

Discussion Paper on

# SOCIAL POLICY

BUILDING TOMORROW TOGETHER

New  Nouveau  
**Brunswick**

Social Policy Renewal Secretariat

*“This Government has set out to govern in a new and inclusive way. It will act with urgency and determination to make things better for our people, to remain focused on its concern for the less fortunate and to build on the immense pride which New Brunswickers feel for their province’s culture, identity and hopes for the future. As we approach the new millenium, New Brunswick will be characterized as a more caring, fair and prosperous society.”*

Honourable Camille Thériault,  
Premier of New Brunswick



*“The journey we are embarking on in fundamentally re-examining our social programs is probably the most important initiative we, as a society, have encountered in the last 30 years. We need to start planning now for the kinds of social programs and services we are going to need to meet the requirements of a changing society”.*

Minister Bernard Richard,  
Chairperson  
Special Cabinet Committee  
on Social Policy Renewal



## MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL POLICY RENEWAL ROUNDTABLE

Fernand Arsenault	Randy Dickinson	Reg MacDonald	Stéphane Robichaud
Rina Arseneault	Harry Doyle	Wade MacLauchlan	Pat Rogers
Beverly Barnes	Jean-Guy Finn	Betty MacWilliam	Brian Saunders
Jane Barry	Patrick Flanagan	Ed McGrath	Harry Sock
Edmond Blanchard	Gerald Flannagan	Bev McIntyre	Anne C. Soucie
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Jean-Claude Cormier	Anthony Knight	Christine Nassrallah	Jack Travis
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Carolle de Ste. Croix	Jeannette Leclerc	Léo-Paul Pinet	Doug Willms
Alex Dedham	Raymond Léger	Lorraine Pollock	Cathy Wright
Pierre-Marcel Desjardins	Betty Ann Levesque	Bernard Richard	
Gene Devereux	James Lockyer	Sue Rickards	



## “WHY SHOULD I TAKE PART IN RENEWING NEW BRUNSWICK’S SOCIAL POLICY?”

Many of us asked this question when we were invited last fall to take part in a series of roundtables to produce a discussion paper about future directions and underlying values for New Brunswick’s social policy. The aim was to start a dialogue that would involve all New Brunswickers.

Remarkably, perhaps, we did not get stuck at that question. Instead, from our very first session, at Fred’s Restaurant in Cap Pelé, there was a special energy in our group. And a sense of trust. On reflection, I realize — as facilitator of the roundtable process — that this energy and sense of common purpose developed so quickly for three reasons:

- Our group was diverse, representing a wide range of experience and perspectives; I think we were all impressed that so many others saw the importance of renewing social policy.
- This is a unique opportunity to influence the future direction of New Brunswick.
- We all realize that we are at a rare juncture in social policy: demographics are changing; finances are being regarded in a fresh light; needs in such important areas as education and health may be changing; it is, very simply, timely to engage in this process.

From our earliest discussions, we realized the wide range of issues included in “social policy.” Among the fundamental points, we recognized the place of youth in our new society, the particular issues faced by our aboriginal communities and the challenges many of us encounter from time to time must be central to New Brunswick’s social policy.

We count on other New Brunswickers to share our energy and sense of common purpose as you take part in this renewal process. Through community dialogues, direct input, or particular local or organizational initiatives, New Brunswick will develop the best possible reflection of the province and what can be done imaginatively in the area of social policy. What is our collective vision? What should be the underlying values? What strategic directions and goals should be set for social policy in New Brunswick?

We challenge you to ensure that this social policy renewal process includes your views.

