



Addressing Child Poverty in Cape Breton

PRESENTATION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

November 10, 2020

Addressing Child Poverty in Cape Breton

Poverty is a complex issue requiring collaboration between government and community.

There is poverty reduction work happening across government, with many departments focused on supporting low-income Nova Scotian families and children.

- Nova Scotia Before and After School Program (CCH)
- Community Food Access and Literacy (CCH)
- Building Vibrant Communities Grant (CCH)
- Child Care Subsidy Program (EECD)
- Pre-Primary Program (EECD)
- Provincial Breakfast Program (EECD in partnership with DHW)
- Youth Development Initiative (EECD in partnership with DCS)
- Family Pharmacare Program (DHW)
- Adolescent Outreach Services (DHW)
- Maintenance Enforcement Program (Justice)
- Parent Information Program (Justice)
- Community Grants Program (Justice)
- Cape Breton Partnership (LAE)
- Cape Breton Infrastructure Initiative (LAE)
- First African Nova Scotian Campus Coordinator hired at Cape Breton University (LAE)
- Heating Assistance Rebate Program (SNS)
- HomeWarming (Province of NS with NS Power and Efficiency NS)

Child Poverty In Cape Breton

- ▶ Cape Breton has the highest child poverty rate in the province at 34.9%
- ▶ Vulnerabilities such as being a visible minority, having a disability, age, and living in a lone-parent family increases the risk of a child living in poverty.
- ▶ Most income assistance recipients in Cape Breton are single individuals without children, which is consistent with all other areas of the province.
- ▶ Lone-parent families are far more likely to be attached to income assistance than couple families. This is also consistent with all other areas of the province.
- ▶ Youth as a proportion of new intakes in Cape Breton (ages 19 to 24) have been declining since significant investments were made in prevention programming in 2015/16, though they remain higher than the provincial average.

DCS & Poverty Reduction

DCS is committed to improving the way we serve and support Nova Scotians in need.

- ▶ DCS is focused on:
 - ▶ Expanding and creating new prevention and early interventions to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.
 - ▶ Addressing anti-Black racism within our department and ensuring our supports and services meet the needs of African Nova Scotian communities and clients.
 - ▶ Reshaping the department's culture so that programs and services put clients first.
 - ▶ Achieving better outcomes for clients, through increased independence and social inclusion.
 - ▶ Removing barriers to accessing our services by focusing on client outcomes rather than administrative processes.

DCS Programming Background

DCS has three core programs that provide supports and services to vulnerable Nova Scotians.

- ▶ **Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA):** Provides financial assistance to individuals and families to meet basic and special needs. ESIA also provides preventative and employment-related supports to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and help clients attach to the labour market.
- ▶ **Child Welfare Prevention and Early Intervention (CYFS P&EI):** Serves children, youth and families by supporting their safety, family functioning and well-being and ultimately reducing the need for child protection involvement.
- ▶ **Disability Support Program (DSP):** Serves adults with intellectual disabilities, long-term mental illness, and physical disabilities through a range of community-based, residential, and vocational/day programs; we also offer some support to children and youth and are piloting programs targeting children and youth.

Addressing Child Poverty in Cape Breton

Building Income Security and expanding programs and supports for families is a key focus of DCS


1. Introduced the Standard Household Rate, an annual investment of \$22.3M, the largest increase to the Income Assistance budget in the Province's history
2. Expanded the NSCB. An \$18M annual investment that is the largest in the program's history
3. Exempted the Canada-Nova Scotia Targeted Housing Benefit from Income Assistance
4. Exempted Child Maintenance: Average of \$322/month
5. Introduced a new Wage Exemption structure so clients can keep more of the money they earn
6. Expanded ESIA Youth Preventative Programming to help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty
7. Expanded CYFS Prevention & Early Intervention programs to reduce the need for both child protection and children in care supports.
8. Introduced Poverty Reduction Building Vibrant Community Grants to support community-led anti-poverty initiatives

Cape Breton Programming

There are many government funded programs in Cape Breton that support children and youth at risk

ESIA:

- YDI Projects and Wage Subsidies
- Career Rising – Sydney, and expanded to Glace Bay in 2020
- Inspiring Success – Summer student hires within NS Lands and DCS
- Feed NS Food Box Delivery Program – partnership with New Dawn



"The feeling that I'm looked at with respect and not treated wrong. I never had a bad day when at the program and felt more safe at this program to express my thoughts and feelings."

