



Social Development and Seniors

POVERTY ELIMINATION STRATEGY ACT

2021-2022 Annual Report

**Poverty Elimination Strategy Act
2021-2022 Annual Report**

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Message from the Minister

May It Please Your Honour,

I am very pleased to present the 2021-2022 Annual Report in accordance with Section 7 of the Prince Edward Island *Poverty Elimination Strategy Act*.

The *Poverty Elimination Strategy Act* outlines a bold vision for reducing and eliminating poverty for all Islanders. Government is taking coordinated action across departments and in collaboration with community organizations and other levels of government to address the targets outlined in this *Act*, targets that aim to not only reduce but fully eliminate poverty, food insecurity, and chronic homelessness.



As ambitious as these targets are, we recognize the importance of working towards them. This report summarizes the progress we have made towards these goals in the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Some highlights include:

- Increasing Social Assistance and AccessAbility supports rates, including the establishment of a Basic Unit Rate to replace separate rates for Food, Clothing, Household and Personal Items, and Transportation;
- Continuing investment in job readiness programs;
- Implementing a Targeted Basic Income (TBIG) Pilot Program; and
- Expanding the Seniors Independence Initiative

As we look forward to 2022-2023, Government, in collaboration with community partners, will continue to establish strong supports and action items to work towards poverty elimination targets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barb Ramsay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barb Ramsay

Message de la ministre

Votre Honneur,

C'est avec plaisir que je vous présente le rapport annuel 2021-2022 conformément à l'article 7 de la *Poverty Elimination Strategy Act* (loi sur la stratégie d'élimination de la pauvreté) de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.

La *Poverty Elimination Strategy Act* (loi sur la stratégie d'élimination de la pauvreté) présente une vision audacieuse de la réduction et de l'élimination de la pauvreté pour tous les Insulaires. Le gouvernement prend des mesures coordonnées entre les ministères et en collaboration avec les organisations communautaires et d'autres niveaux de gouvernement pour atteindre les objectifs définis dans cette loi, objectifs qui visent non seulement à réduire mais aussi à éliminer complètement la pauvreté, l'insécurité alimentaire et le sans-abrisme chronique.



Aussi ambitieux que soient ces objectifs, nous reconnaissons l'importance d'y travailler. Le présent rapport résume les progrès que nous avons accomplis dans la réalisation de ces objectifs au cours de l'exercice 2021-2022. En voici quelques points saillants :

- Augmenter le soutien offert par l'aide sociale et le programme d'accessibilité, notamment en établissant un taux unitaire de base pour remplacer les taux distincts pour l'alimentation, l'habillement, les articles ménagers et personnels, et le transport ;
- Poursuivre l'investissement dans les programmes de préparation à l'emploi ;
- Mettre en œuvre un programme pilote de revenu de base ciblé ;
- Étendre le Programme pour l'autonomie des aînés.

Dans la perspective de 2022-2023, le gouvernement, en collaboration avec les partenaires communautaires, continuera à mettre en place des mesures de soutien et d'action solides pour atteindre les objectifs d'élimination de la pauvreté.

Sincères salutations,



Barb Ramsay

Message from the Poverty Elimination Council

The *Poverty Elimination Strategy Act*, enacted in May 2021, is a bold commitment of government, one that will require equally bold decisions to meet ambitious targets in this time of high inflation, high housing prices, and global economic instabilities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

While this first report represents government's dedication to combating poverty, showcasing notable achievements in 2021 and 2022, there remains a substantial journey ahead. The Poverty Elimination Council, established alongside the Act's accession in 2021, will work with government to effectively tackle poverty in PEI, with a specific focus on underserved and equity-deserving populations.

As Council members, we are passionate about reaching targets set out in the Act because each of us has been affected by poverty, often through lived experience, and unable to fully participate in our society.

Poverty is a complex topic, and gaining employment is not always a solution. Many of our families, neighbours and fellow Islanders continue to be “working poor”. Mental illness continues to be a major factor behind poverty, one which still has not been fully recognized within many support programs.