Wade MacLauchlan  
Facilitator  
Social Policy Renewal Roundtable

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

1. By completing the attached Personal Workbook and forwarding it to:  
Social Policy Renewal Secretariat  
P.O. Box 6000  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
2. By calling our toll-free number: 1-800-636-1177, and leaving us a private message on your views and perspectives. You may also complete the Personal Workbook on-line through our Web Site at <http://www.gov.nb.ca/spr> or fax it to us at 506-453-2266
3. By sending an E-mail to [spr@gov.nb.ca](mailto:spr@gov.nb.ca) directly, or through the Social Policy Renewal Web Site at <http://www.gov.nb.ca/spr>
4. By participating in one of the community dialogues to be held in the following locations:
  - Bathurst
  - Bouctouche
  - Campbellton
  - Caraquet
  - Dalhousie
  - Doaktown
  - Edmundston
  - Fredericton
  - Grand Falls
  - Grand Manan Island
  - Minto
  - Miramichi
  - Moncton
  - Riverside/Albert
  - Sackville
  - Saint John
  - Shediac
  - Shippagan
  - St. Quentin/Kedgwick
  - St. Stephen
  - Sussex
  - Tracadie
  - Woodstock

These sessions will begin in March 1999 and the dates for your community will be widely advertised.

5. By submitting a brief directly to the Social Policy Renewal Secretariat.
6. By writing a letter to the Chairperson of the Special Cabinet Committee on Social Policy Renewal, the Honourable Bernard Richard, P.O. Box 6000, Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1.
7. Please contact us by May 3, 1999.

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## SOCIAL POLICY RENEWAL – IT TAKES ALL OF US

Every society has certain values and beliefs about how people should treat one another. These values and beliefs become a society's Social Policy.

Social policy affects every single one of us. So, as many New Brunswickers as possible need to be involved in reshaping it to match the vision for New Brunswick. We want to encourage your involvement in the current Social Policy Renewal Process. And this document is an important step in the process.

Government began the initiative by establishing a Special Cabinet Committee on Social Policy Renewal and appointing a Social Policy Renewal Roundtable. The Roundtable is made up of people from all walks of life and all geographical areas of the province. It includes men and women, anglophones and francophones, and aboriginal people. The Roundtable has been meeting since the Fall of 1998, with each member contributing to the development of each part of the following paper.

Members of the Special Cabinet Committee on Social Policy Renewal and the Roundtable hope this paper will serve to promote productive discussion of social policy. Over the next few months, we want to get as much feedback as possible – through public meetings, local Roundtables, on our toll-free line, by mail and E-mail.

The government of New Brunswick is committed to listening to your views and taking them into consideration. The result of this process will be a renewed Social Policy Framework, which will guide government in its decision-making.

*Social policy is...  
about what we all can do  
to make New Brunswick  
a better place to live, work  
and raise our families.*

### **Social policy includes such areas:**

- Health (Mental, Physical and Emotional)
- Education and Training
- Justice
- Policing
- Public Safety
- Income Assistance
- Child Protection
- Child Care
- Early Childhood Initiatives
- Services for Seniors
- Services for Persons with Disabilities
- Human Rights
- Employment Standards
- Housing
- Environmental Protection
- Employment
- Workplace Rights and Safety
- Employment Insurance\*
- Child Tax Benefit\*
- Old Age Pensions\*

*\* Though most of the responsibility for social policy lies with provincial governments, the federal government also administers a number of important social programs.*

### Some key demographic factors that will have an impact on programs and program delivery

- By 2010, the number of deaths will likely outnumber births.
- In 1996, 27% of New Brunswickers were under 20 years of age. By 2010, only 20% will be. (Our aboriginal youth population is significantly higher — in 1996, 42% of aboriginal New Brunswickers were under 20 years of age.)
- By 2001, the majority of the working age (20-64) population will be over 40 years of age.
- Our proportion of seniors is growing and life expectancy is increasing.
- 51% of New Brunswickers live in rural areas (as compared to 22% nationally). But, about 80% of us live within 50 kilometres of one of the seven cities.

## WHY REVIEW SOCIAL POLICY NOW?

New Brunswick's last major social policy overhaul took place a quarter of century ago with the Equal Opportunity Program. Since then, our society has changed in all kinds of ways, our expectations are different and so are many of the challenges we face. In the past few years, as well, the New Brunswick government and others across Canada have had to focus on deficit reduction and managing with reduced federal contributions in such areas as health and education. Today, while we must continue to be fiscally responsible, our social policy needs to reflect the changes we have undergone.

