

Nova Scotia
Department of
Community Services

Statement of Mandate 2012-2013

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Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

On behalf of the Department of Community Services, we are pleased to present the 2012-2013 Statement of Mandate.

Our plan this year is about building stronger foundations for brighter futures.

We will begin to build a client oriented service delivery system which enables easy access to information, knowledgeable staff, and timely decisions. Strengthening restorative practices, shifting the focus from working *for* people to working *with* them, will be a key component of our delivery approach.

In addition to better financial supports, we will continue to improve our Employment Support & Income Assistance program. Our goal is to make it easier for clients to access services and supports, to find and keep a job, and to participate in their communities, and for caseworkers to have the time to work more closely with clients to help them maximize their independence.

We are embarking on the creation of an Adoption strategy to increase the number of children who have a permanent home and a family to call their own. For our children and youth who require secure care and specialized treatment, we are opening the new wing of the Wood Street Centre in Truro, so families can access these services closer to home.

Suitable housing with appropriate supports and programs is often the key to enabling people to maximize their independence. This year the department, in concert with the Nova Scotia Housing Development Corporation, and in consultation with our housing partners and stakeholders, will develop a Provincial Housing Strategy.

2012-2013 promises to be an exciting year for the department. We look forward to working together to help build brighter futures for Nova Scotians.

Regards,

Denise Peterson-Rafuse
Minister, Department of Community Services

Rob Wood
Deputy Minister, Department of Community Services

1.0 Department Mandate

The primary responsibility of the Department of Community Services is to ensure the basic needs of individuals and families are met by providing financial support to persons in need and by protecting children and adults at risk. Most of the department's expenditures are in the form of direct payments to clients in need of financial assistance or to service providers who provide prevention, residential, vocational, child care, housing, protection and other social services on behalf of the department. These services form a secure and predictable social safety net for Nova Scotians and help contribute to better futures for children and families, persons with disabilities, seniors, and communities.

1.1 Mission

The Department of Community Services is committed to a sustainable social support system that promotes the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve. This will be achieved through excellence in service delivery, leadership, and collaboration with our partners.

Services are delivered under the authority and direction of the following legislation:

- Adoption Information Act
- Children and Family Services Act
- Day Care Act
- Disabled Persons Commission Act
- Employment Support and Income Assistance Act
- Homes for Special Care Act
- Housing Act
- Housing Development Corporation Act
- Protection of Persons in Care
- Senior Citizen's Financial Aid Act
- Social Assistance Act
- Social Workers Act
- Youth Secretariat Act

1.2 Core Business Areas

The department has three core business areas, i.e., collections of individual programs whose results and outcomes are fundamental to the department in carrying out its mandate. These core functions address many of the social determinants of health, including income security, housing, early childhood development, social support networks, and employment, the work of the department contributes to the health and well-being of Nova Scotians.

- Employment Support and Income Assistance
- Housing
- Family and Community Supports

More information on the department's programs and services can be found on the department's website, <http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/>.

2.0 Government Priorities

Government has identified four core policy priorities.

- Helping people make ends meet
- Making health care better for you and your family, including improving the socio-economic determinants of health.
- Creating good jobs and growing the economy
- Get back to balance and ensuring government lives within its means

Community Services has aligned its planning with these priorities, and has identified a number of initiatives for 2012-2013 to support government in meeting its stated policy objectives.

2.1 Helping People Make Ends Meet

Helping people make ends meet means making life more affordable by improving support for Nova Scotian families, providing new incentives for people to break out of the poverty cycle, and to address gaps in services.

Priority: Employment Support and Income Assistance Model

The focus of the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program is to provide financial assistance and supports to persons in need and to facilitate their movement towards employment, independence and self-sufficiency.

In 2012-2013, the department will orient its ESIA policies, processes, job functions, technology and service delivery approaches to enhance client access, service satisfaction, and maximize client independence and self-reliance.

Specifically, we will:

- Focus our efforts on recipients who have strong potential for employment success, helping to connect them labour market, and providing pre and post employment supports where needed.
- Pilot an innovative employment service model in select communities
- Pilot an assessment model for clients who can benefit from an understanding of how health related issues can impact their ability to participate in employment, and/or employability activities.