This Council and these poverty elimination targets have been informed by the work of previous groups including the Poverty Reduction Advisory Council, on which several of our current members served. The Poverty Reduction Action Plan, and others like it, enacted forward-thinking, proven solutions. It has been made clear that while we often have practical solutions at hand, it is bold decisions and funding commitments from our elected leaders that are required in order to fully meet our targets.

Protecting people from falling into poverty, and assisting people in overcoming poverty, requires a multi-pronged approach involving committed government and community partners working together to remove multiple barriers. A collective response is needed to steadily move towards eliminating poverty, food insecurity and homelessness. The Council plays a vital role in ensuring community partner involvement and advice to government.

For this reporting period, we extend our thanks to Patrick J. Davis, Jennifer Burgess and Crystal MacIntyre from the Department of Social Development and Housing for their support and insight, as well as Paxton Caseley for serving as Chair.

We look forward to continuing to work with government in striving to meet the targets of the *Poverty Elimination Act*.

In your service,

The Poverty Elimination Council

2021/2022 Members

Paxton Caseley (Chair) Roxanne Carter-Thompson Susie Dillon Clover Gallant Yvonne Gallant Liza Jamani	Wanda Lyall Andrea MacDonald Jason MacGregor Ayo Ogunleye Regina Younker
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Message du Conseil pour l'élimination de la pauvreté

La *Poverty Elimination Strategy Act* (loi sur la stratégie d'élimination de la pauvreté) a été promulguée en mai 2021. Il s'agit d'un engagement audacieux du gouvernement, qui nécessitera des décisions tout aussi audacieuses pour réaliser des objectifs ambitieux en cette période d'inflation élevée, de prix élevés des logements et d'instabilité économique mondiale découlant de la pandémie de COVID-19.

Ce premier rapport témoigne de l'engagement du gouvernement dans la lutte contre la pauvreté et présente des réalisations remarquables en 2021 et 2022, mais il reste encore beaucoup de travail à faire. Le Conseil pour l'élimination de la pauvreté, établi parallèlement à la loi en 2021, travaillera avec le gouvernement pour aborder la pauvreté à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard, en mettant l'accent sur les populations mal desservies et celles en quête d'équité.

En tant que membres du Conseil, nous avons à cœur d'atteindre les cibles énoncées dans la loi, car chacun et chacune d'entre nous a été touché par la pauvreté, souvent à travers une expérience vécue, et n'a pas été en mesure de participer pleinement à la société.

La pauvreté est une question complexe, et l'obtention d'un emploi n'est pas toujours possible. Un grand nombre de nos familles, de nos voisins et de nos concitoyens demeurent des « travailleurs à faible revenu ». La maladie mentale reste un facteur important de la pauvreté, phénomène qui n'est pas encore pleinement reconnu dans de nombreux programmes de soutien.

Notre Conseil s'est appuyé sur les travaux des groupes précédents, notamment le Conseil consultatif sur la réduction de la pauvreté, au sein duquel plusieurs de nos membres actuels ont siégé, pour définir les objectifs d'élimination de la pauvreté. Le plan d'action de réduction de la pauvreté et d'autres plans semblables ont instauré des solutions avant-gardistes qui ont fait leurs preuves. Il a clairement été établi que, même si nous avons souvent des solutions pratiques à portée de la main, ce sont les décisions audacieuses et les engagements financiers de nos élus qui nous permettent d'atteindre pleinement nos objectifs.

Pour éviter que les gens ne tombent dans la pauvreté et les aider à en sortir, il convient d'adopter une approche à plusieurs volets faisant appel à des partenaires gouvernementaux et communautaires engagés, qui collaborent en vue d'éliminer les multiples obstacles. Une réponse collective est nécessaire pour progresser vers l'élimination de la pauvreté, de l'insécurité alimentaire et du sans-abrisme. Le Conseil joue un rôle essentiel en assurant la participation des partenaires communautaires et en conseillant le gouvernement.

