The Social Assistance Program provides people with funding for basic necessities such as food, shelter, and clothing, when they are unable to provide for these needs themselves.

In 2012, more than 9,000 Islanders received social assistance at some point during the year. Approximately 4% of the Island's population receives social assistance each month.

Recognizing the difficulty faced by vulnerable Islanders in meeting their basic needs, the Social Assistance Program saw a $2 million increase in the latest provincial budget.

Since 2007, Social Assistance Program funding has increased by $4.7 million, or 16%. This included increases in rates for shelter (11%), food (10%) and community care (33%).

Government has implemented several other measures to improve Social Assistance benefits, and to assist clients who wish to move into the workforce:

- Approximately 10% of clients are engaged in either full or part time employment. Staff resources are being realigned to better assist clients to enter the labor market.

- Through annual investments of $750,000, the provincial government ended the National Child Benefit clawback, which provided for 800 families to keep this income in addition to their Social Assistance benefits.

- Government recognizes the need for additional resources to help clients move into the workforce, and as such, it exempted the Working Income Tax Benefit from eligibility calculations.

- Annually, $100,000 is invested in literacy training for Social Assistance clients, ensuring access to Adult Basic Education at Holland College locations across the province.

- To help families plan long-term for a family member with a disability, the Registered Disability Savings Program is now exempt from eligibility calculations up to the after tax low income cut off threshold.

- Government is working to improve programs so that Islanders in need of short-term assistance are not required to exhaust their savings to be eligible for assistance.