN | NB | CAN | SJ | NB | CAN |
| Bilingual Eng/Fr (Total) | 19.0 | 12.2 | 21.5 | 13.4 | 26.5 | 15.3 | 29.5 | 16.3 | 34.2 | 17.7 | 14.5 | 32.7 | 17.5 |
| Bilingual (mother tongue Eng) | | | | | | | | | | | 11.2 | 14.9 | 8.9 |
| Bilingual (mother tongue French) | | | | | | | | | | | 88.6 | 71.0 | 44.4 |
| Bilingual (mother tongue other) | | | | | | | | | | | 9.2 | 14.4 | 11.7 |

Source: Statistics Canada data; adapted from Folster and Bourgeois, 2013.

Partners Supporting Education

There are a number of initiatives occurring on provincial, municipal, community and neighbourhood levels the work towards improving the quality of life of Saint John Residents. An evaluation of BCAP in 2010 found that "There are dozens of poverty-related programs available to the residents of Saint John. It is estimated that there are some 38 government departments, 87 non-profit organizations, and 55 businesses involved with poverty reduction in Saint John."⁷⁹ The 2010 *Poverty Reduction Strategy for Saint John* stated as one of its ongoing objectives the coordination of services.⁸⁰

Community partners

As both a resource for Saint John residents and as a planning tool for community development efforts, *Living SJ* has begun to compile an electronic inventory of existing educational programs, organizations and institutions in the Saint John area. A couple of these selected programs include:

- **The Saint John Learning Exchange** is an adult education organization that focuses on literacy upgrading, GED preparation and workforce essential skills training. They serve over

⁷⁸ Statistics Canada. [Study: The evolution of English-French bilingualism in Canada from 1961 to 2011](#), *The Daily*, May 28, 2013; Jean-Francois Lepage and Jean-Pierre Corbeil. "The Evolution of English-French bilingualism in Canada from 1961 – 2011," *Statistics Canada Insights on Canadian Society*, Catalogue no. 75-006-x, May 2013, pg.10; Statistics Canada. [Focus on Geography Series, 2011 Census: Province of New Brunswick](#), Table 17 New Brunswick Rate of English-French bilingualism by mother tongue and age groups, 2011 Census. Definition of bilingualism: reported themselves able to conduct a conversation in French or English.

⁷⁹ Deloitte and Touche, 2010:35.

⁸⁰ Vibrant Communities, 2010.

400 learners each year with their day and evening classes. They provide unique training opportunities with the ultimate goal of assisting learners in securing sustainable employment.

- **The Early Learning Centre** serves the families in the South End neighbourhood and provides quality early childhood education programs, childcare services and other important supports for young parents. Government, community groups and businesses collaborate and integrate their resources to make this possible. The aim of the ELC is to improve the wellbeing of children 0 to 5 years and their school readiness by providing quality, accessible, comprehensive services that engage parents and address their priorities.
- **Saint John Early Intervention** is a home-based support and teaching program designed to give children a good start in life. Parents are offered guidance and information on child development and parenting skills. The program is designed to help children optimize their development and become school-ready. An extensive resource library is also available for families. This is a targeted program intended to promote attachment and child development.
- **PALS program (Partners Assisting Local Schools)** is a partnership between more than 110 businesses and community organizations and over 1000 volunteers with 18 local schools. Partners provide their employees that opportunity to volunteer during their work week and/or contribute financial resources to their neighbourhood PALS schools. It includes in-school mentoring through Big Brothers Big Sisters, literacy programs, healthy meals, extra-curricular activities and providing opportunities for students to explore their province are some examples of initiatives to improve student well-being and academic achievement.
- **New Brunswick Public Library Service** runs several programs aimed at getting school-aged children to read more and to enjoy it:
 - NBPLS Summer Reading Club - In 2011, 10,745 NB children read 262,441 books over the summer, and received a certificate for their efforts.
 - Hackmatack Reading Program - The Hackmatack Children's Choice Book Award is a literary program that gives young readers (grades 4- 6) the opportunity to select the award winner from a list of forty titles each year. 2011-12, 6264 NB children participated, up from 4423 in 2007-2008.
 - Hackmatack blog - A blog for participants in the Hackmatack Children's Choice Book Award was launched in 2010. It has been visited 13,746 times.
 - Teen blog - a blog about books for teens was introduced in December 2011. It has been visited 16,020 times since it was launched. Teens are invited to contribute to the blog.

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Health and Wellness

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

The priority area of “Health & Wellness” as defined by Living SJ includes the following key terms and thematic areas:

- Health issues (e.g., obesity, addictions, smoking rates, drugs and alcohol)
- Wellness/recreational programming and facilities
- Mental health
- Activity rates and fitness
- Pregnancy and parenting
- Healthcare/health insurance
- Housing and food security
- Healthy spaces (e.g., walking paths and connectors to promote exercise and active living)

The Current Situation

The health and wellness of Saint John’s residents has widespread social and economic implications to the city’s future development and growth. Improving the health and well-being of its residents can only fully be accomplished by also responding to social conditions such as poverty, housing, education, unemployment, early childhood development, social exclusion, food security and accessibility. Strategic investments need to be directed to the various transitions related to age (e.g., childhood, entering school, adolescence, parenthood, older age, etc.) and will rely on establishing programs and policies targeted to children, youth, families and seniors.

Health and wellness can encompass physical, emotional, mental, social, professional and spiritual areas of an individual’s life. In terms of mental health, approximately 27% of Saint John’s residents in Region 2 have a mental health disorder, the most common being major depression, somatoform disorders (unexplained pain), and phobias, each at approximately 6% of the population, according to 2010 prevalence estimates from Department of Mental Health.

Physical health issues also have had a significant impact on residents of Saint John, with many requiring significant use of healthcare (beyond the provincial average), most specifically within the priority neighbourhoods. Healthcare usage includes emergency room, ambulances, mental health and addictions, and the extra-mural program. According to the North End Health Coalition,

“The high usage rate is not surprising as it has been determined that this community has poor health status with over 40% of community residents reporting one or more chronic conditions, as well as 43% living in poverty.”⁸¹

Children and Youth

Saint John’s youth have shared their concerns around mental health with a third of students (39%) reported feeling depressed at least sometimes, and 20% feeling they needed help for depression. 60% of students reported they had classes that addressed decision-making, peer pressure, assertiveness or refusal skills in the 2011-12 school year.

For children and youth, engagement in recreation activities and sports can provide positive benefits related to psychological health, physical health, familial interaction, peer influence, academic performance, community development and other lifestyle behaviours.⁸²

Youth who participate in recreational activities have shown better academic outcomes in high school and college, less truancy, and fewer behavioural challenges. Conversely, teens that do not participate are nearly three times more likely to skip classes and to use drugs than their counterparts.⁸³

Unfortunately within the province of New Brunswick and the city of Saint John, a lack of recommended physical exercise has been noted as children are spending increasing hours in front of computers and televisions during their afterschool hours. Approximately 63% of children’s free time after school and on weekends is sedentary.⁸⁴ Youth in the province are also not attaining their recommended daily physical activity level. At only 7%, they have the lowest percentage in Canada.

Statistics Canada has reported a childhood obesity rate of 24% for New Brunswick youth aged 12-17.⁸⁵ Youth health is further impaired as young adults constitute the highest proportion of smokers in the province.⁸⁶ Teen pregnancy is also significantly higher than the provincial average of 24.3% in

⁸¹ ONE Voice: Social Programming Initiative – Old North End (2010).

⁸² Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association (www.lin.ca/resource/html/youthb.htm).

⁸³ Strengthening Pathways to Education: For Youth at Risk in Saint John (2009).

⁸⁴ Is Active Play Extinct? Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children & Youth (2012).

⁸⁵ Play Saint John Report: Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan – City of Saint John (2012).

⁸⁶ Live Well, Be Well: New Brunswick’s Wellness Strategy 2009-2013 – Government of New Brunswick (n.d.)

Saint John (44.8%). Lack of subsidized birth control in the province and access to family physicians have been considered impediments to timely access to birth control.⁸⁷

Families

In 2011, 380 incidents of domestic violence were reported in the Saint John census metropolitan area, which includes Quispamsis, Grand Bay – Westfield, Rothesay and Hampton. 2013 data from Statistics Canada revealed that Saint John has the highest reported rate of family violence in Canada for the second year in a row.

As it relates to wellness and recreational programming, there have been a number of benefits identified by families including, fitness, stress relief, fun and relaxation. Sport participation can also help families develop a wide range of skills and attitudes, such as teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, communications, courage, respect for others, self-discipline and self-esteem.⁸⁸

Family structure has been shown to influence the sports participation of children, especially if there are two parents who can share the responsibility of facilitating their children's sports participation. The highest children's sport participation rates (53%) occur in intact families where both birth parents are present.⁸⁹ Within Saint John, lone mothers head 20% of families. In fact lone-parent families are also experiencing high levels of poverty in the city with just over 60% living below the poverty line – the highest rate in Canada.⁹⁰

There is also a correlation between the level of educational attainment and sport activity- the greater the educational attainment; the more active an adult is in sport. Saint John has a high rate of residents with less than high school attainment (23.3%), almost one quarter of the population.⁹¹ It can be suggested that the low level of educational attainment within the city may impact the level of sport participation.

Seniors

By 2025, approximately one quarter of the population of Canada will be comprised of seniors, as more baby boomers turn 65 and older.⁹² Unfortunately the poverty rate among seniors is rising in Canada (from 16.1% in 2007 to 18.5% in 2010).⁹³ Exploring physical health in this demographic also

⁸⁷ Family and Community Services (2004).

⁸⁸ Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada – Conference Board of Canada (2005).

⁸⁹ Kids Sports, Statistics Canada (2009).

⁹⁰ Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS) Report (2012).

⁹¹ Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada – Conference Board of Canada (2005).

⁹² Gap Between Rich and Poor: Elderly Poverty Rate (65 years of age and older) – Vital Signs Community Foundations of Canada (2012).

⁹³ Poverty Trends Scorecard: Canada 2012 – Citizens for Public Justice (n.d.).

highlights concern around chronic diseases, which are currently an enormous burden in Canada. The prevalence increases with age and is highest among older people in vulnerable communities (e.g., Aboriginal and economically disadvantaged groups).⁹⁴

Practicing positive lifestyle behaviours can help seniors live more years independently and in good health. Even modest rates of physical activity have been shown to stave off functional declines in people with osteoarthritis.⁹⁵ Appropriate physical activity also helps with pain management.⁹⁶

Investing in healthy aging initiatives for seniors also have wide ranging social and economic benefits. Approximately 69% of older Canadians provide one or more types of assistance to spouses, children, grandchildren, friends and neighbours.⁹⁷ In addition, civil society programs benefit from the voluntary contributions of a large and growing number of retired seniors with valuable knowledge and skills.⁹⁸

Potential Barriers

Poverty

The New Brunswick's Child and Family Poverty Report Card states that one in every six children in New Brunswick (24,550 in total) live in poverty, and that the child poverty rate for female lone-parent families is very high at 58%.⁹⁹ Living in poverty can affect children's cognitive development, academic success, social and emotional well-being and physical health.¹⁰⁰ Poverty has direct implications on food security and the ability to afford a healthy and nourishing diet. New Brunswick has been encountering an upward trend with food bank usage, especially among single-parent families.¹⁰¹

Household income is also highly correlated to the ability for children or parents to be engaged in sport and recreational activities. Only one fifth of adults with household incomes under \$20,000 participate in sport.¹⁰² According to the Community Profiles: Saint John (CMA) the median income for persons 15 years and over, after tax, in Saint John is \$21,852.¹⁰³

Accessibility

Access to an affordable and effective public transit system is critically important for low-income

⁹⁴ Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) (2005).

⁹⁵ Feinglass et al. (2005).

⁹⁶ Arthritis Society (2005).

⁹⁷ National Advisory Council on Aging (NACA) (2001).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Children's Health Task Force - VCSJ (2008).

¹⁰⁰ The Barriers for People in Poverty – Partnership to End Poverty (n.d.)

¹⁰¹ Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012).

¹⁰² Strengthening Canada: The Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada – Conference Board of Canada (2005).

¹⁰³ Statistics Canada (2006).

households. It is one of the golden keys to accessing employment, education and training and the day-to-day needs for food, health care, recreation and other basic services. The ability to “get out of the house” was linked to better access to employment, education, social networks and activities, all leading to better quality of life and reduced stress/improved physical and mental health.¹⁰⁴

However getting out of the house can be quite challenging for those living with different disabilities within the province of New Brunswick. Many recreational facilities were built without adequate consideration for the needs of participants and spectators with different disabilities. Also, another reality for many persons with disabilities is that they have limited income and are unable to afford transportation, participation and admission fees, required equipment, etc. in order to participate in many typical recreational and active living experiences.¹⁰⁵

Municipal budgets

There have been decreased municipal budgets for parks and recreation, and these budgets are far lower than other municipalities such as Fredericton. The city of Saint John 2010 budget report acknowledges this gap noting that, “periods of restraint have meant that the resources committed to recreation and parks programs and facilities have diminished noticeably in the past decade.”¹⁰⁶ However, during the 2010 budget approval process, Common Council passed a five percent increase to the city budget to allow for additional funding for neighbourhood centres, a new focus on developing green spaces and trails within the city, a larger commitment to the PRO-Kids programs, enhancement of the city’s summer playground programs and additional staffing for recreation programs.

Benefits of Supporting Health and Wellness

Healthcare costs

The costs of obesity, inactivity and tobacco use are overwhelming, socially as well as financially. Recent estimates of health-care spending due to physical inactivity range from \$2.1 billion to \$5.3 billion annually, representing as much as 4.8 percent of total health-care costs nationally. Obesity costs the New Brunswick economy an estimated \$200 million a year or 1.4% of GDP. Similarly, tobacco use costs over \$338 million.¹⁰⁷ Adding to that, chronic diseases are responsible for 67% of total direct costs in healthcare and 60% of total indirect costs (\$52 billion) as a result of early death, loss of productivity and foregone income.¹⁰⁸

A recent study of homeless people with substance abuse and mental health issues in British Columbia

¹⁰⁴ Getting Around if You’re Just Getting By: Poverty, Policy & Public Transit, VCSJ (2012).

¹⁰⁵ Disability Action Plan: The Time for Action is Now - GNB (2012).

¹⁰⁶ The City of Saint John Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan - City of Saint John (2012).

¹⁰⁷ GPI Atlantic - Colman, R., Rainer, R., Wilson J. (2003).

¹⁰⁸ PHAC (2005).

argues that one homeless person costs the public system in excess of \$55,000 per year.¹⁰⁹ Alternately, if this same population was provided with adequate housing and supports, it is estimated that the cost per person would drop to \$37,000 per year, which would save the Province approximately \$211 million annually.

Labour force productivity

Labour force productivity would increase with a more healthy community in Saint John. Healthier and happier employees mean less additional costs and absenteeism from the workplace.¹¹⁰ It can also result in a more efficient workforce, leading to increased wages and earnings.¹¹¹

More than 300,000 Canadians 65 or older were in the labour force in 2001.¹¹² As demographic shifts reduce the ratio between the proportion of employed and unemployed Canadians (i.e., children and retired people), governments and some employers are encouraging individuals to work longer. Remaining in the workforce and actively participating in civic affairs depends, in large part, on staying in good health.¹¹³

Economic spending

Communities with vibrant parks and recreation can attract businesses and employees in search of a high quality of life and can increase the value of nearby properties. Parks and recreational facilities also help improve a community's image, socioeconomic status and enhance the area's desirability.¹¹⁴

Household spending on sport has a significant impact on the Canadian economy with about \$15.8 billion spent on sport (in 2004). This figure constitutes 1.2 per cent of Canada's 2004 gross domestic product (GDP) of \$1.3 trillion.¹¹⁵

Social cohesion and civic engagement

Mental fitness and resiliency describes people's capacity to make positive changes in their daily routines, whether choosing healthy eating, being physically active, or living tobacco free. When people are mentally fit and resilient they are healthier, live longer, are more successful in school and jobs, are happier in relationships and connected to their communities.¹¹⁶ Engaging in sport and recreation can positively impact one's resiliency and it has significant social implications. It can help strengthen communities and build social cohesion. Participants experience a high degree of

¹⁰⁹ Patterson et al. (2008).

¹¹⁰ Alberta Government website: Alberta Community Development

¹¹¹ Investing in Prevention: The Economic Perspective - Public Health Agency of Canada (2009).

¹¹² Statistics Canada (2001).

¹¹³ Healthy Aging in Canada: A New Vision, A Vital Investment From Evidence to Action - Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Committee of Officials (Seniors) (2006)

¹¹⁴ The Trust for Public Land, Land and People, U.S. Spring (2006).

¹¹⁵ The Socio- economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada, Conference Board of Canada (2005).

¹¹⁶ Mental Fitness. Government of New Brunswick, Healthy and Inclusive Communities. (2014).

interaction with other individuals, which improves interpersonal relationships, establishes the basis for trust and builds teamwork skills that generate gains in social cohesion.

Social cohesion, in turn, is fundamental to building social capital. Sport works by constructing associations of people that constitute social networks with a defined purpose. These networks generate trust and a willingness to interact with others outside of sport. This willingness can be harnessed to social and economic advantage. Public investment in sport brings many benefits to communities. It gives individuals of all ages good opportunities to be actively involved in their communities, which helps them learn positive lessons about responsibility and respect for others, and gives them the chance to give back to their communities.¹¹⁷

Parks and recreation are also essential for strengthening and maintaining a healthy community. Recreation brings neighbours together, encourages responsibility towards establishing and maintaining safer, cleaner neighborhoods and creates a livelier community atmosphere. It also promotes social bonds by uniting families, building cultural tolerance and supporting seniors and individuals with disabilities.¹¹⁸

Civic engagement is also being fostered throughout the country through volunteerism. In 2010, 12% of people aged 15 and over did volunteer work for sports and recreation organizations. It was the most common type of organization volunteers contributed to. Organizations associated with sports and recreation accounted for 19% of volunteer hours, while those providing social services and religious organizations accounted for 18% and 15%.¹¹⁹ Volunteers are also most frequently multi participants (as active participants, attendees or both, as well as volunteers).¹²⁰

Partners Supporting Health and Wellness

There are a number of initiatives occurring on national, provincial, municipal and community levels to address health and wellness. While it is clear that there are a variety of initiatives, the degree to which they are currently being implemented and the level of impact on the city of Saint John will need to be evaluated. The key strategies referenced below can be referred to online for more detailed information.

Federal/National

- A couple of the Federal strategies that touch on health and wellness include: The Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy which focuses on preventing chronic disease and promoting

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ CSGVP (2010).

¹²⁰ Socio-economic Benefits of Sport Participation in Canada, Conference Board of Canada (2005).

good health by helping sectors align and coordinate work efforts to address common risk factors such as physical inactivity and unhealthy eating; and the Mental Health Commission's Mental Health Strategy for Canada (2012) is the first mental health strategy for Canada and is considered a "blueprint for change."

Provincial

- Live Well, Be Well: New Brunswick's Wellness Strategy (2009-2013) - Government of New Brunswick: The Provincial Strategy focuses on children and youth. Identified wellness goals / priorities include:
 - To improve mental fitness and resilience
 - To increase physical activity levels
 - To increase rates of healthy eating
- New Brunswick's Wellness Strategy: Action Plan (2012-2013): The plan highlights the strategic direction and associated activities for "Wellness Goals/Priorities" for different settings, including schools, communities, homes, workplaces and the province.
- Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision Program (2012): The program provides a dental and vision plan for all children aged 18 and under in low-income families. The program is expected to benefit about 22,000 children province-wide.
- Disability Action Plan (2012): The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons identified "Recreation & Wellness" as a key priority area for the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in New Brunswick communities.
- New Brunswick Prescription Drug Plan (2013): Once implemented the plan will cover drugs listed on the New Brunswick Prescription Drug Program formulary. There will be no deductible, and coverage will not be denied because of age, gender or pre-existing medical conditions.
- The Action Plan for Mental Health in New Brunswick 2011-2018 (2011): This plan establishes a vision of New Brunswick's desired mental-health-care system, followed by strategic goals and a specific action plan to achieve these goals.
- The Saint John Community Mental Health Service: provides community-based mental health services in short term and long term rehabilitation, child and youth services, senior services, crisis programs and specialized mental health services for those involved with the legal system.
- St. Joseph Community Health Centre: Using the determinants of health and community development principles, the Community Health Centre's enable access to primary health care- multidisciplinary teams, health promotion with low-income individuals to promote health and facilitate access to essential services.

- Community Health Needs Assessment: In April 2012, the provincial government released “A Primary Health Care Framework for New Brunswick”. It was meant to serve as the foundation for creating a health-care system that would be more responsive to the needs of communities and individuals. As part of the recommendations, there was a commitment to complete 10 Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA) around the Province. The City of Saint John was identified as one of the ten communities.

The objectives of the CHNA included:

- Assessing the strengths and limitations of the primary health care services delivery network;
- Providing an opportunity for diverse individuals to dialogue on health and wellness issues;
- Involving the community in articulating a health and wellness vision to inform the health and well-being priorities for Horizon Health Network, municipalities and the provincial government;
- Effectively engaging community partners, including service providers, community groups and individuals, in the planning of primary health care services;

Municipal

- Plan SJ: Municipal Plan – City of Saint John, Community Facilities (2011): Community Facility Goals include (relevant to Health & Wellness):
 - Support active living through the provision of active transportation and recreational infrastructure.
 - Promote social cohesion and ensure community facilities, programs and recreational opportunities are accessible to, and affordable for, all members of the community.
- The City of Saint John Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan – City of Saint John (2012): The strategic plan identified three “Focus Areas” that inform all priorities areas, the first being “Healthy & Active Living” which incorporates the concepts of physical experience, total life experience and the relevance of physical activity to daily life and its place within communities.
- The municipality also provides ongoing Recreation and Cultural Programming; Service Seniors Programs; Playground Program; Community Centres; Tennis Program at Shamrock Park. The city of Saint John also has a program for subsidized recreation for children – Prokids.

Community level

On a community level, there is a robust spectrum of community partners/available programs involved in supporting initiatives related to health and wellness in the city of Saint John.

These include:

- Boys and Girls Club
- Family Resource Centre
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Pasage Inc.
- Greater Saint John YMCA
- AIDS SJ
- Family Plus Life Solutions
- Coverdale Center for Women
- CNIB
- Saint John Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Seniors Resource Center
- Sophia Recovery Center
- VON
- FAST (Families and Schools Together)
- First Steps Housing Project
- Food Purchasing Club
- Maison des Jeunes-Zone Ado
- FACE (formerly Early Intervention)
PALS (Partners Assisting Local Schools)
- P.R.O. Kids, StoryTent
- TRC (The Resource Centre for Youth)
- John Howard Society
- Neighbourhood recreation centres

Initiatives include, but are not limited to: creating awareness around teen pregnancy; offering pregnant women and children a safe place to sleep; poverty reduction strategies; neighbourhood revitalization and housing; housing for youth; early childhood programming and addiction services and educational seminars for seniors.

Conclusion

Improving the health and wellness of Saint John's residents requires addressing the varying needs associated with different life stages. This includes services, programs and initiatives that promote healthy child development, build self-esteem and emotional support for teens, provide counseling and mental health services and address alcohol and drug abuse.

Having a higher level of mental fitness or wellness enables people to more fully enjoy and appreciate their environment and the people in it. When mental fitness needs are sufficiently met, people become more self-determined. They adopt behaviours that contribute to their own personal wellness and that of others, and they make healthier choices.

As the Action Plan for Mental Health in New Brunswick highlights:

"New Brunswick must move away from a 'sickness' model in which people seek treatment for illnesses, particularly mental illness, and invest in cost avoidance strategies that will yield returns in the long term."¹²¹ The province and the city stand to benefit from adopting a proactive approach to health and wellness.

¹²¹ The Action Plan for Mental Health in New Brunswick 2011-2018 (2011).

Enhancing health and wellness also requires a robust infrastructure to be in place. The implications of poverty, housing, homelessness, food security and accessibility on the well-being of Saint John's residents are vast. Addressing issues related to these areas will have considerable impact on the health and wellness in this community.

Resources

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Housing and Homelessness

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

The priority area of "Housing & Homelessness" includes all types of housing along the "housing continuum", emergency, supportive, transitional, not-for-profit, social, and private sector. Descriptive terms include "affordable housing"; "accessible housing"; "housing supports"; "housing developments" (e.g., neighbourhoods and housing plans); "barriers to housing"; "shelter" and/or "hostel"; "homeless" and/or "homelessness". Furthermore, the noted terms relate to specific demographics, including youth, women, men, and families.

Current Situation

Affordable Housing

The state of Saint John's affordable housing stock is not ideal. Much of the city's housing stock is old and in need of repair. As of 2006, approximately half of the housing stock was built before 1970, and of that, 20% was built before 1945 (Human Development Council, 2008). Saint John residents reported the need for major repairs (9%), minor repairs (33%), and regular maintenance (58%) (Human Development Council, 2008). This is reflective of a lack of recent rental development within the city (Benefits Blueprint: Housing Requirements Report, Housing Advisory Group, 2007). According to the Report of the Auditor General: Housing Agreement (2011), without additional funds for remediation, the overall portfolio of province-owned buildings would fall to "poor" in 2017 and "critical" in 2027, at the current funding levels.

In two priority neighbourhoods within Saint John, more than 90% of residents rent. Priority neighbourhoods had a poorer rate of home ownership than the city as a whole with an extremely high rate of rented dwellings in the Waterloo Village (94%) compared to less than 50% in the city. Comparing the city to other areas, however, shows it has a higher prevalence of rented dwellings than the national and provincial averages and it is second only to Campbellton among the other New Brunswick cities. Again, the neighbourhoods had an older housing stock than the city with the Old North End taking the lead with 78% built during 1960 or before. Not surprisingly, the Old

North End had the smallest proportion of newer dwellings with only 2% constructed between 1986 and 2006. Comparing the city to the national and provincial averages and the other NB cities shows that it generally has a higher proportion of older dwellings and a smaller proportion of the newer ones (Poverty & Plenty II, 2008).

The rental vacancy rate within the city is at a record high for the first time in 15 years - 10%, and is predicted to remain for the next two years (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation). A 2007 Urban Poverty Project report, noted that the city of Saint John had one of highest levels of poverty in Canada concentrated within small number of neighbourhoods. In 2000, approximately 24%¹²² of city residents experienced poverty - one of the highest of any urban centre in Canada. In fact, 14% of city residents spend more than 30% of income on housing alone (Benefits Blueprint: Housing Requirements Report, Housing Advisory Group, 2007).

Saint John has one of the lowest population densities in Canada. The current state of housing is largely attributable to the following historical factors: 1) post-war development within the city contained very little mixed use (i.e., large tracts of new land was developed, with single purposes uses in isolation of each other - residential was generally separated from places of employment, major retail, commercial and industrial centres, the University, and the Regional Hospital; 2) amalgamation with neighbouring municipalities perpetuated low-density development ; and, 3) residential population decline, resulting in significant disinvestment and vacancies in the Uptown and the urban core (Plan SJ, 2012). Furthermore, economic support for social housing from the federal government is starting to expire. Current funding agreements between New Brunswick and the Government of Canada total \$35 million annually; however, by 2017, this will decline to \$25 million, with all funding dried up by 2034 (Report of the Auditor General: Housing Agreement, 2011).

Persons with disabilities provide a unique perspective on the need for affordable housing, specifically in terms of inclusiveness. Many newer buildings designed to include more barrier free options are often priced out of reach for the majority of consumers with disabilities living on fixed incomes. The current amount of available non-profit public housing choices is woefully inadequate to meet the huge pent-up demand from low income consumers and families across the province. Affordable and accessible housing needs to be located in areas close to schools, shopping, medical services, banking, recreational opportunities and other community related programs so that lack of affordable and accessible transportation will not become a barrier to participation in the community. Some persons with disabilities will also need access to support services such as homemakers and attendant care in order to be able to live independently in their housing choice in the community (Government of New Brunswick, 2010).