Among the social changes we are seeing are the aging of our population, the steady slowing of our population growth almost to zero, the majority of mothers of young families working outside the home, and the traditional pattern of a career or a job for life becoming the exception, not the rule. In addition, our aboriginal population is growing and more and more people are living off-reserve. These changes can all have a profound impact on the kinds of social programs we will need and the ability we have to deliver them.

We are also seeing changes in attitudes. For example, most people accept the importance of intervening to help preschool children who are facing difficulties. These interventions, it has been proven, can reduce future costs or avoid current costs to society for health, education, income assistance and justice.

In addition to changes to society and to the kinds of programs we may want, new information technologies are altering, in fundamental ways, policy-making, program design and service delivery. Over the last few years, government has started to use new technologies to improve the way services are delivered, as well as to reduce costs. With fewer resources, services have been more and more targeted towards those in greatest need. Government has redesigned a number of the fundamental social programs so that people have to take more personal responsibility. It has also increasingly recognized that integrating programs and services of different departments will make them work better. This integration will also help prevent those in need from falling through the cracks.

Finally, it has become increasingly clear that building a just and caring society in New Brunswick means developing partnerships among the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. It means involving the public in the redesign of social policy. It means all of us discussing our responsibilities as individuals, families, communities and government.

## THE SOCIAL POLICY RENEWAL PROCESS SO FAR

In the work the Special Cabinet Committee and the Roundtable have carried out so far, a number of themes have emerged, including the need to:

1. Achieve a better balance between social policy and economic policy.
2. Address, in our social policy, the impact social issues have on each other.
3. Understand that social policy is a collaborative effort. Building a better New Brunswick takes all of us working together. Government policy needs to help individuals and communities be stronger and healthier. Individuals and communities need to contribute to the enhancement of our society.

Government's traditional approach has been to design specific programs to address specific issues. The challenge now is to integrate policies across sectors, to design initiatives that "connect the dots." This includes:

- Seeing and understanding how each social policy area affects other areas.
- Developing social policy in a way that looks at its overall impact, rather than its effect in just one area.
- Integrating social and economic policies;

*Social policy does not work alone. Social well-being is closely linked to economic well-being.*

*When our social needs are met, we are better able to participate and contribute economically.*

*When our financial needs are met, we are better able to contribute to the social needs of others and ourselves.*

*Similarly, if a province's social programs are not adequate, the economy is affected because fewer people can contribute and a greater number of people depend on the province for support.*

### Some of the concerns expressed by people...

- Healthcare — the possibility of a two-tiered system where people get the level of service they pay for, rather than equal quality service for everyone; the possibility of declines in the standard of service as the cost of the system increases...
- Education — older schools; fewer students; more pressure on the education system to provide a vast array of life and career skills; more pressure on our schools to fix many of society's problems...
- Employment — high level of unemployment; underemployment of many as the nature of jobs is changing (i.e. part-time work, self-employed, home-based, multiple-jobs, shift work, etc.); downward trend in the average annual income of New Brunswick families...
- Social supports (social assistance, welfare, subsidized housing, etc.) — not adequate to meet the needs of those who are struggling to meet the basic needs of their families; little help for the working poor...
- Poverty — the increasing depth of poverty as shown by increasing demands on various social support systems; the ongoing challenge of child poverty...
- Social services in general — appropriate service not always delivered at the right time; not always very well coordinated...



*Building a better  
New Brunswick takes  
all of us working together.*

**What do you think  
of the vision?**

**Are these the  
values and beliefs  
you stand for?**

- Using technology to help government departments and other agencies work together better to serve New Brunswickers (for example, making various departmental databases compatible with automatic information sharing and updating).

Such challenges are not only being considered provincially. As a country, we have embarked on “Social Union” discussions which may alter the way governments work together.

The Special Cabinet Committee and the Roundtable have expressed their work to date in terms of a vision and a list of values, beliefs, principles and directions that we urge you to comment on.