Pour la période visée par le rapport, nous tenons à remercier Patrick J. Davis, Jennifer Burgess et Crystal MacIntyre du ministère du Développement social et du Logement de leur appui et leurs conseils, ainsi que Paxton Caseley d'avoir assuré la présidence.

Nous avons hâte de poursuivre notre collaboration avec le gouvernement en vue de réaliser les objectifs de la *Poverty Elimination Act*.

À votre service,

Le Conseil pour l'élimination de la pauvreté

Membres 2021-2022

Paxton Caseley (présidente) Roxanne Carter-Thompson Susie Dillon Clover Gallant Yvonne Gallant Liza Jamani	Wanda Lyall Andrea MacDonald Jason MacGregor Ayo Ogunleye Regina Younker
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Poverty Elimination Annual Report, 2021-2022

The *Poverty Elimination Strategy Act* became law in May 2021. It is a requirement of the Act that the Government of Prince Edward Island provide an annual report on progress made toward targets to eliminate poverty, food insecurity, and chronic homelessness. This document will serve as the first annual report highlighting achievements and future targets that focus on the elimination of poverty in the Province of Prince Edward Island.

The Poverty Reduction Action Plan 2019-2024 is recognized in the Act as the strategy in effect at this time. Since this Action Plan was written, there have been many important developments in how the province is addressing poverty. Government is currently developing a new strategy and it is anticipated that it will be released in 2024.

The Poverty Reduction Action Plan aims to protect all persons on PEI from falling into poverty, assist individuals to overcome poverty, and promote dignity and quality of life for all. The goals within the Poverty Reduction Action Plan are:

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

Under the framework of the Poverty Reduction Action Plan 2019-2024, Government has taken significant actions to address poverty in PEI. The following section focuses on achievements made towards alleviating poverty in PEI. This report highlights actions taken from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

Achievements made in 2021-2022

Goal # 1 - To help Islanders in need

Actions under this goal support people on PEI who are experiencing poverty due to multiple barriers that limit their participation in the workforce. By removing barriers to create better access to supports and services, and creating opportunities in education, training, skill development, and connecting to the workforce, people will be better prepared to move out of poverty. Adequate income supports and benefits will improve wellbeing and enable people to meet their needs.

- **Increased Social Assistance and AccessAbility Supports rates**
 - In October 2021, Government increased social assistance rates for pregnancy food allowance, shelter, funeral, optical and school age allowance benefits by \$1.5M annually.
 - A Basic Unit Rate was established in January 2022, replacing separate rates for Food, Clothing, Household and Personal Items and Transportation. The Basic Unit Rate is easier to use and provides a single benefit amount at a higher level than previous benefit amounts combined. This represented an increased investment of \$4.5M annually.

- **Enhanced employment supports for Social Assistance and AccessAbility Supports recipients**
 - Social Programs increased the number of Support Coordinator positions to allow for more time to be spent providing employment supports to clients.
 - New case plans were implemented to support increased access to case management services and to improve client accountability.
 - Employment-focused policies were modernized to better meet the needs of employable clients and to reflect the current state of the workforce on Prince Edward Island.

- **Continued investments in job readiness programs**
 - In partnership with service-based organizations, SkillsPEI supported the Prosper program, an employability skills program for individuals who are in receipt of Social Assistance and AccessAbility supports. The Prosper program is designed to assist individuals in making a successful transition to the labour force through on-going employment coaching and mentoring.
 - SkillsPEI expanded job readiness programs for identifying women re-entering the workforce as part of economic recovery with new agreements with the Women's Network and the East Prince Women's Information Center.

- **Increased Mobile Rental Vouchers and Canada Housing Benefit**
 - The Mobile Rental Voucher Program provided 365 Mobile Rental Vouchers in 2020-2021, an increase from 285 the previous year. This program utilizes private market housing through private owners, non-profit corporations, and cooperatives to provide accommodations to seniors and families. The program funds the difference between 25% of the applicant's income and the market rent charged by the landlord, up to a maximum rental ceiling.
 - This program is geared toward funding people's current housing, rather than relocating them to a designated social housing unit.

