



# Business Plan

2020–21

*Department of Community Services*



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Budget 2020–21: Business Plan  
Finance and Treasury Board  
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## Message from the Minister

At the Department of Community Services, we believe all Nova Scotians want to provide for themselves and their families, contribute to their communities, be free from violence and lead fulfilling lives. We work collaboratively across government and with community partners to help people achieve independence and self-reliance.

This year, we are undertaking several key initiatives which will have a significant impact in helping our clients reach their full potential.

Safe and healthy children, youth, and families are key to building a stronger province.

The emotional, social, and physical development of young children has a direct effect on their overall development and on the adult they will become. The investment in the Nova Scotia Child Benefit announced in this year's budget will increase the income threshold of those eligible to receive the benefit and will increase the amount families receive. This will help more families and more children reach their fullest potential and is the most significant change to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit since its inception.

Prevention and early intervention are key to helping families at risk. We are working to ensure that families can be supported before they are in crisis. An increased investment in prevention will allow for support to be provided early, before family breakdown occurs. It is my hope that this investment will, in some cases, eliminate the need for child welfare involvement.

The Department of Community Services is changing how we support Nova Scotians with disabilities. We're focused on creating conditions where clients can be included in their community, have control over their own lives, and be able to meet their basic needs. The number of clients moving to community-based independent living arrangements will increase. We will work with participants and families to ensure they have choice as Nova Scotia transitions away from a program model that is reliant on large residential institutions.

The Status of Women office works with communities and across government to advance equality for all women in Nova Scotia. In 2020-2021, we will continue to work with community organizations and government departments to invest in learning and innovation, and partner on projects that aim to disrupt harmful cycles of domestic violence and prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

As Minister, I am pleased to present this 2020-2021 Business Plan for Community Services, which highlights the initiatives that will help lift the most vulnerable Nova Scotians. Please take a few moments to learn more about this work.

In closing, I offer my thanks to the staff of Community Services and the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and all our service delivery partners. The compassion, commitment, and enthusiasm shown by our employees and partners is fundamental to our overall success in helping our province's most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you.

Honorable Kelly Regan, Minister of Community Services

## Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Community Services (DCS) is to provide effective supports and assistance for people in need so they can live their best lives. The services provided by the department form Nova Scotia's social safety net and play a significant role in contributing to better futures for Nova Scotians.

Working in partnership with other social services departments, DCS provides foundational programs and services that respond to the most basic and fundamental needs of individuals, children, youth and families. Through its programs and services, DCS works with Nova Scotians during their most vulnerable moments and supports them in taking steps toward independence, financial security, and inclusion within their communities.

## Vision

Social and economic well-being for all Nova Scotians.

## Mission

The Department of Community Services is committed to a sustainable social service system that promotes the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve. This will be achieved through excellence in service delivery, leadership and collaboration with our partners.

The Department of Community Services (DCS) supports the most vulnerable people in the province through programs and services that will continue to adapt to meet the changing needs of Nova Scotians. DCS measures the impact of these programs and services against ten core outcomes focused on the client and the social services system.

Client-focused outcomes are:

- Clients have control over their own lives;
- Clients can meet their basic needs;
- Clients are safe from abuse and violence;
- Clients are included in the community; and,
- Clients are attached to the labour market.

System-focused outcomes are:

- Supports and services are affordable and sustainable;
- Supports and services are delivered efficiently;
- System of supports and services is a balanced mix of prevention and intervention;
- Supports and services are accessible; and,
- DCS staff and delivery partners are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives.

The department's strategic change agenda is driven by the need to continuously raise the bar on these outcomes. All core programs and services are united by these outcomes—forming key themes.

DCS has implemented an Outcomes Management Framework to measure its progress against the achievement of targets for each of these outcomes. The framework is an evidence-based accountability tool that will improve the way the department measures its performance.

## Strategic Priorities in 2020-21

In 2020-21, the department will continue to implement strategic changes to its programs and services in alignment with government's priorities. These key initiatives will focus on priority themes aligned with key departmental outcomes.

### [Clients will be supported to have more control over their own lives](#)

DCS will support its clients to increase their independence, so they can meaningfully make their own decisions and pursue their own interests.

