

UPDATE

Our Kids Are Worth It

Our Second Year

Strategy for Children and Youth



Our Second Year

In 2005, the Province of Nova Scotia established the Nunn Commission to conduct a public inquiry, prepare a report, and make recommendations relating to the tragic death of Theresa McEvoy. Broader social issues were also of interest to the inquiry.

All 34 recommendations of the Nunn Commission were accepted, including three specific to the development and implementation of a Child and Youth Strategy.

Launched in 2007, the Child and Youth Strategy is now in its second year. It focuses on coordinating resources to fill service gaps between five key government departments: Health, Community Services, Justice, Education, and Health Promotion and Protection.

The Child and Youth Strategy sets out a comprehensive plan and vision to ensure children and youth are healthy, safe, nurtured, and responsible – and given the right opportunities to be the best they can be. It is not just about more programs and services, but about improved access and coordination of existing services into more sustainable and effective supports for children, youth, and families.

The Child and Youth Social Policy Committee, with representatives from the five key government departments, meets regularly and shares responsibility for implementing the Strategy. We use this multi-partnered approach to ensure accountability and foster collaboration across departments, committees and other groups.

In 2009, the Child and Youth Strategy moved beyond the development and implementation of pilot programs and is now focused on strategy and planning for the future. This year, the Strategy's focus has been to:

- Establish a shared governance model to enhance collaborative practices and that recognizes all levels of ownership for coordinated activities.
- Evaluate and integrate feedback gleaned from pilot projects initiated through the Strategy.
- Develop a plan outlining areas of focus for the Strategy in keeping with government's commitments to improving life for families, job creation, education, sustainable healthcare, social prosperity, economic growth and living within our means.

It is not just about more programs and services, but about improved access and coordination of existing services into more sustainable and effective supports for children, youth, and families.

Child and Youth Strategy

New Governance Structure

Our Kids Are Worth It, Nova Scotia's Child and Youth Strategy, is central to providing children and their families a foundation on which to build a healthy, happy life. *Weaving the Threads: A Lasting Social Fabric*, Nova Scotia's social prosperity framework, outlines how social prosperity, economic prosperity, and environmental sustainability must work together. The Child and Youth Strategy is one of the strategies feeding into this overall framework.

To foster further collaboration among the key departments and other partners, this year the Strategy developed and implemented a new governance model. The new model will allow for ongoing interaction and integration of ideas, issues and initiatives.

Figure 1 shows how the Strategy was structured. **Figure 2** shows the governance model now in place. It is an approach that connects and involves the five key departments, as well as other stakeholders. It also allows for continuous feedback so that we can assess progress and make changes as we move forward.

Collaboration is not unique to the Child and Youth Strategy. We also recognize and value the collaboration that exists at the community level. Much of this work pre-dates the Strategy and happens both formally and informally amongst service providers, volunteers, community groups and stakeholder networks. In short, much is being done in the provision of services for children, youth and families. The Child and Youth Strategy will continue to work with these individuals and groups and support their efforts wherever possible.

An important goal of the Strategy is to strengthen and support feedback at the local level. We have established four Regional Leadership Tables, bringing together senior administrators from the five government departments. These groups will identify regional opportunities for greater collaboration and share them with other departments and groups including the Child and Youth Social Policy Committee.

