

A fresh start

## NB Works restores self-esteem and productivity

**E**mpowerment is the buzz word of the 90s. It's a strong word that conjures up visions of hope. If New Brunswick could use only a single word to describe its demonstration project for getting people off welfare permanently, it would have to be "empowerment".

*NB Works* is stirring up a system of social programs that has unwittingly had an effect on the independence and dignity of New Brunswickers and other Canadians.

Announced in May 1992, *NB Works* is an experiment in cross-level, interdepartmental government co-operation. The demonstration project requires two federal and two provincial departments to work together, leaving no cracks through which programs, participants can fall.

The federal departments of Health and Welfare Canada and Employment and Immigration Canada are working with the New Brunswick departments of Income Assistance and Advanced Education and Labor. *NB Works* relies on a creative mingling of programs and funding to produce a three-year plan for each person who agrees to participate.

### A CHANCE OF A LIFETIME

"I started dancing in my kitchen when I got the call that I'd been accepted into *NB Works*," recalls Gloria Shipp. She and the other 1,000 women and men who made up the first entrance group of *NB Works* had to make to a serious decision when their caseworkers asked if they were interested in the program.

In the first phase of the three-year commitment, participants stopped receiving income assistance. They immediately went into a 20-week plan that, if they stuck to it, would qualify them to receive unemployment insurance benefits plus additional training allowances. With that financial support, they went back into the classroom to begin academic upgrading and, eventually, training in a career of their choice. The training continues over three years, mixed with work experiences in the field.

"We asked them to make a long-term commitment," says Karen Mann, executive director of operations, Department of Income Assistance. "It was a big adjustment. Some had been on social assistance for years and had never held a job. Others were used to working short-term. We

were asking them to sign up for three years!"

Shipp remembers the mental wrestling match she had with herself over going off social assistance and into a three-year program. On assistance, she knew where she was at. Going back to



*NB Works helps New Brunswickers gain independence and dignity*

school and work meant big changes in her life.

"I told myself it was going to be a struggle in every way. But," she calculated, "at the end of that three years, I would be self-sufficient. I would be able to do what I want with my life because I would have the training I need."

For Shipp and others in the first *NB Works* class, going back to school has been a "family affair."

### WORKING TOWARDS A CAREER

Wayne McGivney quit school in Grade 9, 25 years ago. Without a trade, he's never been able to find a job with a future and has had to rely on income assistance, off and on. He left social assistance to get into *NB Works*. "Everybody I told that I was going back to school said it was really good and they were proud of me," McGivney says. He's become a studious role model for his son and daughter upon whom he depends for help with difficult math and algebra homework.

His 20-week work experience was with the Department of Natural Resources and Energy.

McGivney thrived on building bridges, working with wildlife and fighting fires. Now, he knows what he wants to do and he's working toward a career in forestry through *NB Works*.

There are nearly 80,000 people on income assistance in New

Brunswick. Early estimates show at least 15,000 could be eligible for *NB Works*.

The first wave of *NB Works* clients are now in the classroom phase of the program for academic upgrading. For some, this means starting at the elementary school level where they left off many years ago. Others are in the junior or senior high level. Everyone works at their own, comfortable pace towards their high school diploma.

Of the original 1,000 who started in the job phase last May, about 700 remain. That, says Mann, is better than anyone hoped. And, those who've stayed appear committed to see it through the three years.

The ultimate goal of *NB Works* is to prepare these women and men for the job market - to give them the confidence, employee savvy and the specific training to pursue a career - to empower them!

The program was up and running in head-spinning time last May. It was announced on May 8, 1992, and by May 24, administrators had a thousand people

out working for their 20 weeks. There was no time to be selective about job placement.

This winter, administrators will be fine-tuning *NB Works*. The first group of clients will be going into work "internship" situations geared to their chosen areas of interest for training. The second 1,000 will start their 20-week job phase in the spring.

The final 1,000 clients in the *NB Works* pilot project will come on stream in May 1994. Over the six-year period, the two levels of government will spend \$177.1 million. After that, it's projected that the former income assistance clients who've completed their training will become self-sufficient members of society.

"It's a big program to administer," Mann says. "These are uncharted waters. Over its six-year pilot period, *NB Works* will reach out to about 3,000 income assistance clients, involve hundreds of employers and keep the wheels of administration turning at high speed. It's an ambitious and aggressive program.

"We get calls regularly from media outlets, other governments and departments across Canada," Mann explains. "They are looking at *NB Works* to see if this is going to be a model that might be adopted for changes to income support as we know it in this country."

Gloria Shipp is more personal in her assessment. "On income assistance, I worried all the time. I wondered if this was the way my life was always going to be" she said. "Now I have a goal. *NB Works* has given me the chance to become self-sufficient - to control my life. It's given me back my self-esteem."

## More hot jobs

If occupations described in the Top 10 don't turn you on, take a look at the occupations listed below. While they are not forecast to grow as quickly as the Top 10, they will provide a large number of job opportunities over the next 10 years. Employment in these occupational groups is high (see employment for 1992) and therefore, although they will grow very slowly, most will contribute new jobs to the labor market. In addition, there is expected to be a lot of attrition (retirements and so on) in these occupations and this will provide job opportunities. Attrition will account for most of the opportunities in all these groups, except graduate non-supervisory nurses, child care workers, EDP equipment operators and systems analysts.

Occupational Group	Employment in 1992	Total openings 1992-2001
Graduate Non-Supervisory Nurses	7,536	4,546
Bookkeepers	9,427	4,200
Child Care Workers	5,593	3,735
Cashiers & Tellers	8,658	3,333
Chefs & Cooks	5,472	2,694
Secretaries & Stenographers	8,076	2,628
Janitors	5,582	2,160
Receptionists	2,556	2,057
General Managers	2,463	1,961
EDP Equipment Operators	3,454	1,816
Truck Drivers	7,591	1,601
Carpenters	4,430	1,403
Guards & Security	2,663	1,323
Systems Analysts	1,901	1,303
Nursing Attendants	2,743	1,187
General Office Clerks	3,239	1,060
Financial Officers	3,892	1,029
Nursing Assistants	1,739	971
Food & Beverage Serving	4,527	942
Industrial Mechanics	2,766	930