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- In partnership with service providers, DCS will pilot a Person-Directed Planning Service in the Disability Support Program (DSP). This service will help participants identify and work toward their own life ambitions.
- In partnership with the Departments of Health and Wellness (DHW) and Municipal Affairs and Housing, DCS will pilot a program model to enable young adults with physical disabilities and nursing support needs to live independently in community.
- DCS will continue work on modernizing the province's adoption legislation.

### Clients will be better able to meet their basic needs

DCS will continue to help clients better meet their basic needs through increased financial and non-financial supports.

- Today, the department administers the Nova Scotia Child Benefit (NSCB), a non-taxable monthly payment provided to low-income families to assist with the cost of raising children under age 18. In 2020-21, DCS will significantly increase the monthly financial benefits paid to low income families and children. DCS will expand the reach of the program to impact close to 30,000 families and almost 50,000 children and youth across the province.
- In 2020-21, more than 6,000 new families will be eligible for the Low-Income Pharmacare for Children program. These families will be better able to meet the needs of their children without incurring financial hardship.

### Clients will be safe, and supported through increased prevention and early intervention

DCS will work toward ensuring clients are not only safe from abuse and violence but provided with preventative programming and early intervention.

- DCS will expand and enhance preventive, family-based programming across Nova Scotia to respond to the needs of children, youth and families who are at increased risk of child protection involvement. Key areas of focus will include family preservation, parenting education, family violence prevention, cultural relevance, and specialized training and professional development for staff supporting children, youth and families. Enhanced programming will represent a fundamental shift from a crisis-driven child welfare system.
- DCS will continue to expand and diversify placement options for children and youth in care. In 2020-21, the department will work with new and existing service providers to expand on specialized placement options for children in care.

### Clients will be more included in their communities

Clients will be included in their communities so that they have opportunities to participate in employment, volunteer work, and cultural, recreational, and social events.

- Working with DSP participants and families, DCS will continue to transition adults with disabilities to more independent, community-based living. This will be done as the province begins to phase out large residential program facilities for persons with disabilities.
- Working with participants and families, DSP will move participants into community-based living across the province, and will also expand community-based supports and independent living options.
- We will also further enhance our disability support day programming for adults, young people, and clients with high medical needs.

### The department will work to strengthen relationships with African Nova Scotian communities

DCS will continue its focus to engage meaningfully with African Nova Scotian communities across the province, while also working to better address the unique needs of African Nova Scotian children, youth and families.

- In partnership with community, we will continue work on initiatives to address systemic racism and discrimination. These initiatives include youth outreach and community programs that focus on sexual violence prevention and a focus on culturally appropriate programming across the department.
- In fall 2019, Morning Cafes were held in two African Nova Scotian communities in Halifax and Dartmouth. These cafes showcased programs and services offered by the department and encouraged feedback from African Nova Scotian community members. This community engagement forum provided an opportunity for departmental staff to strengthen relationships with the communities. In 2020-2021, DCS will expand the Morning Café community engagement approach across the province in partnership with African Nova Scotian communities.
- In September 2019, government's *Count Us In: Nova Scotia's Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent* was launched. This action plan is aimed at developing positive relationships and expanding initiatives between government and communities. In 2020-2021, the department will continue to focus on the delivery of the action plan.

### More clients will be attached to the labour market

For those who can work, opportunities for employment can mean independence, self-sufficiency, and economic and social security.

- DCS will expand and evaluate education and employment support services for at-risk youth across the province. Working with community and service providers, DCS will tailor its programming to meet the diverse needs of today's youth.
- DCS will expand and design new, tailored employment support services to better meet the changing needs of adult Nova Scotians receiving income assistance. In doing so, the department will reimagine the way client-centered case management is delivered.

### Programs and services will be delivered more efficiently

DCS will work toward delivering programs and services to Nova Scotians with more efficient and effective use of departmental resources.

- DCS will implement a new, evidence-based assessment methodology for adults with disabilities. This new assessment methodology will lead to a more equitable and efficient delivery of services in the Disability Support Program.
- DCS will launch a new, client-focused online service delivery channel. Online services will be designed with input from clients and will focus on creating a more accessible, client-centered, positive experience.
- DCS will begin work on a specialized allegation protocol policy and supporting process. The new process will help ensure investigation of allegations against foster parents are fair, expedient, and objective, while still serving the best interests of children and youth in care.

