

Employment Support & Income Assistance

About 50,000 Nova Scotians benefit each year from these services

Ken's Story, A Journey of Hope

Ken Poole grew up in Montreal where he lived 'a fairly good life' until 2003 when circumstances changed his life dramatically and he found himself living in a Halifax shelter for the homeless. "I was devastated," says Ken, "my self-esteem was at an all time low." Ken turned to the Parker Street Food & Furniture Bank where he was given more than gifts of furniture and food—he was given hope and treated with respect. With help and financial assistance from Community Services, Ken was able to find an apartment and begin a search for meaningful work. Wanting to learn new skills and re-enter the workforce, he completed a computer course and earned credits toward future programs at the Nova Scotia Community College, thanks to a unique partnership with the Community Care Network Society, the Nova Scotia Community College and Community Services.

It was then that Ken learned about a special pilot program for mature workers over the age of 45. Part of the One Journey Work and Learn Initiative, the program involves the departments of Community Services and Education, HRDA Employment Services, the Nova Scotia Community College, the Community Care Network, Home Depot and the Atlantic Building Supply Dealers Association. Through a combination of classroom and on-the-job training, Ken acquired the necessary skills and graduated in July 2006. "Yes, programs like these cost money. But of the eight people who started this program, six are now employed and no longer dependent on income or other assistance," says Ken. He credits the program with giving him the confidence to succeed. "Because of One Journey, I'm now working at Home Depot. I'm 62 years old and I'm happy," says Ken. "I'm no longer dependent on social services—and that's a good feeling."



Helping People Succeed

Through the efforts of a dedicated, professional staff, Community Services is helping more Nova Scotians to become self-sufficient, enriching their lives and strengthening the communities in which they live. For many, self-sufficiency means returning to work. Staff in the Department's Employment Support Services help more than 10,000 Nova Scotians each year—working with them to develop action plans that support their transition to employment and encouraging them to continue along the path of life long learning. This year, 2,500 recipients of income assistance will successfully make the transition to work. "We help people to develop a vision, encouraging them to explore opportunities they may never have thought possible," said Debbie Dorey, caseworker, Employment Support Services.

Helping Families Get Better and Stay Healthy

The Westhavers of Fox Point are one of more than 26,000 Nova Scotia families who received good news last year with the new Low Income Pharmacare for Children program. Parents of modest means will get the help they need to buy medications so their children get better and stay healthy.

Eligible families like the Westhavers will now pay only \$5 per prescription. "It's a big relief to know the help is there," says Marie Westhaver, a hard-working parent of two children, Tiffany and Emily. "Now, if one of my daughters becomes ill for whatever reason, I know I'll be able to afford any medications she might need." Community Services will spend \$2 million on the children's pharmacare program each year.

For more information or to learn if you are eligible, please call toll free: 1-866-424-1269.

Community Services Minister Judy Streach with Marie Westhaver and her daughters Emily (age 3) and Tiffany (age 9). The Westhavers were the first family to apply to the province's Low Income Pharmacare for Children program.



Making Life a Little Easier

Despite their hard work and determination, some Nova Scotia families are forced to make difficult choices while they stretch their limited income to pay for basic costs of living. Community Services helps to make life a little easier for more than 30,000 Nova Scotia families who face these choices every day. The government has increased allowances for personal needs for the past four years. Beyond the basic allowance, Nova Scotians receiving income assistance may receive up to \$7,000 in extra benefits, such as the Child Tax Benefit, Pharmacare, child care, transportation and assistance for other special needs.

Survey says - good service!

As part of our new client service initiative, we surveyed 1,200 Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) clients on a wide range of service delivery issues. Clients gave their caseworker/client relationship an overall satisfaction rating of 88%! We're going to try even harder, but the numbers are proof positive that we are doing the right things in the ongoing relationships between our department and our ESIA clients.