¹²² When utilizing the “low income cut-off” (LICO) approach to measure poverty, LICO is an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family. The approach is essentially to estimate an income threshold at which families are expected to spend 20 percentage points more than the average family on food, shelter and clothing (Statistics Canada, 2009)

Homelessness

Measuring the true incidence of homelessness within a city is very difficult, as many individuals and families that experience homelessness go undetected.¹²³ Emergency shelters/transitional housing that provide services to the “sheltered homeless” in the province (those individuals/families who stay temporarily) are operating over capacity. Those accessing shelters may be one or two-time users while others may access shelters multiple times through the year, but may not be able or ready to form the long-term connections necessary to move to stable housing (Government of New Brunswick, 2010). Saint John currently does not have an emergency housing program; however, it is estimated that there are currently 100 homeless and at-risk youth in need of transitional housing in the Saint John area. In 2012, more than 62 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 used a shelter. The prevalence of youth homelessness (between the ages of 16 and 24) appears to have increased over the last 6 years: it was reported that 45 homeless youth accessed emergency shelter support in 2007 (HDC, 2007); whereas, more than 62 young people used a shelter in 2012 (HDC, 2013).

The Importance of Affordable Housing in Saint John

Shelter is considered a basic foundational necessity for individuals. According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, shelter is situated within the one of the most fundamental levels of needs, ‘Physiological’. According to Maslow’s Theory, if the basic level is not met, an individual has difficulty progressing to higher levels within the hierarchy, including ‘Safety’ (i.e., employment, resources, family, health, property); Love / Belonging’ (i.e., friendship, family); ‘Esteem’ (i.e., self-esteem, confidence, achievement, and respect of and by others); and, ‘Self-Actualization’. In real life terms, “without suitable shelter, the ability to benefit from government and community based services is limited and participation becomes secondary to the more immediate need of finding shelter.”

The presence of housing is considered to be a “building block” for stability in one’s life and has been shown to directly contribute to crime prevention, school achievement, labour attachment, and to the mental and physical health of individuals and families. Beyond shelter, *good* and *safe* housing is an important determinant of well being and contributes to a greater quality of life for all individuals and communities. A home provides a foundation for healthy living, offering the stability that enables people to work, play, get educated, form relationships, nurture children and participate as citizens. Housing has also been shown to positively contribute to neighbourhood revitalization, through feelings of enhanced cohesion and inclusiveness within a community.

Mixed housing within neighbourhoods, including “a range of housing types, tenures and costs also ensures diversity and creates safe, healthy and inclusive neighbourhoods with a high quality of life

¹²³ In New Brunswick, many individuals/families can be defined as the “hidden homeless” and the “at risk homeless”. The “hidden homeless” are those people that are continuously moving among temporary housing arrangements provided by strangers, friends or family or who find abandoned buildings to sleep in. The “at risk homeless” include individuals or families who are at imminent risk of eviction from their current housing, who pay too high a proportion of their income for housing, or who live in unacceptable housing.

for residents” (Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, 2009). The success of Housing First initiatives¹²⁴ have illustrated that housing/shelter is a critical prerequisite to achieving positive outcomes in other areas of life, including physical and mental health, addiction, and access to social services (Canadian Housing & Renewal Association, 2009).

Social and Economic Impacts of Affordable Housing and Homelessness

Social Impacts

As noted, the presence of housing significantly contributes to many social impacts. “A home provides a foundation for healthy living, offering the stability that enables people to work, play, get educated, form relationships, nurture children and participate as citizens. These social functions all contribute to economic self-sufficiency. For example, it has been demonstrated that residential stability and good quality housing can have positive effects on academic performance, with subsequent impacts on earnings (Canadian Housing & Renewal Association, 2009).”

The results of a recent UK study, *The Human Cost: How the Lack of Affordable Housing Impacts on All Aspects of Life* (Shelter, 2010), reveal that the lack of affordable housing is spreading to a much wider group than simply those at the sharp end of the housing crisis, and is having a profound effect on the way in which we live our lives in the following areas:

- Delaying starting a family.
- Continuing to live with a partner because they couldn’t afford to live apart.
- Continuing to live with parents, negatively impacting the ability to develop and maintain relationships.
- Reducing the amount they spend on food to help pay their housing costs.
- High housing costs have affected their ability to move for work.
- Resorting to sometimes borrowing on a credit card to help pay for housing costs.
- Many believe that their children or future children will not be able to afford a decent home.

Economic Impacts

Housing has a direct impact on the economy of community, through economic development, neighbourhood stabilization, health and safety, and environmental sustainability. For example, the development of new housing or upgrading existing housing stocks within a community contributes to employment opportunities. “For every new home built, approximately 1.2 person years of employment are generated on site, with an additional 1.8 years off site in indirect employment;....a dollar invested in affordable housing may generate three or four times that amount due to the

¹²⁴ As an alternative to the current system of emergency shelter/transitional housing, the Housing First methodology is premised on the belief that vulnerable and at-risk homeless families are more responsive to interventions and social services support *after they are in their own housing*, rather than while living in temporary/transitional facilities or housing programs. With permanent housing, these families can begin to regain the self-confidence and control over their lives they lost when they became homeless (Beyond Shelter, 2012: <http://www.beyondshelter.org>).

additional contributions made by owners and municipalities in mortgage financing and equity" (Canadian Housing & Renewal Association, 2009). Furthermore, it has been shown that access to affordable housing benefits the business community, by attracting and retaining service sectors workers, as well as other key sectors such as safety and education. Investments in affordable housing can also reduce costs elsewhere in the service system. Households who are forced to live in overcrowded or inadequate housing or in marginalized neighbourhoods are more likely to experience health problems and risks to safety, and to require greater social service support. An investment in upgrading older rental housing not only contributes to the economy of community, but also directly impacts a community's environment. For example, "energy retrofits can benefit lower income households through reduced utility costs and the creation of green jobs" (Canadian Housing & Renewal Association, 2009). At the extreme end of the spectrum, failure to invest in the housing system can result in people becoming homeless.

Supporting homelessness is a very expensive business; in fact, the cost of inaction is higher than the cost of providing housing. While it is hard to measure the real cost of homelessness, the estimated cost to provide services to homeless people can cost thousands of dollars per person each annually. Estimates range from \$30,000-\$40,000 annually, including the costs of staying in an emergency shelter, to in excess of \$55,000 annually for homeless individuals with substance and mental health issues (The Homeless Hub, 2012). In contrast, a number of studies have shown that investment in providing housing for people who are homeless actually saves the government money in related costs. For example, the cost of providing a social housing unit is \$25 to \$31 per day compared to an emergency shelter bed at \$69 per day, a jail cell at \$143 per day and a psychiatric inpatient bed at \$665 per day (Canadian Housing & Renewal Association, 2009).

To fully understand the cost of homelessness, you must consider both direct and indirect costs: direct costs include shelters and services; whereas, indirect costs include those associated with increased use of health services, policing and the criminal justice system. A recent report suggests that a conservative estimate of the annual cost of homelessness in Canada in 2007 was \$4.5 to 6 billion – this for community organizations, governments and non-profits to provide emergency services (The Homeless Hub, 2012).

Research reveals a complex set of links between homelessness and health – people who are homeless are poorly nourished, they are unable to get proper rest, when they get sick they are unable to engage in proper health practices (such as following a drug or treatment regime), they live in congregate settings and are exposed to communicable diseases, frequent moves and instability threaten their health, they are unable to maintain a healthy social network necessary for good health, they are vulnerable to a higher level of physical and sexual violence, inadequate social programs trap people in their homelessness, and a downward cycle of despair along with sleep deprivation can lead to chronic depression and serious mental health concerns. People who are homeless often have high rates of health care utilization, frequently receiving care from emergency departments. The annual cost of hospitalization for a 'housed person' is \$524; whereas, it is \$2,495 for a 'homeless person' (The Homeless Hub, 2012).

Addressing Affordable Housing & Homelessness in Saint John

Many key players are involved in affordable housing and homelessness issues, including federal, provincial and municipal departments, as well as community organizations and neighbourhood-level partners.

Federal

Affordable housing is principally supported by the federal government through the Canada/New Brunswick Affordable Housing Agreement¹²⁵. The amendment to the Canada/New Brunswick Affordable Housing Program Agreement in July 2011, which implemented the two year extension of Affordable Housing Initiative as well as funding under Canada's Economic Action Plan, brought \$42.66 million in federal funding to the province. The Government of New Brunswick matched the commitment for a total of \$85.32 million to assist those in housing need and, in collaboration with other levels of government and community partners, made various types of affordable housing programs possible. The federal government supports community based initiatives to reduce homelessness through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, including Saint John. A Community Advisory Board reviews applications for funding from local organizations and distributes the city's allocation (\$286,372 in 2013/2014) in accordance with the priorities set out in our Community Plan. Within the 2013 Federal Budget, the HPS was renewed for an additional five years, to 2019, with a 'Housing First' approach.

Provincial

The Government of New Brunswick implemented a housing strategy in 2010, *Hope is a Home: New Brunswick's Housing Strategy*, which features a Housing Policy Framework: A Vision for Housing. In addition, The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons supports affordable housing and homelessness issues through the *Disability Action Plan: The time for action is now* (2012), which identified the following housing needs for persons with disabilities: 1) To increase the number of accessible and affordable housing units in the province; and, 2) To promote the concept of universal barrier free design concepts in all new housing projects including renovations of existing housing stocks where feasible. The need for 'Universal Barrier Free Design/Access' is also identified as a priority area within the Report, and is relevant in terms of considerations for the physical design and construction of public facilities and housing options.

Municipal

The City of Saint John's Plan SJ (2012) specifically identifies 'Neighbourhoods & Housing' as an area for consideration. The Plan identified the following directions for the City: Saint John is comprised of healthy, unique and inclusive neighbourhoods. Saint John:

- Strengthens the concept of 'one' Saint John by working to make distinct neighbourhoods feel part of one City and one future;

¹²⁵ The 2013 Federal Budget included a commitment of \$253 million per year over five years to renew the Investment in Affordable Housing, nationally.

- Supports mixed income living, offering a range of diverse housing choices to meet different life-cycle needs;
- Enables people of any income level to live in a neighbourhood of their choosing;
- Builds on the strong tradition of neighbours taking care of each other - neighbourhoods are the foundation of the strong community pride that defines Saint John; and
- Provides a range of services, employment, leisure and recreational choices within neighbourhoods to provide people with the opportunity to live, work, and play in their neighbourhood.

Community & Neighbourhood

The city of Saint John has a plethora of community-based organizations, committees and working groups, and priority neighbourhood groups working to improve the affordable housing stock within the city, as well as address homelessness. Three key groups include Vibrant Communities Saint John, Human Development Council, and the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative, which help to facilitate initiatives related to affordable housing and homelessness within the city. In addition, the Greater Saint John Area Housing Working Group and the Greater Saint John Homelessness Steering Committee (GSJHSC) have been established to gather community-organizations, businesses and government representatives to address housing issues within city. Other key organizations that specifically support affordable housing include Saint John Non Profit Housing Inc. and Housing Alternatives Inc. Specific to homelessness, the city of Saint John has two year-round emergency shelters: The Centre of Hope (Salvation Army) for men and Coverdale Centre for Women. The City also has a cold weather shelter for men, *Out of the Cold*, which operates between December and March. The city also has two additional shelters for women: 1) *Hestia House*, the largest Transition House within the province with 24 beds for women, with or without children, fleeing relationship violence; 2) First Steps Housing Project Inc. has 12 shelter beds and 9 cribs, to support young women and their babies.

Priority Neighbourhood groups, such as ONE Change and Crescent Valley, have also significantly contributed to addressing affordable housing and homelessness issues within their respective neighbourhoods. For example, the community of Crescent Valley, represented by two community groups (Crescent Valley Community Tenants Association and Crescent Valley Resource Centre) worked with the Government of New Brunswick (Social Development and New Brunswick Housing Corporation) and private consultants to develop a 20-year revitalization concept plan, addressing the issue of social isolation by changing Crescent Valley from a dedicated social housing community to a mixed income community targeting diverse segments of the population. Similarly, ONE Change, a community group within the Old North End of Saint John, partnered with the City of Saint John to develop a revitalization plan for the neighbourhood.

Moving Forward: Next Steps & Solutions

Affordable Housing

- Question: Who ultimately “owns” the problem of affordable housing within Saint John?

- Require stewardship from all levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal): a tripartite agreement will be required to successfully address affordable housing within the city.
- Need shared governance and appointed leaders to implement existing and new plans.
- Can learn from the Waterfront Development Strategy – best practices and lessons learned from F/P/M government collaboration.
- Ideally, Saint John would return to its pre-war ‘complete community’ development pattern: a compact and walkable city, where most people live close to work, shopping, schools and other services important for day-to-day life (Plan SJ, 2012).

Homelessness

- Grassroots effort – neighbourhoods and municipality need to work together. What are their respective roles? What can be done locally?
- Neighbourhoods plans (existing and to be developed) will set the stage for community development going forward.
- The province also plays a key role.

Resources

A Choir of Voices: The “What Was Said” Report. A Dialogue on Poverty – Government of New Brunswick (2009).

An Affordable Housing Policy for Canada – Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (2009).

AuthentiCity: District Wealth Creation – A Cultural Strategy for Saint John – Uptown Saint John (2008).

BCAPI Poverty Study Reports & Recommendations (2010).

Disability Action Plan: The Time for Action is Now – GNB (2012).

Experiencing Homelessness in Saint John & New Brunswick: Homelessness Report Cards – HDC (2013; 2012; 2011).

Getting Around if You’re Just Getting By: Poverty, Policy & Public Transit – Final Report – VCSJ (2012).

Greater Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy: Poverty Reduction... Moving Forward 10 Years of Reducing Poverty (2013).

Greater Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy – VCSJ (2010).

Hope is a Home: New Brunswick’s Housing Strategy – New Brunswick Housing Corporation, Department of Social Development (2010)/

ONE Voice: Social Programming Initiative – Old North End (2010).

Old North End (ONE) Neighbourhood Plan (2010) .

Our Saint John: Integrated Community Sustainability Plan – Dillon Consulting (2008).

Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan: Progress Report September 2010 – March 2011 – Government of New Brunswick (n.d.).

Plan SJ: Municipal Plan (2012).

Poverty & Plenty II (2008; 2005).

Report of the Auditor General: Housing Agreement (2011).

Strengthening Pathways to Education: For Youth at Risk in Saint John (2009).

The Human Cost: How the Lack of Affordable Housing Impacts on All Aspects of Life - Shelter (2010).

The real cost of homelessness: Can we save money by doing the right thing? - The Homeless Hub (2012).

Vitals Signs - Human Development Council (2011).

Youth Homelessness in Saint John - HDC (2007).



New Canadians

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

The term 'newcomers' can be defined as new individuals to a city, whether born in or outside Canada. New Canadians specifically refers to individuals that have recently immigrated to Canada from another country (i.e., immigrants). This background piece focuses on individuals new to Canada from other countries (New Canadians or immigrants), rather than individuals from other regions of Canada (aka intra-regional migration).

It should be noted that the experience of an individual immigrating to Canada is largely dependent on the type of immigration, or classification a person experiences. This review does not specifically address each classification of newcomer for each area discussed. The four classifications of newcomers are¹²⁶:

- **Refugee class:** includes people who seek refuge from persecution in their home countries (for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, etc.). Refugees need more support than other immigrant classes, as most of them come to Canada with few if any possessions (especially those arriving from refugee camps outside their home countries).
- **Economic class:** includes skilled workers or professionals, business owners, and entrepreneurs who have higher economic status (upper or middle class) in their countries of origin.
- **Family class:** includes people who may be sponsored by relatives or those who have lived in Canada for a long period of time and will provide economic and personal support to their family.
- **Temporary foreign worker class:** includes workers brought by companies to work in Canada for at least one to two years.

¹²⁶ Edmonton Social Planning Council (2014).

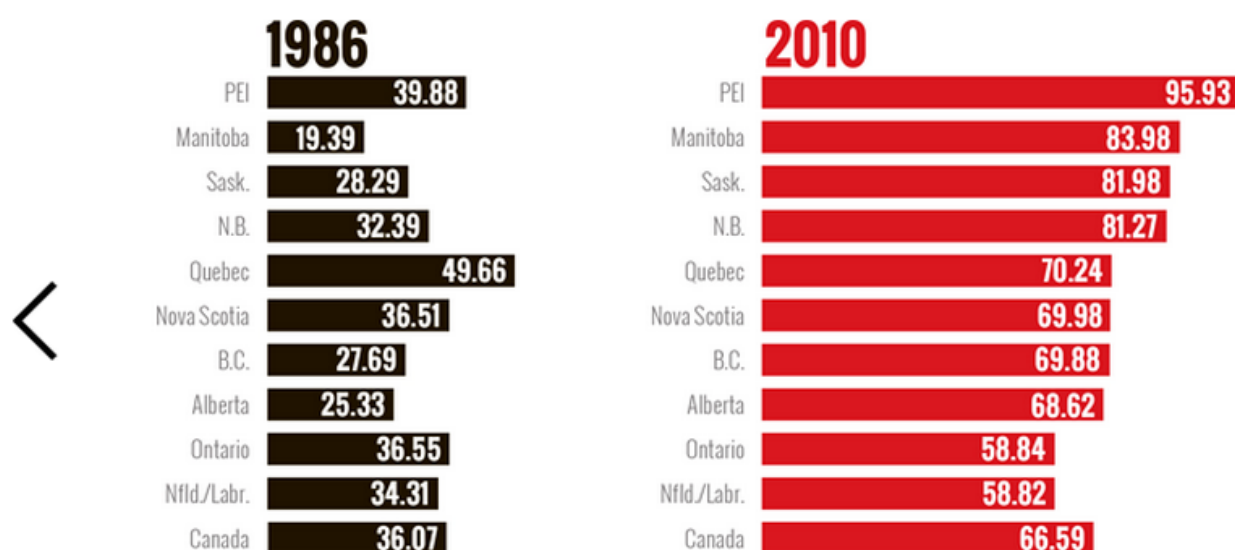
http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=619&Itemid=619

The Current Situation

Several trends in immigration in the past couple decades stand out. In every province, the proportion of economic immigrants (skilled and educated workers, entrepreneurs and investors and those with Canadian experience) has increased significantly, while family reunification has declined. There are more immigrants moving West rather than flocking to Ontario and Quebec and the primary source countries are no longer the U.K. and the U.S., but the Philippines, India and China.¹²⁷

Economic immigrants

As a percentage of all immigrants, by province



Source: Citizenship & Immigration Canada¹²⁸

Immigration has doubled in New Brunswick since 2006, however only about one percent of immigrants to Canada end up in New Brunswick.¹²⁹ Half of all skilled workers who left the Atlantic Provinces in 2006 moved to Ontario, and a lesser portion moved to Quebec (18%), Alberta (16%) and British Columbia (15%). However more immigrants under the skilled worker category flowed into the Atlantic provinces from Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec, enhancing the region's net migration positively. The Atlantic Provinces have registered a relatively low retention rate for refugee immigrants, with a retention value of 48%.¹³⁰

Each provincial government in the Atlantic region has a mandate to increase both the level of skilled worker immigration as a way of dealing with skill shortages, and the retention rate of annual

¹²⁷ Rethinking Immigration: The Case for the 400,000 Solution – Globe and Mail (2012).

¹²⁸ Collected from: Rethinking Immigration: The Case for the 400,000 Solution – Globe and Mail (2012)

¹²⁹ Aboriginal and Immigrant Populations Growing in N.B. – CBC News (2012).

¹³⁰ The Interprovincial Mobility of Immigrants in Canada – Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010).

immigrant inflows, which has been low in most Atlantic provinces since the mid- 1990s. As a result, it is expected that immigration will continue to play an important role in shaping the future population growth of the region. The province of New Brunswick signed an agreement with the federal government that makes it easier for foreign graduates in New Brunswick to gain an additional year of work experience in their field of study, as one strategy to retain international students.¹³¹

There were 5,365 individuals who identified as “immigrants”¹³² in the 2011 National Household Survey in Saint John, of which 2,775 identified as Canadian citizens only (52%), 570 identified as a citizen of Canada and at least one other country (10%), and 2020 identified as not being a Canadian citizen (38%). The majority of individuals in Saint John who identified as immigrants indicated being of European descent (41%), followed by Asia (30%), the Americas (i.e., North America and Central America) (25%), the Caribbean and Bermuda (3%) and Oceania (1%).¹³³ Since 2007, there have been 296 government-assisted refugees arrive in Saint John, with almost one third of them being under the age of 18. They arrived from 14 different countries, with more than half coming from Bhutan, Afghanistan and Columbia. Since 2007, 49% (145 residents) have left Saint John.¹³⁴

In an effort to give more rights to non-citizens, over 50 countries have extended voting rights to permanent residents and non-citizens. However, in Canada the right to vote federally and provincially remains restricted to “citizens.” Recently, Saint John’s City Council endorsed the concept of extending municipal voting rights to permanent residents. In January, the City voted to send a letter to the province requesting an amendment to the Municipal Elections Act. The letter highlighted that:

“Similar to all citizens, permanent residents pay municipal property taxes and are active users of municipal services, but unlike citizens, permanent residents are not granted the right to vote in municipal elections....reform to the corresponding provincial legislation will expand the democratic nature of local government, and will provide greater accountability between those residents that use municipal services and the Members of Council that represent them through Common Council.”¹³⁵ The Government of New Brunswick has yet to champion this opportunity to be the first in Canada to introduce this electoral reform.

¹³¹ Socioeconomic Profiles of Immigrants in the Four Atlantic Provinces – Phase II: Focus on Vibrant Communities – Citizenship & Immigration Canada (2008).

¹³² Immigrant refers to a person who is or has ever been a landed immigrant/permanent resident. This person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others have arrived recently. Some immigrants are Canadian citizens, while others are not. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but a small number are born in Canada. In the 2011 National Household Survey, 'Immigrants' includes immigrants who landed in Canada prior to May 10, 2011.

¹³³ 2011 National Household Survey: Data Tables, Saint John, NB – Statistics Canada (2013).

¹³⁴ Telegraph Journal, Opinion-Commentary: Refugee Settlement Needs Support-Randy Hatfield (2013).

¹³⁵ Report to Common Council, City of Saint John. Jan. 23, 2014.

New Canadians and the Labour Force

In New Brunswick, immigrants lag behind the non-immigrant population in participation and employment rates; however, immigrants have a lower unemployment rate than the non-immigrant population in New Brunswick. The share of immigrants (17.3%) with less than a high school diploma is smaller than the share of the non-immigrant population (30.0%). A much larger share of the immigrant population (32.1%) in New Brunswick has a university certificate, diploma or degree, compared to the non-immigrant population (15.4%). The average income for immigrants in the province is \$32,607, which is higher than non-immigrants (\$28,313).¹³⁶ However new immigrants have been found to experience “precarious employment” - states of employment that do not have the security or benefits enjoyed in more traditional employment relationships (as compared with “secure employment”).¹³⁷

The Socioeconomic Profiles of Immigrants in the Four Atlantic Provinces by Citizenship and Immigration found that sales and service occupations are the most represented among immigrants in Atlantic Provinces. Professional immigrants (managers and scientists) are also found to settle in smaller centres (which are defined as cities outside of Halifax). Health care, social services and educational occupations also are more represented among immigrants than among the total population in all places. Outside of Halifax, immigrants also find work in agriculture and resource-based industries, as well as in government services. The findings that skilled, as well as younger immigrants, also settle in smaller areas suggest that immigration can be used as an effective tool to avert population aging and also to meet skill shortages in Saint John.¹³⁸ However, interestingly in the last provincial budget, the Population Growth Secretariat saw its budget fall from \$6.2 million to \$3.5 million.¹³⁹

Potential Barriers

Three dominant population trends are occurring in the city of Saint John: the largest age group (25-54) is shrinking; the young population (0-14) is rapidly declining; and the overall population is aging.¹⁴⁰ As a result the city has attempted to increase immigration to support the labour force, and this has been met with some success, unfortunately the retention of immigrants continues to be a challenge.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Profile of New Brunswick Labour Force – Government of New Brunswick (2012).

¹³⁷ It's More than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-being - Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) (2013).

¹³⁸ Socioeconomic Profiles of Immigrants in the Four Atlantic Provinces – Phase II: Focus on Vibrant Communities – Citizenship & Immigration Canada (2008).

¹³⁹ Telegraph Journal, Opinion-Commentary: Refugee Settlement Needs Support-Randy Hatfield (2013).

¹⁴⁰ Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, Plans SJ (2012).

¹⁴¹ Our Saint John: Integrated Community Sustainability Plan – Dillon Consulting (2008)

Language and Cultural Adaptation

Culture shock and language barriers can be a challenge for immigrants. It is particularly strong for refugee children, who must adjust to a whole new way of life, including: new types of homes, architecture and neighbourhood layouts; new foods, clothing styles and toys; and different civic cultures, rules and expectations (from street signs to voting). Immigrants may also experience loneliness and isolation, as they have left their extended family and friends and may be adjusting to life in a more individualistic culture. Immigrants may also experience exclusion from political participation, which may reduce their interest in participating in their new society.¹⁴²

Lack of Social Support

Social support and interaction are other challenges for many immigrants. Most of them find the lack of social support and interaction as their main challenge, especially those who have neither close friends, nor family members here already who can direct them to resources. Inadequate social support can lead to isolation, depression and difficulty in seeking employment.¹⁴³

Employment Barriers

New Canadians lack of credential recognition, job networks, and Canadian work experience are factors that may make it difficult to find good jobs that earn a living wage and as a result, many immigrant families live below the low income cut off.¹⁴⁴

Health and Wellbeing

As a result of some of the above identified challenges and barriers, the prevalence of emotional problems and stress has been identified among recent immigrants in Canada, especially refugees. Region of origin was found to be associated with the prevalence of emotional problems, with immigrants from South and Central America more likely to report experiencing emotional problems, followed by Asia and Pacific and then North America, United Kingdom and Western Europe. Recent immigrants in the lowest income quartile were significantly more likely to report experiencing high levels of stress and emotional problems compared to those in the highest income quartile.¹⁴⁵

Immigrant health status has been of particular interest to researchers, policy-makers and program officials. Social capital has been linked to positive externalities such as better health, higher employment rates, and increased social interaction.¹⁴⁶ Social capital can play an important role for immigrants in the maintenance of good health during the initial years after landing. Governments

¹⁴² The Diverse Experiences and Challenges of Immigrants – fACTivist (Jon Bol, MacEwan Social Work Practicum Student, Edmonton Social Planning Council) (2010).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Mental Health and Well-being of Recent Immigrants in Canada: Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada – Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Foreign Affairs and International Trade (2012).

¹⁴⁶ Mohan and Mohan, pg. 193 (2002).

have an important role to play to develop more policies and programs that facilitate linkages between organizations and agencies involved in immigrant population health.¹⁴⁷

Benefits of Supporting New Canadians

There are considerable social and economic benefits to supporting New Canadians. For one, New Canadians bring with them cultural and linguistic experience and identities that contribute to the social fabric of Saint John. Whether through art, music, fashion or cuisine, there are many facets through which immigrants can enrich and diversify the city. The skills, abilities and perspectives of New Canadians also serve to build a more attractive, creative and innovative community.

A Conference Board of Canada study highlighted the innovative role immigrants play, and found immigrants now make up 35% of university research chairs in Canada, much higher than their 20% share of the population. The study also showed the impact immigrants have on Canadian trade links. It proposed that a 1% increase in immigration from a specific country would lead to a 0.1% increase in the value of Canadian exports, largely as a result of the international networks that immigrants bring with them. Immigrants also bring with them a desire for goods from their home markets that contribute to a 0.2% rise in imports and establishes a more varied and diverse market for consumers in Canada.¹⁴⁸

Some people argue that there are various forces working in different directions, which make quantifying the economic contribution of immigration in Canada a challenge. The impact of immigration on government fiscal balance is an empirical issue and depends on the age, education and skill level of immigrants.¹⁴⁹ The underuse of immigrants skills/training and expertise is a lost opportunity in communities across Canada. Foreign credentials that are fairly applied and opportunities for meaningful employment for immigrants to utilize their skill sets will not only increase their satisfaction levels but can contribute to immigrant retention.