## VISION

**“We believe New Brunswick is a place of opportunity. We want a just and caring society where all citizens are valued and have the opportunity and the means to fulfill their potential. We want a society where we celebrate our differences and we all feel responsible for each other’s well-being.”**

## VALUES AND BELIEFS

The shared values and beliefs that underlie this vision are of a society that:

- Believes in the worth, dignity and value of all people.
- Believes in citizens’ basic needs being met.
- Believes in people having the opportunity to achieve their potential.
- Believes in all New Brunswickers being able to live and work without fear for their personal safety.
- Believes in individuals, families and communities contributing to the collective well-being, to the best of their ability.
- Believes in living within our means and not mortgaging the future of subsequent generations.
- Believes in preserving the environment as a legacy for future generations.

## PRINCIPLES

We, as citizens, also expect that we and our government will adopt certain principles or rules that will govern how we reshape our social programs. In order for social policy to contribute to achieving the vision, there must be:

- **Access** to a range of services which meet citizens' needs.
- **Accountability** for results.
- **Affordability** and sustainability.
- **Flexibility** to address differences.
- **Harmonization** of programs.
- **Ongoing citizen participation**.
- **Partnerships** among individuals, families, labour, business, social organizations, communities and governments to ensure New Brunswickers have the best social system possible.
- **Protection** of vulnerable groups within society (including children, youth and seniors).
- **Respect** for people's dignity and for individual and collective rights in the delivery of programs.
- Individual and collective **responsibility** for health, education and social security.

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

**Achieving the vision takes a long term strategic plan; it can't be done overnight. It will take concerted action. In this section of the document, we set out what we see as the directions, the building blocks of this strategy.**

### Building Block #1

#### *Build on individual strengths*

Our aim is a just and caring society where everyone has the opportunity to participate and contribute. Building that kind of society means encouraging people to develop their strengths, and realizing that any one of us may sometimes need help and support. In recent years, that support has been getting less and less; this needs to change in a renewed social policy.

#### **Goals:**

- Ensuring people have enough resources to meet their basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, health, education, safety).

? **Are these the principles we want?**

? **How can they be improved?**

The following are adapted from comments the Special Cabinet Committee and the Roundtable have heard from New Brunswickers in all kinds of situations about different aspects of social policy.

*"I am 63 years old and never learned to read. I enrolled in a literacy program last year and now I am reading stories to my grandchildren."*

*"I want to pursue my studies at Community College. I applied for and got a student loan. It covers my educational costs but I don't have enough left over to live on."*

*"They've cut off my power twice this year. Don't they know that the only way I can give my kids two meals a day is to let my power bill go ... what am I to do?"*

? **What does this mean to you?**

*“I used to have a good-paying job in the forestry sector. But then came the machines. I am 50 years old, never finished high school and out of a job.”*

**What does this mean to you?**

*“My grandfather has lived alone in his house for the last ten years since my grandmother passed away. The family has also moved away from the village to find jobs. Now his health is getting worse. His eyesight is going and he has difficulty getting the daily chores done. None of us is close enough to help him. He won’t ask for help from any community groups or government because he’s afraid they’ll take his small life savings away.”*

**What does this mean to you?**

*“We are going through a divorce and the children are havng a hard time coping with it. Everybody is angry. Everybody is upset. Nobody is talking. We need help but we can’t get any family counselling.”*

- Helping people of all ages and capacities to take part in education, training and other opportunities.
- Aggressively pursuing sustainable employment opportunities for New Brunswickers.
- Matching the skills and abilities of people with employment opportunities.
- Encouraging and assisting people to take responsibility.

**Building Block #2**

***Build on family strengths***

Most of us live in families. And no matter how traditional or non-traditional our families may be, they need to be strong and healthy if we, and particularly our children, are to grow and prosper. But today, we find more and more families under stress, including the challenge of supporting and caring for both children and elderly parents. While society expects families to be the main financial providers, caregivers and emotional supporters, a renewed social policy must find ways to help families and reduce this stress.

**Goals:**

- Promoting the value of families within society.
- Helping children by helping families as a whole.
- Supporting families (particularly single parent and working families) faced with caregiving responsibilities.