For more information about employment support and income assistance, please call toll free: 1-877-424-1177

Protecting Our Children A shared responsibility

A new toll-free phone line is making it easier for Nova Scotians to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Callers from anywhere in the province reach a professionally trained social worker after-hours (4:30 pm to 8:30 am), and 24 hours on weekends and holidays. If an immediate response is required, local child welfare staff are dispatched.

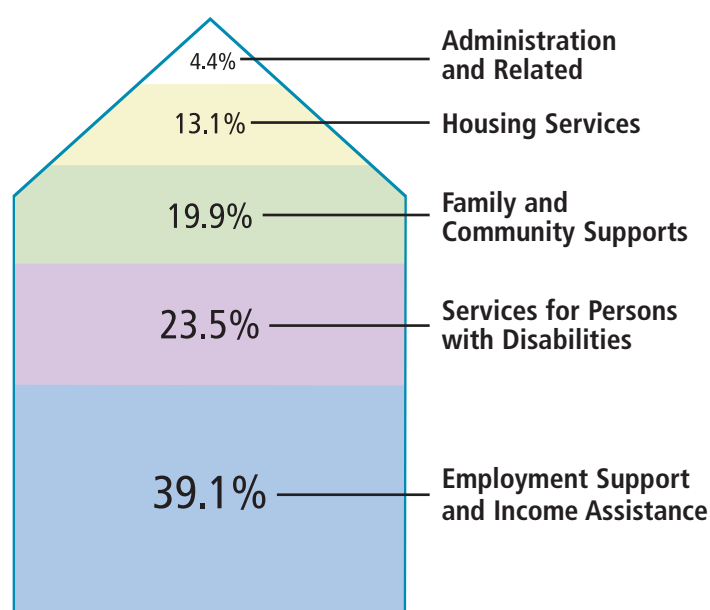
If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, we encourage you to call the new number 1-866-922-2434 after hours. Call your local child welfare agency during regular hours.

Children's Aid (during regular hours)

Annapolis County	(902) 532-2337
Cape Breton-Victoria	(902)563-3400
Colchester County	(902)893-5950
Cumberland County	(902)667-3336
Hants County	(902)798-2289
Inverness Richmond	(902)625-0660
Kings County	(902)678-6176
Mi*kmaw Family & Children's Services	(902)758-3553 or 1-800-263-8686
Pictou County	(902)755-5950
Queens County	(902)354-3525
Yarmouth County	(902) 742-0700

Our Program Budget

The Department of Community Services has the third largest budget in government. The 2007-08 budget is \$781 million, serving more than 160,000 Nova Scotians.



We're Listening!

We welcome your feedback on this publication. Let us know how you would like to hear about the programs and services offered by the Department of Community Services in the future. Please email your comments to webcoms@gov.ns.ca



Building Strong, Healthy Communities Together.



Department of Community Services Minister, Judy Streach, visits with children at the site of the new Alexandra Children's Centre in north end Halifax.

The 35-year-old Centre added an infant program to accommodate up to 10 children from 12 to 18 months old. The Centre is now licensed to care for 95 children. The funding is part of an agreement with the federal government to fund 75 per cent of expansion or new construction costs to ensure licensed, non-profit and commercial child-care facilities are safe and accessible for children, families and staff.



Community Services helps 1 in 9 Nova Scotians every year.

Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services reaches out to more than 160,000 people each year, helping to build strong, healthy communities. Guided by a clear vision and strong leadership, our 1,200 staff work in 40 offices across the province to deliver a broad range of integrated, social services through four main programs.

Through partnership and collaboration, we promote the independence, self-reliance and security of the people we serve. We invite you to learn more about Community Services and how we are helping to create hope and opportunity, one life at a time.

Investing Today for Our Children's Tomorrow

We know the early years are an important time for shaping a child's life. We also know the importance of quality, accessible and appropriate child care and early education to their emotional, intellectual and physical growth. The Early Learning and Child Care Plan will invest more than \$137 million over 10 years to strengthen the quality and accessibility of child care in Nova Scotia. There will be improved support for low-income families who need child care in order to work, attend school or search for employment. At its heart is a vision to ensure all Nova Scotia children enjoy a good start in life, nurtured and supported by caring families and communities.