Partners Supporting New Canadians

Federal/National

The Department of Citizen and Immigration Canada (CIC) is involved in the following activities:

- Screens and approves for admission, immigrants, foreign students, visitors and temporary workers who help Canada's social and economic growth;

¹⁴⁷ Health Status and Social Capital of Recent Immigrants in Canada: Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada – Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010).

¹⁴⁸ How Immigrants Affect the Economy: Weighing the Benefits and Costs – Globe and Mail (2013).

¹⁴⁹ The Economic Contribution of Immigration in Canada – Recent Developments: What do we know? What does it mean for policy? – Serge Nadeau, Research Group on the Economics of Immigration, University of Ottawa (2011).

- Resettles, protects and provides a safe haven for refugees;
- Helps newcomers adapt to Canadian society and become Canadian citizens;
- Manages access to Canada to protect the security and health of Canadians and the integrity of Canadian laws; and,
- Helps Canadians and newcomers to participate fully in the economic, political, social and cultural life of the country.

Service Canada, the service delivery component of Employment and Social Development Canada, processes applications from employers requesting temporary foreign workers and issues a Labour Market opinion (LMO), which is an assessment of the likely impact that hiring the requested foreign workers may have on the Canadian labour market. In most cases, a positive LMO is required before applying to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for a work permit. Foreign Credential Recognition Program works with partners and stakeholders to ensure that foreign credentials are assessed in a fair, consistent, transparent and timely manner across Canada.

The Canada Border Service Agency is responsible for screening foreign workers at all Canadian border crossings and airports prior to issuing work permits and allowing entry into Canada. A Visa and Border Services officer makes the final decision about who may enter Canada.

There are a number of Government programs targeted specifically to newcomers:

- International Experience Canada Programs: Enables thousands of students and young professionals, between the ages of 18 and 35, to come and work temporarily in Canada.
- Temporary Foreign Worker Program: Admits eligible foreign workers to work in Canada for an authorized temporary period, typically ranging from three months to three or four years.
- Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications: Addresses barriers in foreign credential recognition, and is committed to creating action plans for six target occupations, (i.e. dentists, engineering technicians, licensed practical nurses, medical radiation technologists, physicians and teachers).
- Federal Internship for Newcomers Program: Provides newcomers with Canadian work experience in the federal public service. It has expanded from Ottawa to Toronto and Vancouver/Victoria, as well as to 20 participating departments and agencies where 63 interns were successfully placed.
- Micro-Loans Pilot Project: Intended to help internationally trained individuals cover some of the costs associated with the foreign credential recognition process. In support, CIC established a contribution agreement with the *Immigrant Access Fund* to develop an action plan to expand its micro-loans program, as well as to develop a mechanism to track the outcomes of the loan program participants.
- The International Qualifications Network (IQN): The website provides a virtual space for

stakeholders in the area of foreign credential recognition to share innovative practices. In 2011-2012, almost 300 members joined and 146 initiatives were posted on the website.

Provincial

The New Brunswick Multicultural Council Inc. (NBMC) is a non-profit, umbrella organization for immigrant-serving agencies, multicultural and ethno-cultural associations in the province. NBMC facilitates member, government and community efforts to make New Brunswick the province of choice for both newcomers and residents, through enhancing the economic, social and cultural value of diversity.

New Brunswick's Multiculturalism Policy: The province's policy on multiculturalism pertains to all New Brunswick residents. Its purpose is to work for equal treatment for all citizens of all cultures. It represents a commitment to equality in matters of human rights, in matters of cultural expression and in access to and participation in New Brunswick society. New Brunswick's policy on multiculturalism is guided by principles of 1) equality, 2) appreciation, 3) preservation of cultural heritages, and 4) participation. These principles govern interaction among majority and minority cultural communities in New Brunswick.

Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL):

- The Foreign Qualifications Recognition Funding Program provides funding to non-profit organizations to assist internationally-trained workers in finding employment matching their skills, education and work experience, and also to assist internationally-trained workers in successfully integrating into the local labour market. The Population Growth Division will accept proposals from eligible organizations to provide programming such as sector-specific language classes, cultural competency training for employers, as well as other initiatives in support of the funding priorities.
- The Francophone Immigrant Settlement Support Funding Program is a funding program for non-profit organizations to assist with the settlement, integration and retention of francophone newcomers in New Brunswick's communities; facilitate the integration of francophone newcomers into the local labour force; and/or promote and encourage understanding of the benefits of francophone newcomers to New Brunswick's economy, and cultural and social lives.
- Multicultural Grants Program is a program to assist community partners working to meet the objectives of the New Brunswick Policy on Multiculturalism.
- Immigrant Settlement Support Funding Program is a funding program for non-profit organizations to assist with the settlement, integration and retention of newcomers in New Brunswick's communities; facilitate the integration of newcomers into the local labour force; and/or promote and encourage understanding of the benefits of newcomers to New Brunswick's economy, and cultural and social lives.

Municipal

The PlanSJ process identifies a need for increased awareness and further education regarding cultural diversity, and for the provision of appropriate programs and assistance to newcomers.

The Council outlines the following policies:

- Policy AC-31: Recognize that cultural diversity is a valuable asset to the City.
- Policy AC-32: Encourage the celebration and promotion of distinct cultures, languages and art forms to increase cultural diversity, understanding and acceptance.
- Policy AC-33: Work with the Government of New Brunswick and other agencies to uphold and fully implement the New Brunswick Policy on Multiculturalism and its principles of equality, appreciation, preservation and participation through: a. Recognition that our cultural diversity is a source of community strength and pride; b. Provision of access to municipal services for all; c. Promotion of understanding, sensitivity and positivity towards multiculturalism amongst all community members; d. Encouraging full participation by citizens from all cultures and backgrounds in City planning; and e. Discouraging discrimination in any form on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, or religion.
- Policy AC-34: Work with the Government of New Brunswick and other agencies to provide appropriate services, education, and opportunities for newcomers to the City.
- Policy EP-11: Recognize the important role the City plays in welcoming new immigrants to the community through the delivery of programs and services. The City intends to ensure its services are sensitive and responsive to the needs of new residents of the community.
- Policy AC-28: Encourage arts and culture to act as a magnet for new immigrants and visitors and to project a positive image of the City to the world.

Community-level

YMCA/YWCA Settlement Services: Offers a number of specific programs that target new Canadians in the Saint John area, including the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program and the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP).

The Saint John College: Offers international students three English-language training options to help them prepare for university study. The program attracts hundreds of students to UNB Saint John each year.

Saint John Multicultural & Newcomers Resource Centre Inc.: Promotes cultural development in Saint John through newcomer services, referral programs, and special events that create cross-cultural experiences that can be enjoyed by long-time residents and newcomers alike. The Resource Centre facilitates the integration of newcomers to Saint John and help to retain them through various efforts, including the creation of a road map for newcomers to navigate the city of Saint John and its associated services and programs. Newcomer services include:

- NB Interview Assistance Program
- Pre-visit Program
- Immigration Assistance
- Integration Services
- Workshops on Multiculturalism

- Newcomer Employment Search

PRUDE (Pride, Race, Unity, Dignity, Education): Dedicated to the full participation of all cultural communities in the social, cultural, and economic fabric of mainstream New Brunswick life. PRUDE offers a number of programs and services for newcomers and Saint John multicultural citizens, including school presentations and workshops, public education and awareness, a computer access centre and black heritage resources.

Immigrant and Refugee Support Centre: Assists claimants with settlement in the community, (i.e. housing, language training, and employment); assists claimants throughout the refugee determination process; researches and assists preparing documents for applications on refugee and family sponsorship, permanent residence, humanitarian and compassionate grounds and pre-removal risk assessments; acts as a political lobby for fair and just government policies regarding refugees; provides information, advice and support to other individuals or groups who help refugees; and, promotes and assists groups sponsoring refugees.

Hola! (Hall of Latin America in Saint John): A Spanish forum developed to create an easier transition for Spanish-speaking newcomers into the community. The group serves as a link to the cultural sector to facilitate newcomers into the city, and it looks to develop business opportunities with Latin American countries. The group maintains a database of Spanish-speaking families in the area, organizes opportunities for Spanish-speakers who wish to mix with members of the English community to practice their English-speaking skills, runs a welcoming committee, and is currently working on building a small Spanish section in the Library.

Welcome Wagon, Saint John: A greeting service designed to assist people who have recently moved. The Welcome Wagon operates 2 programs: 1) Baby - any new baby to the family; and, 2) Newcomers - any new families moving to and around a community.

Enterprise Saint John: The Business Immigrant Mentorship Program offers immigrant entrepreneurs in the Saint John Community the opportunity to meet with, learn from, and engage in dialogue with established local business people.

Conclusion

Saint John stands to benefit socially and economically by encouraging New Canadians to make the city their new home. Besides filling a looming labour force shortage in the city, the experience, insights and perspectives of New Canadians can transform and diversify the community. The city is already strongly shaped by the diversity of newcomers, whether from within Canada or from around the world. However, as research has highlighted, while immigration has increased in recent years, there is still a concern around retention. A better understanding of the reasons why New Canadians are not remaining in Saint John can help to inform stronger programs, practices and policies to make the city more attractive. Retention depends on ensuring that adequate social and

economic supports and opportunities are available to New Canadians, not only to welcome and invite them, but to create a city that individuals and families won't want to leave.

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Persons with Disabilities

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

The term persons with disabilities is used to apply to *all* persons with disabilities *including* those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. It is also important to note that a person with disabilities may be regarded as a person with a disability in one society or setting, but not in another, depending on the role that the person is assumed to take in his or her community. The perception and reality of disability also depend on the technologies, assistance and services available, as well as on cultural considerations. Disability should be seen as the result of the interaction between a person and his or her environment. It is not something that resides in the individual as the result of some impairment.¹⁵⁰ Mental health is also covered under this definition as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his own community.”¹⁵¹

The Current Situation

According to the 2006 Census, there are approximately 4.4 million Canadians with a disability, or 14.3% of the total population. There are slightly more females in Canada with a disability (15.2%), than males (13.4%).¹⁵² New Brunswick has the second highest rate of disability in Canada at 17.2% of the population (after Nova Scotia).¹⁵³

National employment participation figures clearly demonstrate that persons with a disability lack opportunities for employment compared to the general population. Persons with disabilities

¹⁵⁰ United Nations Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2013).

¹⁵¹ Strengthening Mental Health Promotion: Fact Sheet No. 220 - World Health Organization (2001).

¹⁵² Statistics Canada. Persons with disabilities <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/health71a-eng.htm> (2006).

¹⁵³ Profile of New Brunswick Labour Force - Government of New Brunswick (2012).

represent approximately 10% of the entire employed labour force in New Brunswick (33,790 of the 337,620 employed). They have a much lower labour force participation rate than persons without disabilities in New Brunswick (53.4% compared to 79.4%) and across Canada (56.2% compared to 82.0%). The average employment income for working-age adults with disabilities is \$29,393, which is 22.5% lower than the average of \$37,994 for working-age adults without disabilities.¹⁵⁴

People with disabilities are over-represented within the low-income population. Approximately one fifth (20.2%) of working-age adults with disabilities live in low-income households. They are also more likely than people without disabilities to have less than a high school diploma and to live alone. Unattached individuals are particularly vulnerable to low income due to the absence of another earner in the household. Furthermore, the effects of disability on work (e.g. occupation, hours of work and earnings) help explain why low income is more common among people with disabilities.¹⁵⁵

Poverty

The overall poverty rate for people with disabilities in Canada was 14.4% in 2006, comprising nearly 600,000 people.¹⁵⁶ In New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, which have been grouped together due to low population counts in order to meet Statistics Canada's standards, those with disabilities are 2.3 times more likely to live in poverty than their counterparts without disabilities (17.3% vs. 7.7%).¹⁵⁷

Poverty is associated with living arrangements. For instance, among people who live alone, 31% with disabilities live in poverty compared with 21.3% of their counterparts without disabilities. Some 21.3% of lone parents with disabilities have incomes below the poverty line compared with 18.4% of lone parents without disabilities. Age is also associated with low income. Poverty rates are considerably higher for persons with disabilities up to the typical age of retirement (65 years) then drop to about the same levels as for retirement-aged persons without disabilities. The type of disability is also associated with the likelihood of poverty. People with disabilities in the areas of communication (24.1%) and cognition or psychological well-being (learning, memory, Developmental/Intellectual Disability, psychiatric diagnosis—22.3%) are more much more likely than people without disabilities (9.7%) to be living in poverty.¹⁵⁸

The reality for many persons with disabilities and their families living in New Brunswick is that they must deal with their disability as well as frequently existing on low levels of income. Many persons with disabilities who are employed may be working in entry-level positions with low wages and lack of benefits or perhaps are only working part-time due to the difficulty in accommodating their disability. Persons with disabilities have the same living expenses as other citizens for things like

¹⁵⁴ Profile of New Brunswick Labour Force – Government of New Brunswick (2012).

¹⁵⁵ Federal Disability Report: The Government of Canada's Annual Report on Disability Issues – HRSDC (2010).

¹⁵⁶ Statistics Canada. Persons with disabilities <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/health71a-eng.htm> (2006).

¹⁵⁷ As a Matter of Fact: Poverty and Disability in Canada – Council of Canadians with Disabilities (2009).

¹⁵⁸ As a Matter of Fact: Poverty and Disability in Canada – Council of Canadians with Disabilities (2009).

housing, food, transportation, clothing, recreation, etc. Most persons with disabilities can also have other expenses directly related to their disability for prescription medications, mobility equipment, technical aids, home renovations, accessible transportation, testing supplies, home care supports, etc.¹⁵⁹

Health and Wellness

Ensuring that all people with and without disabilities have access to the health care services they require is a critical part of an individual's health and well-being. All people require support from health professionals at some point in their lives. However, some people with disabilities are not receiving the health care that they need due to barriers including cost and lack of information. Cost is also the largest barrier preventing people with disabilities from obtaining needed medication and other health-related aids.¹⁶⁰

In terms of mental health, approximately 27% of Saint John's residents in Region 2 have a mental health disorder, the most common being major depression, somatoform disorders (unexplained pain), and phobias, each at approximately 6% of the population, according to 2010 prevalence estimates from Department of Mental Health.

Persons with disabilities face higher risk of developing secondary conditions and specifically to experience diet-related health complications like malnutrition, constipation and diabetes.¹⁶¹ One big risk for secondary conditions is obesity – a much higher percentage of adults with disabilities (27.4%) are seriously overweight than people without disabilities (16.5%). Children and teens with disabilities also have a higher risk of obesity than their nondisabled peers.¹⁶²

Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience food insecurity than persons without disabilities. Young men and women with disabilities (ages 15-34) are more than twice as likely to be food insecure than their nondisabled counterparts and middle-aged women and men with disabilities (ages 35-49) are about three times as likely to experience food insecurity than nondisabled persons of the same age. Over 50% of Canadian food bank users report having a disability or limitation.¹⁶³

Housing

9.9% of adults with disabilities live in "inadequate homes" (i.e. homes that are in need of major repairs), compared to 6.4% of adults without disabilities. Housing in need of major repairs can have serious negative effects on owners and tenants, including health complications, psychological

¹⁵⁹ An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick: 2012-2017 – Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (2012).

¹⁶⁰ Federal Disability Report: The Government of Canada's Annual Report on Disability Issues – HRSDC (2010).

¹⁶¹ A secondary condition is a disability or health concern that arises as a direct or indirect result of a primary disability or health concern. Secondary conditions can be physical (reduced mobility) medical (diabetes) or emotional/psychological (depression, anxiety) in nature. Other secondary effects can be social or environmental, such as increased isolation or reduced accessibility of services or structures.

¹⁶² Independent Living Canada Information Sheets (2009).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

distress and social withdrawal. While people with other types of disabilities do have unmet needs for home modifications, the most common unmet needs remain mobility-specific: elevators or lift devices, grab bars in the bathroom, and ramps for access to and from the residence are the most common unmet needs.¹⁶⁴

Education/Learning

In order to be successful today every citizen needs to have strong literacy and numeracy skills with an appropriate education to help prepare them to interact successfully with their social peers and to attain their goals of self-sufficiency. For persons with different disabilities it is especially critical that they have full and complete access to all levels of educational opportunities in order to offset any barriers that may be created by their disabilities.¹⁶⁵ Most children with disabilities are enrolled in mainstream schools, 64.7% of children with disabilities attend regular school, and an additional 24.9% attend regular school with special education classes. Only 7.9% of children with disabilities attend special education schools, and 77.6% of those who do have severe to very severe disabilities. Many children with disabilities (17.9% or 27,970 children) need aids and devices at school but do not receive them.¹⁶⁶ For student's with disabilities to excel, it is essential that they are properly supported and that the public school system and post-secondary education system is barrier-free in the province and across Canada.

Potential Barriers

Employment

The unemployment rate is a key economic indicator for people with disabilities because not all people with disabilities are able to work. The unemployment rate measures labour market success for people with disabilities and can be directly compared to the rate for people without disabilities, because it is based only on those who are available to work. The unemployment rate for working-age adults with disabilities is 10.4%, compared to 6.8% for working-age adults without disabilities. Severity of disability can have a significant impact on the ability of people who are unemployed to pursue employment: 87.9% of people with very severe disabilities are limited in their ability to look for work, compared to 66.5%, 42.4% and 21.8% of people with severe, moderate and mild disabilities respectively.¹⁶⁷

The most common barriers to labour force participation for people with disabilities are their disabilities themselves. Most people with disabilities who are not in the labour force are either limited in the kind of work they can do or completely prevented from working due to their disabilities.¹⁶⁸ Having a child with a disability also affects parent's employment status. Almost 2 in 5

¹⁶⁴ Federal Disability Report: The Government of Canada's Annual Report on Disability Issues - HRSDC (2010).

¹⁶⁵ An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick: 2012-2017 - Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (2012).

¹⁶⁶ Federal Disability Report: The Government of Canada's Annual Report on Disability Issues - HRSDC (2010).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Federal Disability Report: The Government of Canada's Annual Report on Disability Issues - HRSDC (2010).

(38.4%) reported working fewer hours in order to care for a child with a disability; about 1 in 4 parents had not accepted employment.¹⁶⁹ For low-income families this can create a considerable challenge as precarious employment and additional costs of raising a child with a disability are factored.

Given the fact that many persons with a disability have skills, a desire to work and the need for human resources to sustain the economy, a logical assumption would be that employers are openly welcoming persons with a disability into their workforce. While some clearly are, many employers are still reluctant to recruit and employ persons with a disability. The Public Service Commission of Canada's Equity and Diversity Directorate (May 2011) highlighted the challenges faced by persons with a disability in a number of western countries, including Canada:

- Negative attitudes, fears, misperceptions, false assumptions, myths and stereotypes about persons with a disability held by employers, managers and supervisors.
- Lack of knowledge by employers about disability issues, the duty to accommodate and how to set up a structured recruitment program for persons with a disability.
- Inaccessible websites, including tools and applications that are not usable and/or user-friendly for persons with a disability (as well the lack of computer access).
- Inadequate recruitment and outreach strategies as well as the lack of employer collaboration with organizations that support persons with a disability to achieve employment.
- Employers' lack of knowledge about how to implement retention strategies for persons with a disability.
- The perception that today's workers must be able to 'multitask' and juggle multiple roles along with the corresponding belief that persons with a disability will not be able to handle these expectations.
- Employment agencies that do not fully understand employer needs.

There remains a clear disconnect between the willingness of people to work and the willingness of employers to recruit and hire. With looming demographic changes about to affect the availability of labour, the time is right to change the relationship between persons with a disability and New Brunswick employers.¹⁷⁰

Accessibility

New Brunswick is a largely rural province, which makes the issue of transportation services extremely problematic for persons with disabilities who may require certain accessibility features to be able to use transportation. Underfunding of public transportation is a significant issue within the city of Saint John. In late 2011 and early 2012, the city announced two successive funding reductions to the public transit operator Saint John Transit and as a result transit services were

¹⁶⁹ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012).

¹⁷⁰ An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick: 2012-2017 - Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (2012).

decreased across the city. A comparison of transit fares and funding models among other municipalities reveals that Saint John Transit is under-funded, and that public transit riders in Saint John pay higher fares than those in other communities.¹⁷¹ In March 2014, Saint John Transit reversed a policy that allowed visually impaired people to ride on the bus for free. They declared they did not want to favour one group with a disability over another and so all passengers now have to pay the full fare.¹⁷²

A lot of consumers with disabilities will not be able to afford to own and operate their own vehicles due to their low income.¹⁷³ As a result they rely on public transit for education, employment, groceries, medical appointments, etc. and reductions in operations will have direct implications to individuals and families well-being. Just over half (50.6%) of people with disabilities who would like to participate in more cultural and leisure activities in their spare time are prevented from doing so by barriers. While their conditions and costs are the two largest barriers, the need for someone's assistance, inaccessible facilities and transportation, and the need for specialized equipment are all commonly reported barriers as well.¹⁷⁴

Benefits of Supporting Persons with Disabilities

There are many social and economic benefits associated with improving the wellness of persons with disabilities in Saint John. Increasing the involvement persons with disabilities in the labour force will have positive economic implications for the city, especially in the context of an increasingly aging demographic and the retirement of baby boomers. Chronic diseases are responsible for 67% of total direct costs in healthcare and 60% of total indirect costs (\$52 billion) as a result of early death, loss of productivity and foregone income.¹⁷⁵ Given persons with disabilities face higher risk of developing conditions related to diet-related health complications like malnutrition, constipation and diabetes, taking preventative measures to support healthy lifestyles will have long-term benefits.

The costs of not addressing mental health issues in the workplace are significant. Mental health problems and illnesses also account for more than \$6 billion in Canada in lost productivity costs due to absenteeism and presenteeism. Only 23% of Canadians surveyed said they would feel comfortable talking to an employer about their mental illness. Changing attitudes and fighting stigma require more than just improving understanding of the signs and symptoms of mental health problems and illnesses. The best way to break down stigma is through 'contact-based education'—meeting and talking with people who can share their experiences of mental illness and

¹⁷¹ Getting Around if You're Just Getting By: Poverty, Policy & Public Transit – Final Report – VCSJ (2012).

¹⁷² CBC New Brunswick (2014). <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/saint-john-transit-ends-free-rides-for-visually-impaired-1.2563471>

¹⁷³ Disability Action Plan: The Time for Action is Now – Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (2012).

¹⁷⁴ Federal Disability Report: The Government of Canada's Annual Report on Disability Issues – HRSDC (2010)

¹⁷⁵ PHAC (2005).

recovery.¹⁷⁶

Initiatives around inclusive education can help foster a culture of respect and belonging among Saint John's children and youth and can contribute to a more positive environment for persons growing up with disabilities. It can also result in students with intellectual and other disabilities having a much greater improved health status, being involved in their communities, completing high school and going onto post-secondary education, getting a job and having a decent home.¹⁷⁷

Reducing barriers to participation of persons with disabilities in the labour force, volunteerism and in recreation and cultural programs in Saint John will serve to enrich the social and cultural landscape. The quality of life for persons with disabilities is particularly enhanced through recreational and social interaction associated with having fun. A tremendous emphasis is being placed on providing recreational opportunities for the disadvantaged, which brings these individuals into a more full contact with society. It encourages the entire community to participate and support full accessibility.¹⁷⁸

Partners Supporting Persons with Disabilities

Government services affecting persons with a disability are very numerous across many departments, as are the community programs that are offered within the city. The partners listed, are by no means a comprehensive list but a snap shot of selected departments, organizations and programs.

Federal/National

Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010 – meaning that it “pledged to be governed by the CRPD, the newest international human rights treaty which boldly articulates a human rights framework for addressing the exclusion and lack of access people with disabilities have encountered in Canada and in all societies.”¹⁷⁹ Canada does not have a nation-wide disabilities act, unlike many western nations such as the United States and Australia. Instead the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial legislation is used to protect the rights of people with disabilities.¹⁸⁰ Unfortunately there are no consistent regulations across provinces with regard to accessibility and accommodations, which can lead to piecemeal legislation.

¹⁷⁶ Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada - Mental Health Commission of Canada - (2012).

¹⁷⁷ Inclusive Education – Canadian Association for Community Living (2013).

¹⁷⁸ Social/Community Values and Benefits of State Parks – The National Association of State Park Directors (2013).

¹⁷⁹ Council of Canadians with Disabilities. Press Release. (2010).

¹⁸⁰ Does Canada Need a National Disabilities Act? Champions Career Centre (2012).

<http://championscareercentre.blogspot.ca/2012/07/does-canada-need-national-disabilities.html>

WORKlink is the largest virtual employment resource centre in Canada for job seekers with disabilities and offers a range of employment and recruitment services. The Canada Access Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities is another program that offers grants to high-need students with permanent disabilities that need support for education and living expenses that exceed that which is offered by Canada Student Loan and provincial financial assistance.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program provides forgivable loans to low and moderate income households to bring substandard housing up to standard and to convert non-residential buildings to affordable rental housing. It also provides assistance to modify units for persons with disabilities.

The Mental Health Strategy for Canada consists of six strategic directions considered a “blueprint for change” developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada in close consultation with people living with mental health problems and illnesses, families, stakeholder organizations, government, and experts.

Many of the following national-level organizations also have provincial and/or municipal chapters.

| | |
|--|---|
| Independent Living Canada | Schizophrenia Society of Canada |
| Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians | Canadian National Institute for the Blind |
| Canadian Association for Community Living | Canadian Paraplegic Association |
| Canadian Association of the Deaf | DisAbled Women’s Network |
| Canadian Council of the Blind | Learning Disabilities Association of Canada |
| Council of Canadians with Disabilities | National Education Association of Disabled Students |
| Canadian Hard of Hearing Association | National Network of Mental Health |
| Canadian Mental Health Association of Canada | Neil Squire Foundation |
| Mood Disorder Society of Canada | |
| National Network for Mental Health | |

Provincial

The Disability Action Plan: The Time for Action Now- Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (2012) outlines 38 recommendations for action in the following areas:

- Adopting an Enabling Policy Framework to Support the Employment Action Plan’s Vision, Goals and Recommendations
- Preparing Youth with a Disability for Employment
- Accessing Post-Secondary Education and Training
- Providing Other Pre-Employment Supports
- Removing Significant Barriers to Employment
- Strengthening the Community (Disability) Employment Support Sector
- Providing Adequate and Timely Disability Supports for Training and Employment
- Encouraging and Supporting Employers to Hire and Retain Employees with a Disability
- Facilitating Self-Employment Options

The plan has a number of specific strategies relating to: housing and homelessness; recreation; environment and public spaces; health and wellness; workforce development and transportation. Some of these include the following:

- To increase the number of accessible and affordable housing units in the province.
- To promote the concept of universal barrier free design concepts in all new housing projects including renovations of existing housing stocks where feasible.
- To promote the use of "Universal Design" and Barrier-free" in the restoration and development of community facilities.
- To promote workforce participation for disabled persons through poverty and education objectives.

There are a large number of other provincial partners including but not limited to:

- The Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities- promotes healthy living and integrates a number of socially oriented policies, programs and services. In addition to overseeing sport and wellness programming, the Department works in partnership with the non-profit sector and stakeholders to better address the needs of seniors, young people, people living in poverty and persons with disabilities.
- RecreationNB (RNB)- is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the recreation and parks field by broadening the knowledge and experience base of its members and by advocating for the value and benefit of leisure and recreation opportunities for all people. The organization provides educational opportunities, offers resource materials, distributes a broad range of information through its publications, and acts as a voice for the recreation and parks movement in New Brunswick.
- Mental Health Services- the Saint John Community Mental Health Service (part of Horizon Health Network) provides community-based mental health services in short term and long term rehabilitation, child and youth services, senior services, crisis programs and specialized mental health services for those involved with the legal system.
- P.E.E.R. 126 (Peers Engaged in Education and Recovery)- is part of Horizon Health Network. It is a comprehensive, culturally sensitive initiative for youth that promotes engagement and education in the areas of self-determination, life goals and positive relationships through collaborative, community partnerships. It is for anyone aged 16-29 experiencing mental health concerns, addictions, or other struggles. It provides Community, Education & Employment, Friends & Family, Housing, and Peer Support services.

