

Supporting Seniors

Affordable living and healthy aging

The Province of Nova Scotia is committed to helping seniors live more independent and fulfilling lives by providing support to help many make ends meet, increasing activity opportunities and encouraging participation and healthy lifestyle choices.

Many programs and services offered by the Departments of Health, Community Services and Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, as well as the Senior Citizens' Secretariat in 2005–2006 are focused on contributing to a more positive aging experience in Nova Scotia.

Providing support when and where needed

In 2005–2006, the province will freeze Pharmacare premiums to ensure they remain affordable for seniors. This year, the province will make an additional investment of \$16.9 million to cover increases in the cost of the program, bringing the total annual investment in Pharmacare to nearly \$120 million.

With an investment of \$500,000, the Department of Health will work with partners to pilot the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated stroke program that includes stroke prevention, emergency and acute care and rehabilitation. As well, the government will continue to engage stakeholders in ongoing system planning related to the prevention of and improving outcomes of people with heart disease and stroke.

The department will invest \$750,000 to increase the range of home care services. An alternative level of care will allow seniors to remain at home longer and will defer or prevent admission to long-term care facilities and hospitals. Also, \$500,000 has been allotted for a new Self-Managed Care Program for seniors and people with disabilities; this will provide some relief to home care, long-term care and acute care services. This program represents an alternative option to home care services and allows individuals to take a more active role in managing their care needs.

To better meet the needs of individuals who require short-term rehabilitative care, the department will invest \$1.65 million to establish 50 new restorative beds. Introduction of these new beds will help to increase access to the appropriate type of care patients need while an assessment of the province's continuing care and alternative levels of care services is completed.

An investment of \$383,000 has been provided to the South West Nova District Health Authority for holistic palliative care services and support. The program is congruent with the work of the Provincial Hospice Palliative Care Project and includes the addition of a coordinator, as well as designated time from professionals in a variety of disciplines who are part of an interdisciplinary palliative care team.

Encouraging positive aging

The Senior Citizens' Secretariat will spend \$979,000—an increase of \$207,000 over last year—to continue its work in elder abuse prevention, encouraging healthy active living for seniors, strengthening peer support and volunteer networks, informing seniors about the programs and services that are available to them, and developing seniors' literacy and learning programs. The secretariat will also continue the work of preparing Nova Scotia for an aging population through the Task Force on Aging.

The province will continue to support the Preventing Falls Together program through Community Links, again providing \$100,000 in 2005–2006 to develop community-based services, supports, education and assistance to reduce falls among seniors.

In addition, the Office of Health Promotion will continue to provide physical activity enhancement grants to community groups for seniors programs, as well as hosting the Nova Scotia 55+ Games; and the Physical Activity Strategy will be broadened to include seniors.

Assisting with safe, affordable and accessible transportation

The province's commitment to helping rural Nova Scotians who need safe, affordable and accessible transportation will be enhanced by this fiscal year. Funding to Community Transportation Assistance Programs will increase by \$153,000, to \$550,000. The per capita contribution will increase from \$1.41 to \$1.60 to help with fuel, maintenance and insurance for vehicles participating in the province's Dial-A-Ride program. In addition, the program's capital component, which is used to assist in the purchase of accessible vehicles, will double to \$20,000 per vehicle from the current \$10,000 level.

Helping to make ends meet

The province is also continuing several programs in 2005–2006 that will help more low-income seniors live more safely and comfortably in their own homes.

The CAP Assessment Program, which helps protect Nova Scotia property owners from dramatic increases in market value assessment by limiting or "capping" the amount of annual assessment increases, will continue in 2005–2006. The Property Tax Rebate program assists low-income seniors by providing a rebate of up to \$400 per year on their property taxes.

The province will continue to provide funding for home repair grants, giving many seniors and other low-income Nova Scotians up to \$5,000 to make repairs, including furnace replacements.

In the fiscal year 2005–2006, the Department of Community Services will continue to provide grants for home adaptations and increased accessibility, as well as financial assistance to qualifying families who create parent apartments within or attached to their homes.

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