- YDI March Break Participant 2019

Cape Breton Programming

There are many government funded programs in Cape Breton that support children and youth at risk

Prevention & Early Intervention – Child, Youth & Family Supports:

- Families Plus
- Youth Outreach
- Family Resource
- Parenting Journey
- A Place to Belong

Coming Soon:

- Enhancements and funding increases for Parenting Journey and Family Resource Programming in Cape Breton
- A Community Family Peer Support initiative in Sydney Mines
- Increased investments in Youth Outreach across Cape Breton



Parenting Journey Program Family, Sydney, NS

Cape Breton Programming

Examples from our Poverty Reduction Blueprint work in Cape Breton:

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Building Vibrant Communities Grants:

- Whitney Pier Boys and Girls Club Project Boost
- Cape Breton Regional Library: FoodSmart - Youth food literacy & healthy snack program
- EPIC Workshops: Youth Employability & Youth Wellness
- New Dawn: The Good Food Bus

Poverty Reduction Government Initiatives

- Youth Housing Worker and Trustee: CBRM
- Poverty Reduction for Families with Child Support Orders
- African Nova Scotian Freedom School (as part of the ANS YDI Poverty Reduction ESIA)
- Bridging the Gap: Skills & Employment Attachment for Children Transitioning Out of Care
- CBRM Transit Project (through CCH Transportation)
- Employment Experience for Youth with Disabilities
- Mental Health & Transportation Support for Eskasoni

Poverty Reduction Social Innovation Labs

- African Nova Scotian Youth Employment Lab
- CBRM Transportation Lab



CBC article on the first graduates of the African Nova Scotian Freedom School

Committed to poverty reduction

- Poverty is a multifaceted and complex problem requiring long-term, wrap-around supports
- Poverty cannot be “solved” by any one department—rather, we need to work together, with community, on interventions that interrupt the cycle of poverty and create lasting, long-term change
- Nova Scotia’s poverty rate is slowly declining; we will continue to carefully monitor and evaluate the outcomes of our programs and services to determine which has the greatest impact on tackling our poverty numbers

Thank you.



United Way
Cape Breton

Our Mission

To improve lives and build community
by engaging individuals and mobilizing
collective action in Cape Breton.



**From Poverty to
Possibility**



All That Kids Can Be



Collaborative Projects

Changing Lives. Together. Locally.

EACH YEAR OUR DONORS & COMMUNITY PARTNERS MAKE LIFE
BETTER FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS!

A LOOK @ THE NUMBERS:

17
Partner
Organizations

830,000
\$'s invested

27
Funded
Programs

7,068
Lives impacted

Changing Lives. Together. Locally.

Our programs
help youth
engage in
learning.

Community Investment Fund 2019-20

From Poverty to Possibility

10 programs

2,877 participants



Employment &
Financial Security



Food Security



Housing Stability

All That Kids Can Be

13 programs

3,656 participants



Engagement
In Learning



Connectedness &
Community Involvement



Emotional & Physical
Well Being

FOOD SECURITY



TRANSPORTATION



COMMUNITY CONNECTS



LITERACY



YOUTH COMMUNITY CONNECTS



TOY DRIVE



SUMMER CAMPS

EVERY DOLLAR COUNTS:

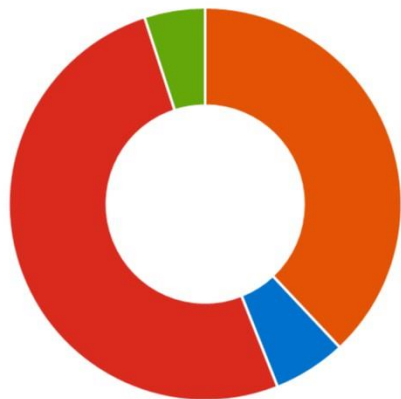
Employee Giving 34%

Corporate Giving 5%

Special Events 46%

Individual Giving 4%

Other: 11%



Together, we are possibility!