Community Level

Saint John has a number of community level organizations that address the needs of persons with disabilities. They provide services around specific disabilities, and also programming for issues relating to education, employment, transportation and recreation. The Saint John Ability Advisory Committee's mission is to advise, advocate, and monitor the provision of barrier free access and

enhanced opportunity for all persons seeking full participation in the community. The Learning Disabilities Association of New Brunswick, Saint John chapter increases awareness and services for persons with Learning Disabilities in our communities. The Strengthening Families Together Family Psycho-Education Program is an on-going peer structure designed specifically for family members of individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. The course balances basic psycho-educational and skill-training with self-care, emotional support, and empowerment.

Programs around employment include the Partners for Workplace Inclusion Program, which offers employment services for job seekers with self-declared disabilities. Options Employment Outreach Inc. provides employment related services to people who have barriers to finding or maintaining a job due to their disabilities. CNIB, Saint John District Office provides vocational assessments, helps individuals explore career interests, develop employment plans, market to potential employers, and investigate job opportunities and accommodations. The Saint John Association for Community has a number of programs that it offers to the families of disabled persons-employment, transition from school to work, family network, and best buddies.

In terms of transportation, the Handi-Bus is funded by Saint John Transit and managed by Independence Plus. It offers door to door service for persons with various mobility problems and who are unable to utilize the regular transit service. In Quispamsis, there is also Right of Way Transit for persons with disabilities. As for recreational programming on a community level, Making Waves Saint John provides one-on-one swimming instruction for children with intellectual disabilities.

There are a number of organizations that provide services for specific disabilities.

- **L'Arche Saint John Inc.** - is an international federation of faith-based communities creating homes and day programs with people who have developmental disabilities.
- **The Stepping Stone, Fundy Region Inc.** - is an agency that delivers services to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- **Family Plus / Life Solutions Inc.** - assists and supports children, youth, and adults living with disabilities or who are having difficulties in developing relationships, making informed choices, or coping with the daily challenges of life.
- **Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services Inc., Saint John** - offers a variety of services and programs such as courses in American Sign Language and Deaf Culture, literacy skills, life skills program, employability skills program, Heritage and Mentorship program, hearing aid recycling, interpreter services, public awareness seminars, advocacy, information and repairs for technical devices, and a resource library.
- **Community Autism Centre** - offers a support group for parents and siblings, resource information, education programs, mentoring program, social skills group and community support, training and community connections, mini workshops, consultation for adult support and a summer day camp program.
- **Cerebral Palsy Foundation Inc., Saint John** - provides assistance to individuals with Cerebral Palsy who are in need of special equipment. The foundation also provides an information network and support group.

- **Centenary Queen Square Care Centres Inc, Adult Outreach Centre** - provides social/recreational services available to adults with physical and/or mental disabilities and to seniors.
- **Veterans Affairs Canada, Saint John District** - provides pensions for disability or death, economic support in the form of allowances, health care benefits and services.
- **Canadian Council of the Blind, Saint John Chapter** - provides advocacy for people in need and increase government awareness of needs for the visually impaired.
- **Bayshore Home Health, Saint John** - provides a foot care clinic, provided in-home or at the Bayshore Clinic, for persons with a disability.
- **Ataxia Support Group** - provides information on updates and research, as well as helping individuals cope with Ataxia.

Conclusion

Many persons with disabilities in New Brunswick are dealing with their disability while living on low levels of income. Those who are employed may be working with low wages and lack of benefits or are only working part-time due to the difficulty in accommodating their disability. They are also over two times more likely to live in poverty than their counterparts without disabilities. However many persons with disabilities have a desire to work, skills to offer and an ability to contribute to Saint John's economy through their engagement in the workforce. Employers in the city will need to play a significant role in creating opportunities and inclusive environments for its residents with disabilities. Strengthening accessibility in the city, through transportation, facility design and restoration and programming will also be an integral part in building a Saint John that is barrier-free. The community and province are working hard at providing effective services for persons with disabilities, and still, there are long strides to take to improve the wellness of some of those most vulnerable in the city.

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Priority Neighbourhoods & Poverty

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

Poverty has been defined as “the social and economic vulnerability caused to individuals and households by a lack of resources needed for dignity, self-sufficiency and well-being. Ultimately, poverty means reduced opportunity to participate fully in the life of one’s community.”¹⁸¹

Three measures of poverty are generally utilized, they include¹⁸²:

- The Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) - Under LICO, a family is poor if they are expected to spend 20% more than the average family on food, shelter and clothing.
- The Market Basket Measure (MBM) - Utilizing MBM, a family is poor if they do not make enough money to meet “creditable” community norms, such as housing transportation, clothing and other things.
- The Low Income Measure (LIM) - LIM is a relative measure of poverty, whereas the MBM and the LICO are absolute measures of poverty. According to LIM, a family is poor if their income is less than one-half of the median income of an equivalent household.

In the city of Saint John, poverty is increasingly concentrated among priority neighbourhoods, which PlanSJ (2011) defines as five neighbourhoods in the urban core of the city – the Old North End, Crescent Valley, the South End, Waterloo Village and the Lower West Side.

¹⁸¹ Vibrant Communities Saint John (2005)

¹⁸² Gap Between Rich and Poor: Elderly Poverty Rate (65 years of age and older) – Vital Signs Community Foundations of Canada (2012)

The Current Situation

Poverty costs Canada \$72-84 billion per year with the costs to the health care system alone being \$7.6 billion per year.¹⁸³ Besides the economic costs, poverty is an issue that significantly affects the lives of people in Saint John, with one in five residents living in poverty, 40% of whom live in the priority neighbourhoods.¹⁸⁴ Poverty is multi-faceted and touches many elements of everyday existence, including but not limited to housing and neighbourhoods, food security, labour force participation and families. Poverty is highest among children and youth, lone female led families, recent immigrants, aboriginal peoples, seniors and peoples with disabilities.

Housing and Neighbourhoods

In Canada, 3.1 million households pay more than 30% of their income on housing, making them housing insecure.¹⁸⁵ In the 2006 Census, Crescent Valley, the Old North End and the Waterloo Village were all classified as very high-poverty neighbourhoods with more than 40% of their residents living below the poverty line. Meanwhile, the South End and the Lower West Side were classified as high-poverty neighbourhoods with between 30% and 39.9% living in poverty.¹⁸⁶ In Saint John's priority neighbourhoods where poverty is highest, not only are there economic challenges associated with renting and owning, but the housing stock is generally old and in poor condition.¹⁸⁷ The insufficient mixed-income housing within the priority neighbourhoods has also been identified as an area of concern.¹⁸⁸

Food Security

Food bank usage is at the highest level recorded, with 882,000 Canadians having used food banks each month in 2012.¹⁸⁹ Of those households needing assistance by food banks, one in five had employment income.¹⁹⁰ New Brunswick has been encountering an upward trend with food bank usage, especially among single-parent families.¹⁹¹

Labour Force

People living in households with one worker account for almost 40% of the poor in Canada today, while households with two or more workers account for 12% of this group.¹⁹² Social assistance and minimum wage rates have created challenges for New Brunswickers to rise out

183 Just the Facts – Canada Without Poverty (2013)

184 Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets for PlanSJ – City of Saint John (2012)

185 Wellesley Institute, Precarious Housing in Canada Report, 2010

186 Poverty & Plenty II – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2008)

187 Vibrant Communities Saint John: Dismantling Poverty Traps – Community Stories – Caledon Institute of Social Policy (2006)

188 The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative Report on Future Roles and Areas of Focus –Deloitte 2011

189 Just the Facts – Canada Without Poverty (2013)

190 Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012)

191 Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012)

192 Poverty Trends Scorecard: Canada 2012 – Citizens for Public Justice

of poverty. When costs of living, transportation and childcare are accounted for, it can often be more affordable for people in the province to not work.¹⁹³

Families

Saint John has one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada, with 28.3% of children attending school living in poverty. This is almost double the provincial average of 16.2%. Lone-parent families are also experiencing high levels of poverty in the city with just over 60% living below the poverty line – the highest rate in Canada.¹⁹⁴

Potential Barriers

Low Wage Employment / Unemployment

The minimum wage in New Brunswick (\$10/hour) is slightly lower than the average across the country (\$11.04) and it does not lift most families safely from the poverty line. Lone-parent families of any size and two-earner families with more than two children will live below the poverty line on a minimum wage.¹⁹⁵ Youth in Saint John have also encountered employment challenges and list this issue as a priority, with 52% surveyed stating that the city requires “more employment opportunities for teens.”¹⁹⁶

Low Education / Job Skills

A higher level of education increases an individual’s chances of moving out of poverty and research has highlighted that a parent’s lack of education frequently acts as a deterrent to his / her children’s success in school. As a result, the cycle of poverty continues into the next generation.¹⁹⁷

Currently, New Brunswick (notably, Region 2) has lower literacy and education than Canadian counterparts,¹⁹⁸ and university completion rates (15.3%) are below provincial and national averages. Affordability is a major barrier to post-secondary education for youth of low and moderate incomes.¹⁹⁹

Research has highlighted that within Saint John there is a need for programs that provide high school equivalent diplomas and essential skills training (including computer training), for vulnerable populations, most specifically within the priority neighbourhoods. Programs that are geared towards creating jobs and fostering self-employment can play an important role in reducing unemployment or underemployment in the city.²⁰⁰

193 The Barriers for People in Poverty – Partnership to End Poverty (n.d.)

194 Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS) Report (2012)

195 Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012)

196 Greater Saint John’s Vital Signs 2011: Our Region’s 6th Annual Check-Up, Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2011)

197 Education to Employment: Pathways Out of Poverty – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2006).

198 Teen Pregnancy Statistical Report (2010)

199 Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, Plans SJ (2012)

200 The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative Report on Future Roles and Areas of Focus –Deloitte 2011

Poverty Among Vulnerable Groups

Poverty is more prevalent among certain demographics, specifically children of immigrants, lone female led families, people of aboriginal identity, part of racialized families and those with disabilities. In Saint John, poverty among these groups is further exacerbated if they live in the priority neighbourhoods.²⁰¹

Child and Youth Poverty

Children who experience poverty are more likely to be poor as adults, and more than one in seven Canadian children live in poverty. Living in poverty can affect children's cognitive development, academic success, social and emotional well-being and physical health.²⁰²

In New Brunswick, there are 22,000 children living below the poverty line – a number significantly increased from the previous year (14,000).²⁰³ In addition, young adults are also encountering poverty and are more likely to be poor today than they were three decades ago. According to the Low Income Cut Off Measure, an estimated 550,000 Canadians under the age of 18 live in low-income households.²⁰⁴

Exploring the incidence of child and youth poverty in the priority neighbourhoods highlights extremely high rates in Crescent Valley, with 77% of children less than 6 years of age living in poverty.²⁰⁵ Some of the concerns echoed by low-income families in the neighbourhood center around access to comprehensive childhood education, care for young children and sustainable afterschool programming for youth.

Recent Immigrants

Recent immigrants are more likely to live in poverty, have low-paying jobs, be unemployed and are at higher risk of long-term poverty compared to the non-racialized Canadian population.²⁰⁶ The economic situation for newcomers to Canada has deteriorated. Immigrants had higher rates of employment, labour market participation, earnings and family income three decades ago than they do today. In 2010, the rate of poverty among new immigrants was 17.6%, 5 percentage points higher than in 1981 and almost twice the overall poverty rate for Canada that year.²⁰⁷

Aboriginal People

If the United Nations Human Development Index only considered First Nations communities in Canada, the country would share a ranking of 78th, alongside Kazakhstan. This stark

201 Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012)

202 The Barriers for People in Poverty – Partnership to End Poverty (n.d.)

203 Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012)

204 Child Poverty – The Conference Board of Canada (2013)

205 Poverty & Plenty II – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2008)

206 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives & the Wellesley Institute

207 Poverty Trends Scorecard: Canada 2012 – Citizens for Public Justice (n.d.)

contrast, from the top-10 position Canada usually holds, highlights the extreme poverty encountered by the First Nations. That poverty is particularly concentrated in New Brunswick. Seven of the ten poorest postal codes in Canada are in First Nations communities in the province. Child poverty is also prevalent, with a child born in a First Nations community being twice as likely to live in poverty. Youth living in First Nations communities are half as likely to graduate from high school, twice as likely to live in poverty and experience hunger, and six times as likely to commit suicide.²⁰⁸

People with Disabilities

People with disabilities have higher rates of poverty and unemployment, and lower levels of education and income security, than those without disabilities in Canada.²⁰⁹ The average employment income for working-age adults with disabilities is 22.5% lower than the average for working-age adults without disabilities.²¹⁰

In New Brunswick, working age people with a disability are approximately twice as likely to live on a low income compared to people without disabilities.²¹¹ Those living alone with a disability are more likely to live in poverty than those living alone without a disability (31% compared to 21%).²¹²

Seniors

The poverty rate has risen for seniors in Canada from 16.1% in 2007 to 18.5% in 2010.²¹³ This is significant not only because the situation is worsening, but also due to the increasing number of seniors entering the Canadian landscape. Approximately ¼ of the population of Canada will be comprised of seniors, as more baby boomers turn 65 and older.²¹⁴

Lone Female Led Families

Poverty among women is most profound among lone mothers, with more than half (52.1%) of female lone mothers with children under six living in poverty.²¹⁵ In New Brunswick, there are more than 29,000 lone mothers and 45.4% of them live in poverty. Half of lone mothers in the province have an income of \$25,900 or less.²¹⁶ Within Saint John, lone mothers head 20% of families,²¹⁷ and they are most prevalent in the priority neighbourhoods, especially in Crescent Valley.

208 Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012)

209 Poverty Trends Scorecard: Canada 2012 – Citizens for Public Justice (n.d.)

210 Federal Disability Report: The Government of Canada's Annual Report on Disability Issues – HRSDC (2010)

211 An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick: 2012-2017 – Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (2012)

212 As a Matter of Fact: Poverty and Disability in Canada – Council of Canadians with Disabilities (2009)

213 Poverty Trends Scorecard: Canada 2012 – Citizens for Public Justice (n.d.)

214 Gap Between Rich and Poor: Elderly Poverty Rate (65 years of age and older) – Vital Signs Community Foundations of Canada (2012)

215 Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012)

216 Fact Check: Poverty in New Brunswick – Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, Government of New Brunswick (2012)

217 National Council of Welfare (NCW), 2006

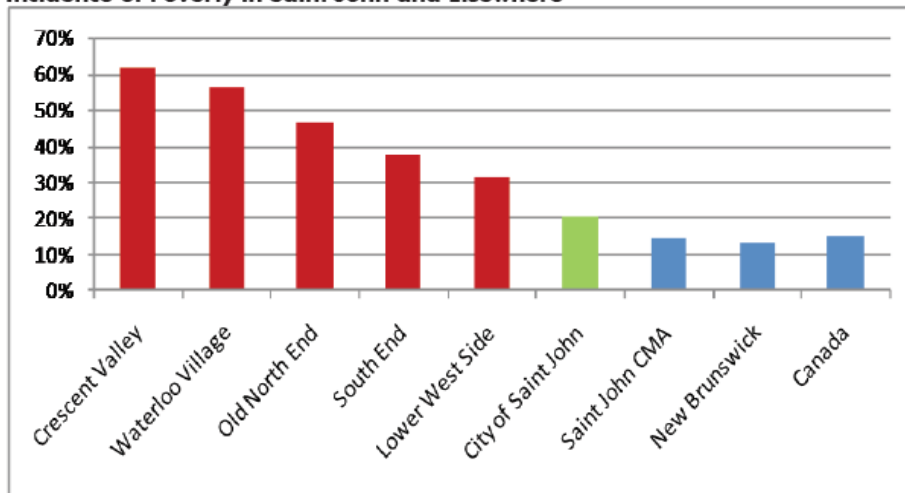
It is especially difficult to break the cycle of poverty for lone mothers earning minimum wage. An individual working 37.5 hours per week at \$10.00/hour would take home approximately \$1,625 / month before taxes (approximately \$1,200 after taxes). The average cost of licensed daycare for a toddler in the province is \$618 and the average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in Saint John is \$703. The total for those two expenses is \$1,321²¹⁸ - more than the \$1,200 earned.

Benefits of Supporting Priority Neighbourhoods

The 2011 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives report²¹⁹ highlights the estimated economic costs of poverty in the province. Health care costs to the provincial government are an estimated \$196 million, crime costs are \$15 million and productivity loss is between \$108-190 million. The economic costs of poverty are high and its effects are far-reaching. Cost reductions associated with poverty reduction would lead to resources that could be redirected to creating and maintaining sustainable and effective social programs that could keep poverty levels low.

The spatiality of poverty in Saint John is made very clear when looking at the concentration of poverty in the priority neighbourhoods. Much of Saint John's poverty exists within Crescent Valley, Waterloo Village, the Old North End, the South End and the Lower West Side. In addition to the higher prevalence of poverty, there are also lower labour participation rates, lower levels of individuals with post-secondary education and higher levels of high school non-completion.

Incidence of Poverty in Saint John and Elsewhere



Source: Vibrant Communities Saint John

218 * Adapted from - The Barriers for People in Poverty – Partnership to End Poverty (n.d.)

219 Cost of Poverty in New Brunswick – InFocus, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2011)

The 2011 Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI) and Deloitte report²²⁰ revealed that communities within the CMA, outside of the priority neighbourhoods have low awareness of poverty and its implications. This highlights an opportunity to increase knowledge of poverty within Saint John's communities and demonstrate the benefits a poverty reduction strategy would bring the entire city.

A concerted effort is being made by a variety of stakeholders to focus services and investments on supporting community and social development in the priority neighbourhoods. Support for priority neighbourhoods would involve investing in education, literacy, skills development, job creation, civic engagement and safer communities. The benefits of such investments would translate to a healthier, safer, better-educated and economically self-sufficient community.

Targeting poverty reduction strategies for children and youth specifically will have significant intergenerational effects. As research has highlighted, children who experience poverty will be more likely to remain poor as adults, continuing the cycle's destructive path – unless effective policy measures are implemented to prevent this trend. Such measures would involve investing in quality childcare and education. The direct relationship between education level and income highlight the important path that education can play in overcoming poverty.

"Higher levels of education correlate with better health outcomes and higher rates of civic engagement, from voting to volunteering...Children of educated parents tend to pursue higher levels of education, be healthier, be better prepared for school, and engage in more activities."²²¹

Partners Supporting Priority Neighbourhoods

There are a number of initiatives occurring on provincial, municipal, community and neighbourhood levels to address poverty in the city and key social issues in the priority neighbourhoods. Through the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC), the Government of New Brunswick has developed a provincial poverty reduction plan: Overcoming Poverty Together. ESIC has targeted three priority areas for action: "By 2015, New Brunswick will have reduced income poverty by 25% and deep income poverty by 50%, and will have made significant progress in achieving sustained economic and social inclusion." The strategy involves the following areas of focus:

Opportunities for Being (Meeting Basic Needs)

- Reforming social assistance; Raising the minimum wage
- Providing stable funding for homeless shelters

220 The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative Report on Future Roles and Areas of Focus –Deloitte 2011

221 Insulating the Education Pipeline to Increase Postsecondary Success – The Forum for Youth Investment (2010).

- Initiating a prescription drug program for uninsured citizens

Opportunities for Becoming (Lifelong Learning and Skills Acquisition)

- Increasing the number of registered Early Childhood Education spots
- Advancing the community schools concept
- Providing ongoing teacher training
- Initiating literacy mentors programs

Opportunities for Belonging (Community Participation)

- Developing a housing strategy
- Exploring opportunities for social enterprise
- Providing continuing education opportunities to support low-income people to enter the skilled workforce

In order to meet some of these strategies, the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities has been established to promote healthy living and integrate a number of socially oriented policies, programs and services. The department will collaborate with the non-profit sector and stakeholders to target efforts around the vulnerable populations identified in this report.

There are also initiatives taking place on a municipal level to address poverty in the city. PlanSJ identifies poverty as being the top social issue affecting the city. The plan involves collaborating with other levels of government and key stakeholders around poverty reduction initiatives. It identifies “Urban Neighbourhood Intensification Areas” as areas of the city in which growth and development will be focused. These include the priority neighbourhoods and will benefit from renewed investment and development (they are targeted to receive approximately 45% of future growth and development). The City of Saint John’s economic development plan, Charting our Renaissance: True Growth 2.0 is focusing on labour force attraction, readiness, and retention as a means of supporting job growth and breaking the cycle of poverty.

On a community level, there is a robust spectrum of organizations, businesses and departments involved in poverty reduction in Saint John. In fact, according to the 2011 BCAP and Deloitte report, “it is estimated that there are some 38 government departments, 87 non-profit organizations, and 55 businesses involved with poverty reduction in Saint John.”²²² Of these there are two key players directly involved in poverty reduction, Vibrant Communities Saint John (VCSJ) and the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative (BCAPI).

The 2005 poverty reduction plan developed by VCSJ surpassed its objective of reaching 2000 families by 2008 by 50%. Drawing upon its successes, this plan was revised in 2008 and

²²² The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative Report on Future Roles and Areas of Focus –Deloitte 2011

again in 2013. The 2013 poverty reduction strategy²²³ serves as an important platform for community change.

BCAPI serves as a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to poverty reduction in Saint John and comprises of business and professional leaders in the community. Its primary objectives include the following: 1) Increasing opportunities for children, youth and single-parents, who live in poverty, to succeed in school and achieve employment that pays a decent wage; and, 2) Providing adequate resources in low-income neighbourhoods and schools to enable low income families to improve their well-being, work toward economic self-sufficiency and feel valued as contributing members of a vibrant community.

On a neighbourhood level, there are organizations, associations, councils and community centres operating within the priority neighbourhoods. Their work ranges from community building with the Saint John Police Force (PULSE and the West Side PACT), to providing safe spaces for children (the Old North End Community Centre, ONE Change and the Carleton Community Centre) and tenants associations and resource centres (Crescent Valley Community Tenants Association, Crescent Valley Resource Centre, the South End Area Community Action Team and the South Central Citizen's Council).

Conclusion

The City of Saint John has some significant strides to make in addressing poverty and key socio-economic issues in the priority neighbourhoods. Research highlights the populations most vulnerable and those under most distress. It is incumbent on everyone to work together to reduce poverty levels, not only for the sake of those currently in need, but also for the future generations growing up before us. It is clear that there is not a shortage of organizations, departments and businesses interested in pursuing this cause. The next step is identifying how various stakeholders can effectively work together to set specific goals and actions towards poverty reduction. Poverty reduction is a necessary step in improving the quality of life and well-being of people living in poverty and building a strong and prosperous future for the city of Saint John.

Resources

An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick: 2012-2017 – Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (2012)

As a Matter of Fact: Poverty and Disability in Canada – Council of Canadians with Disabilities (2009)

²²³ Greater Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy: Poverty Reduction...Moving Forward 10 Years of Reducing Poverty - Vibrant Communities Saint John.

Child Poverty – The Conference Board of Canada (2013)

Child Poverty Report Card: New Brunswick – Human Development Council (2012)

Cost of Poverty in New Brunswick – InFocus, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2011)

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Gap Between Rich and Poor: Elderly Poverty Rate (65 years of age and older) – Vital Signs Community Foundations of Canada (2012)

Greater Saint John Poverty Reduction Strategy: Poverty Reduction...Moving Forward 10 Years of Reducing Poverty - Vibrant Communities Saint John.

Greater Saint John’s Vital Signs 2011: Our Region’s 6th Annual Check-Up, Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2011)

Insulating the Education Pipeline to Increase Postsecondary Success – The Forum for Youth Investment (2010).

Just the Facts – Canada Without Poverty (2013)

National Council of Welfare (NCW), 2006

Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012)

Partners Assisting Local Schools (PALS) Report (2012)

Poverty & Plenty II – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2008)

Poverty Trends Scorecard: Canada 2012 – Citizens for Public Justice

Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets for PlanSJ – City of Saint John (2012)

Teen Pregnancy Statistical Report (2010)

The Barriers for People in Poverty – Partnership to End Poverty (n.d.)

The Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative Report on Future Roles and Areas of Focus –Deloitte 2011

Vibrant Communities Saint John: Dismantling Poverty Traps – Community Stories – Caledon Institute of Social Policy (2006)

Vibrant Communities Saint John (2005)

Wellesley Institute, Precarious Housing in Canada Report, 2010



Recreation and Culture

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

The priority area of Recreation and Culture encompasses the following two terms:

Recreation refers to the health of physical spaces or locations and includes concepts such as: access to clean, healthy spaces and facilities for the citizens of Saint John; contribution to healthy neighbourhoods; environmental health and priorities for the community (e.g., garbage, cleanliness); communities facilities, including neighbourhood, community and regional parks, as well as recreational facilities, and gathering spaces (e.g., public or open spaces); and, the natural environment, such as national areas and land within the Saint John area.

Culture refers to a number of components including traditions and values, the arts, heritage, diversity and social history. It includes the promotion of cultural events, activities, and strategies within the city, such as performing arts, visual arts and crafts, book-publishing, music, film, video, audio-visual and tourism.

The Current Situation

Greater Saint John is the name of the area encompassing Metro Saint John (Saint John, New Brunswick, Grand Bay-Westfield, Rothesay and Hampton). It is also known as Greater Saint John Census Metropolitan Area, or Saint John CMA, and is located in New Brunswick, Canada. Greater Saint John has a population of 138,644 (2011)²²⁴.

Saint John is the oldest incorporated city in Canada and has a rich heritage that has been shaped

²²⁴ Statistics Canada. Census Data. (2011).

by recreation and culture. In fact, Saint John was the first city to set aside land for public squares in its Royal Charter of 1785 and is home to more than 1,130 ha of parks and 23,900 ha of open space, including the city's Rockwood Park, one of Canada's largest urban parks, and the Irving Nature Park. Historic and cultural resources also shape the city, like the Imperial Theatre, Saint John Arts Centre and New Brunswick Museum. Residents of the City of Saint John, the Greater Saint John area, and tourists from around Canada and the world enjoy these places and facilities in great numbers each year.

Saint John has a wealth of distinctive architecture and heritage buildings. Today, there are 770 properties in heritage conservation areas in the city of Saint John. Aside from its rich heritage, Saint John has a strong culture of people who work in the arts of music, dance, theatre, visual arts, film and writing. A strong Francophone community continues to shape Saint John's cultural landscape as do new Canadians and ethnic groups that have made this community home. More than one in four people who are visible minorities (28.5%) in the province reside in Saint John.²²⁵ The city's designation as a Cultural Capital of Canada in 2010 highlighted arts and culture in the city and its unique architectural legacy.

The city also offers many indoor and outdoor facilities, including arenas, recreational fields, tennis courts, baseball diamonds and skate parks, playgrounds, open spaces and four city sports complexes, Memorial Park, Shamrock Park, Allison Grounds and Forest Hills Park. The natural landscape in Saint John provides an abundance of multi-purpose trails. The city also offers various recreation programs through community centres and programs and partnerships with other community groups.²²⁶

Significant resources are required to maintain and support Saint John's recreational and cultural assets. For these to be successfully maintained, operated and developed, there are a number of factors, including demographics, infrastructure, access/accessibility and budgeting that need to be considered.

Changing Demographics

According to PlaySJ (2012), "three population trends are taking place within the city of Saint John: the largest age group (25-45) is shrinking; the youngest population (0-14) is rapidly declining; and, the overall population is aging, led by the baby boomer generation (aged 45-65). The city is getting older with fewer youth 19 years old and younger and a growing number of residents aged 55 and older."

²²⁵ Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, Plans SJ – City of Saint John (2012).

²²⁶ Play SJ Background Document – City of Saint John (2011).

Due to the rapid decline of children and youth within the province, school enrolment is also in decline, which may result in the closure of school playgrounds that have served a community's recreational needs and services. The province of New Brunswick (i.e., the Department of Education) possesses the ultimate decision-making authority over which schools to close within the province, making it extremely difficult for municipalities to plan for such an occurrence. Enhanced communication between the province and municipalities is necessary to ensure that an appropriate response to changing demographics on a community level is considered.

