



Business Plan

2023-24

Community Services

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Department of Community Services

2023-24 Priority Actions in Support of Government's Business Plan

Government's vision for a healthy, economically strong Province cannot be realized without its continued commitment to support the most vulnerable Nova Scotians. The work of the Department intersects with all government priority areas, including solutions for healthcare, the economy, and our future.

The Department's key program areas and the Status of Women Office are supported by the Service Delivery division in 38 offices across the province to ensure that principles of anti-racism, prevention and early intervention and client-centredness are embedded in all programs, policies, and services. Specific priorities for 2023/24 are as follows:

Child Poverty

The Minister's mandate includes a commitment to work across departments to develop a 5-year approach to reduce child poverty. Implementation of key initiatives will include an increase to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit (NSCB), further investments in prevention and early intervention programming, employment and education supports for youth and supports for children leaving care.

Child and Family Well-being

The Department continues to build a more comprehensive child welfare prevention and early intervention system through community-based programs. Increasing emphasis on prevention and early intervention will reduce the need for more costly and intrusive services from Community Services, Education and Early Childhood Development, Addictions and Mental Health, Health and Wellness and Justice. This shift will commit to reflective social work practice, placing the child and family at the centre of all decision making.

The Department will continue initiatives to implement the redesign of the foster care system, including recruitment and retention of diverse foster families, expansion of foster care placement types, and improvements to peer support and respite for foster families through the Mockingbird Family Model – a network to support, develop, and retain foster caregivers. The Department has a long-term goal to increase the number of foster families to 1000.

The Department has a legislative requirement to review the *Children and Family Services Act* every four years to ensure practices and policies are meeting the needs of vulnerable Nova Scotian children and youth. The next review will commence in 2023/24, with a public report for release in March 2025.

Progress will be measured by multi-year metrics such as numbers of children in care, foster parents, and Alternate Family Care placements, and reporting from prevention and early intervention programs, including qualitative data about families' experience with the Department.

Disability Support Program (DSP)

DSP is working with program participants, families, communities, service providers, and other stakeholders to build the best services possible for Nova Scotians with disabilities. Key initiatives include our commitment to close larger residential facilities and to continue to explore innovative supports and services for adults, youth, and children with disabilities that keep individuals at the

centre of decision-making about their lives. DSP will also implement a new Disability Support Program for Children and Youth to shift the focus to prevention and early intervention programming.

In response to the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal's finding of systemic discrimination against persons with disabilities by the Province of Nova Scotia, the two parties (Province of Nova Scotia and the Disability Rights Coalition) are working collaboratively to develop a jointly endorsed submission to the Human Rights Commission. Recommendations will inform metrics used to measure the progress of DSP's achievement of its strategic goals.

Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)

System, programming, and policy changes will continue to ensure supports to clients are equitable, anti-racist, and client-focused. Recommendations will be implemented to address the needs of African Nova Scotian clients, work will continue on a client case management approach, and we will continue to focus initiatives on increasing participation in employment-related opportunities. To address intergenerational poverty, the Department is committed to enhancing prevention and early intervention supports for youth, including post-secondary education, community and mentorship connections, career planning, and work experience. Performance targets include increased participation in employment support services, less time on Income Assistance, and improved supports to African Nova Scotian clients.

As part of its mandate, the Department is implementing the province's first Supportive Housing Action Plan to provide a strategic approach to developing new supportive housing across the province and a shift towards preventative-based interventions and supports. This Action Plan will reduce homelessness and pressures on healthcare, social services, and the justice system. In partnership with community organizations and government departments such as Municipal Affairs and Housing, Department of Health and Wellness, and the Office of Addictions and Mental Health, a continuum of supports from emergency shelter and eviction prevention to permanent housing with wraparound supports will continue to be implemented. Progress will be measured by metrics such as homelessness data, reductions in healthcare pressures related to homelessness, supportive housing numbers, and impacts on other sectors.

Status of Women

The Status of Women Office continues to support initiatives to keep women and their children safe from gender-based violence, including *Standing Together to Prevent Domestic Violence – Nova Scotia's Action Plan*. Collaboration across all levels of government and the community will continue to inform the province's coordinated strategy to prevent human trafficking and sexual exploitation, with a specific focus on supporting African Nova Scotian and Indigenous women and girls. Work will also continue to coordinate collaborative efforts with the Mi'kmaq and other provincial departments regarding *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. The Status of Women Office encourages women's economic security and opportunities for leadership and will continue to lead initiatives that encourage women to join careers in science, technology, the trades, and public office.

Financial Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
	2022 -2023 Estimate	2022-2023 Forecast	2023-2024 Estimate
<u>Programs and Services</u>			
Senior Management	921	1,062	921
Strategic Policy & Decision Support	8,459	9,022	9,148
Corporate Services Unit	3,919	4,066	4,374
Inclusion, Diversity & Community Relations	337	414	394
Service Delivery	100,180	101,374	104,479
Strategic Operations & Innovation	13,437	14,769	13,206
Disability Support Program	500,852	521,691	543,423
Child & Family Wellbeing	131,218	150,359	161,318
Employment Support & Income Assistance	444,089	438,913	444,416
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women	14,240	22,232	18,234
Total - Departmental Expenses	1,217,652	1,263,902	1,299,913
Ordinary Recoveries	16,286	14,826	19,472
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	1,610.3	1,613.0	1,613.5
<u>Note:</u>			
For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2			
For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1			