➤ **Doubled Home Renovation Grants**

- The PEI Home Renovation Program doubled its grants as of April 1st, 2021 to assist individuals, families, and seniors in need of support to make necessary repairs to their home. Depending on household income, eligible program funding rose as follows:
 - Seniors Safe @ Home increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000;
 - Seniors Home Repair increased from \$2,000 to \$4,000;
 - PEI Home Renovation increased from \$6,000 to \$12,000; and
 - PEI Home Renovation for people with disabilities increased from \$8,000 to \$16,000.

Goal # 2 – To support the most vulnerable

Some people on PEI face challenges so significant that they are not able to support themselves through employment. This population needs a comprehensive range of supports. Actions under this goal impact families, communities, and government, and play a vital role in ensuring residents of Prince Edward Island can meet their basic needs, enjoy good quality of life, and live in dignity.

➤ **Implemented Targeted Basic Income Guarantee (TBIG) Pilot Program**

- The TBIG reduces poverty and provides income security by providing supplementary social assistance payments to those unable to enter the workforce and youth exiting the care of the Director of Child Protection.
- TBIG provides a vital support for eligible clients and has now reached 14% of Social Assistance and AccessAbility Supports recipients.

➤ **Enhanced services for people at risk of experiencing homelessness**

- The Community Outreach Centre moved to a new, permanent location in June 2021 with additional space and amenities for clients. This has allowed for enhanced services for clients by providing centrally located services.
- Government continued to respond to the needs identified in the Community Needs Assessment on Emergency Shelters.

➤ **Supported the implementation of Coordinated Access for those needing transitional and supportive housing**

- The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is a web-enabled management information system that allows multiple service providers to implement coordinated access using real-time information about people experiencing homelessness. HIFIS allows for the documentation of client-level transactions and plans across a broad range of service providers and provides the right tools to support integrated service delivery to prevent and reduce homelessness. HIFIS has been implemented on PEI through the John Howard Society.

Goal # 3 – To build on our supportive communities and partners

Actions under this goal are aimed at preventing poverty, as life transitions can leave anyone vulnerable to poverty. By building resilience, people on PEI will be better prepared to respond to life changes without experiencing poverty. People become resilient by having a healthy start in life, maintaining good health throughout their lives, attaining education and training, developing a strong sense of belonging in their community, and preparing for retirement. Supportive communities strengthen the social fabric that fosters resiliency.

➤ **Expanded the Seniors Independence Initiative**

- This initiative provides \$1,500 in annual funding to seniors. Changes to the program include:
 - Seniors became eligible for a disability parking pass and lifeline medical alert;
 - The program intake was streamlined to simplify the process for clients;
 - Family members became eligible to be service providers if they did not live in the same home as the senior; and
 - Income thresholds were increased to a maximum of \$26,500 for a single person and to a maximum of \$34,000 for a couple.

➤ **Continued Implementation of Sustainable Transportation Action Plan**

- In Fall 2021, Government partnered with Trius Transit to operate two low-fare weekday rural public transit routes in Eastern PEI and to reduce fares on an existing Charlottetown to Summerside route.
- In March 2022, Government implemented free transit for passengers 18 years and younger wherever public transit was available.
- In March 2022, the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action provided the REACH Foundation with \$25,000 to start a Bike Refurbishment Program. REACH clients refurbish bikes and they are then provided at no or low cost to people that may not be able to afford one. This program has provided valuable skills to participants of REACH programming and has provided quality pre-owned bikes to clients of the Adventure Group, CMHA and other community minded organizations.

➤ **Supported the growth of 211PEI**

- In addition to providing funding for 211PEI, Government partnered with United Way to have 211PEI provide intake for food supports to seniors in January 2022 when COVID-19 cases were high, thereby increasing the profile of the service.
- Similarly, 211PEI provided triage service for Emergency Basic Needs Support, again demonstrating to the public the value of the service and building community recognition.