Aging Infrastructure

The city is facing challenges addressing an overabundance of outdated facilities. Many recreational facilities within New Brunswick and Saint John are over 40 years old and are considered to be either reaching, or at the end of their useful life span. Taking this into consideration, a review of New Brunswick recreation facilities estimated the total renewal/replacement cost for the current recreation infrastructure (e.g., swimming pools, community centres, arenas, and athletic and ball fields) is \$327 million for facilities that are presently at life cycle stages 3, 4 and 5. (Stage 3: 15-24 Years Old; Stage 4: 25-34 Years Old; and, Stage 5: 35+ Years Old).

Access

Programs offered by partner organizations, like the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club, were previously supported by in-house/private transportation that provided the opportunity for participants to get to and from recreational programming. However, due to a number of factors, many organizations have eliminated private bus and van services, thereby placing a higher demand on public transportation (such as Saint John Transit) and other forms of transportation to support participation. This has increased the participation cost for many individuals and families, thereby further limiting access to recreational opportunities.

Potential Barriers

Budget Constraints

The 2011 Census states that the population of Saint John was approximately 70,063; however, many of Saint John's recreation facilities were constructed to serve a population 25% larger (closer to a population of 90,000). Taking these numbers into consideration, a review of the city of Saint John's recreation facilities and parks against a population-based (per capita) recreation industry standard has shown that Saint John has an oversupply of a number of recreation facilities. These facilities were built in anticipation of larger population and thus, a larger tax base to

support service and maintenance levels. As a result, funding for these spaces is spread too thin, meaning many parks and facilities remain in substandard condition.²²⁷

The city of Saint John has decreased its municipal budget for parks and recreation. According to PlaySJ (2012), “The city of Saint John reported an average recreation and culture budget equal to 6.54% of its total operating budgets between 2004 and 2008. Other comparable communities in the region invest significantly higher ratios of their operating budgets. For example, the City of Fredericton operating budget for community services, which is responsible for recreation spending, as well as parks and trees and public transit, represents 11.4% of that city’s total operating budget.”²²⁸ A reduction in municipal funding to recreation and culture translates to an increase in participation costs for individuals and families.²²⁹

Investment

Lack of investment in arts and culture has been noted as a barrier to building a more vibrant Saint John. Stimulating investments in sectors such as arts and culture helps to diversify and grow the regional economy. One strategy is to invest in post-secondary education and research facilities. For Saint John to maintain and develop its professional workforce in the creative industries, strong post-secondary links are required. Stronger training, education and research facilities and capacities – particularly if located in the Uptown – are essential to building the creative economy and the local capacity for innovation.²³⁰

There are also concerns around investment in the maintenance of heritage property in the city. There are high vacancy rates above street level in a large number of historic properties and little life above the storefronts in the historic centre of the city. There has been a focus among developers to invest in new construction as opposed to reviving the historical and cultural spaces that enrich the city of Saint John. Residents have voiced the desire to build the capacity of the arts and culture sector by providing hubs and spaces where cultural industries can innovate and flourish.²³¹

Accessibility

According to “A Community Research Report for Saint John”, families have identified transportation issues as a prominent barrier to participation for children.²³² High levels of urban

²²⁷ Saint John Infrastructure, Facilities and Programming Inventory - City of Saint John Leisure Services, ADI Limited (2009).

²²⁸ PlaySJ: The City of Saint John Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan – City of Saint John (2012).

²²⁹ Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, Plans SJ (2012).

²³⁰ AuthenticCity: District Wealth Creation – A Cultural Strategy for Saint John, Uptown Saint John (2008).

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Understanding the Early Years: Greater Saint John, New Brunswick – A Community Research Report – J. Douglas Willms; KSI Research International Inc.; and, R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (2010).

and rural poverty in the city make it challenging for families to access programming. Moving forward, it will be important for the city to ensure recreation services are accessible, geographically, economically, and socially.

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (2012) highlighted the need for better accessibility for participants and spectators with different disabilities at recreational facilities. The Council also identified the need for better participation access for persons with disabilities, in terms of associated costs (e.g., admission fees and equipment) and transportation (i.e., to and from recreational facilities). Persons with an intellectual disability are specifically impacted by lacking accessibility to recreation facilities, and have often been excluded from programs and activities, largely due to the "inability of recreation service providers to adapt their programs to enable individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities to actively participate in a meaningful and sustained way." This has led to individuals feeling isolated and has led to health issues such as obesity and cardiovascular problems.²³³

Benefits of Supporting Recreation and Culture

Community Wellness

The arts and culture sector creates jobs, increases youth retention, supports increased tourism, and immigration, provides health and educational benefits and supply's many other positive spin-offs. Similarly recreation has a number of benefits including reducing health care costs and increasing labour force productivity due to healthier lifestyles and reduced time at health care facilities and out of the office.²³⁴

Recreation reduces stress levels, develops leadership capacities and social skills in both adults and children, as well as contributes to reductions in self-destructive and anti-social behaviour, which has a direct impact on the safety of a community. Recreation has also been shown to build stronger families, as a direct result of engaging in activities together. For those families that cannot afford the luxury of a stay-at-home parent present before and after school, available recreational programming has also provided safe, developmental opportunities for children.²³⁵

Cultivating Economic Growth

Arts and culture generates significant municipal revenue and is an engine for growing local economies. The Conference Board of Canada research shows that arts and cultural industries contribute \$85 billion dollars annually to the economy, which is 7.4 per cent of the GDP. That's

²³³ New Brunswick Association for Community Living – Recreation & Leisure (2012).

²³⁴ Economic Values and Benefits of State Parks – The National Association of State Park Directors (2013).

²³⁵ Consultation on Enhancing Local Governance - Recreation: For Fun, For Life, Forever! Recreation New Brunswick (2011).

more than the forestry and auto sector combined (each roughly 2 per cent of GDP).²³⁶ Within Saint John, the average household spending on arts and culture was \$961 in 2009, higher than the provincial average (\$893) and lower than the national rate (\$962).²³⁷

The cost to generate one job in the arts and culture sector is roughly \$20,000, while the cost to generate one job in industry is \$200,000. Investment in the arts creates more jobs per dollar than investment in industry- ten times more.²³⁸ In 2010, the proportion of the population employed in cultural industries in Saint John (CMA) was 1.09% (representing 700 persons).²³⁹

The presence of recreational facilities and parks also supports a community's economic wellness through increased tourism, the attraction and retention of business, and as employment generators. Saint John is home to a number of visual artists, and hosted the first New Brunswick International Sculpture Symposium in 2012, which was a huge success, bringing in over 35,000 visitors who watched six international artists carve 120 tons of New Brunswick granite²⁴⁰. Public art has become a part of the cityscape.

The New Brunswick Tourism Indicators Summary Report, Government of New Brunswick (2011) highlights the importance of tourism to the New Brunswick economy.

- In 2010, 34,700 employees worked in the tourism sector, representing 9% of New Brunswick's labour force.
- Visits in the province of New Brunswick in 2010 contributed an estimated \$1.1 billion in tourism. Non-resident visitor spending was estimated at \$638 million in 2010.
- This economic activity associated with the tourism sector sustained an estimated 19,600 full-time equivalent jobs in 2010.
- Visitor spending also benefited New Brunswick's provincial and municipal governments through estimated tax revenues of \$103 million and \$17 million, respectively, in 2010. This allows for further investment in culture and recreation facilities that benefit the residents of New Brunswick, and provides incremental funding to support education, health care, and other vital programs.

Social Cohesion

Recreational facilities and parks provide the opportunity to enhance community cohesion, through shared management and ownership of resources. This shared agenda facilitates improved community relationships, as different groups are expected to work together to maintain

²³⁶ The Arts Save Lives, Angela Birdsell (published in the Telegraph Journal September 3, 2011).

²³⁷ Greater Saint John's Vital Signs 2011: Our Region's 6th Annual Check-Up, Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2011).

²³⁸ Support for the Arts Sector, ArtsLinkNB (2012).

²³⁹ Greater Saint John's Vital Signs 2011: Our Region's 6th Annual Check-Up, Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2011).

²⁴⁰ Sculpture Saint John. <http://www.sculpturesaintjohn.com/> (2013).

the quality of their community (e.g., youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, and people of different cultural backgrounds). Opportunities to engage with fellow community members for which one might not otherwise, contributes to greater cross-cultural tolerance, reduces alienation and loneliness, and increases intergenerational understanding, which ultimately helps to create local attachments.²⁴¹ Community cohesion also contributes to a community's economy. The "know-your-neighbour" social capital helps to "ward off antisocial problems that would otherwise cost the city more in police and fire protection, prisons, counseling, and rehabilitation."²⁴²

A University of Pennsylvania research report demonstrated that a high concentration of the arts in a city leads to higher civic engagement, more social cohesion, higher child wellness and lower poverty rates. A robust arts community ensures that young people are not left to be raised solely in "a pop culture and tabloid marketplace".²⁴³

Partners Supporting Recreation and Culture

Recreation

At the federal level, the principal partners are Environment Canada and Parks Canada, which both play an active role in protecting the environment, conserving Canada's natural and cultural heritage, and fostering public understanding for present and future generations. The Government of Canada, through Canada's Economic Action Plan 2012, has also provided specific funding through the Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund to support infrastructure projects that focus on improving the quality of facilities enjoyed by Canadians, including community centres, cultural centres, parks and recreational trails, recreational facilities, and tourism facilities.²⁴⁴

Recreation has many supporters within the province of New Brunswick, including both public (the Government of New Brunswick) and private/non-profit entities (e.g., RecreationNB and the Nature Trust of New Brunswick). The Government of New Brunswick supports recreational facilities and parks through the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, the Department of Environmental and Local Government, and the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities. The Premier's Council on the status of Disabled Persons guides the recreation industry through the promotion of universal design and barrier-free design in the restoration and development of community facilities. The Council's Action Plan (2012) focuses on Recreation/Wellness as a priority area, within which, one of the objectives is "to ensure that all

²⁴¹ Social/Community Values and Benefits of State Parks – The National Association of State Park Directors (2013).

²⁴² Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System – The Trust for Public Land: Conserving Land for People (2009).

²⁴³ 10 Reasons to Support the Arts, Americans for the Arts (2013)

²⁴⁴ Budget 2013 – Chapter 3.3: The New Building Canada Plan – Government of Canada (2013).

public recreational programs and facilities are doing what is necessary to enable the inclusive participation of persons with disabilities.” The New Brunswick Association for Community Living also guides recreation within the province through its Inclusive Recreation Program. It can also be suggested that organizations like SportNB, the Healthy Eating Physical Activity Coalition, the Department of Health, and the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation indirectly contribute to recreation within the province through its various mandates related to health and wellness.

Recreation is strongly supported within the City of Saint John through the municipality and community entities. Under the new “Transportation and Environmental Services” service area, “Sport and Recreation Facilities Services” and “Parks and City Landscape Service” are responsible for: the scheduling and booking of sport fields, arenas, facilities; development, operation and maintenance of all community parks, trails, tourist sites; preservation and protection of natural areas; and, coordination of urban forestry operation and initiatives. Under the “Growth and Community Development Services” service area, “Recreation and Cultural Programming Service” and “Neighbourhood Improvement Service” are responsible to deliver service that promotes community well-being and enhances the quality of life of citizens to produce a healthy, vibrant, positive and strong community. Service is focused on meeting the diverse recreation, cultural and leisure needs of our citizens.

The City of Saint John recently developed its own strategic plan, PlaySJ (2013) that “puts forth strategies for recreational facilities within the city, including playgrounds, parks, outdoor facilities, indoor recreation facilities, community centres, neighbourhood improvement, and trails,” taking PlanSJ’s directives into consideration. Recreation is also supported at the municipal level through the development of initiatives like the Trails and Bikeways Strategic Plan (2010), which aims to promote non-motorized access to key destinations around the city, and the Marsh Creek Restoration Initiative, which also aims promote connectivity within the city, as well as promote environmental benefits, like improved water quality. There are also plans being developed in Greater Saint John such as the GrandBay Westfield recreation plan, along with other municipal plans under development that will add to the opportunities available in the Saint John CMA.

At the community level, environmental efforts are largely supported by priority neighbourhood organizations (i.e., Westside PACT, PULSE, Waterloo Village Association, Crescent Valley, the ONE Change Environment Team, and East Side Motivators) through garbage/recycling programs, neighbourhood clean-ups, community garden projects, and energy efficiency programs. Youth in the Old North End have been involved in the “Green Team”, responsible for initiatives like the development of a bottle recycling program, maintaining community gardens, cleaning garbage-

filled lots, painting/installing street garbage cans, and providing environmentally-friendly themed activities for youth.

Other organizations that provide direct support to ensuring that the quality of Saint John's environment is maintained and enhanced include the Atlantic Coastal Action Plan, which works to improve the environmental health and integrity of the Saint John Harbour and its estuaries, and the Canadian Rivers Institute, which focuses on conservation and sustainable management of water resources. Vibrant Communities Saint John has played a role in supporting the environment through its research on alternative transportation modes that could contribute to an environmentally sustainable transportation, such as light rail transit and linkages between pedestrian and bicycle trails.²⁴⁵

Culture

The primary federal department responsible for culture is the Department of Canadian Heritage which is responsible for formulating policies and delivering programs that help all Canadians participate in their shared cultural and civic life. The Department's main activities involve funding community and other third party organizations who contribute to departmental objectives related to culture, arts, heritage, official languages, citizenship and participation, Aboriginal, youth, and sport initiatives. The only Saint John based organization receiving funding is the Imperial Theatre for the "Imperial Theatre Presentation and Outreach" project. Another agency, the Canada Council for the Arts is a national arm's length arts funding agency that provides grants to professional artists and arts organizations, awards fellowships and prizes and conducts research and arts promotion.

Provincially, the mandate of the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture is to facilitate cultural development in the province by providing leadership in the development, implementation and monitoring of government strategies, initiatives and programs. The mandate of the Heritage Branch is to coordinate and support those activities in the province designed to promote heritage awareness and protect and preserve heritage resources. The mandate of the Arts Development Branch is to facilitate community cultural development in New Brunswick by providing leadership in the development, implementation and monitoring of government policies, strategies, initiatives and programs supporting the arts. The New Brunswick Arts Board is an arm's length arts funding agency with a legislated mandate to facilitate and promote the creation of arts as well as administer funding programs for professional arts in the province.

The city of Saint John and the municipal plan, PlanSJ guide many of the city's cultural strategies.

²⁴⁵ Getting Around if You're Just Getting By: Poverty, Policy & Public Transit – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2012).

The Cultural Affairs Office is responsible for delivering the Arts & Culture Service to citizens and visitors, through the Saint John Arts & Culture Policy. This involves the promotion of community awareness of arts, culture and heritage in Saint John. The office supports the Saint John Community Arts Board's Community Arts Funding Program, which provides project support for non-profit organizations or groups wishing to offer quality arts activities in any discipline of the creative arts within the city. The 1% For Art Program is designed to provide opportunities for artists to exhibit works of art in public spaces. Through the Saint John Community Arts Board, the City will allocate at least 1% of the cost of a City capital project to the creation and installation of public art, as part of such municipal projects.

PlanSJ acknowledges that the vitality, quality of life and quality of place in the city are influenced by arts, culture and heritage. Strengthening the vitality of these assets requires continued investment of resources into arts and cultural initiatives and the continued celebration and conservation of the city's history. Goals in the plan involve further developing arts and culture in the city by working with the arts community to maintain appropriate arts and culture facilities; supporting and enhancing the city's multicultural community; continuing to recognize, value and conserve heritage resources; and increasing the provision of appropriate programs and assistance to newcomers.

On a community level, the Saint John Arts Centre and the Saint John Theatre Company lead a number of programs, workshops and productions in the city. The Saint John Arts Centre is a multidisciplinary venue, dedicated to serving the community through arts, educational and cultural programming that is accessible to all. The Saint John Arts Centre is host to many workshops, artist talks and art classes as well as maintaining an active schedule of art exhibits in its galleries. The Saint John Arts Centre is also host to cultural events such as concerts and plays, as well as private fundraisers for many different charities. The Saint John Theatre Company: Saint John Theatre is a volunteer run, community-based, non-profit organization. They house performance space, various production departments and offer a number of performances during the year. l'Association Régionale de la Communauté francophone de Saint-Jean (ARCf), offers a lively cultural calendar for the francophone community in the city.

Conclusion

Moving forward, the involvement of tri-level government support (i.e., municipal, provincial, and federal) will be critical in better supporting and enhancing current linkages with other governmental responsibilities, such as health and wellness. Recreational and cultural resources, such as facilities, buildings, programs and partnerships are incredibly interwoven and complex

and will rely on increased communication among varying levels of government to ensure that the needs of the community are heard.

Saint John's recreational and cultural landscape enriches the community and shapes the identity of the city. It contributes to community wellness, economic growth and social cohesion and it is crucial that programs linked to recreation and culture, are accessible to all residents socially, economically and geographically.

Cultural vibrancy, healthy spaces (neighbourhoods, parks, open spaces, etc.) and facilities (indoor and outdoor) rely on considerable resources and investment. Cultivating economic growth in Saint John will involve giving more thought to the kind of recreational and cultural opportunities the city wants to support that would benefit residents, retain youth and attract newcomers and visitors. With resources, innovation and commitment alongside the city's rich culture, heritage and landscape, the potential is great.

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Seniors

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

This growing cohort of Canadians represents a unique population for review and consideration, particularly within Saint John. For the purposes of this paper the threshold of 65 years old was chosen to delimit the population of seniors. Furthermore, the terms “senior”, “older person”, “older adult” and “elderly” is used to describe someone who is age 65 and over, however, it should be noted that this group is far from homogeneous. This collection of research provides a shallow overview of ‘Canadian seniors’, as senior-related issues are extremely broad and complex. Areas not specifically covered include elder abuse, injury prevention, emergency preparedness, seniors caring for seniors, as well as an in-depth look at immigrant seniors.

The Current Situation

Between 2011 and 2031, all members of the baby boom generation—Canada’s largest birth cohort (born between 1946 and 1965)—will turn 65. As a result, both the number and proportion of seniors in the population will climb.²⁴⁶ The Atlantic Provinces currently have the highest proportions of seniors (ranging from 15% to 16%). By 2031, the greatest increases will have occurred in both the Atlantic Provinces and in the territories.

About 16% of New Brunswick residents are over the age of 65, about 122,000 out of a total population of 755,000. That is slightly higher than the national average of people over the age of 65, which sits at 14 per cent.²⁴⁷ In Saint John, approximately 17% of residents are over the age of

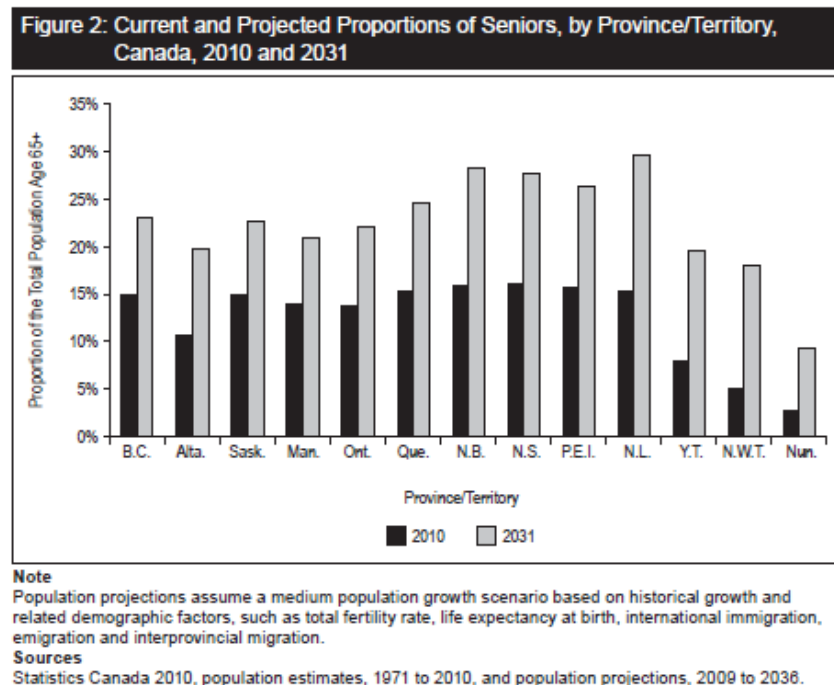
²⁴⁶ Health Care in Canada: A Focus on Seniors and Aging – Canadian Institute for Health Information (2011).

²⁴⁷ Facts About Aging in New Brunswick – Government of New Brunswick website (2013).

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/public_consultations/living_healthy_aging_well/facts.html.

65 out of the total population.²⁴⁸ Over the next 20 years, Statistics Canada forecasts the province's population will age faster than the rest of Canada.²⁴⁹

Current and Projected Proportions of Seniors, by Province/Territory in Canada 2010 and 2013- Statistics Canada



In terms of gender distinctions among Canada's seniors, most seniors are women, especially among the older age groups. For example, women accounted for 52% of seniors age 65 to 74 and 60% of seniors age 75 and older in 2010.²⁵⁰ The province's current life expectancy is 82 years of age; 77.5 years for men and 82.8 years for women

About 90% of New Brunswick residents over the age of 65 have adult literacy scores below Level 3 (which is the base minimum for a person to function in Canadian society). This leaves the bulk of older adults vulnerable to social isolation and poorer health outcomes.²⁵¹ The most common reported functional capacity limitation for seniors is an inability to perform housework without assistance, 14% of all seniors were unable to do so. Other common functional capacity limitations among seniors included the inability to: shop without assistance (10%); go places without help (10%); and, prepare meals (5%). While these challenges have been cited, only 7% of seniors live

²⁴⁸ Statistics Canada. Census Profile (2011).

²⁴⁹ Facts About Aging in New Brunswick – Government of New Brunswick website (2013)

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/corporate/public_consultations/living_healthy_aging_well/facts.html

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

in long-term facilities in Canada,²⁵² with only 3% in New Brunswick.²⁵³ This highlights the importance of promoting and supporting independence and independent living in Saint John.

In terms of physical health, the rates of obesity among seniors age 75 and older have risen. Women age 75 or older are more likely to be obese than men of the same age, in part because they are also more likely to be physically inactive. Rising rates of obesity and low levels of physical activity among adults and the middle-to-eldest seniors threaten to increase chronic disease prevalence and morbidity into the future.²⁵⁴ The risk of developing high blood pressure and osteoarthritis is highly correlated with obesity. In Canada between 10% and 15% of seniors suffer from depressive symptoms and/or clinical depression. Late-life dementias, which include Alzheimer's disease, affect 8% of seniors over the age of 65 and more than 25% of those over the age of 80. Dementia is considered to be one of the greatest public health challenges of the coming generation.²⁵⁵ Physical inactivity increases an individual's susceptibility to a number of chronic conditions and mental health problems.

Poverty

The poverty rate has risen for seniors in Canada from 16.1% in 2007 to 18.5% in 2010.²⁵⁶ Improvements in Canada's public pensions including the employment-based Canada/Quebec Pension Plans (CPP/QPP,) and the universal Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) have helped reduce poverty among seniors over the last few decades, however its been creeping up again in recent years and now requires serious attention. Delayed access to OAS and GIS as a result of the federal government raising the age of access from 65 to 67 will mean tremendous hardship for those with low incomes and those unable to work because of poor health or disability, especially women seniors who have a poverty rate double that of men.²⁵⁷ Despite universal access to health care in Canada, seniors with fewer personal resources, including health, wealth and social support, are also more likely to experience barriers to accessing health care.

Differences in life expectancy at age 65 were seen when socio-economic status was taken into account. Compared with those from poorer neighbourhoods, senior men living in Canada's wealthiest neighbourhoods had longer life expectancies. In 2000-2001, men age 65 and older in the highest neighbourhood income tercile could expect to live 1.1 years longer than senior men in the lowest tercile. In contrast, senior women from the wealthiest neighbourhoods did not live longer than their counterparts in the poorest neighbourhoods.

²⁵² Healthy Aging in Canada: A New Vision, A Vital Investment From Evidence to Action - the Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group (2006).

²⁵³ Living Healthy, Aging Well: A Report – Premier's Panel on Seniors (2012).

²⁵⁴ Health Care in Canada: A Focus on Seniors and Aging – Canadian Institute for Health Information (2011)

²⁵⁵ Healthy Aging in Canada: A New Vision, A Vital Investment From Evidence to Action - the Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group (2006).

²⁵⁶ Poverty Trends Scorecard: Canada 2012 – Citizens for Public Justice (n.d.)

²⁵⁷ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012).

Although income has increased generally across Canada, the income gap in retirement between the sexes has remained. In 2008, the mean after-tax income from all sources for women older than age 65 was 65% that of men, unchanged from the mid-2000s. In 2008, this translated to an annual income difference of \$13,300 (\$24,800 versus \$38,100).²⁵⁸

Within Saint John, Crescent Valley had the highest incidence of poverty for seniors 65 years and over among the priority neighbourhoods, while the Lower West Side had the lowest. The city had an incidence of poor seniors 1.3 times higher than the CMA's and 2.1 times higher than the suburbs. The CMA had an incidence 1.2 times lower than the national average.²⁵⁹

Immigrants

A relatively large proportion of seniors in Canada are immigrants. In 2001, 28.6% of persons aged 65 to 74 and 28% of those aged 75 to 84 were immigrants.²⁶⁰ By contrast the national average was 13%.²⁶¹ Most immigrants who are now aged 65 or older initially arrived in Canada when they were young. Of the immigrants who were aged 65 or older in 2001, 26.2% arrived in Canada when they were less than 25 years of age, and hence have lived here for at least four decades.²⁶²

Immigrant seniors, especially those who came in most recently years, are more prone to ill health in the long run than Canadian-born seniors because of limited social networks, inadequate knowledge of official languages, and relatively low income, particularly if they live alone. According to the 2009 CCHS Healthy Aging Survey, fewer immigrant seniors (82%) reported being satisfied with their lives in general than non-immigrant seniors (89%).²⁶³

Transportation

Results from the Canadian Community Health Survey – Healthy Aging found that in 2009 the most common form of transportation used by seniors was a motor vehicle. Nine in ten (90%) seniors with a valid driver's license had driven at least once a week during the month preceding the interview. Six in ten (60%) seniors reported that driving a motor vehicle was their most common form of transportation in 2009. Being a passenger in a motor vehicle was the next most common form of transportation, reported by 28% of seniors. About 6% of seniors used public transportation and 3% of seniors walked as their most common form of transportation. The likelihood of driving appears to be related to the number of chronic conditions reported by seniors. Seniors with three or more chronic conditions were less likely to drive and more likely to be passengers than seniors with no chronic conditions²⁶⁴

²⁵⁸ Health Care in Canada: A Focus on Seniors and Aging – Canadian Institute for Health Information (2011).

²⁵⁹ Poverty & Plenty II: A Statistical Snapshot of the Quality of Life in Saint John – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2008).

²⁶⁰ A Portrait of Seniors in Canada – Statistics Canada (2006).

²⁶¹ Healthy Aging in Canada: A New Vision, A Vital Investment From Evidence to Action - the Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group (2006).

²⁶² A Portrait of Seniors in Canada – Statistics Canada (2006).

²⁶³ What Do We Know About Immigrant Seniors Aging in Canada? A Demographic, Socio-Economic and Health Profile – CERIS Working Paper (2012).

²⁶⁴ The Use of Transportation by Seniors in Canada – Statistics Canada (2012).