Thank you to our Leaders of the Way!

"A good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well and to help those who are doing well to do even better." -Jim Rohn

41

Bronze

\$1,000-\$2,499

26

Silver

\$2,500-\$4,999

14

Gold

\$5,000-\$9,999

11

Platinum

\$10,000+



Together, we are possibility!



United Way
Cape Breton



We are locally focused, connected, united in the work we do, informed, and deeply invested in supporting programs across Cape Breton.

Transition from the Good Food Bus to the Good Food Packs



**Working with
community
groups
&
more!**



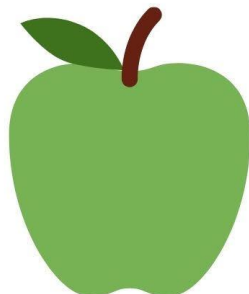
WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

BE AWARE OF THE SUPPORTS ACCESSIBLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

FREE SUPPORT LINE



211 Nova Scotia is a free telephone service that will connect you to individual services in the area such as: housing & shelters, continuing care, financial support and more. You can also visit ns.211.ca to access more information and a live chat. Just pick up the phone and dial 211.



NEW DAWN FOOD HAMPER PROGRAM

New Dawn Enterprises is coordinating a food distribution program where they will assemble food hampers for organizations who serve participants experiencing food insecurity during COVID-19. If interested in more details, contact New Dawn at 902-562-1245.



FREE WIFI + DEVICES

The Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia is making internet available to families who can't afford it during the COVID-19 crisis. You must not already have internet to qualify. If interested, contact our office at 902-562-5226 and leave a message with your name and phone number. We will get back to you as soon as possible to gather some more information. Please note that this is a temporary measure due to COVID-19.

LEARNING TODAY WITH UNITED WAY

Connecting your child virtually to a trusted mentor while they stay safe at home.



KICK BACK +
PLAY A GAME



SPREAD THE
WORD!

CHAT WITH A
NEW FRIEND



GET HELP WITH A TOUGH
SUBJECT + PREPARE FOR THE
NEW SCHOOL YEAR



If interested, send an email to unitedwaycb@gmail.com or leave a message at 902-562-5226.

LOCAL IMPACT

OVER \$600,000
INVESTED TO
STRENGTHEN LOCAL
PROGRAMS



OVER 28,000
INDIVIDUALS
SUPPORTED

REACHING 51
CAPE BRETON
COMMUNITIES



United Way
Cape Breton

**FEDERAL,
PROVINCIAL &
MUNICIPAL
FUNDING
ALONG WITH
CORPORATE
AND
PRIVATE DONATIONS**

Covid

STAY
SAFE!

STAY
The
BLUES
Home!

Justin Trudeau
Tim Hortons

Scott's Food Mart
doctors

Family
Sawyer

Dave Sault
Spencer

underarmen +
Police



Y
Essen
Hoping
Nurses

O
John, Nirav, Lindsay
Lunch bag Program
Nurses
Post Office
Truckers
Workers
Health
Workers

U
Mackdonalds
drive thru.
Chickies
Doritos
Tobacco
Online
Scholarship

Donating Silver



HAND
Sanitizer

WASH YOUR
HANDS!



STAY
SAFE!



Standing Committee on Community Services

Child Poverty in Cape Breton

**Speaking Notes of JoAnna LaTulippe-Rochon, Executive Director, Cape Breton's Family Place Resource Centre
November 10, 2020**

Good Morning. And thank you for the opportunity to speak today, bringing you a perspective on child poverty in Cape Breton. Family Place works with approximately 3,573 individuals per year from all across Cape Breton Island. Our programs and services are focused on reaching the Island's most vulnerable families.

There are so many things that could and should be said when opportunities like this come forward. After a few quick statistics that are most likely familiar to you, I decided to share some of the impact of poverty – to paint the pictures, if you will, of what child poverty means today for those we work with and are aware of in Cape Breton.

We know that children do not yet earn income. They live in poverty because their parents/caregivers are struggling to survive given the harsh realities of living in low income circumstances. Statistically, the latest figures from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives tells us that we have 36.6% of children living in poverty within the federal riding of Sydney-Victoria while 26.9% of children are living impoverished lives within the Cape Breton-Canso riding. From a disturbing low of 17.2% in Cheticamp, to a decimating high of 73.2% in Eskasoni, too many children are doing without the very basics that others may take for granted as we live, work, and play on our Island. Nova Scotia has the third highest provincial child poverty rate in Canada and the highest rate in Atlantic Canada.