It's a plan made in Nova Scotia for Nova Scotians—one that is reflective of the many different voices heard through consultation with child care providers and early educators across the province.

As part of the plan, Community Services launched the new portable subsidy program in 2006. "With this program, we're putting families first. We're making it possible for low income families to have access to child care which may not otherwise have been a viable option for them," says Jane Breckenridge, project director, early learning and child care. "The portable space belongs to the child—not the child-care centre. Families now have the freedom to move their child to a child care centre closer to their home. It's their choice as a parent who will care for their child."

Highlights of the 10-year plan include:

- Creation of about 1,000 licensed child-care spaces
- 550 new portable subsidy spaces by 2010
- Increased opportunities for infant care and children with special needs
- Funding to establish family home child care across Nova Scotia
- Facility improvements: repairs and renovations, energy, and accessibility upgrades
- Equal access to learning and development opportunities for early childhood educators in rural and urban Nova Scotia
- Improved communication with parents

For more information call toll free 1-877-424-1177



Children and Families

23,000 children received protection services



Morinville Family, Years of Experience and Compassion

Vicky Morinville volunteers with Community Services in Halifax as an adoption trainer, coaching people through the process of adopting a child. When she speaks with prospective parents, it's with years of experience and compassion. Vicky and her husband, Sylvain, have six daughters—three of them adopted. "We started out as foster parents. We knew other people who had really positive experiences fostering children and we felt we had a lot to offer kids who needed a safe place to live," says Vicky. "We ended up adopting our first foster child. And then we adopted two more little girls!"

Two of the Morinville's daughters have special needs, having been prenatally exposed to alcohol. Vicky worries people may be 'scared off' by the term special needs. "There are no guarantees in life, whether your children come to you biologically or through adoption. Adopting our daughters is a decision we've never regretted for a heartbeat," says Vicky. Community Services provides valuable support to the Morinville family, including funding to subsidize the costs of specialized treatments and care for their daughters. "The Department has been very helpful to us, even helping us finance specialized daycare for one of our children."

Vicky says her biological children, ranging in ages from 17 to 22, have been very supportive. "They've had to make sacrifices as well but they love their sisters dearly." Vicky hopes others will consider adopting or fostering a child. "So many children need homes—and it's an amazing and rewarding experience."



Adoption is an Option

More than 100 children in Nova Scotia are in need of a good home. "We provide extensive support and training to help adoptive parents throughout the process," says Janet Nearing, acting manager of adoption and children in care. "We have adoptive parents of all different ages, personal and financial circumstances and cultural backgrounds."

Individuals interested in adopting must meet specific screening requirements, participate in a comprehensive education program and complete a home study. Great care is taken to match children with families and prepare them for their new homes.

It can take anywhere from six to 12 months to formalize an adoption. Last year, 103 agency adoptions were approved: 26 were newborns to age one; 49 were children between 1 and 4; 24 were between 5 and 10; and 4 were teenagers.

Community Services is working to create family support groups and a directory of community resources for families who have adopted children with special needs.

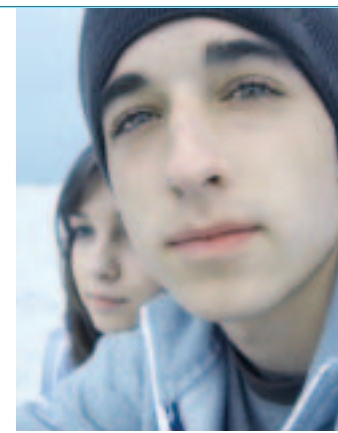
Interested in Adoption or Becoming a Foster Parent?