Nutrition

In 2008-2009, approximately one-third, or 34% of Canadians aged 65 or older (more than 4.1 million), were at nutritional risk. Gaining or losing more than 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms) in the past six months and skipping meals “almost every day” were the main drivers of nutritional risk. Among seniors who were depressed, 62% were at nutritional risk. This was substantially higher than among those who were not depressed, 33%. Disability was also a factor with 44% of people with moderate or severe disability being at nutritional risk, compared with 27% of those with no or mild disability.²⁶⁵

A higher percentage of women than men were at nutritional risk, 38% versus 29%. Biological differences, higher levels of pain and depression and body image are all considered to play a role in higher nutritional risk for women. For men, those with the lowest household education and income had significantly higher odds of being at nutritional risk than did those with the highest household education and income.²⁶⁶

Living alone, infrequent social participation and low social support all remained significantly associated with nutritional risk when demographic factors and mental and physical well-being were taken into account. About half (49%) of people living alone were at nutritional risk, compared with 28% of those who lived with others. The difference was particularly large for men, with those living alone twice as likely to be at nutritional risk (51%) than were those living with others (25%). People living alone may be an important target group for nutritional risk screening. Social participation and tangible support are modifiable factors that may reduce nutritional risk.²⁶⁷

Potential Barriers

Caregiving

Migration patterns have fed into the story of aging in New Brunswick. As young people continue to leave rural areas for urban centres, it accelerates the ‘greying’ of rural New Brunswick. This is a world-wide trend but it is exacerbated in New Brunswick because of the decades-long outmigration from the region. An increasing number of New Brunswick residents look for jobs first at home, then in one of New Brunswick’s cities and then, if they are unsuccessful, they leave for Halifax, Montreal, Toronto or the oil fields of Alberta. This is leaving a number of seniors far from family networks that many rely on for support in healthy aging. In 1961, almost 60% of seniors lived with their son or daughter. Today, only 5% of seniors live with one of their children and the option of seniors living with children has reduced significantly as the migration of their children from New Brunswick continues.²⁶⁸ In recent years older adults have joined the migration into urban areas to be closer to health care services and children, a trend that is happening across Canada.

²⁶⁵ Nutritional Risk Among Older Canadians – P.L. Ramage-Morin and D. Garriguet (for Statistics Canada) (2013).

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Living Healthy, Aging Well: A Report – Premier’s Panel on Seniors (2012).

Health Care System

About 92% of New Brunswick residents have a family doctor, one of the highest percentages in Canada, according to the New Brunswick Health Council. However in its 2011 New Brunswick Health System report card, the Council gave the province's primary health care sector a C grade, largely because of reduced access to family physicians. New Brunswick residents may have a doctor but getting in to see them can be a challenge— for both individuals and population health.²⁶⁹

Having a system that is responsive to the unique health care needs of seniors will become increasingly important as Canada's population ages. The Canadian Institute for Health Information has identified a number of strategies that may help the Canadian health care system address current barriers and adapt to seniors needs.

- **Improved Integration of Care Across the Continuum:** Existing health care delivery systems and organizations were developed to meet acute care needs. Delivering appropriate care into the future will require a paradigm shift from episodic, short-term interventions to long-term, comprehensive or integrated care for those with continuing care needs. Integrated care is especially important in the seniors population, because they receive care from many different providers in various settings. Integrated care systems help keep seniors living at home, without reducing quality of or access to care.
- **Increased Focus on Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Prevention:** Initiatives that encourage and support all aspects of healthy living may reduce the demand for health care and other support services, through cost avoidance or shifts to lower-cost sectors. One way to promote overall public health is through disease prevention, which can take many forms. Primary prevention serves to protect healthy people from developing disease in the first place. Secondary prevention aims to slow or even reduce the burden of illness once a disease is already present. Tertiary prevention focuses on helping people manage complicated, long-term health problems.
- **Adoption and Efficient Use of New Technologies:** Many new technologies are emerging, with expected benefits to the health care system and its users. Some technological advances are in the early stages of development and with time, such technologies may be of particular service to older Canadians. Other advances, such as telehealth—the delivery of services by health care organizations using information and communications technology solutions, when the clinician and patient are not in the same location—are more widely applicable.
- **Better Information for Policy-Making:** Many have recognized that before performance can be managed, it must be measured. Measurement includes collecting high-quality

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

information, calculating comparable measures and using the results to work toward improvements. It also includes improving data collection and data quality.²⁷⁰

Benefits of Supporting Seniors

Investing in healthy aging initiatives for seniors also have wide ranging social and economic benefits. Approximately 69% of older Canadians provide one or more types of assistance to spouses, children, grandchildren, friends and neighbours.²⁷¹ Older people provide a wealth of experience, knowledge, continuity, support and love to younger generations. In addition, civil society programs benefit from the voluntary contributions of a large and growing number of retired seniors with valuable knowledge and skills.²⁷²

Older Canadians make an important contribution to the paid economy. More than 300,000 Canadians 65 or older were in the labour force in 2001. As demographic shifts reduce the ratio between the proportion of employed and unemployed Canadians (i.e., children and retired people), governments and some employers are encouraging individuals to work longer. Remaining in the workforce and actively participating in civic affairs depends, in large part, on staying in good health.²⁷³

Healthy aging can delay and minimize the severity of chronic diseases and disabilities in later life, thus saving health care costs and reducing long-term care needs. Chronic diseases account for an enormous human and economic burden in Canada. The prevalence increases with age and is highest among older people in vulnerable communities (e.g., Aboriginal and economically disadvantaged groups). Chronic diseases are responsible for 67% of total direct costs in healthcare and 60% of total indirect costs (\$52 billion) as a result of early death, loss of productivity and foregone income.²⁷⁴

Seniors are relatively high users of many health care services. For example, utilization rates for inpatient services, including acute, complex continuing and rehabilitation care, were significantly higher for seniors than for younger adults. And among seniors, hospital utilization increased with age. The majority of Canadians receiving residential care and hospital-based continuing care were seniors. This group was also significantly more likely to be taking prescription medication and visiting family physicians, in comparison with younger adults. In 2009, total provincial and territorial government per capita health expenditure on Canadians age 65 and older (\$11,196) was 4.5 times greater than that for adults age 20 to 64 (\$2,495).²⁷⁵

²⁷⁰ Health Care in Canada: A Focus on Seniors and Aging - Canadian Institute for Health information (2011).

²⁷¹ National Advisory Council on Aging (NACA) (2001).

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Healthy Aging in Canada: A New Vision, A Vital Investment From Evidence to Action - Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Committee of Officials (Seniors) (2006).

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Health Care in Canada: A Focus on Seniors and Aging – Canadian Institute for Health Information (2011).

Small decreases in the key modifiable risk factors for chronic disease can have a large effect in preventing the transition from low to high risk. Practicing positive lifestyle behaviours can help seniors live more years independently and in good health. Even modest rates of physical activity have been shown to stave off functional declines in people with osteoarthritis.²⁷⁶ Appropriate physical activity also helps with pain management.²⁷⁷

Partners Supporting Seniors

Federal/National

There are a number of plans and initiatives federally that are working to improve the quality of life for older Canadians. In the 2009 final report on the Special Senate Committee on Aging, a comprehensive vision for government, organizations and individuals is set to embrace the challenges of an aging population. It includes 32 recommendations that the Government has begun implementing to support the wellness of older adults.

The 2013 Speech from the throne included: "...our Government's low tax plan will permanently enhance the Guaranteed Income Supplement for some 680,000 of Canada's most vulnerable seniors." The new Horizon's for Seniors program is a federal Grants and Contributions program that supports projects led or inspired by seniors who make a difference in the lives of others in their communities. As a result seniors have led or participated in developing urban gardens, teaching/playing music, helping preserve their native language, etc.

A few online tools have been developed: seniors.gc.ca provides web based information and services relevant to seniors 55+ and the Seniors Policies and Programs Database through Veterans Affairs Canada provides a wide range of Federal/Provincial/Territorial policies, programs and services for seniors, such as health, housing and income support.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation provides assistance to seniors through financial assistance programs and renovations and adaptations information. They provide tips to assist seniors to live in their own homes for as long as possible. The Veterans Independence Program has a home care program that provides veterans and their primary caregivers with health and support services.

Province

The Government of New Brunswick has the following departments supporting healthy aging for seniors: Senior and Healthy Aging Secretariat, Social Development and Healthy and Inclusive Communities. Living Health, Aging Well: A Report- Premier's Panel on Seniors (2012) released a

²⁷⁶ Healthy Aging in Canada: A New Vision, A Vital Investment From Evidence to Action - Healthy Aging and Wellness Working Group of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Committee of Officials (Seniors) (2006).

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

report on the challenges and opportunities an aging population will present the province over the next ten years. The panel identified 10 goals for a comprehensive vision of aging in New Brunswick.

The Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons is actively engaged in addressing transportation related-issues and needs for persons within the province, including increasing the number of carriers who offer affordable and accessible transportation services and providing programs, and funding for community transportation alternatives.

Municipal

Plan SJ (2011) included considerations for individuals over the age of 65 in the following areas:

- Transportation and Mobility- ensuring street crossings are designed for users with wheelchairs and elderly people.
- Neighbourhoods and Housing- encouraging the provision of housing for people with special needs, including senior citizens.

Community

To date, transportation initiatives for persons with disabilities and seniors within the city have been few and far between, however, a few local organizations support access to transportation, including: Independence Plus, Handibus Accessible Transportation, supported by Saint John Transit; Right of Way Transit, for persons with disabilities, in Quispamsis; and the Canadian Red Cross, which provides volunteer drivers for seniors with medical appointments.

In 2011, the city of Saint John and the province of New Brunswick announced the proposed development of new, affordable housing units for seniors in Crescent Valley. According to the news release, "Elias Management Group Inc. will construct a 60-unit mid-rise seniors' apartment building. It will include 30 one-bedroom, rent subsidized units, six of which will be fully accessible and 24 of which will be senior-friendly. Half of these senior-friendly units will include roll-in showers. The remaining 30 units are intended as one and two-bedroom market units. The building will also include a community room and a multi-purpose area to host events and activities."²⁷⁸

The Seniors' Resource Centre provides information regarding various government services and information on groups and organizations regarding home care, seniors' clubs, finances, recreation activities, assistive devices, etc. The Centre also provides administration services for individuals aged 50+ and also provides free income tax preparations for low-income people (single \$30,000 and couple \$35,000) for ages 50+.

The city of Saint John is home to number of seniors clubs and day programs, located across the city, many of which are located and support residents of various housing complexes. Examples of

²⁷⁸ CBC. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/story/2011/11/18/nb-saint-john-seniors-housing.html>. (2011).

some of the various activities include monthly meetings, news and events, weekly lunches, card games, bingo, an annual bus trip, motivational, social, and therapeutic activities; companionship if they are socially isolated or lonely; and programs/services for seniors who are physically disabled or suffering with all types of dementia.

Go Ahead Seniors Inc. is a provincial, bilingual, non-profit organization incorporated in 1996. It offers educational sessions for the 50Plus population in New Brunswick. The program is aimed at helping New Brunswick older adults make more informed choices about their health and well being through health education, personal empowerment and prevention.

Centenary Queen Square Care Centres Inc - Adult Outreach Centre provides social/recreational services available to adults with physical and/or mental disabilities and to seniors. It provides a hospitable caring atmosphere including various activities suited to clients' abilities. Exercise, meals, and recreational activities are offered and respite time for caregivers of clients

Conclusion

Saint John currently has a higher proportion of residents over the age of 65 than the provincial or national average. Over the next 20 years the provinces population will age faster than the rest of Canada. To support these demographic shifts, it will be important for the city to build an "age friendly city/community" which the World Health Organization (WHO) defines as an "inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active aging."²⁷⁹ The WHO outlines a number of areas that communities need to consider to improve the health and quality of life of older people through. These include: outdoor spaces and building, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information and community support and health services.²⁸⁰ Given that most of Saint John's seniors live independently in the community and want to remain there, this will require a shift in priorities away from treatment and care and towards health promotion, prevention, healthy aging and community support.

Resources

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A Portrait of Seniors in Canada - Statistics Canada (2006).

²⁷⁹ The World Health Organization (WHO) developed the Global Age-Friendly Cities Project (2006). (http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf).

²⁸⁰ Facts About Aging in New Brunswick – Government of New Brunswick website (2013).

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Transportation

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

The Importance of Affordable and Available Transportation Options for the City of Saint John

The availability of affordable and effective transportation options within a municipality can have profound social and economic impacts on its citizens, as it affects our health and safety, the ways we interact with one another, and the opportunities that we have access to. It has been shown that municipalities that support affordable and accessible public transit, as well as promote walking and cycling, afford greater access to activities with high social value, such as: employment; education and training; public services, such as healthcare and recreation; and consumer opportunities, such as food and clothing, ultimately making communities more equitable. Furthermore, safe pedestrian access to public transit stops and stations (e.g., well maintained sidewalks and bus shelters) is particularly important for people who have difficulty accessing transportation, such as those with disabilities, the elderly, children, and people with low incomes.”

Benefits of Supporting Efficient, Effective and Affordable Transportation

The following list²⁸¹ highlights the benefits of an efficient, effective, and affordable urban transportation and active transit system for the city of Saint John:

Social Equity

Social equity is about protecting the fundamental rights of all citizens and ensuring that, regardless of age, income or disability, all Canadians enjoy equal access to all aspects of society. Transportation is an integral part of one’s ability to move forward in life and yet it poses a constant

²⁸¹ The following list of implications is derived from the following sources: The Social Implications of Sustainable and Active Transportation, Transport Canada (2010); Sustainable Transportation, University of British Columbia (2011); Disability Action Plan: The Time for Action is Now - GNB (2012); The Economic Impacts of Active Transportation - Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (2012).

barrier for many households. A recent transportation study conducted in Saint John (2012) indicated that improvements and access to transit within the city was linked to better access to employment, education, social networks and activities, all leading to better quality of life and reduced stress/improved mental health.

- **Employment Equity:** Access to public transit can expand job opportunities, increase worker satisfaction and productivity by lessening commute times, and cushion the effect of high gasoline costs on working families. Residents living in municipalities that support greater access to public transit stand to gain these types of social benefits. Poorly designed or non-existent transit services, on the other hand, can have deleterious effects on those seeking employment.
- **Access to Medical Care:** Municipalities that provide affordable and convenient public transit allow residents to travel to key community services such as medical care. For those without access to a vehicle, gaining access to these types of services can be more difficult.
- **Food Equity:** Many people take the simple act of going to the grocery store for granted. For those who cannot or do not drive, access to even this basic need may be less than adequate.
- **Accessibility Issues:** New Brunswick is a largely rural province, which makes the issue of transportation services extremely problematic for persons with disabilities who may require certain accessibility features to be able to use transportation. A lot of consumers with disabilities are not able to afford to own and operate their own vehicles due to low income levels.
- **Community Livability:** A livable community provides a mix of uses that meet all the basic needs of its residents—food, shelter, education and medical services—and affords a good quality of life, which includes environmental quality, social and recreational opportunities, and access to affordable transportation.

Community Engagement

Municipalities where people walk more offer greater opportunities for residents to socialize, to be involved in their communities, and to self-police the neighbourhood. People who lived in walkable neighbourhoods felt more connected to their community and more likely to know their neighbours. In addition, they were more likely to trust and have faith in people, to contact elected officials, had a higher overall level of political participation, and were more likely to walk to work.

- **Safety:** Municipalities with mixed-use neighborhoods had people watching the streets throughout the day, and thus experienced less crime.

Environmental

It can be suggested that inefficient public transportation systems or lack of access to public transportation has the potential to contribute to increased reliance on personal transportation, thereby contributing to higher use of fossil fuels, and increased levels toxic pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions. "As more residents of a community select public transit as their primary form of transportation, vehicle emissions drop through a reduction in personal vehicle use, and wear-and-tear on municipal infrastructure is reduced, etc" (The Social Implications of Sustainable and Active Transportation, Transport Canada, 2010).

Economic

The availability of affordable public transit and active transit within a municipality can have significant economic impacts for the community, at various levels:

- At an individual level, inactivity is a very serious public health concern that costs the healthcare system \$5.3 billion annually, which can be limited through active transportation. In addition, active transit can contribute to improved individual finances, through lower costs of living. It is estimated that it costs \$0.58/km to operate a car compared to \$0.06/km to cycle. According to a recent study conducted in Saint John, respondents noted that access to public transportation would likely have an impact on personal finances, in terms of having the ability to pay off debt and save for children's education.
- At a community level, active transportation can have a direct impact on businesses. Retail businesses benefit greatly from increased pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Wider sidewalks, proper curb aids with tactile surfaces and other efforts to develop pedestrian-friendly shopping districts help shop owners. It has also been shown that bike lanes, recreational trails, and other infrastructure that promotes active transportation increase property values for homes and businesses located nearby and improve the overall health of the population.
- Lastly, at a municipal government level, active transportation reduces costs associated with maintaining municipal infrastructure. For example, the following construction costs are associated with municipal spending: Bike Lane: \$20,000/km; Off-road Path: \$225,000/km; Road Widening: \$1.3 million/km; and Parking Structure: \$15,000/parking space.

The Current Situation

The City of Saint John operates Saint John Transit, the largest public transit service in New Brunswick, with the most passengers and kilometers served by transit routes. Annual transit ridership is 2.7M, with capacity for 5M passengers annually. Saint John Transit has the most kilometers served by transit routes. It has a 50% higher ridership than average (compared to other Canadian cities with a population between 50,000 and 150,000) (Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, Plans SJ, 2012). According to the 2006 Community Profiles for Saint John (CMA), as a percentage of the total employed labour force, only 4.4% of Saint John citizens utilize public transit, and only 7.6% walk or bicycle to work on a daily basis. As well, approximately 20% of residents living in the city's urban core walk to work, whereas 2 out of every 3 Saint John residents (66%) drive to work.

Transportation Challenges

The city of Saint John faces a number of key challenges to effectively and efficiently offer transportation in an affordable and accessible manner. With a geographic area of approximately 316 square kilometres, 600km of municipal streets, and a population of only 68,000 people, Saint John has a very low population density, which creates challenges when attempting to efficiently deliver services and enhance the quality of life for residents. Underfunding of public transportation is a significant issue within Canada in general, but more specifically within New

Brunswick and Saint John²⁸². At the federal level in Canada, financial and policy support for public transit is low relative to other G8 countries and is typically aimed toward capital and infrastructure investment (vs. operating expenses). The Government of Canada contributes slightly less than 13% of total public transit operating costs; in contrast Germany finances 90%, New Zealand 50%, and the United States 20%. From a policy standpoint, the United States, France and Italy are examples of countries that have enacted legislation which allows local and regional governments to raise special taxes or collect a portion of local taxes to fund transit operations. The federal government provides municipalities with a Gas Tax Fund²⁸³, which supports municipal infrastructure projects, including public transit; however, the City does not utilize the provided revenues to support public transit. At the provincial level, New Brunswick belongs to a group of five provinces and territories that do not direct any financial contribution to public transit operating costs.

At the municipal level, Saint John Transit receives less municipal funding per capita than most of its regional counterparts. As a result, the citizens of Saint John pay higher fare than those in other communities, which places a specific burden on low-income residents dependent on public transportation (i.e., the city of Saint John had a poverty rate of 20.6% in 2011²⁸⁴). A review of twenty-seven other municipalities in Canada, within a similar population bracket, shows that only three other communities charge more than Saint John Transit's adult cash fare of \$2.75, as most fares fall below \$2.50. Furthermore, only seven municipalities charge any fare for children under five; of those that do, Saint John's fare is the highest. "In late 2011 and early 2012, the City announced two successive funding reductions to the public transit operator Saint John Transit. As a result, transit services were decreased across the city, including another decrease in service frequency to many parts of the community and the complete elimination of services on Statutory Holidays. Where "discretionary riders" (those who don't have to take public transit for financial reasons but still choose to) have the ability to adapt to these changes to transit services, residents who rely on them as their only means of accessible transportation have borne the brunt of these budget and service reductions... If the history of funding cuts continues, it is likely that Saint John Transit will spiral toward the point of organizational failure: funding partners trim budgets even further based on low ridership numbers, and ridership continues to drop as a result of service reductions from funding cuts.

Partners in Transportation

The Province of New Brunswick and the City of Saint John, as well as community level organizations and neighbourhood groups, are currently involved in a number of initiatives and strategies to address transportation issues within the province and the municipality. At the provincial level, the Government of New Brunswick tasked themselves in 2010 with "developing a

²⁸² This section was derived from *Getting Around if You're Just Getting By: Poverty, Policy & Public Transit*, VCSJ (2012).

²⁸³ <http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/prog/gtf-fte-eng.html>

²⁸⁴ *Greater Saint John's Vital Signs 2011: Our Region's 6th Annual check-up*, Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2011)

provincial strategy to ensure accessible and affordable transportation, including people with disabilities” (Progressive Conservative Party of New Brunswick, 2010). To date, this has yet to be developed. However, the *Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation* (ESIC)²⁸⁵, a provincial Crown Corporation, has been working toward supporting “community transportation alternatives” within the province. ESIC recently supported Vibrant Communities Saint John (VCSJ), one of ESIC’s 12 Community Inclusion Networks (CINs), with the *Saint John Urban Transportation Initiative* in early 2012. In addition, ESIC also held a provincial “Community Transportation Dialogue” in mid-2012, which was attended by 150 cross-sector representatives. The Dialogue produced the report, *Towards a Common Vision for Community Transportation in New Brunswick* (2012).

The Premier’s Council on the Status of Disabled Persons is also actively engaged in addressing transportation related-issues and needs for persons with disabilities within the province, and identified the following objectives for the Province:

- To increase the number of carriers who offer affordable and accessible transportation services for travelling in our communities and across New Brunswick.
- To develop programs of financial incentives to enable non-profit community organizations and private taxi companies to acquire and operate accessible vehicles for public transportation for seniors and/or persons with disabilities.
- To provide funding for community transportation alternatives.

The Premier’s Council also made specific recommendations for appropriate Departments, including the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, the Department of Social Development, the Executive Council Office, and the ESIC. To date, transportation initiatives for persons with disabilities and seniors within the city have been provided through: 1) Independence Plus, Handibus Accessible Transportation, supported by Saint John Transit; 2) Right of Way Transit, for persons with disabilities, based in Quispamsis but covering the region; and 3) the Canadian Red Cross, which provides volunteer drivers for seniors with medical appointments.

At the municipal level, Plan SJ (2012), the City of Saint John Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan (2012), and the Trails and Bikeways Strategic Plan (2010) highlight transportation related issues within the city, as well as identify recommendations and policies to address such issues (e.g., connectivity). “The underlying goal of the Municipal Plan is to increase population density in the City. More residential population and more employment in Intensification Areas will help to generate the critical mass necessary to support enhanced alternative modes of transport such as public transit and active transportation.

Transportation is also critically important to the City’s economy. Trade and business require efficient and effective transportation systems.” It is the hope that Intensification Areas will

²⁸⁵ ESIC’s mandate is to “develop, oversee, coordinate and implement strategic initiatives and plans to reduce poverty and assist thousands of New Brunswickers to become more self-sufficient, which is guided by “Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan”.

“increase the population density in strategic locations, reduce the cost of service delivery, and support improved transit service, active transportation connections and greater investment in the public realm for an enhanced quality of life.” In terms of Public Transit, Plan SJ has proposed that Council shall:

- Policy TM-22: Recognize and promote public transit as an important component of a sustainable urban transportation system which contributes to economic development and helps the City achieve its environmental goals and objectives.
- Policy TM-23: Provide effective fiscal support for efficient, affordable, safe and convenient transit services linking major employment, commercial, residential and recreational areas.
- Policy TM-24: Prepare a Transportation Strategic Plan in consultation with the community, to strategically review and set the direction for transit services in the City and to identify service enhancements, especially in Intensification Areas and express east-west service at peak times.

The Trails and Bikeways Strategic Plan (2010) and the *Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan* (2012) are specifically aligned with Plan SJ’s “Active Transportation”, in terms of addressing connectivity issues within the city through the development of a comprehensive trail and bikeway network, and connecting key destinations around the city.²⁸⁶ The Parks and Recreation Plan also specifically identifies a strategy for “Trails, Connectivity and Access Services”, that anticipates that “trails and pedestrian infrastructure [will] facilitate the linkage of one neighbourhood to another, and to community facilities and amenities such as schools, parks, community centres, shopping malls, etc. In this way, trails provide connectivity throughout the city.” The Parks and Recreation Plan also includes a proposal for the implementation of a “Neighbourhood Walkable Communities Initiative” to provide connectivity between and among neighbourhood parks, playgrounds, and schools.

To date, significant transportation-related work has been conducted within the community. As noted, the *Saint John Urban Transportation Initiative*, championed by VCSJ, was conducted “to better understand the challenges facing low-income residents in transportation for work or to access services.” This work was in collaboration with Saint John Transit, the City of Saint John, BCIPI, Saint John Board of Trade, UNB Saint John, and Priority Neighbourhoods within the city. A report was released, *Getting Around if You’re Just Getting By: Poverty, Policy & Public Transit* (2012). Saint John Transit immediately changed policies related to extending the length of time to use a transfer and increased the number of children under age of five (up to three) that can travel for free. Following a presentation to Common Council in the summer of 2012, public transit became one of the priorities in 2013 budget, resulting in increased support for Saint John Transit. This in turn translated into increased hours of service.

²⁸⁶ The Marsh Creek Restoration Initiative is also aligned with municipal plans/strategies in terms of connectivity, as the “proposed trail network would improve connectivity in the city for both pedestrians and cyclists, providing active transportation opportunities from the Uptown to McAllister Drive” (Our Saint John: Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, Dillon Consulting, 2008).

VCSJ has been working to implement other recommendations within the report, including a more effective 'bulk buying' program, cost shared by employers and employees for public transit within the city. Most recently, VCSJ initiated a cost-sharing pilot project with Saint John Transit and the neighbourhoods for a bi-monthly "community bus", designed to help people living in priority communities (i.e., Crescent Valley, Anglin Drive and the Davenport (formerly Rockwood Court) to have better access to transportation for shopping services and hopefully recreational opportunities (if funding permits) on Sundays.

The municipalities of Saint John, Moncton, Dieppe, and Fredericton, have been working together with the ESIC established CINs on common transit concerns and with the Province on improving transportation services. Under the leadership of VCSJ and its local transportation partners, this *Multi-City Working Group on Transportation* has had two meetings since January 2013, bringing together individuals representing municipal staff, municipal politicians, CINs, and two well known university consultants.

Moving Forward: Next Steps and Solutions

Challenges and Opportunities (as identified within Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, 2012):

- As the municipal planning process moves forward, questions surrounding the challenges and opportunities facing Saint John will form part of future discussions with the public:
 - What missing transportation links should be added to the City?
 - How can the burden of municipal infrastructure be reduced?
 - How can the City continue to build upon the success of Saint John Transit to further increase ridership?
 - Are there ways that Saint John can become a more walkable and active community?
 - How can the Municipal Plan help reduce dependence on the automobile and encourage more residents to walk, cycle or take transit?

Transportation Opportunities within Saint John (as identified within Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, 2012):

- There are opportunities to enhance transit both within and outside the City, building off initiatives already in place by Saint John Transit and the Parking Commission, including enhanced commuter express routes (Comex), park-and-ride facilities, ridesharing programs and transit nodes or transit-oriented development (more dense development patterns that help support transit service).
- The City's waterfronts and diverse landscapes offer an excellent opportunity for a network of walking and cycling trails for both recreational users and commuters. Harbour Passage is a popular multi-use pathway along the Saint John waterfront that could become the main

artery of a connected active transportation network for commuting and recreation throughout the City. Bike lanes have recently been added to a number of City streets, with plans in place to create a trails and bikeway network of almost 200km.

- One Mile House Interchange will help to improve connectivity, with a direct connection between the Saint John Throughway and the east side industrial areas. The Province has plans in place to upgrade the Route 1 corridor from St. Stephen to River Glade that will include an additional eastbound and westbound lane for the Mackay Highway. This development will have long-term impacts on the City.
- Inner Harbour Waterfront Development Project: Extending the waterfront greenway network, including Harbour Passage, the full length of the Inner Harbour from Fallsview Park in the north to Round Reef Marine Park in the south, with connections to the Lower West Side, West Side, North End, Uptown and South End neighbourhoods. The greenway network and Harbour Passage would become a strategic waterfront movement corridor, fully integrated into the City's and Region's new park and ride and bike and walk urban transportation system and demonstration project (Saint John Inner Harbour: Land Use Plan and Implementation Strategy - Urban Strategies Inc, 2003).
 - Supports: Policy CF-22 Support the continued expansion of Harbour Passage to develop a connected system of trails along the City's waterfront (Plan SJ: Municipal Plan, 2012).