Perhaps we allow the situation to continue because we are not familiar with what the impact of poverty is on our young families. Diving into the heart of the matter is somewhat heart-breaking and certainly uncomfortable. It is my belief that until we each understand the face of poverty in very real terms, we may not be inspired to do the difficult work necessary to eradicate its existence. Here is just a sample of what we oftentimes see in our work:

1. We are working with a rural dad whose children were removed from the care of their mother while he was incarcerated. He is trying to get his home ready for his children to return as he recognized the need for appropriate furnishings and such. He is attempting to live on a single person's Income Assistance. He is often hungry when he arrives at Family Place to attend programs. We know that what we are serving as "snack" represents a meal for him. He has made significant progress and the ongoing plan for Child Welfare is to return the children to his care. So, he is very focused and wants to be sure that his house is equipped with the necessities so that Child Welfare workers will have no "reason" not to return the children to his care. To get what he needs for the children he has been going without basic necessities himself. This is the only way he has found to access funds to slowly get the items he needs.
2. Some of our participants who do not own a vehicle, do not drive, and cannot afford cab fare report that they feel "forced to perform sexual acts" to "pay" for their transportation for necessities – trips to the grocery stores, medical appointments for their children, and so forth. When living in rural communities, transportation issues are very limiting and not easily resolved.
3. Families often deal with rodent issues. It got so bad for one family that the rats ate food that was put out to be prepared for her family's meal. When we covered the cost and sent an exterminator to the home (given that the landlord refused to do so), the exterminator reported that it was the worst he had ever seen - there were "several generations" of rats in the house. Her child gets so depressed about the state of their living arrangements, she has a difficult time going to school. Her mental health is worsened by the difficult living conditions such that she left home to move in with a neighbour. Her mother is devastated feeling unable to provide for her children.

4. Jane is a mother of three, living separate from her partner and children. She has access visits with their middle child. She is challenged to try and understand the difficult physical and emotional road her youngest child, along with other transgender people have to travel to become the person they always knew they were. Jane suffers with mental health issues which leave her unable to consistently maintain or, at times, leave her small apartment. At times when her mental health spirals out of control, she is unable to maintain the required contact with other service providers. This results in reduced services and benefits being accessible to her. The family often experience food insecurity. The loss of internet and lack of telephone access exasperates this situation. She is experiencing much by way of parental stress, strife and confusion in a situation that increases her level of mental unwellness.
5. Denise is a grandmother providing primary care for her grandchildren in an urban community. A number of her granddaughters are still in school. One has identified special needs. Denise is on a fixed income, separated from a partner and living in a small rental unit. She does not always have access to transportation. The provision of school supplies and clothing for growing boys and girls are huge challenges. Through program experiences with Denise, we learn that she often goes without food in the effort to try and make more available for her family. Denise came to be the primary caregiver of her grandchildren after a family separation related to addiction issues.
6. Joseph is the father and primary caregiver to his two young children. Occasionally he finds himself also parenting another child that needs support. Addictions played a significant role in the break-up of their relationship and continues to have an effect on their children's lives. Joseph works full-time for minimum wage. His wages do not meet the needs of his family. He is dependent on the financial help of his aging parents – support they can little afford to give. Food insecurity, inconsistent access to reliable transportation, cost of educational and recreational opportunities are just some of the poverty-related challenges Joseph faces as he puts forward his best efforts to support his family.

I was invited here to speak specifically to the Cape Breton experience but in no way want to diminish the experiences of children and their families from all across Nova Scotia. While this is a problem that is perhaps heightened in Cape Breton, it isn't one that stops at the Canso Causeway. How many more children will be left behind before we make it our collective priority to end child poverty?

A living wage; food security; accessible, affordable, appropriate housing; quality child care; access to Internet; telephones; and public transit; focused supports for our Indigenous communities...places to begin and/or continue our efforts if we really are focused on doing right by our youngest citizens.