If you are interested in adoption—domestic, international or private—or becoming a foster parent, please call toll free:

Adoption: 1-866-259-7780 Foster care: 1-800-565-1884

"Established in 1977, HomeBridge Youth Society provides residential care to youth between the ages of 12 and 19 in six different facilities throughout the Halifax Regional Municipality. Approximately 180 young people reside in our facilities annually; all are in the temporary or permanent care of Community Services. Ours is a unique and important partnership, we're both very committed to the youth—their present and their future. Community Services provides funding and sets standards for care delivery and HomeBridge provides the care. Every child needs to know there's an adult who believes in them; they just want to be with people who care for them. The reality is these young people are extremely troubled, due to a range of circumstances, and are not able to live in regular foster homes. I see frontline staff—youth care workers and social workers—draw on their internal resources every day to give these kids hope and guidance, making sure they don't give up. And every time a youth finishes school or is able to develop a healthy relationship with their family, we know we've beaten the odds and our partnership with Community Services has succeeded."

— Linda Wilson, Executive Director, HomeBridge Youth Society



Services for Persons with Disabilities

About 50,000 Nova Scotians benefit from these services

Wheelchair Recycling Program,

Helping children and adults lead active, independent lives

Building on the success of the wheelchair recycling program for children launched in 2005, the Department of Community Services has invested \$1 million in a similar program targeted at un-insured, working-age adults with disabilities. The enhanced program will help adults get the equipment they need to become more active and participate fully in their communities.

"Our partnership between the Abilities Foundation (representing leading community disability organizations) and Community Services has enabled us to respond to the needs of children and adults requiring wheelchairs much more quickly and effectively," said Tom Merriam, president of the Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia. "Not only does it benefit the individual's health and facilitate the rehabilitation process, it also relieves some of the anxiety felt by individuals and families who don't necessarily have the financial resources to pay for a wheelchair."

Since the program started, 64 children and 24 adults between the ages of 19 and 64 have received wheelchairs. For more information, call the Abilities Foundation of Nova Scotia: 902-453-6000 or visit www.wheelchairsrecyclingprogram.ns.ca



System Aims to Foster Independence

Services for Persons with Disabilities is a program that helps people with disabilities and their families. "Our goal is to help individuals who are at various stages of their development and independence stay at home in their own community, whenever possible," says Mildred Hayward, director of services for persons with disabilities. With that goal, the Department has initiated a province-wide review of all its residential programs and services. "It's incredible to have the opportunity and support of government to look at the whole system and to involve individuals with disabilities, service providers and community stakeholders," says Mildred.

"The reality is that our communities are changing; our population is aging. We want to look at our needs now and into the future and build an integrated, coordinated system that provides a range of options for anyone with a disability. Ultimately, we need a system that fosters independence; one that has the flexibility to provide the best possible care and support to children and adults as their needs change and communities change."

For more information, call toll free 1-877-424-1177.

A Range of Options

With an investment of more than \$4 million, three new and expanded programs are helping to improve supports and services to people with intellectual, long-term mental and/or physical disabilities:

The Independent Living Support program helps people living with a disability realize their goal of living on their own. Beginning in Cape Breton, local service providers are called upon to offer individuals up to 21 hours of support each week, helping them develop the skills needed for daily living such as laundry, meal preparation, banking or local transportation. Building on its success, the Cape Breton model is being extended to the entire province.

The Alternate Family Support program helps people with disabilities live in a home-like environment by matching them with a 'foster family.' Taking the time to ensure the comfort of the individual with the disability and the family is critical to the success of the program.

The Direct Family Support program supports families who care for a family member with a disability at home by providing funding for respite services and special care items.

Did you Know?

About 4,800 Nova Scotians access support and services through the Services for Persons with Disabilities programs. Community Services provides a range of in-home and residential support for children, youth and adults with disabilities in Nova Scotia.