Figure 1: Old Governance Model

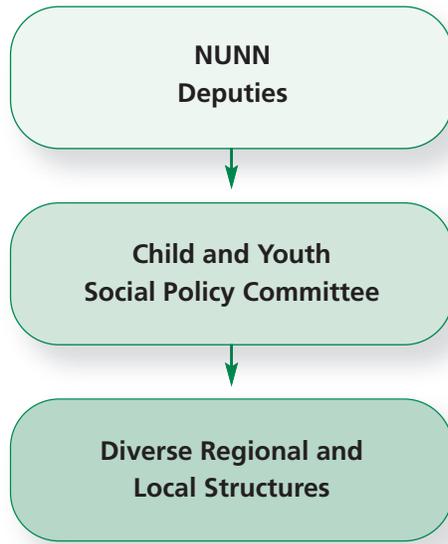
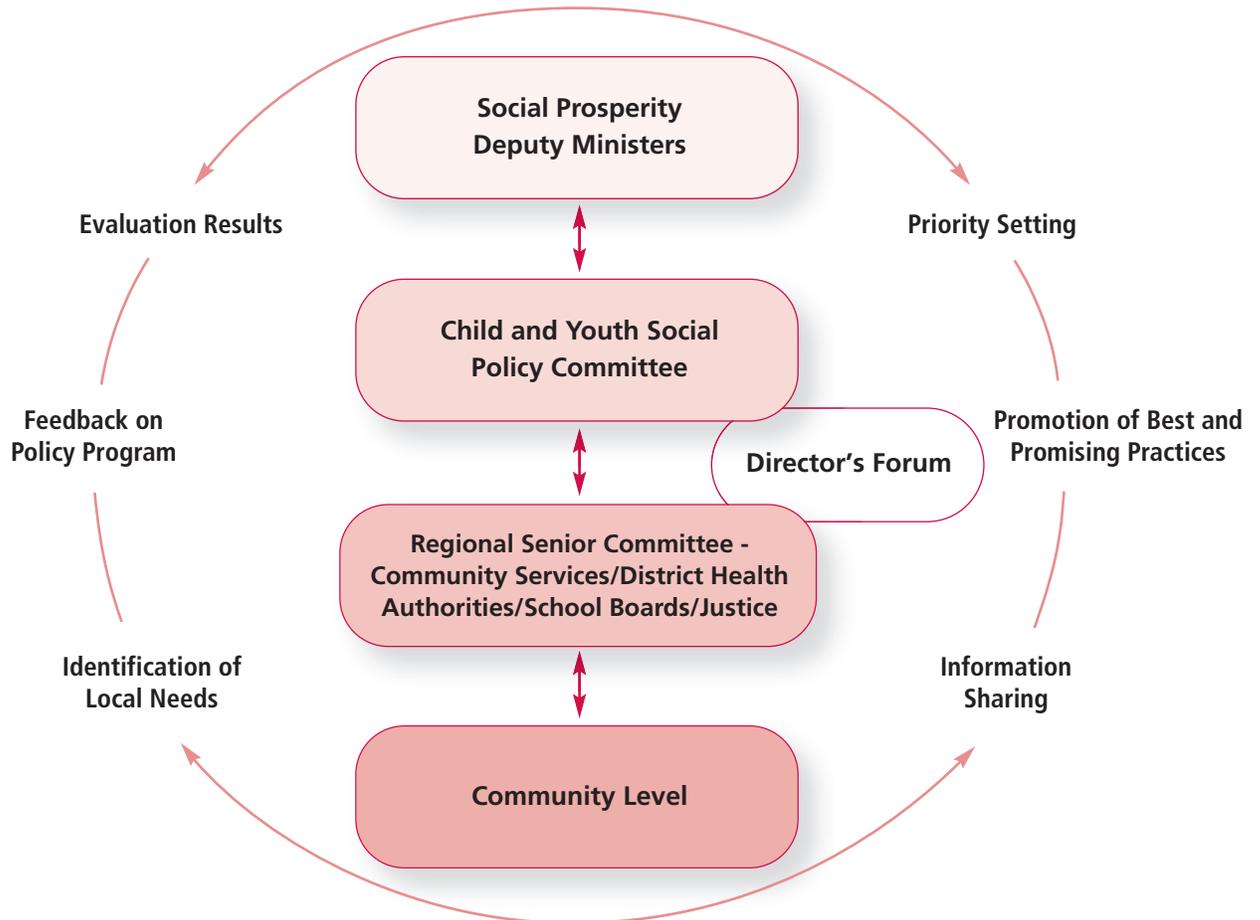


Figure 2: New Governance Model



Evaluate and Integrate

In *Our Kids Are Worth It: Our First Year*, we committed to evaluating pilot projects—to support decisions on where, when, how, and even if, these should be continued or expanded.

Evaluations have been completed for the following pilots:

- Parenting Journey
- Family Health Expansion
- A Place to Belong

The reviews demonstrate the value the projects had for children, youth and families. Thus, a recommendation has been made for adoption of these pilots as ongoing programs.

One of our pilots (WRAP Services), will not continue, but the collaborative practices will be adopted into ongoing work.

Evaluation of the remaining pilots initiated in the Strategy's first year are underway and will be reported on in the near future.

Year 2 Pilots (2009)

Eight additional projects were launched in year two:

- Family Support Navigation and Intervention Project
- Child and Youth Behavioural Consultant
- Supporting Youth in Transition
- Multi-Agency Service Delivery Model (Building Bridges of Support)
- International Child Assault Prevention Project
- Roots of Empathy (Enhancement)
- After Hours Response Project
- Feed Nova Scotia Helpline

A commitment has been made to evaluate all new projects. Results will be shared as they become available.

Why Evaluate?

Our Kids Are Worth It: Our First Year highlighted the need for rigorous and continued evaluation. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation will enable us to have current, accurate information on which to base decisions and to target our resources, efforts and investments.