➤ **Supported Community Organizations**

- Rural and Regional Development (RRD) supported strategic planning for a new facility for Tremplon, as well as renovations to the new Inclusions East facility.
- In partnership with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Holland College, RRD continued to support board governance training for non-profit organizations.

Goal # 4 – To improve the well-being of children and youth

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

- **Increased number and improved affordability of childcare spaces**
 - Capital Grants were made available to existing Early Years Centres to support expansion of spaces, and eleven new Early Years Centres were designated.
 - Effective January 2022, standard parent fees in Early Years Centres were decreased to \$25 for children from birth to school entry, and non-designated Early Childhood Centres received funding to decrease parent fees.
 - Capital grants were made available to support individuals who wish to license a Family Home Centre. Grants help with the costs of renovations and with the purchase of materials and equipment. Operational grants were provided to support the reduction of parent fees in licensed Family Home Centres.
 - Government invested in Early Years staff by:
 - Increasing provincial wages paid to Early Years Centre staff, Special Needs Assistants and Autism Assistants;
 - Providing Retention Grants to staff working in licensed Early Childhood Centres and Early Years Centres;
 - Creating a Return to Early Childhood Educator Profession Grant for eligible Early Childhood Educators returning to employment in an Early Years Centre; and
 - Offering Education Training Grants for individuals employed in licensed Early Childhood Centres to complete a credential in early childhood education.

- **Continued investments in job readiness programs for youth**
 - In partnership with four service-based organizations, SkillsPEI supported SEAM/STAR programming which provided up to 80 youth an opportunity to gain valuable life skills and work experience that will support their successful completion of high school and subsequent transition to post-secondary education, apprenticeship, the workforce, or entrepreneurship.

Looking Forward to 2022-2023

A number of actions are planned for 2022-2023 that will continue to work towards poverty elimination targets. These actions include:

➤ **Reducing Poverty**

- Increasing the minimum wage by 80 cents, to \$14.50 per hour, on January 1, 2023. Another 50 cent increase to \$15 per hour will happen on October 1st, 2023.
- Increasing the maximum funding available through the Seniors Independence Initiative to \$1,700 per year.
- Increasing Social Assistance rates to address the increased costs of living in Prince Edward Island.
- Expanding the SEAM/Star and Prosper Programs to assist more youth and persons receiving Social Assistance achieve better outcomes moving forward.

➤ **Increasing Food Security**

- Providing increased funding to the School Food Program, which provides meals using a “Pay What You Can” model in Island schools. Over 500,000 meals are expected to be provided in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.
- Expanding the Summer Food Program, which provides meals to Island children and youth whose families express a need for meal options over the summer months when the School Food Program was not available. Approximately 50,000 meals are expected to be provided during the summer of 2022.

➤ **Reducing Chronic Homelessness**

- Enhancing services at the Community Outreach Centre including:
 - Hiring a dedicated manager for the Centre;
 - Increasing staffing levels and case workers positions; and
 - Providing fully resourced, dedicated case management programming and supports to complement existing community partner contributions.
- Increasing emergency shelter options for those experiencing homelessness.
- Increasing the number of supportive housing options.
- Continuing to increase Government-owned housing builds through acquisition and construction.

Measuring Poverty in Prince Edward Island

Key Indicators

The *Poverty Elimination Strategy Act* sets out targets for five key indicators for measuring poverty on PEI. As per the Act, 2018 is the base year from which future target years will be compared. The five key indicators as mandated by the Act are:

Indicator	2025 Target	2030 Target	2035 Target	As Measured By
<i>Poverty rate for all persons</i>	25% reduction	50% reduction	Rate is 0	Market Basket Measure
<i>Poverty rate for those under 18</i>	50% reduction	Rate is 0	Rate is 0	Market Basket Measure
<i>Food insecurity for all persons</i>	50% reduction	Rate is 0	Rate is 0	Canada Income Survey
<i>Food insecurity for those under 18</i>	Rate is 0	Rate is 0	Rate is 0	Canada Income Survey
<i>Chronic homelessness</i>	Rate is 0	Rate is 0	Rate is 0	2021 Point-in-Time Count

Market Basket Measure

The Market Basket Measure (MBM) is both Prince Edward Island and Canada's official poverty line. The MBM looks at the actual cost of a basket of goods that would be required to live a modest lifestyle. The MBM is calculated for 53 different geographic regions in Canada, including three in Prince Edward Island. Figures for this measurement are typically provided by Statistics Canada two years after the sample is taken.