New Brunswick specific challenges for transportation (as identified within Towards a Common Vision for Community Transportation in New Brunswick - Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation of New Brunswick, 2012):

- Transportation service viewed as a municipal responsibility (not provincial)
- The inability to initiate and negotiate services between Local Service Districts and municipalities
- Low population densities in rural areas
- Lack of awareness and education on transportation issues
- Trending decline in bus ridership - difficult to maintain and even group ridership

Resources

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Workforce Development

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

This priority area focuses primarily on the adult population in terms of workforce participation, and education and training. Youth specific information on workforce participation, education, and training will be presented within the “Youth Issues” priority area.

The Current Situation

Both New Brunswick and Saint John are perceived by many within and outside of the province, as a place with high levels of unemployment, social assistance participation, seasonal work, and poverty, as well as low levels of workforce participation, literacy, and educational attainment. And although many of these statistics are correct in comparison to other CMAs within the province, provincial averages, as well as national averages, great strides have been made over the last few decades. For example, the average annual rate of employment growth in the Saint John Region between 1996 and 2006 stood at 1.7% - the only period of decline occurred in 2001 (closing of the Lantic Sugar Refinery) and in 2003 (closing of Saint John Drydock). This section not only highlights areas for improvement, but also experienced successes and potential opportunities for better workforce participation.

The City of Saint John has undergone a number of significant changes over the last 25 years. According to True Growth 2.0 (2012), the city entered the 21st century with a “thud on its doorstep...Lantic Sugar closed, the [Canadian Frigate Patrol Program] ended, Saint John Shipbuilding was shuttered and the Port saw container traffic fall. Between 1989 and 2003 Saint John had the biggest loss of manufacturing jobs anywhere in Canada - 26 per cent. On top of this, the economic challenge post-2008 was felt in most, if not all, North American cities, and Saint John was no different.” However, New Brunswick and Saint John both experienced the economic downturn much later in New Brunswick when compared with the rest of Canada. Employment fell by 2.8% from 2008 to 2011 in New Brunswick, while the remainder of Canada was beginning its

ascent. “Substantial declines in employment among the least educated, that is persons with less than a high school diploma, were widespread across the provinces and territories between 2008 and 2011. In 2011, employment among individuals in this group was lower than in the pre-downturn peak (2008) by between 6% and 10% in several provinces/territories (New Brunswick ~ 12%).”²⁸⁷ Key labour force statistics, however, have seen increases from 2011 to 2012; a promising sign for New Brunswick.

Saint John has made great strides in the last decade, including the introduction of the Dalhousie New Brunswick Medical School, the emergence of a vibrant ICT-sector, a state-of-the-art cruise ship terminal with approximately sixty cruise ships scheduled for port in 2013, and a robust private sector energy cluster and a growing public sector energy presence. “The economy remains rooted in the manufacturing and distribution of products moved by sea including potash, petroleum, and forestry products however continues to diversify into many other sectors. In fact, research conducted for PlanSJ confirms that the City has one of the most diversified small city economies in Canada with significant concentrations of employment in many different industries.”²⁸⁸ Despite these economic strides, the city still has a long way to go to ensure that employment and training opportunities are available to all citizens of Saint John.

This, unfortunately, is not an easy task. There are many factors that contribute to labour force statistics, such as labour force participation, employment, unemployment, as well as access to education, skills and employment opportunities. It is never just one factor that acts as a barrier or difficulty to accessing employment, but a myriad of factors and circumstances, both internal and external to the individual, described below.²⁸⁹

Potential Barriers

Lack of Access to Education- Individuals consulted identified that a lack of access (i.e., as a result of an inadequate education system, as well as the cost for higher education) and a lacking education system (i.e., not addressing the needs of students, not sufficiently preparing students – low literacy level, skills training is missing) contribute to unprepared New Brunswickers. The lack of perceived preparation of students during the foundational years, may contribute to the high level of high school non-completion within Saint John. In 2010, the proportion of the population

²⁸⁷ Education Indicators in Canada: Economic Downturn & Educational Attainment – Statistics Canada (2012)

²⁸⁸ Plan SJ: Municipal Plan – City of Saint John (2011)

²⁸⁹ The following themes were identified by New Brunswickers via sixteen public dialogue sessions held across the province in 2009. The objective of the sessions was “to engage participants in sharing their views on the issue of poverty and to talk about what poverty means to them, what causes it, and what can be done to reduce it.” Each theme is further elaborated with findings from other relevant sources.

15 years and over who had not completed high school in Saint John (CMA) was 19.8%, up from 19.5% in 2009 and down from 25.7% in 2000. The 2010 figure was lower than the provincial average (24.8%) as well as the national rate (20.2%) (Statistics Canada).

Residents noted that the cost of post-secondary education, as well as lack of high school completion, inhibits many New Brunswickers from attending, in addition to large debt loads following post-secondary education. "47.6% of Saint John residents have achieved some form of post-secondary education (compared to 53.4% in Canada). Saint John's strength lies in completion rates for trade certificates and college programs, which stand at 32.3%. However, university completion rates (15.3%) are below provincial and national averages."²⁹⁰ This particularly affects New Brunswick youth – youth who do not complete high school are more likely to have lower incomes, be unemployed and to become homeless. "Affordability is a major barrier to post-secondary education for youth of low and moderate incomes. Today, many students are financing their education by taking on debt second only in size to a mortgage. The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) estimates that the current federal student debt is now \$15 billion. Since 1990, debt owed to government student assistance programs has increased from \$10,000 to \$25,000 a year on a per-student basis."²⁹¹ According to Community Foundations of Canada (2013), "amongst college and university graduates aged 25-29, 1 out of 3 moves into a low-skilled job after graduation, eroding their skills and income potential for up to 10 years." This is supported by the upward trend of unemployment for Saint John youth 15 to 24 years in Saint John (CMA) between 2006 and 2011²⁹², as well as a recent survey conducted with Saint John youth who identified that the city requires "more employment opportunities for teens" (52% of those surveyed identified this a priority).²⁹³

Lack of Skills - New Brunswickers do not possess the appropriate skills for available employment opportunities – technical, as well as life skills. More on the job training was identified as a potential solution. Furthermore, it was noted that Saint John specifically has a high proportion of population with lower education and skills level, who are not participating in the workforce. The International Adult Literacy Skills Survey (IALSS) of 2003 showed that 50 per cent of the population of New Brunswick, between the ages of 16 and 65, have less than IALSS Level 3 skills – the level deemed necessary to function in a modern, industrialized economy and society.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, Plans SJ (2012)

²⁹¹ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012)

²⁹² Greater Saint John's Vital Signs 2011: Our Region's 6th Annual Check-Up, Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2011)

²⁹³ Youth Vital Signs Saint John – Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2013)

²⁹⁴ Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick. Action Plan 2010-2013. Community Adult Learning Services Branch (2010)

Lack of Opportunities - Individuals suggested that the lack of employment opportunities contributes to poverty levels in NB, as well as the seasonal nature of employment; too many part-time jobs, rather than full-time; access to employment challenging for those without post-secondary experience. It should be noted that the Saint John "labour force is 6.8% larger (in absolute numbers) today than in 2003 and is larger than anytime previously in the past eight years."²⁹⁵

Lack of job opportunities may also be as a result of a crowded workplace, specifically older workers (55+) staying in the workforce longer than had been expected. "New Brunswick's working age population is undergoing both a transformation and an aging process. The 54 and under age group is declining in numbers, while the 55 and older age group is increasing...The 55 and over age group has grown consistently at an average growth rate of 2% over the period 1976 to 2012, increasing by 118,500 to 232,000."²⁹⁶ Similarly, HRSDC (2013) reported that the share of older workers has increased steadily since 1994, as compared with younger age groups. "Since 1994, the participation rate for older workers 55 and over has increased 16.2 percentage points from 17.5% to 33.6%. Within this broader age group, the participation rate for the 55 to 59 cohort and 60 to 64 cohort increased by 21.9 and 21.3 percentage points, respectively to 70.8% and 46.6%. In contrast, the participation rate for the 25 to 54 age group increased by only 9 percentage points to 86%."²⁹⁷ One explanation for this upward trend is education attainment – those with higher education attainment may tend to exit the labour market later. Older workers tend to either remain in their current jobs or retire from full-time jobs, only to go back on contract as term employees, mentors, or consultants.²⁹⁸

Companies are also hiring international workers to fill vacancies within the Province, through such programs as the Provincial Nominee Program; however, it can be suggested that these hiring practices are not as a result of a shortage of workers, but as a result of employment terms, hours, and associated wages/pay (aka precarious employment). Precarious employment can be defined as "poorly paid, insecure, and unprotected" employment – this type of employment is becoming much more common for the average worker, if not the standard. According to the Report, *It's More than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-being* (2013), "compared to the decades following World War II, fewer people have permanent, full-year, full-time jobs. Average job tenure is falling, and seniority provides less protection from job loss. This means that workers face increased income variability. Fewer enjoy benefits such as drug plans or employer pension

²⁹⁵ Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, Plans SJ (2012)

²⁹⁶ Labour Market Bulletin – New Brunswick: April 2013 (Quarterly Edition) – HRSDC (2013)

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Vital Youth. Community Foundations of Canada. (2013)

plans.”²⁹⁹ Many factors have brought this change about. “Large companies, an important source of secure employment in the past, have repeatedly reduced their workforces. This was a result of technological change, increased contracting out, and extended supply lines – often involving suppliers in other countries. Companies reorganize or even disappear at an increasing rate [(e.g., the closing of the Lantic Sugar Refinery in 2001 and the Saint John Drydock in 2003)], the result of financial reorganizations, decisions to relocate, the entry of new competitors, or the inability to keep up with the rapid pace of innovation. Companies that provided secure employment just a few years ago now face an uncertain future. This has created employment instability for large numbers of workers, and resulted in labour market polarization. There has been growth in high wage employment and in low wage employment, but a decline in middle-income jobs.” Women are often most affected by precarious employment conditions. When compared with New Brunswick men, women hold more part-time jobs than full-time, when working full-time they receive less full-time wages than men, but are more educated. This is particularly problematic when taking into consideration the number of single mothers in Saint John. “The city of Saint John had an incidence of single mothers 1.3 times higher than the CMA’s, 2.5 times higher than the surrounding suburbs’, 1.6 times higher than the province, and 1.2 times the national average.”³⁰⁰

Minimum Wage - Of those in the workforce, many New Brunswickers and Saint Johners earn minimum wage. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2011), “Statistics Canada found that 5% of New Brunswickers worked for minimum wage in 2009. [At the time, New Brunswick had the lowest minimum wage in the country - \$7.75.] The number that worked for just over minimum wage (minimum wage + 10%) rises to 11% of New Brunswickers. Jobs that not meet basic economic needs often do not make economic sense. Many New Brunswickers noted that the social assistance and minimum wage rates are too low (\$809 for 1 Adult & 1 Child - 2012, and \$10/hour, respectively), which prevents New Brunswickers from rising out of poverty. Given the cost of living, and other costs like transportation and childcare, it often makes better economic sense not to work. It is particularly difficult to make ends meet when someone has dependents and/or health issues.”³⁰¹ For example, an individual earning a minimum wage (\$10/hour) for a 37.5 hour workweek, would take home approximately \$1,370/month – now take into consideration that the average cost of licensed daycare in New Brunswick for a toddler is \$618/month, plus the average rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in Saint John is \$703 (totalling \$1321). There is momentum in Saint John and New Brunswick toward the adoption of a living wage³⁰² (rather than

²⁹⁹ Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) (2013)

³⁰⁰ Poverty & Plenty II: A Statistical Snapshot of the Quality of Life in Saint John – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2008)

³⁰¹ TIES 2 Work Reports for Saint John Learning Exchange: Final Evaluation (2012)

³⁰² The “living wage is defined as an hourly wage that is high enough to allow a family to pay for the basic necessities of life and to participate in the civic/social life of their community” (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2013).

a minimum wage); however, this has yet to be adopted. Having a job does not guarantee a route out of poverty.

New Brunswick has experienced high levels of poverty for many years; however, statistics have shown that this has improved over the last few decades. Low income improved under both Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO) and the Market Basket Measure (MBM) in New Brunswick from 2000 to 2009, and there were also continuing improvement in the four years up to 2009 under Low Income Measures (LIM)...The Provincial low income rates under LIM and MBM were no longer significantly different from the corresponding national rates, as they had been consistently in the thirty years prior.³⁰³

Saint John, however, has the highest incidence of poverty (after tax) amongst other New Brunswick cities, the CMA, and Canada, with a rate of 2.9 times that of the lowest city in NB (Dieppe) and 1.7 times that of the province³⁰⁴. Much of Saint John's poverty exists within one of its five "priority neighbourhoods" (Crescent Valley, Waterloo Village, the Old North End, the South End, and the Lower West Side), which fare much worse when compared to the City of Saint John (CMA), the Province, as well as nationally for the following areas:

- The priority neighbourhoods have much higher levels of high school non-completion;
- They have lower levels of individuals with post-secondary education;
- They have lower labour participation rates; and,
- They have higher prevalence of poverty.

Social Assistance System - Individuals believed that the rates should be higher, while others suggested that the system keeps people poor (i.e., it becomes a way of life, particularly if all individuals 'know' - the "generational nature of poverty"). "As of July 2012, the Saint John CMA had 4,596 Social Assistance (SA) cases, representing 7,813 individuals. Of these 4,596 cases, 1,375 were single parents (30%), 2,752 were single persons (60%), 258 were two parent families (6%), and 211 were two persons households (4%). In July 2012, there were also 1,032 cases benefiting from non-social assistance cheque benefits (health card only, day care only and pre/postnatal benefits)."³⁰⁵

Of great concern to many New Brunswickers who spoke out on the social assistance system was the issue of the rate for persons with disabilities. There are many people who feel that persons

³⁰³ Low Income in Canada: A Multi-line and Multi-Index Perspective - Chapter 4: Low Income across Provinces and Cities - Statistics Canada (2013)

³⁰⁴ Poverty & Plenty II: A Statistical Snapshot of the Quality of Life in Saint John - Vibrant Communities Saint John (2008)

³⁰⁵ Social Assistance Statistics - Government of New Brunswick, Social Development (Correspondence with Blake McNeil, Statistical Analyst; 2013)

with disabilities should not actually be receiving social assistance, but should be receiving a guaranteed income supplement like that received by seniors.³⁰⁶

Other root causes may also include: stigma (e.g., persons with criminal records and persons with disabilities), employment retention; GED credential perceptions, and driver's license requirements.

Stigma - Stigma has been identified as a barrier to employment, particularly for individuals with criminal records and persons with disabilities. There has been an increasing trend since the 1990's for the requirement of a criminal background check or police check as part of the employment process - this could pose a particular challenge for those who possess a criminal record. Approximately 4.2 million adults living in Canada (or 10% of the population) have a criminal record. Employment hurdles for those with criminal background often include: a lack of vocational experience due to the shortage of skills-building programs in prison (e.g., the 2010 closing of Canada's six prison farm programs); reputation risk for a company; and stigma and attitudes.³⁰⁷ Many employers continue to be reluctant to employ those with a prior record; however, this reluctance significantly inhibits the individual's ability to rejoin society as a contributing member, as well as contributes to the potential for recidivism. "Recidivism studies show that the risk of reoffending decreases substantially both with the age of the offender and the passage of time. Further, studies of what makes a person desist from crime show, for example, that employment is a strong predictor of desistance...Employers may have legitimate concerns about a history of offences involving dishonesty, where they are recruiting for a position involving the handling of money or similar requirements of trust. However, the statistics indicate that it will not be entirely uncommon, statistically, for a member of the community to have some form of criminal history, but that most of these offences will not involve violence or dishonesty. It is therefore important that employers have thought carefully about how they take account of a criminal history when making employment decisions."³⁰⁸ It should be strongly noted that the individual person should always be taken into consideration - statistics do not necessarily represent the individual's circumstances or likelihood to reoffend - they merely offer a guide for employers when considering employment.

New Brunswick has second highest rate of disability in Canada at 17.2% of the total population; of those of working age (15-64), 14.3% have a disability. Although many persons with disabilities have lower levels of high school diplomas (23.2%) and post-secondary credentials (29.3%) than

³⁰⁶ A Choir of Voices: The "What Was Said" Report. A Dialogue on Poverty.

³⁰⁷ Seven Employment Barriers for Ex-Offenders – CBC (2012).

³⁰⁸ Living Down the Past: Why a Criminal Record Should Not be a Barrier to Successful Employment – B. Naylor, Monash University (2012).

those individuals without disabilities (33.5% and 36.8%, respectively), they have a larger share of people with an apprenticeship/trade certificate (13%) than persons without a disability 10.3%).³⁰⁹ Given the fact that many persons with a disability have skills, a desire to work and the need for human resources to sustain our economy, a logical assumption would be that employers are openly welcoming persons with a disability into their workforce. While some clearly are, many employers are still reluctant to recruit and employ persons with a disability.³¹⁰ According to the Government of New Brunswick (2012), persons with disabilities represent approximately 10% of the entire employed labour force in New Brunswick; however, they have a much lower labour force participation rate than persons without disabilities in New Brunswick (53.4% compared to 79.4%) and across Canada (56.2% compared to 82.0%). The Public Service Commission of Canada's Equity and Diversity Directorate (May 2011) highlighted the challenges faced by persons with a disability in a number of western countries, including Canada:

- Negative attitudes, fears, misperceptions, false assumptions, myths and stereotypes about persons with a disability held by employers, managers and supervisors.
- Lack of knowledge by employers about disability issues, the duty to accommodate and how to set up a structured recruitment program for persons with a disability.
- Inaccessible websites, including tools and applications that are not usable and/or user-friendly for persons with a disability (as well the lack of computer access).
- Inadequate recruitment and outreach strategies as well as the lack of employer collaboration with organizations that support persons with a disability to achieve employment.
- Employers' lack of knowledge about how to implement retention strategies for persons with a disability.
- The perception that today's workers must be able to 'multitask' and juggle multiple roles along with the corresponding belief that persons with a disability will not be able to handle these expectations.
- Employment agencies that do not fully understand employer needs.

Employment Retention - Many skilled, young workers are moving to other parts of the Maritime or the country where employment is more plentiful (e.g., Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta and Saskatchewan). During the economic downturn, many New Brunswickers braved the storm at home; however, as the Province's economy continues to lag, many residents are resuming their search for employment in other regions of Canada. Saint John youth were recently surveyed on quality of life measures. The majority of youth noted that "the right schools and training opportunities are available in the Saint John region for them to get the education and training

³⁰⁹ Profile of New Brunswick Labour Force – Government of New Brunswick (2012)

³¹⁰ An Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick: 2012-2017 – Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons (2012)

they want (67%) and “that they are able to pursue their dream career in the Saint John region (46%)”; however, only one third “said [that] they see themselves living and working in the region 10 years from now (32%).”³¹¹

Outmigration estimates should also take into consideration recent immigrants that may have decided to “make a go of it” in another region of Canada. The retention of New Canadians their skills sets continues to be a challenge for the city of Saint John. New Canadians present an often untapped resource when taking into consideration their education levels and unemployment rates. According to HRSDC (2013), New Canadians lag behind non-immigrant populations in participation and employment rates, but have a lower unemployment rate, are more educated than non-immigrant population. For example, a much larger share of the immigrant population (32.1%) in New Brunswick has a university certificate, diploma or degree, compared to the non-immigrant population (15.4%).³¹²

Perceptions of GED Credential - Individuals who want to work often perceive that they first need to obtain their GED, which has very low success rate and does not necessarily provide skills to be successful in the workforce.³¹³ For example, between April 1, 2011 and September 20, 2012 in Saint John, 447 individuals wrote their GED tests, 204 were successful (46%).³¹⁴

Driver’s License Requirements - Lack of a license, and the costs associated with acquiring a license, can be a barrier to otherwise suitable jobs.

Partners Supporting Workforce Development

Labour force statistics, including employment and unemployment rates, are reported quite frequently through Statistics Canada (e.g., *The Daily*, Statistics Canada's official release bulletin); however, this information sheds little light on the actual success of specific workforce development programming.

There is much support for workforce development at both the federal and provincial levels. For example, the Government of Canada routinely highlights jobs and economic growth as a key priority for Canada, specifically through their Economic Action Plan. The 2013 Action Plan “aims to drive economic progress and prosperity by: Connecting Canadians with Available Jobs; Helping Manufacturers and Businesses Succeed in the Global Economy; Creating a New Building Canada

³¹¹ Youth Vital Signs Saint John – Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2013)

³¹² Labour Market Bulletin – New Brunswick: April 2013 (Quarterly Edition) – HRSDC (2013)

³¹³ TIES 2 Work Reports for Saint John Learning Exchange: Final Evaluation (2012)

³¹⁴ Completion of GED in Saint John – Department of Post-Secondary Training and Labour (Correspondence with Linda O'Brien, Manager; 2013)

Plan; Investing in World-Class Research and Innovation; and, Supporting Families and Communities. Many federal departments also support workforce development, such as Human Resources & Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). In addition, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) also supports opportunities for economic growth in Atlantic Canada, through the support of the federal government.

The Province of New Brunswick supports workforce development through many of its departments, including the Department of Post-Secondary, Education, Training and Labour (PETL). PETL is the steward of the *Adult Literacy Strategy* for New Brunswick, as well as offers a full suite of employment-related programming through various divisions and branches, including Adult Learning and Employment, Community Adult Learning Services/Network, Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification, and Employment Development, and Post-Secondary Education. The vision for the *Adult Literacy Strategy* (2009) is for “All New Brunswickers [to] have the literacy skills they need to participate fully at home, at work and in their communities.” The Strategy identifies four specific strategies to achieve this vision:

- Reduce barriers and increasing participation.
- Increase the number and range of adult literacy learning opportunities.
- Ensure the quality and effectiveness of adult literacy programs.
- Strengthen partnerships to develop a robust and effective adult literacy system.

The Department of Social Development is another key player in working with individuals to develop a case plan with steps and possibly programs to move towards employment. They often are a referral source to other departments and community agencies.

The Provincial Government also supports workforce participation through the Economic Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC), a crown corporation responsible for the Province’s Economic and Social Inclusion Plan (*Overcoming Poverty Together*). ESIC’s mandate is “To develop, oversee, coordinate and implement strategic initiatives and plans to reduce poverty and assist thousands of New Brunswickers to become more self-sufficient.” As a result, ESIC focuses on many initiatives that promote sustained economic and social inclusion, such as:

- **Reforming social assistance:** Achievements to date include the introduction of the *Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision*, the Province’s dental and vision plan for children of low-income families (implemented September 2012), as well as expanded access to the Transition Assistance Program, for clients who qualified under the Interim Assistance Program – representing an 82 per cent increase in their monthly cheque. The health card has been extended for individuals exiting social assistance until the prescription drug program is introduced.

Another improvement is the revision to the wage exemption policy to allow recipients to keep more of their earnings as they gain employment. The wage exemption policy exempts a portion of a client’s wages earned from either part-time, full-time or self-employment when calculating income for social assistance. This policy permits clients to earn a certain amount of income without affecting their social assistance benefits. As an example, a single client is able to earn a flat

wage exemption of \$150 with no deductions to their cheque. For every additional \$1 in earnings their benefits are reduced by \$1. The flat wage exemption will be retained, but as of October 2013, the client's social assistance benefits will be reduced by \$0.70 for every additional \$1 earned by the client.

- **Raising the minimum wage:** ESIC assisted in the raising of the minimum wage in New Brunswick to \$10/hour on April 1, 2012. In 2009, Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimated that 17,100 New Brunswickers earned minimum wage, representing 5.3% of all employed persons in the province.
- **Strengthening the ability of low-income people to enter the skilled workforce:** Through the provision of training, education and volunteer opportunities as part of the transition to work, as well as on the job training; An advisory committee on Social Enterprise and Community Investment Funds has developed a project plan framework to develop a social enterprise model that will foster social and economic growth. The report was presented to government in the spring of 2013.
- **Reducing barriers to education:** In 2011-12, funding for improving access to post-secondary education for families with lower incomes was increased to \$1.5 million. This funding assists post-secondary education institutions in developing and implementing a variety of pilot projects such as low income support programs to encourage parents and their children to pursue post-secondary education, development of services for students with learning and physical disabilities, improved academic and skill supports and individualized outreach to students who do not meet the admission average requirement for university, and free academic upgrading courses in both official languages for adults wanting to improve their occupational and academic situations.

Workforce development is also supported by the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons, through their *Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick 2012-2017* (2012) and *Disability Action Plan: The Time for Action is Now* (2012). The Premier's Council is actively involved in addressing issues related to workforce participation through poverty and education objectives, and identifies a number of recommendations for the Province within their Action Plans.

Within the city of Saint John, residents have access to an extensive network of organizations at the community level that provide employment-related assistance, such as career counselling, job preparation, and education and training that target both general and specific populations (e.g., persons with disabilities and ex-offenders). A few examples include:

- **Saint John Learning Exchange-** (e.g., WorkLinks is an employment assistance service of the Learning Exchange that fosters connections between employers and candidates. A team of Job Coaches and a Job Developer supports individuals/candidates to overcome barriers to work, develop skills, research opportunities, execute job search strategies, and access and maintain employment.)
- **Enterprise Saint John-** (e.g., Saint John Work Solutions, where agencies coordinate efforts with Enterprise Saint John to strengthen approaches to employers, on behalf of the individuals they are working with and who are ready for employment. This program is undergoing some changes).

- **Saint John Community Loan Fund-** In its nearly 10 years of operation the SJCLF has made nearly 150 loans for a total value of over \$175,000. The impact of this investment has included individuals needing reliance on Provincial Income Assistance, families becoming self-reliant and over \$3million in new income being circulated through the local economy.
- **Urban Core Support Network-** (e.g., Power UP!, is a ten week intensive training program designed to enhance and develop leadership skills to help women living in high poverty neighbourhoods take their next decisive step, whether education, employment or another option.)
- **John Howard Society-** (e.g., "Job Track" provides more than 40 homeless youth per year with resources and supports to gain housing and part-time work to complete their high school education. Upon successful completion of the program, they provide tutoring services to other at-risk youth experiencing similar challenges.)
- **The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work-** (e.g., the Workplace Inclusion Program (PWIP) that provides a one-stop employment service for job seekers with disabilities).

Saint John is also home to a number of post-secondary educational institutions, including one university (the University of New Brunswick, Saint John), college (the New Brunswick Community College) and numerous trade schools, including: the Saint John College Campus of Eastern College, the Academy of Learning - Saint John, Carpenters & Millwrights Training Centre of New Brunswick (this is now closed and only offers training to their union members), Commercial Diving College, and Dental Assisting Academy of New Brunswick.

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Youth

This paper is one of 12 issue papers prepared by Living SJ. The intention of each issue paper is to provide background information. Each paper offers a summary of current literature that has been gathered from local, provincial and national sources. The issue papers are not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues but rather a snapshot of current literature.

Operational Definition

The 'Youth' priority area covers the following topic-areas specific to youth within the 15-24 age range³¹⁵: educational attainment (e.g., high school drop-out/completion rates; access to training/education opportunities; post-secondary education); health (e.g. pregnancy, addictions, mental health); homelessness; availability of social programming/outreach services (e.g., drop-in centres, shelters); employment programming for youth; alternate pathways to education/employment; opportunities for participation in recreation; single parenthood; crime prevention and legal advice; and youth engagement/safety.

This paper should not be considered without also referring to the "children and families" report, as many challenges faced by youth are directly linked to childhood issues (e.g., education, employment, health, poverty, and parental/ family/social connections).

The Current Situation

The current New Brunswick youth population (2012) represents 12.1% of the total population of the province (91,300). This number has decreased from the Census 2006 data, which found that NB youth (15-19 years) represented approximately 13% of the total population, or a -0.4% rate of change.³¹⁶ This finding is not limited to New Brunswick; "over the past 35 years, the proportion of the Canadian population aged 12 to 29 years has decreased. According to the 2006 Census, of the entire population of 31.6 million, 7.5 million Canadians (24%) were between the ages of 12 and 29 years, down from 33% in 1971. Of those 7.5 million, 46% were youth and 54% were young adults.³¹⁷ Saint John youth represent 6.4% of the total city population (Census 2006) and have modestly increased at a 0.1% rate of change since 2001.

³¹⁵ The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years; however, it is understood that some define youth up to and including age 29. It will be explicitly stated when other youth age ranges are utilized, otherwise it should be assumed that the range is 15-24.