**Building Block #3**

***Build on community strengths***

Just as most of us live in families, so most of us belong to communities. Strong communities are essential to a just and caring society. In strong communities, people can connect, learn to rely on each other and help each other. But, communities have different capacities and capabilities. A renewed social policy should encourage the development of strong communities.

**Goals:**

- Helping communities to come together to discuss issues of common concern.
- Aiding communities in responding to local social issues.
- Valuing the role played by community groups and organizations and supporting them in fulfilling their role.
- Encouraging and supporting volunteerism.

## Building Block #4

### *Build on government and community partnership*

Improving the partnership between government and community should be an objective of a renewed social policy. During the past decade, government faced a number of difficult decisions as it focused on improving the province's economic health. As a result, some responsibilities were handed over to communities and community groups. Sometimes this was done without the necessary support being provided, leaving communities and volunteers struggling. Providing better services will mean establishing a better partnership.

#### Goals:

- Establishing sustainable, trust-based partnerships between government and communities.
- Providing for ongoing citizen and community involvement in social policy development, design and delivery.
- Encouraging cultural and ethnic sensitivity in the establishment of partnerships.
- Incorporating measurable results into all social policy programs and services.

## Building Block #5

### *Build on an integrated approach*

A renewed social policy should see service agencies at the federal, provincial and community levels working effectively together. This has not always been the case. Sometimes, there have also been disconnections between the policy and the delivery branches of a department or agency. To build on the strengths of individuals, families and communities, federal and provincial government departments will have to work together. We will need to share information, harmonize our policies and ensure that our programs are designed and delivered with the citizen in mind.

#### Goals:

- Developing a quality "customer service" approach within government service agencies.
- Adopting a citizen-centred focus.
- Establishing good working relationships with the community and among service agencies.
- Sharing information among government departments, provincial agencies, community organizations and service

### ? What does this mean to you?

*"I see young kids of all ages hanging down on Main Street at all hours of the evening. Why doesn't somebody do something about that."*

*"My child is sick. I can't afford to work any more because my company doesn't have health insurance. If I go on social assistance, I'll be able to get the prescription drugs she needs."*

*"Our kids are spending more and more time in front of the television and less time playing outdoors. Will they grow up to be less healthy?"*

### ? What does this mean to you?

*"All I need from government is a little bit of help and then I'll be able to fend for myself. I've been told that unless I'm in a crisis, I can't get any help at all."*

*“It seems that my service group is being asked to do more and more because government has less money. Our last fundraiser was a bust. We only have half of the volunteers we did five years ago.”*

### What does this mean to you?

*“I keep being bumped from one government department to another. Who’s responsible?”*

*“Every time I go into a government office, they make me tell my story all over again. Don’t government workers ever talk to each other.”*

agencies and with the public effectively and promptly.

- Ensuring services are delivered by the most appropriate level (i.e. federal government, provincial government, municipal government, community).

## Building Block #6

### ***Build on prevention***

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” When it comes to social policy, that old cliché couldn’t be more true. If we do not pay enough attention to prevention, we pay a high cost, with more young people dropping out of school, more cases of suicide, and more people depending on public income support programs. Social policy needs to stress prevention, both for the general population and specific, at-risk groups. Investing in our people today should lower future costs. It should also make us more able to take advantage of opportunities.

#### **Goals:**

- Committing to investments in prevention.
- Making sure social policy programs and services help improve the overall health of society.
- Allowing for flexibility in social policy programs and services so that people can get the right service at the right time.
- Intervening early with at-risk children to maximize their opportunity to develop and learn.
- Developing preventative programs to decrease the incidence of family violence, child abuse, injury, preventable disease, developmental delay and disability, and to improve public safety.
- Recognizing the unique challenges of the aboriginal communities and promoting partnerships between all levels of government to address these issues.

## THE NEXT STEP

Social Policy Renewal is a journey we are all taking. We trust that New Brunswickers will use this opportunity to build on the vision, values, principles and directions presented in this paper, to consider how these elements can be translated into programs and other actions.