The Child and Youth Strategy has engaged the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation (NSHRF) to assist with this. The Foundation developed a Logic Model that includes the activities, target population, outputs, and intermediate and long-term outcomes for the Strategy. Those long-term outcomes include the following:

- fewer children living in low-income families
- higher percentage of youth getting appropriate level of physical activity
- improved rates of school readiness
- lower drop-out rate
- more youth volunteering
- fewer youth involved in crime
- reduced wait times for appropriate mental health services
- reduced rates of youth homelessness

We are now in the process of developing an evaluation framework in consultation with the five departments and the NSHRF to measure our progress in these eight outcomes. This framework will allow for a consistent and timely approach to evaluation and reporting.

As Commissioner Nunn reported: “With a rapidly changing society with its corresponding needs, it seems to me that a periodic audit of ... services and activities would be valuable as a means to evaluate whether any particular activity is necessary, desirable, or worth its costs. Quite possibly this could produce savings, financial or staff, that could be applied to family services.”

We couldn’t agree more. The Child and Youth Strategy emphasizes the importance of evaluation before moving forward too quickly. Too much is at stake to rush ahead without carefully assessing what we are doing now and testing new approaches and programs before rolling them out province-wide.

Real and lasting change takes time. The full impact of our efforts will only be seen as our youngest children grow and develop.

“With a rapidly changing society with its corresponding needs, it seems to me that a periodic audit of ... services and activities would be valuable as a means to evaluate whether any particular activity is necessary, desirable, or worth its costs. Quite possibly this could produce savings, financial or staff, that could be applied to family services.”

— Commissioner Nunn

Future Work

How do we know if the Child and Youth Strategy is making a measurable difference in the lives of Nova Scotians? We need to be able to compare progress year-over-year, based on a key set of measures, and present our findings. The Strategy has made a commitment to report on the progress of the Strategy annually. Further, we will prepare a more detailed report as the data becomes available.

All work of the Strategy is shaped by five key directions:

- Building a strong foundation
- Identifying problems and helping early
- Co-ordinating programs and services
- Improving access and closing gaps
- Engaging youth and promoting shared accountability

These directions will help us to achieve our vision: “Children and youth are healthy, safe, nurtured, and responsible — and given the right opportunities to be the best they can be.”

We have listened to what communities and youth have to say, and we are working to follow through constructively on the dialogue. For example, we have restructured the Regional Tables and provided a mechanism for youth input and insight into the Strategy through another successful Leaders of Today Summit.

This is in keeping with Article 12 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*¹(UNCRC) which stresses the importance and relevance of youth voice and engagement.

The Child and Youth Strategy also hosts an annual Lunch and Learn Series targeted at provincial civil servants interested in learning more about how to engage with young people around the programs, policies and services they provide to youth. Last year’s evaluations of this series indicated attendees were very interested in hearing directly from youth more often. In response, three of the four upcoming sessions for 2009-2010 will feature youth as presenters.

1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, available online at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

We will also:

- Continue to track, evaluate and make decisions about all new pilots to determine what to incorporate into ongoing programming.
- Continue to use a governance model recognizing all levels of ownership to ensure coordinated activity and to enhance collaborative practices.
- Endorse and champion a provincial Well Child System that will create a comprehensive continuum of supports for children, enabling them to reach their full potential, and build confidence in families.
- Conduct an inter-departmental youth services review to ensure the best use of resources and the most efficient delivery of services to children, youth and their families
- Support projects that engage communities in local issues to identify gaps, strengths and priorities, and demonstrate the value of community in the Strategy

To view a listing of Programs and Services for Children, Youth, and Families, please visit the Department of Community Services website at:

<http://gov.ns.ca/coms/families/ChildandYouthStrategy.html>

For additional information, please contact:

Child and Youth Strategy
Department of Community Services
PO Box 696 Halifax
Nova Scotia B3J 2T7