³¹⁶ Profile of New Brunswick Labour Force – Government of New Brunswick (2012) and Poverty & Plenty II: A Statistical Snapshot of the Quality of Life in Saint John – Vibrant Communities Saint John (2008).

³¹⁷ The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada (2011).

Potential Barriers

Youth face many issues today, such as educational attainment (i.e., high school and post-secondary), employment, debt, addictions, lack of family support, pregnancy, homelessness, mental health issues, trouble with the law, etc. And although this list has not changed significantly over the years, an “era of complexity and uncertainty has emerged” that we have not previously experienced; “landmarks that once signaled a transition from one phase of life to another have been significantly delayed, if not destroyed.”³¹⁸ The following sub-sections highlight potential barriers faced by many youth living in Canada, New Brunswick, and where available Saint John specifically. It should also be noted that many of the barriers or challenges faced by youth do not occur in isolation, and for many youth, occur simultaneously.

Youth Living in Poverty - Many Canadian youth still face issues of poverty. Based on low income cut-offs (LICO), an estimated 6% of Canadian youth and 5% of young adults were living in low-income households in 2008, an improvement over rates estimated to be as high as 14% for youth and 8% for young adults in 1996.³¹⁹ Many New Brunswick youth face significant levels of poverty, particularly in Saint John. According to Census 2006, approximately 21% of the total population of the city of Saint John experiences poverty, while comparatively, 15.3% of Canadians and 13.5% of New Brunswickers experience poverty. Poverty is not evenly distributed across the city, with poverty rates much higher in the city’s five “Priority Neighbourhoods” (i.e., Crescent Valley, the Old North End, Waterloo Village, the South End, and the Lower West Side), considered as such due to the following factors: high poverty rates, percentage of single parents, and low levels of education and labour force participation. The Crescent Valley community had the highest incidence of poverty among the priority neighbourhoods (62%), followed by the Old North End (47%), and the Lower West Side (31%). Priority neighbourhoods are also home to a higher incidence of youth. The Old North End community has the highest incidence of youth (8.2%), followed by Crescent Valley (8.1%) and the Lower West Side (7.1%), much higher than the City of Saint John (6.4%). The Old North End also has a “very high” incidence of poverty, where more than 40% of the population experiences low income before tax (47%)³²⁰. The Old North End also has a high incidence of single mothers (39%) and single fathers (10.7%), a +8% increase from 2001 to 2006. All priority neighbourhoods within the city have poverty incidences higher than the national average.

Youth Education - Educational attainment continues to be a challenge for many youth across Canada. The dropout rate for youth in New Brunswick, reported by the Department of Education (2009; 2010) for grades 7-12 was 2.4% in both 2006-7 and 2007-8 school years, and decreased to 2.2% for 2008-9. Dropout rates have improved over the years, but more boys than girls still leave high school without a diploma in New Brunswick. For example, “in 2007/08, 3% of boys enrolled

³¹⁸ Vital Youth – Community Foundations of Canada (2013).

³¹⁹ The Chief Public Health Officer’s Report on the State of Public Health in Canada (2011).

³²⁰ Prevalence of low income before tax - Percentage of economic families or persons not in economic families who spend 20% more than average of their before-tax income on food, shelter and clothing.

in Grades 7 to 12 quit school (830 male students), compared to 2% of girls (535 female students).” For over a decade, male dropout rates have remained higher than female dropout rates in Canada and most OECD countries.³²¹ Research has shown that there are many contributing factors for youth to leave school, including: addictions, a lack of family support, parenting/pregnancy, a lack of interest, poor academic performance and literacy, social issues, homelessness, mental health issues, employment, trouble with the law, the age-grade gap, a difficult transition to high school, and being asked to leave/discipline in school.³²² Department of Education statistics reveal that the proportion of students who leave because of employment opportunities and academic problems is higher in Saint John than at the provincial level. Suspension rates within the city are very high – according to a recent report on inclusive education in NB, District 8 (includes Saint John) had suspension rates approximately 3 times the provincial average (Safe Harbour: Transitional Youth Services – Saint John Human Development Council, 2013). According to the New Brunswick Department of Education (2010), for approximately 79% of youth between grades seven and twelve who dropped out of school, students reported doing so because of personal problems (e.g. lack of interest in school, failure to attend classes, pregnancy, lack of child care and family problems), followed by employment (12%) and academic problems (7%). The Saint John dropout rate from 2008 to 2009 was 2% of the total student population enrolled in grades 7-12 (128 of 6,386 students). Upon further examination, it appears that the majority (94%) of students that dropout in Saint John do so once in high school (i.e., grades 9-12) and are male (58%).³²³ According to Poverty & Plenty II (2008), the incidence of high school non-completion for all of Saint John’s priority neighbourhoods, with the exception of the South End community of Saint John, was alarmingly higher or comparable to the national average (21%), the provincial average (27%), the city (23%), and the CMA (19%). Crescent Valley had the highest incidence of high school non-completion among the priority neighbourhoods (43%), closely followed by Waterloo Village (40%), the Old North End (34%), and the Lower West Side (27%). Dropping out of high school significantly limits the ability for youth to continue with post-secondary educational opportunities, thereby limiting their employment choices and income levels, and puts them at an increased risk for unemployment and welfare dependence, mental health problems, drug abuse, involvement in crime, homelessness, as well as limits their access to accessible, affordable housing and suitable housing.

For those that do graduate from high school, it has been discovered that many youth are not well-equipped for post-secondary education. “According to a recent survey by Achieve, Inc., 39% of high school graduates feel they do not have adequate mastery of skills and abilities expected by employers and/or higher education institutions. Whether in college or in the workforce, 86% feel they have some gaps in crucial skill areas. The Achieve Inc. poll also revealed postsecondary instructors believe 42% of their students are not adequately prepared. Furthermore, 70% report

³²¹ Status Report: Women in New Brunswick – Advisory Council on the Status of Women (2010).

³²² Strengthening Pathways to Education: For Youth at Risk in Saint John (2009).

³²³ It should be noted that although not a large number, eight students dropped out of school in grade seven and eight between 2008 and 2009 in Saint John (Education Dropout Statistics: September 30, 2008 to September 30, 2009 – Department of Education, 2010).

spending some class time reviewing high school materials and skills and 24% report spending significant class time on these skills.”³²⁴

For many New Brunswick youth, particularly those of low and moderate income families, the cost of post-secondary education is prohibitive, preventing access to universities, colleges, and trade schools. A report by Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer noted that when taking into consideration “all sources of borrowing, including family, government and non-government loans, college graduates owed on average \$13,600, while university graduates owed twice as much, an average of \$26,680.”³²⁵ As a result, the ability of most low-income students to pursue and complete post-secondary studies is questionable without significant financial contributions of grants and/or bursaries. Campaign 2000 (2012) explained that tuition fees have been significantly increased as a result of decreased funding to colleges and universities. For example, “from 1982-2012, public funds supporting post-secondary education in Canada declined from 80% to 50%, due to both funding cuts and naturally increasing costs necessary to improve programs and keep up with inflation.” Despite the high cost, almost half of Saint John residents have achieved some form of post-secondary education (48%, compared to 53% in Canada), including trade certificates and college programs (32%) and university (15%).”³²⁶

Lastly, for those youth who manage to graduate from high school and attend post-secondary institutions, many are not doing so successfully. New Brunswick has a 78% participation rate for postsecondary education - the majority of students attend university (41%), followed by college (34%), and other post-secondary institutions (23%). Despite attendance rates, post-secondary students in New Brunswick have some of the highest dropout rates for university (21%; tied for fifth with Nova Scotia)) and college (24%; second only to Alberta).³²⁷

Youth Labour Force - Today’s youth face many challenges in terms of not only obtaining employment, but also sustaining employment. According to the Government of New Brunswick, *Profile of New Brunswick Labour Force* report (2012), “New Brunswick youth represent 13.5% of the total employment population and 15% of the total labour force, with an unemployment rate of 20.1% - for males it was 26.3% - much higher than the working age population in the province (9.5%) and youth across Canada (14.2%).”³²⁸ This in comparison to the national unemployment rate of 7.2% - the youth rate is almost double. The share of New Brunswick youth (41.1%) with some post-secondary education or a post-secondary certificate, diploma or bachelors degree is much lower than the 60.5% of the core working age population (those 25-54) that have the same credentials; however, New Brunswick youth have similar levels of educational attainment as youth across Canada.”

³²⁴ Insulating the Education Pipeline to Increase Postsecondary Success – The Forum for Youth Investment (2010).

³²⁵ The Chief Public Health Officer’s Report on the State of Public Health in Canada (2011).

³²⁶ Technical Background Report: Fact Sheets, Plans SJ (2012).

³²⁷ Postsecondary Education – Participation and Dropping Out: Difference Across University, College and Other Types of Postsecondary Institutions – D. Shaienks, T. Gluszynski, & J. Bayard (Statistics Canada & Human Resources and Social Development Canada) (2008).

³²⁸ Unemployment rates were taken from Youth Vital Signs Saint John – Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2013).

Many skilled, young workers are moving to other parts of the Maritimes or the country where employment is more plentiful (e.g., Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta and Saskatchewan). During the economic downturn, many New Brunswickers braved the storm at home; however, as the Province's economy continues to lag, many residents are resuming their search for employment in other regions of Canada. Saint John youth were recently surveyed on quality of life measures. The majority of youth noted that "the right schools and training opportunities are available in the Saint John region for them to get the education and training they want (67%) and "that they are able to pursue their dream career in the Saint John region (46%)" ; however, less than half of the students (46%) "said that they are able to pursue their dream career in the Saint John region" and only one third "said [that] they see themselves living and working in the region 10 years from now (32%)." ³²⁹ Saint John youth also suggested that 'more employment opportunities for teens' and 'higher quality summer jobs' would significantly improve the Saint John region.

The unemployment rate for New Brunswick youth is particularly alarming; however, one needs to take into consideration that the "cradle to career" pathway has significantly changed for today's youth, without much warning. According to the Community Foundation of Canada (2013), youth no longer follow the expected pathway (i.e., high school, university/college, job, marriage, children, and retirement). Rather, youth are faced with a frenzied pathway that is extraordinarily difficult to navigate, but continue to be pressured by parents to continue along the expected path (illustrated within the infographic).



Youth face many other employment-related obstacles, including under and precarious employment, lay-offs, and competition with baby boomers and foreign-trained workers. For example³³⁰:

- Amongst college and university graduates aged 25-29, 1 out of 3 moves into a low-skilled job after graduation, eroding their skills and income potential for up to 10 years, thereby significantly impacting their ability to pay-off any acquired post-secondary debt. For example, it has been found that this debt can take an average of 14 years to pay off³³¹, particularly when one considers the average after-tax income for young adults is only \$23,000.³³²
- Youth aged 15-24 make up only 16% off Canada's labour market, yet they accounted for half of all losses during the recession.
- Available jobs for youth are often part-time or piecemeal jobs (aka precarious employment). "Between 1997 and 2011, the percentage of young employees aged 15-

³²⁹ Youth Vital Signs Saint John – Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2013).

³³⁰ The following points have been derived from Vital Youth - Community Foundations of Canada (2013).

³³¹ Vital Youth Community Foundations of Canada (2013).

³³² The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada (2011).

30 working in non-permanent jobs rose from 6.9% to 11.6%. Just over half of these employees had completed college or university. The rest were in temporary and/or part-time work (26.2%) or unemployed (6.2%).³³³

- The workplace is more crowded – boomers are working into their 60's and 70's or retiring from full-time jobs only to go back on contract as term employees, mentors, or consultants. Companies are also hiring international workers to fill vacancies within New Brunswick.
- Summer jobs in 2012 were at the lowest level since data was first collected in 1977.

Youth Health - Canadian youth also face many health-related challenges, including pregnancy, obesity, addictions, mental health issues, and drug use. Canadian and New Brunswick youth experience high levels of obesity, as 34 % of New Brunswick children and youth (ages 2-17) are overweight or obese, much higher than the Canadian average of 26%.³³⁴ According to the Government of New Brunswick's *Health Strategy 2009-2013* (n.d.), "Only about 21% of Atlantic children and youth (ages 4-18) are meeting the recommended number of servings of vegetables and fruit, compared to a national average of 38%. Those who eat vegetables and fruit less than 5 times a day are significantly more likely to be overweight or obese than those who eat fruit and vegetables more frequently. At the local level, "Saint John has an obesity rate of 25% - significantly higher than the national average of 17%. In 2009, Statistics Canada reported a childhood obesity rate of 24% for New Brunswick youth aged 12-17 - this includes youth in the Saint John CMA. At only 7%, New Brunswick has the lowest percentage of youth attaining the recommended daily physical activity level."³³⁵ The *Active Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth* (2012) gave the Government of Canada a "D" for strategies related to physical activities. Furthermore, the report noted that less than 1% of the total healthcare spending in Canada is devoted to health promotion, physical activity/education, and sport.³³⁶

Considering the above-noted findings on educational attainment, it should be noted that obesity has been linked with levels of education and income. According to Canada's Chief Public Health Officer (2011), overweight and obesity rates were higher among youth in households where the highest level of attained education was less than high school (34%), compared to those with post-secondary attainment (29%). In addition, an association between single-use residential neighbourhoods and higher levels of obesity was also identified. "Residents in communities characterized by mixed land use (i.e., with stores, schools and/or employment centres within walking distance of homes) are more active than in those neighbourhoods designed for automobile-dependent transportation." It should be noted that Saint John priority neighbourhoods with incidences of very high poverty (i.e., more than 40% of residents live below the poverty line) and high incidences of youth, such as Crescent Valley and the Old North End, would be classified as single-use residential neighbourhoods.

³³³ Needed: An Action Plan to Eradicate Child and Family Poverty in Canada - CAMPAIGN 2000 Report Card (2012).

³³⁴ Shields, M. (2004); Active Healthy Kids Canada (2008).

³³⁵ Play Saint John Report: Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan – City of Saint John (2012)

³³⁶ Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card on Physical Activity for Children & Youth – Active Healthy Kids Canada(2012).

Mental health issues also appear to present many challenges for today's youth. According to the UNICEF Report Card (2013), Canada's children are among the unhappiest. Of the 29 countries included in the comparative review, Canada ranked 24th when taking children's view of their life satisfaction into account – this has fallen over the past decade.³³⁷ New Brunswick and Saint John youth also suggested lower levels of life satisfaction. According to the Government of New Brunswick, "over a third of [middle and high school] students (39%) reported feeling depressed at least sometimes and 20% indicated that they required assistance for depression."³³⁸ When surveyed in 2012, Saint John youth provided the following letter grades for "Health & Wellness" indicators: Physical Well-Being – C+; Mental Well-Being – C+; and, Quality of Life – B- (Greater Saint John Community Foundation, 2013). Although it is quite difficult to suggest why youth are experiencing higher levels of emotional stress and mental health issues, it has been shown that "deprivation, abuse and neglect, and low-birth weight, as well as parents' employment status, education, mental health and parenting skills" have been linked with an increased risk of mental illness and mental health problems in youth and young adulthood. Similar to obesity, mental health issues have also been linked with youth and young adults living in low-income households. "Canadians living in lower-income households were found to have a higher risk of becoming distressed over time due to a higher prevalence of certain stressors in their lives, such as job strain, financial problems, relationship problems and recent life events."³³⁹ In addition, today's youth continue to be exposed to various technologies (i.e., cell phones, computers, tablets, etc) – one is truly never "shut off". "Humanity today generates more data in 2 days than it produced in all of history up to the year 2003 – non-stop use of technology is creating physical and mental health issues like we've never seen before – isolation, stress, obesity, inactivity; mental disorders in youth are the second highest hospital care expenditure in Canada. Today, 3.2 million Canadians, aged 12-19, are at risk for developing depression. Children and youth of low-income families are especially at risk; yet, 3 out of 4 children/youth that need specialized treatment aren't getting it."³⁴⁰

Teen pregnancy is also a major issue within New Brunswick and Saint John. Approximately 29% of all births in New Brunswick in 2007 were born to mothers aged 15-24 years old (GNB Vital Statistics 2007 Annual Report). This is slightly up from the Province's lowest teenage pregnancy rates experienced in 2004 and 2005. Saint John's teen pregnancy rate is the highest in New Brunswick, and it is nearly double the national average. Currently for every 1,000 teen girls in the community, about 42/1000 per year will become pregnant. In 2010/11, the percentage of births to teens in Health Region 2 (which includes the Saint John CMA) was 8.1% (representing 141 births), up from 7.7% in 2009/10. A third of these young mothers were under 18 years of age.³⁴¹ Factors specific to New Brunswick and Saint John that place youth at a higher risk for teen pregnancy include higher incidences of lone parent families and poverty, lower literacy rates and

³³⁷ UNICEF Canada (2013).

³³⁸ Student Drug Use Survey Report – Government of New Brunswick, Department of Health (2012).

³³⁹ The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada (2011).

³⁴⁰ Vital Youth. Community Foundations of Canada. (2013)

³⁴¹ Vital Signs – Greater Saint John Community Foundation (2011).

education, and a lack of subsidized birth control, access to family physicians, and abortion services throughout the province.³⁴²

Youth Crime – In 2011 in New Brunswick, 1,784 youth were charged with a crime, approximately 2% of the total youth population. The youth incarceration rate (age 12-17) in NB is higher than the national rate (10 vs. 8 per 10,000 youth).³⁴³ More specifically, the Saint John CMA has the highest rate of youth charged in Atlantic Canada, and the 6th highest in the country.³⁴⁴ According to the Boys and Girls Club of Canada (2011), “Statistics Canada recently reported a declining rate of crime committed by youth over the past decade, with the crime rate falling 7 percent in 2010. They also reported a steady decline in the severity of youth crime over the past 10 years, and a 6 percent decrease in 2010. Unfortunately, while property crimes, such as vandalism, graffiti and defacing public property have been on a sharp decline since 1992, violent crimes, such as murders, beatings and robberies have been on the rise – the youth violent crime severity index is 5 percent higher than in 2000.”

Youth crime has been linked with higher rates of poverty and social exclusion, as well as lower rates of educational attainment. The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2008) reported that upon a review of Canadian cities, crime appears to be concentrated in neighbourhoods where residents have limited access to socio-economic resources. “High-crime neighbourhoods typically have a population that is more disadvantaged in economic terms (higher proportions of government transfers and of people living in low-income households, and lower median incomes) and a smaller proportion of highly educated people. In addition, in high-crime neighbourhoods, a larger proportion of the population spends more than 30% of its income on shelter and a smaller number of dwellings are owner-occupied.”³⁴⁵ The Boys and Girls Club of Canada (2011) also reported that young people most likely to be drawn into criminal activity are living in low-income circumstances, experience social isolation, generally are less successful in school and have less hope for later success in life. For example, “More than 70 percent of those who enter federal prisons have not completed high-school.”³⁴⁶ Research has shown that the positive connections between youth and their parents/family, as well as supportive relationships with adults and peers, decreases the risk for youth to experience educational, social and community disengagement, and are less likely “engage in risk taking behaviours, anti-social behaviour and delinquency. Youth are also more likely to have positive social relationships, complete secondary school or pursue post-secondary education, and to report good overall health.”³⁴⁷

A new program of note within Saint John is the Quantum Opportunities Program; a multifaceted mentor-based school program for School District 8 youth (includes Saint John). Participating students are assessed as being at the highest rate for dropping out upon transition from grade 8

³⁴² Teen Pregnancy Statistical Report (2010).

³⁴³ Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (2009).

³⁴⁴ Safe Harbour: Transitional Youth Services – Saint John Human Development Council (2013).

³⁴⁵ Analysis of the Spatial Distribution of Crime in Canada: Summary of Major Trends – Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada (2008).

³⁴⁶ Prevention – Investing in Canada’s Youth – Boys and Girls Club of Canada (2011).

³⁴⁷ The Chief Public Health Officer’s Report on the State of Public Health in Canada (2011).

to high school. Seventy-five highest risk youth from the city's four high schools are provided 750 hours of educational, developmental and service activities per year, for the four years of high school, based on individualized case plans. According to the BCAPI 2011-2012 Report Card, "in their first year of high school, 29 [youth] were sentenced to probation, open or closed custody, 50 youth received serious addiction treatment or residential treatment, 32 youth received serious mental health counselling, and 17 youth became homeless. Despite these risks and 82 school suspensions, QUANTUM was able to ensure all 75 youth remained connected with school with 72% advancing to grade 10 and 4 youth advancing to grade 11."

Benefits to Supporting Youth

First and foremost, efforts to support youth must start in childhood; however, it is unrealistic to think that programming and services available to children and families will accommodate *all* children and families. As a result, specific, evidence-based youth programming must also be available. We need to broaden our current thinking beyond the classroom, the school day, and academics, beyond age 18, beyond high school graduation and college readiness. Canada, New Brunswick, and Saint John needs to do a better job of targeting specific youth groups that are at a higher risk of slipping through the cracks, such as: youth living in poverty/priority neighbourhoods, young males; youth with substance abuse problems; pregnant and parenting youth; homeless youth; and, young offenders. Youth need to be supported through public investments and should be part of a national investment strategy. Funding groups, both public and private, need to see youth support as an economically efficient strategy. Furthermore, it is strongly suggested that programming focus on developing positive youth assets (internal and external) and characteristics, such as empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, social competencies, and positive identity.³⁴⁸ Through this approach, it has been shown that youth decrease involvement in risky behaviours (alcohol, violence, drugs, and sexual activity) and increase in positive behaviours (leadership, health, and school success).

Supporting youth to achieve academic success has significant implications for future opportunities. For example, post-secondary education, which assumes high school completion, has clear workforce and economic implications, and is associated with better life outcomes. For example, "Over the course of a lifetime, college graduates earn roughly one million dollars more than peers with only a high school diploma...[and are] more likely to have access to other forms of compensation such as health insurance and retirement benefits."³⁴⁹ In addition, post-secondary education also is the biggest factor in breaking the cycle of poverty, thereby influencing every facet of one's life. "Higher levels of education correlate with better health outcomes and higher rates of civic engagement, from voting to volunteering...Children of educated parents tend to pursue higher levels of education, be healthier, be better prepared for school, and engage in

³⁴⁸ The Power of Assets – Search Institute (2012), via WardClapman Blog.

³⁴⁹ Insulating the Education Pipeline to Increase Postsecondary Success – The Forum for Youth Investment (2010).

more activities.”³⁵⁰ Supporting youth in the engagement of health and wellness activities, such as sports and recreation, and healthy eating, also provides many benefits, including improvements to psychological health (e.g., decision-making, creativity, and social skills), familial interaction, academic performance, and community involvement.

Failing to invest in youth-related support programming and services, has the potential to “trigger substantial economic, social, and political costs resulting from negative outcomes such as early school drop-out, poor labor market entry, risky sexual behaviors, substance abuse, and crime and violence.”³⁵¹ For example, young adults in New Brunswick represent the highest proportion of smokers – smoking costs New Brunswick \$338 million in direct and indirect costs per year! Preventative programming has been shown to have significant cost-benefit savings. For example, it has been reported that the overall social cost of substance abuse in Canada was estimated at \$39.8 billion in 2002; however, an analysis of prevention programs has shown cost savings of \$15-18 for every dollar spent on drug abuse prevention.”³⁵² Drug abuse prevention also has implications for crime-related cost reductions. “Court associated cost for processing criminal offences (e.g. court staff, legal aid service and prosecutors) related to alcohol and drugs were estimated at approximately \$513 million and \$330.6 million respectively.”³⁵³ According to the Boys and Girls Club of Canada (2011), the social and economic costs of crime are approximately \$31.4 billion annually. Rather than invest \$2.1 billion to retrofit and expand prison facilities, in addition to the \$15 billion spent annually on the criminal justice system, the Government of Canada should redirect its funds toward crime prevention programming that will reach those who would benefit the most (e.g., young people living in poverty). “This investment in youth crime prevention will help sustain Canada’s economic recovery and secure its future prosperity. Tax revenues will increase as more young people successfully complete their education and enter the workforce. Young people will make better life choices and avoid entering a costly criminal justice system, saving tax dollars. Fewer crimes mean fewer victims, reduced costs to victims of crime and safer communities for all Canadian families.”³⁵⁴

Partners Supporting Youth

Youth have many avenues for support, at the federal, provincial, and municipal government levels, as well as at the community level in Saint John. At the federal level, various programs have been designed to support youth from an economic perspective (e.g., Economic Action Plan 2013; the Canadian Youth Business Foundation; and, Youth Employment Strategy - a horizontal initiative involving eleven federal departments and agencies, comprised of three program streams: Skills Link, Career Focus, and Summer Work Experience) and a health perspective (e.g., Government of Canada’s commitment to the New Brunswick Healthy Living Project, NB PLAYS! in March 2013;

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Fact Sheet: Youth as a Smart Investment – Inter-Agency Network for Youth Development (2011).

³⁵² A Case for Investing in Youth Substance Abuse Prevention – Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (2012).

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Prevention – Investing in Canada’s Youth – Boys and Girls Club of Canada (2011).

and, the Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy). In addition, the federal government supports youth with disabilities through a number of programs and services related to employment, education, and finances.

Similarly at the provincial level, the Government of New Brunswick supports youth through the adoption of various strategies and action plans that focus on education (e.g., Department of Education and Childhood Development), disability (e.g., the Premier's Council on the status of Disabled Persons, *Disability Action Plan: The Time for Action is Now*), employment (e.g., Premier's Council on the status of Disabled Persons, *Employment Action Plan for Persons with a Disability in New Brunswick: 2012-2017*), housing (e.g., *Hope is a Home: New Brunswick's Housing Strategy*, specifically regarding youth homelessness), and health (e.g., *New Brunswick's Wellness Strategy: Action Plan 2012-2013*; and, the *Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision* plan for children of low-income families). The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and Partners for Youth Inc., a registered charity, are strong provincial supporters of youth issues.

The municipality of Saint John also supports youth through local plans, like *Plan SJ - The City of Saint John Municipal Plan* (2011) and *True Growth 2.0* (2012) in terms of labour force attraction and retention for the city, as well as *Play SJ - The City of Saint John Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan* (2012), specifically in terms of healthy and active living through its various services (e.g., playground, parks, indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and programs, community centres, neighbourhood improvement, and trails and connectivity services).

Countless organizations support youth at the community level within Saint John, including:

- **Priority neighbourhood Groups** - ONE Change (the Old North End), the Crescent Valley Resource Centre, the South End Area Community Action Team (SEACAT), Police Unite Lower South End (PULSE), The Village Association (Waterloo Village), and the Carleton Community Centre (the Lower West Side). Many of the neighbourhood organizations work with other non-profit organizations within the community to deliver services and programming, including The Resource Centre for Youth and the Youth Inclusions Program;
- **Poverty-Reduction Groups** - Vibrant Communities Saint John and the Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative;
- **Children and Youth-specific Groups** - The Resource Centre for Youth, the Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Saint John, Partners Assisting Local Schools, the Youth Inclusion Program, the YMCA-YWCA, Positive Recreation Opportunities (P.R.O.) for Kids, the Greater Saint John Teen Pregnancy Committee, and First Steps Housing, to name a few; and,
- **Other** - Youth also have access to other programming and services within the city, not necessarily specific to youth, such as the Saint John Learning Exchange, The John Howard Society, Fusion Saint John, the Saint John Community Load Fund, as well as recreation, sports, and arts and culture programming.

Of particular note, YOUTH SJ (Youth Organizations United Together Helping Saint John) was created in November, 2011, a partnership comprised of four major youth organizations within the city (the YMCA-YWCA, the Boys and Girls Club, the Teen Resource Centre, and Big Brothers Big Sisters). YOUTH SJ has developed a “standards of care tool kit” that identifies the 20 best practices that are appropriate for all youth programs to ensure that youth are provided with safe, high quality programs and services regardless of the youth agency or youth group for which they are involved.³⁵⁵ It has been suggested that YOUTH SJ could become “the” voice for youth related issues within the community.

Resources

A Case for Investing in Youth Substance Abuse Prevention – Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (2012).

A Choir of Voices: The “What Was Said” Report. A Dialogue on Poverty – Government of New Brunswick (2009).

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