In addition to our efforts to renew social policy within the Province of New Brunswick, we need to consider how we can work cooperatively with the Government of Canada and other provinces to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each level of government in the area of social policy. We also need to establish ways to resolve disputes.

Your feedback will help to form the new Social Policy Framework, a framework for a dramatically new approach to social policy. On the following pages you'll find a personal workbook to help you contribute to the process. It includes some questions we would like to hear answers on; it also includes plenty of space for you to address other questions and issues you are concerned about.

## MY PERSONAL WORKBOOK

### THE VISION

**“We believe New Brunswick is a place of opportunity. We want a just and caring society where all citizens are valued and have the opportunity and the means to fulfill their potential. We want a society where we celebrate our differences and we all feel responsible for each other’s well-being.”**

The following questions are meant to get you started. You probably have others you would like to comment on. Please give us your input and take part in New Brunswick’s Social Policy Renewal. (And don’t be limited by the space here. Add more pages if you need them.) You can give us your responses by telephone, mail, E-mail (at the addresses below), fax or in person at the upcoming public sessions.

Social Policy Renewal Secretariat  
P.O. Box 6000  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1

Toll-free: 1-800-636-1177

Fax: 506-453-2266

E-mail: [spr@gov.nb.ca](mailto:spr@gov.nb.ca)

Web Site: <http://www.gov.nb.ca/spr>

*Thank you for your participaton.*

**PART A:**

**1** What can be done to make life better for you and your family?

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**PART B:**

**Tell us more**

**2** What do you think of the vision statement for New Brunswick? Is there anything missing? How can it be improved to better reflect the future you want for New Brunswick? *(For example, the vision includes phrases like “a place of opportunity” and “a just and caring society”. Are there other key words or phrases that come to mind for you?)*

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**3** How will we know if we have achieved our vision of a just and caring society? *(For example, for some this may mean that people with physical disabilities have access to all public facilities. For others, it might mean that we have safe schools and neighborhoods. What would be the markers of success for you?)*

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**PART C:**

The next six questions ask your opinions about the six Building Blocks. One way to answer these questions is to return to pages 11 through 14 and delete goals you feel are not of high priority and to place an asterisk (\*) beside the goal that is the highest priority for each block. We would also like you to write your comments in the margin. Alongside those of other New Brunswick citizens we have met with.

**6** What role should the individual play in contributing to the vision proposed in the paper? Is this reflected well enough in *Building Block 1 – Build on individual strengths*? How would you improve the block and goals?

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**7** What role should the family play in contributing to the vision? Is this reflected well enough in *Building Block 2 – Build on family strengths*? How would you improve the block and goals?

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**8** What role should the community play in contributing to the vision? Is this reflected well enough in *Building Block 3 – Build on community strengths*? How would you improve the block and goals?

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**20** **9**

What role should government play in contributing to the vision? *Building Block 4 – Build on government and community partnership?* How would you improve the block and goals?

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**10** What do you think about *Building Block 5 – Build on an integrated approach?* How would you improve the block and goals?

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**11** What do you think about *Building Block 6 – Build on prevention?* How would you improve the block and goals?

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**12** How will we know we are meeting the directions and goals in the Building Blocks? How can we measure our level of success?

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**13** Are there any issues or concerns that have not been identified that you would like to see addressed?

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Please help us to analyse the input we are receiving from various sources by filling in the following information.

- a) Sex:  male  female
- b) Age:  under 15  15 – 24  25 – 34  35 – 44  45 – 54  55 – 64  65+
- c) Number of children less than 15 years of age: \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Postal code: \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Currently working:  yes  no
- f) Total family income:  under \$10,000  \$30,000 to \$39,999  
 \$10,000 to \$14,999  \$40,000 to \$49,999  
 \$15,000 to \$19,999  \$50,000 to \$59,999  
 \$20,000 to \$24,999  \$60,000 to \$69,999  
 \$25,000 to \$29,999  \$70,000 and over

**PLEASE RESPOND BY MAY 3, 1999.**