Market Basket Measure Thresholds for a sample family of four, PEI Regions

Region	2018	2019	2020
PEI, Rural	\$41,520	\$42,284	\$42,745
PEI, Population under 30,000	\$42,283	\$43,056	\$43,517
PEI, Charlottetown & Area	\$43,205	\$44,027	\$44,505

Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0066-01, June 21, 2023

Food Insecurity

The Household Food Security Survey Model (HSFFM) is collected through the Canadian Income Survey (previously collected through the Canadian Community Health Survey). This survey asks 18 questions relating to the amount of food available to parents and children in the home. Based on the answers, persons can be food secure or experiencing marginal, moderate or severe levels of food insecurity.

Chronic Homelessness

The Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is a community-based measurement organized by Infrastructure Canada and various experts as a part of Canada's Reaching Home Program. PiT Counts provide a one-time snapshot of people experiencing homelessness in selected locations, including shelters, unsheltered locations, and transitional housing. In future reports, it is expected the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) will be used to report chronic homelessness data for this report. HIFIS is expected to come online for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Poverty Rates

Percentage of Persons in Low Income in Prince Edward Island 2018, 2019 and 2020, Market Basket Measure

All Persons

Region	2018	2019	2020
PEI	13.4	12.3	7.6
Canada	11.2	10.3	6.4

Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0135-01, May 2, 2023 (Notes: income statistics for 2018 & 2019 are updated to reflect 2021 Census population estimates)

Persons Under 18 Years of Age

Region	2018	2019	2020
PEI	12.5*	14.6*	7.2*
Canada	10.6	9.4	4.7

Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0135-01, May 2, 2023 (Note: income statistics for 2018 & 2019 are updated to reflect 2021 Census population estimates)

*Low sample size, use this data with caution

Percentage of Persons Experiencing Food Insecurity 2018, 2019 and 2020 Canadian Income Survey

All Persons*

Region	2018	2019	2020
PEI	17.3	18.6	16.5
Canada	16.8	15.9	15.7

Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0835-01, May 2, 2023

*Combination of persons reporting marginal, moderate and severe food insecurity

Percentage of Persons Experiencing Food Insecurity 2018, 2019 and 2020, Canadian Income Survey

Persons under 18 Years of Age*

Region	2018	2019	2020
PEI	24.5	25.8	25.4
Canada	22.2	20.0	19.6

Statistics Canada Table 11-10-0835-01, May 2, 2023

*Combination of persons reporting marginal, moderate and severe food insecurity

Homelessness

Results of the 2018 and 2021 Point in Time Surveys		
	2018	2021
Number of people experiencing homelessness (street count, file reviews, surveys)	86	147
Number of Surveys Completed	118	59
Survey Data	2018	2021
Gender	Male – 53% Female – 47%	Male – 57% Female – 41% Two-Spirit – 2%
Age	16-18 – 7% 18-54 – 86% 55+ - 7%	16-18 – 2% 18-54 – 93% 55+ - 5%
Other characteristics	Indigenous – 14% Immigrant or refugee – 1 % Veteran – 6%	Indigenous – 1% Immigrant or refugee – 1% Veteran – 1%
Housing situation	Transitional housing – 49% Emergency shelter – 15% Systems (hospital, jail) – 13% Hidden homeless (couch surfing, staying with friends) – 23%	Transitional housing – 52% Emergency shelter – 18% Systems (hospital, jail) – 13% Hidden homeless (couch surfing, staying with friends) – 17%

Contact Information

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<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/social-development-and-seniors>



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