Housing



20,000 Nova Scotians live in Social Housing

The summer of 2006 will long be remembered by the people of St. Andrew's, Antigonish County, as a time when the community came together to help others in need. Eight new housing units, designed for seniors, stand as a daily reminder of the remarkable efforts of more than 100 local volunteers who pooled their talents and time to create a place for seniors to call home. They weren't alone. Local businesses loaned equipment and provided discounted products, the Municipality of the County of Antigonish helped fund a new water supply and the Bergengren Credit Union donated land. Under the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement, the federal government provided \$200,000 in capital, and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services stepped up with a commitment of \$120,000 for rent supplements.

Joe Van de Wiel, chair of the St. Andrew's Seniors' Housing Association, believes a strong community spirit helped make the project a success. "When projects that benefit the community come up, everyone is behind them all the way," says Joe. "Most of our seniors have lived here all their lives and contributed so much to the community. This project allows us to give back to them by creating quality, affordable housing where they can enjoy their retirement."

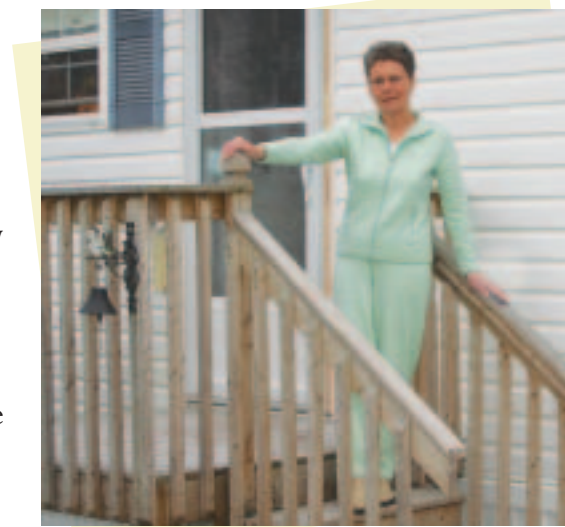


Photo above: Volunteers of all ages lend a hand in creating affordable rental housing for seniors in St. Andrews, Antigonish County.

Photo right: Gail Jackson, safe at home in Springhill, Nova Scotia.

Helping Seniors Remain in Their Homes

Gail Jackson is breathing easier these days thanks to a grant for repairs to her home in Springhill. "I am just so pleased with the help," says Gail. Workers hired through the grant lifted and leveled her home, installed new doors with safety locks and repaired the roof and floor of her water-damaged porch. "My doors wouldn't lock and there was a robbery across the road. I haven't been well and I was so nervous here alone, but I feel so much safer now. It's a big thing to keep people in their own homes, especially for those of us who are on a fixed income." Under the Senior Citizens Assistance Program, grants are available for individuals who wish to remain in their own homes but cannot afford to carry out necessary repairs.



Building for the Future

While Nova Scotia has among the highest rates of home ownership in Canada, it also has some of the oldest homes. Recognizing our unique housing challenges, the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement was created in 2002 in partnership with the federal government. A total of \$56.18 million will be committed by 2009 to renovate or create affordable housing for Nova Scotians. A new \$23-million Affordable Housing Trust is also helping hundreds of families across the province live in decent, affordable homes.

Access to safe, affordable and sustainable housing helps to strengthen the social and economic fabric of a community. It helps create meaningful work and builds stronger, healthier neighbourhoods. Community Services provides more than 20,000 units of social housing, mortgage funds to buy or build modest homes, and helps over 2,500 low-income families each year address health and safety concerns in their home thanks to home repair programs.

Home Repair / Adaptation Programs

Provincial Housing Emergency Repair Program

Senior Citizens Assistance Program

Access-A-Home Program

Small Loans Assistance Program

Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (Homeowner RRAP)

Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (Disabled RRAP)

Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (Rental RRAP)

Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (Rooming House RRAP)

Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (Conversion RRAP)

Emergency Repair Program

Home Adaptation for Seniors' Independence

Shelter Enhancement Program

For more information on any of these programs, please visit www.gov.ns.ca/coms or call toll free:

1-877-424-1177