E-mail: chilyouthstrat@gov.ns.ca

Phone: 1-877-424-1177

Online: <http://gov.ns.ca/coms/families/ChildandYouthStrategy.html>

Related Frameworks, Strategies, and Action Plans

Framework, Strategy, Action Plan	Description	Lead and Partner Departments	Status
Active Kids, Healthy Kids	Intended to increase the number of children and youth who accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate or higher-intensity physical activity on a daily basis. Regular activity improves self-esteem, increases relaxation, and enhances healthy growth and development. http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/pasr/akhk-intro.asp	Health Promotion and Protection Education	Under way
Alcohol Strategy	Incorporates the vision of broad cultural change, where Nova Scotia is a society in which individuals, families, and neighbourhoods support responsibility and risk reduction in the use of alcohol. www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/addictionprevention.html	Health Promotion and Protection	Under way
BLAC Report on Education	Improves educational and training opportunities for African Nova Scotians, raising educational attainment.	Education	Under way
Crime Prevention/ Crime Reduction Strategy	Intended to prevent and reduce crime by working in partnerships with communities and individuals. http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/prevention/community_counts.asp	Justice	Developed
Drug Strategy	Promotes the health and well being of individuals, families and communities across Nova Scotia by preventing illicit drug use, treating and reducing harms associated with such drug use and undertaking enforcement initiatives to reduce the supply of illicit drugs.	Justice Health Promotion and Protection	Being developed
Early Learning and Child Care Plan	Intended to (a) ensure that all children enjoy a good start in life, nurtured and supported by caring families and communities and (b) lay the foundation for a flexible, equitable child-care system. www.gov.ns.ca/coms/families/elcc.html	Community Services	Under way
Framework for Action Against Family Violence	Initiated to improve the response of the justice system to incidents of spousal/intimate partner violence. www.gov.ns.ca/just/publications/docs/russell/summary.htm	Justice	Under way
Healthy Beginnings: Enhanced Home Visiting	Provides families facing challenges with intensive home visiting support for the first three years of their child's life. The program focuses on promoting a healthy parent-child relationship, fostering healthy childhood development, and linking families with community resources that further enhance opportunities for the healthy growth and development of both the child and the family. Provincial Outcome Evaluation completed in July 2009.	Health Promotion and Protection (Delivered by the District Health Authorities)	Under way
Healthy Eating Nova Scotia	Outlines objectives in four priorities: breastfeeding, children and youth, fruit and vegetable consumption, and food security. School nutrition, particularly improving the available food and beverage choices, is key. http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/cdip/healthy-eating-strategy.asp	Health Promotion and Protection Education	Under way

Framework, Strategy, Action Plan	Description	Lead and Partner Departments	Status
Health Promoting Schools	Provides an overall framework for key school health initiatives in the province, including healthy eating, physical activity, youth sexual health, tobacco reduction, addiction, and injury prevention in the school setting.	Health Promotion and Protection, Education	Under way
Immigration Strategy	Intended to improve the retention of immigrants to 70% for the 2006–11 census period and to attract 3,600 immigrants per year by 2010. www.novascotiaimmigration.com	Office of Immigration	Under way
Improving Services for Children and Families	Reviews and strengthens four key areas of child welfare service delivery: placement services, emergency after-hours services for child protection, foster and adoption services, and opportunities for shared services between the province and community child welfare agencies. http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/departement/documents/Child_Welfare_Committee_Report.pdf	Community Services	Under way
Injury Prevention Strategy	Intended to reduce the physical, emotional, and economic impact of injury. http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/cdip/injury-prevention-strategy.asp	Health Promotion and Protection	Under way
Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together	A four-year plan for public school education. http://brighterfuturestogether.ednet.ns.ca/	Education	Under way
Mental Health Standards	Established for the core mental health services and for selected specialty services to establish an accepted quality and level of mental health service in Nova Scotia.	Health	Developed
Nova Scotia Family Pharmacare	Provides universal access to drugs for Nova Scotians who lack prescription drug coverage.	Health	Completed
Poverty Reduction Strategy	A multi-year poverty reduction strategy aimed at addressing poverty in Nova Scotia.	Community Services, Labour & Workforce Development, Health, Justice, and Health Promotion & Protection	Developed
Social Policy Framework Weaving the Threads	A coordinated, collaborative effort on behalf of all social policy departments that provides a context for issues and initiatives promoting the social vision for Nova Scotia.	Community Services	Under way
Strategic Framework to Address Suicide	To enhance the necessary societal, policy, and individual supports required to address suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Canadian children and youth aged 10 to 24 years. http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/cdip/suicide-prevention.asp	Health Promotion and Protection	Under way
Youth Sexual Health Framework for Action	Developed to improve the sexual health of youth; provide a comprehensive, strategic direction for youth sexual health; and suggest roles for youth, communities, community-based agencies, and all sectors of government in improving youth sexual health.	Health Promotion and Protection	Under way

For additional information, please contact:

Child and Youth Strategy
Department of Community Services
PO Box 696 Halifax
Nova Scotia B3J 2T7

E-mail: childyouthstrat@gov.ns.ca

Phone: 1-877-424-1177

Online: <http://gov.ns.ca/coms/families/ChildandYouthStrategy.html>