

Healthy Kids

Investing in the health of our children

Improving the health of Nova Scotia's children is a responsibility shared among parents, communities, government and schools. In 2005–2006, the Province of Nova Scotia is doing its part by investing in initiatives aimed at helping kids get in shape and stay in shape.

Many of the new investments will be directed towards children where they spend much of their time—at school. The Office of Health Promotion and the Department of Education are working to ensure more physical activity opportunities and healthy eating options at school.

Developing healthy eating programs

A total of \$595,000 in grants will benefit schools so they can develop or start a healthy eating plan. Funds will be used for things like beverage selection, menu planning, pricing and training for staff and volunteers involved in school food and nutrition.

A \$360,000 investment will place public health nutritionists in each district health authority. The nutritionists will support the implementation of the Healthy Eating Nova Scotia strategy, released in March 2005, and will provide support to schools in their region to develop and start healthy eating programs.

There is an undeniable link between students' academic performance and their overall health and well-being. A \$750,000 breakfast program will see elementary school students province-wide have a healthy breakfast to ensure that every child gets a good start to the school day.

Developing healthy and active learners

Through its new plan for education, *Learning for Life: Brighter Futures Together*, the Department of Education will focus on developing healthy and active learners. Recognizing the role schools play in supporting healthy, active lifestyles, the department will invest \$1.7 million in programming and resources to better support students. Initiatives include new physical education programming and more physical education teachers, a resource for every school board to support schools in implementing health and physical education programs, health education resources for parents and students and more professional development for teachers.

Increasing physical activity

Through a partnership with the federal government, a \$1-million investment over three years will see a sport animator hired for each school board who will bridge the gap between schools and communities to increase participation in sport, physical activity and recreation.

The Active Kids, Healthy Kids research conducted in 2001 will be repeated this year to track the changes in level and frequency of physical activity among children and youth in grades 3, 7 and 11. The new research will also look into healthy eating habits. With an investment of \$352,000, six physical education teachers will be seconded to collect the information, and researchers will compile and interpret the data. Armed with this information, we can track our progress to date and better plan policies and programs to help young Nova Scotians become healthier.

More than \$2 million is invested annually in facilities that promote sport and physical recreation. This year, an additional \$150,000 will be dedicated to supporting school playgrounds so children can play and be physically active with safe equipment. An additional \$90,000 will buy new physical education equipment for schools. A total of \$9.5 million is being invested in the Office of Health Promotion in 2005–2006 to increase physical activity opportunities for all Nova Scotians.

A healthy living tax credit will be introduced for children effective July 1, 2005. Families will receive an allowable tax credit on up to \$150 for each child who is registered in a qualifying sport, municipal or public program.

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Finance

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