## Collaboration & Partnerships

The nature of the department's mandate makes collaboration and partnerships essential. Some examples of those partnerships are illustrated below:

### Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children Restorative Inquiry

The Restorative Inquiry has offered a different way forward in Nova Scotia to ensure the lessons from the Nova Scotia Home for Colored Children make a difference for young people, families and communities. Government and community partners are committed to continuing to work together on the path forward outlined by the Restorative Inquiry.

Throughout 2020-21, DCS will work with its partners to take a human-centered approach to our work and ensure we value and respects the wisdom of communities and families.

### Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services and Indigenous Services Canada

DCS will continue to collaborate with its First Nations partners and the federal government to ensure its legislation, regulations, and policies are culturally informed, accountable, and aligned with work happening in Nova Scotia.

### Poverty Reduction in Nova Scotia

The Department of Community Services and the Office of Strategy Management (OSM) are co-leading a whole-of-government approach to reducing poverty in Nova Scotia. Together with partner departments, work is underway to test innovative projects, examine practices in other jurisdictions, and develop capacity in communities across the province.

As noted earlier, in 2020-2021, the department will implement significant changes to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit (NSCB)--a non-taxable monthly payment provided to low-income families to assist with the cost of raising children under the age of 18. This year, the monthly financial benefits paid to low income families and children will increase. DCS will expand the reach of the program, impacting close to 30,000 families and almost 50,000 children and youth across the province. This is the most significant change to the NSCB since its inception.

Poverty reduction work will continue to be guided by four objectives:

- Prevent the cycle of intergenerational poverty by strengthening supports for children and families;
- Build vibrant communities by supporting collaborative ideas that build community capacity;
- Alleviate poverty by connecting with Nova Scotians experiencing poverty to ensure they are accessing available supports; and,
- Enable Nova Scotians to reach their potential.

## Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

### Overview and Mandate

The mandate of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (Status of Women) is to bring issues affecting the lives of women and girls in Nova Scotia to the forefront of government. Status of Women is composed of citizen leaders who reflect the diversity of women across Nova Scotia.

Status of Women provides research, policy advice, and information services in pursuit of equality for all women in Nova Scotia. To advance this mandate, the Status of Women office works collaboratively with government departments, agencies, academia, community groups, and women-serving organizations.

### Strategic Priorities in 2020-21

To advance a vision of a gender equal Nova Scotia, the Status of Women's current priorities are:

- Ensuring that women and their children are safe from gender-based violence;
- Strengthening women's economic security; and,
- Encouraging women's participation in leadership.

In 2020-21, Status of Women will advance several key initiatives including:

#### *Standing Together: A Provincial Action Plan to Prevent Domestic Violence*

Status of Women is leading the implementation of *Standing Together: A Provincial Action Plan to Prevent Domestic Violence*. In 2020-21, Status of Women will continue to work with community organizations and departments to support innovation, learning, and research that will guide the development of a provincial plan to break harmful cycles of domestic violence and to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

Status of Women will also work with its counterparts in the Atlantic provinces to steward the establishment of the Atlantic Domestic Homicide Review Network. Through data-driven policy analysis, this network will recommend systemic improvements to further prevent domestic violence in Atlantic Canada.

#### *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

Status of Women leads work with communities, other provincial departments, and the federal government to address and respond to complex challenges related to violence against Indigenous women and girls and to strengthen economic and social prosperity of Indigenous women. In 2020-21, Status of Women will continue to collaborate with Mi'kmaw, provincial, territorial, and federal partners to meet the challenges ahead.

## Financial Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	2019-20 Estimate	2019-2020 Forecast	2020-21 Estimate
Senior Management	949	1,032	974
Policy and Innovation	9,985	10,461	10,947
Corporate Services Unit	4,055	4,275	4,112
Service Delivery	93,452	100,518	94,358
Strategic Services	12,874	14,073	11,927
Disability Support Program	369,070	386,183	389,509
Child, Youth and Family Support Program	96,240	116,023	105,329
Employment Services and Income Assistance Program	349,011	347,283	372,228
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women	12,268	12,342	12,818
Total - Departmental Expenses	947,904	992,190	1,002,202
Ordinary Recoveries	15,732	16,891	15,786
Funded Staff (# of FTEs) Department Funded Staff	1,550.2	1,613.4	1,533.7

Note:

For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2.

For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1