Priority: Improve Income Support

Government recognizes the challenges that low-income Nova Scotians can face on a daily basis.

As committed in the budget of 2011- 2012, the department will continue to strengthen income supports for low-income Nova Scotians. Approximately \$6 million will be invested to:

- increase the ESIA personal allowance by \$9 per month

- strengthen the Nova Scotia Child Benefit program, providing an average increase of 5% for some 20,000 low-income families.

Priority: Improve Access to Program Information

Starting in the spring of 2013, Nova Scotians will be better able to access a full range of social services within their local communities, just by picking up the phone. 2-1-1 Nova Scotia, a not-for-profit organization, will provide a new province-wide information and referral service for nonemergency community and social services.

Critical to the success of 2-1-1 is the development of a comprehensive, integrated province-wide 2-1-1 database of social services. Community Services has an extensive network of service providers and community organizations which it supports throughout the province. This network is an integral part of Nova Scotia's social safety net.

In 2012-2013, the department will work closely with 2-1-1 Nova Scotia in the collection of accurate and comprehensive information on Community Services' funded programs, to support a successful public launch in the spring of 2013.

2.2 Better Healthcare for You and Your Family

Community Services through a broad range of programs and policies plays a significant role in contributing to the overall health and well-being of Nova Scotians.

Priority: Continuing Care/ Services for Persons for Disabilities Strategy

The Departments of Health & Wellness and Community Services serve the needs of people who are aging, and/or have disabilities through the provision of residential support, family support, health care and a variety of vocational and other programs. There are individuals who are ready for discharge from hospital; however, due to lack of capacity, they remain in acute care beds until suitable placement options are available. As well, due to a lack of crisis stabilization services, there are individuals with very complex and challenging behaviours who may find it necessary to access Emergency Room services.

In 2012-2013, government will develop a long term Continuing Care/ Services for Persons for Disabilities strategy to create a system which provides seamless access to a continuum of services in a cost effective manner.

Priority: Supportive Housing

Persons with disabilities want to be active and vibrant citizens, and to make positive contributions in their communities. Suitable housing with appropriate supports and programs is often the key to enabling people to maximize their independence, enhancing the fabric of our society.

In 2012-2013, by accessing the financial resources of the NSHDC, the department will develop strategies to:

- increase the number and range of supportive housing units
- increase the number of transitional housing beds for people with multiple barriers
- develop a housing hub model providing multiple units with shared services.

Priority: Housing Strategy

Housing is a key determinant of educational, social, health and economic outcomes. Healthy families, healthy communities are formed around sustainable housing.

While much good work has been done over the course of the last number of decades, many Nova Scotians continue to struggle to find and maintain a home for themselves and their families, and to build equity for a brighter future.

Across the country, provinces are looking at new ways to manage and diversify their approach to public and affordable housing. Healthier, more diverse communities have proven to be successful in removing the stigmas often associated with public and affordable housing, leading to better citizen outcomes.

In 2012-2013, Community Services, in consultation with our housing partners and stakeholders, will develop a Provincial Housing Strategy. An effective housing strategy can serve as the vehicle to improve not only the quality and affordability of housing, but

equally as important, to improve the educational, social, health and economic determinants for individual Nova Scotians, and for the province as a whole.

Priority: Adoption Strategy

The department continues to take important steps towards the vision for child welfare - a single integrated service system, accessible and responsive to children and families across the province.

Every child needs a forever family, a home where they can find a permanent loving and secure environment in which to grow and thrive. Unfortunately some children, through no fault of their own, have been in permanent care of the Minister of Community Services for extended periods. Right now there are over 1,000 children who do not have a permanent home.

In 2012-2013, we will be working with our partners to develop and implement a strategy to significantly increase adoption rates in Nova Scotia.

To support this, the department will also implement a Learning and Growth Strategy for child welfare staff to ensure they have access to the most current best practice approaches.

Priority: Implement a Restorative Practice Approach

Restorative Practice is an approach that can span across programs, systems and within multiple layers of an organization/government department. It can be used with clients, with staff and with other service providers.

A restorative practice approach operates from the premise that people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things *with* them rather than *for* them.

Much of the work the department does is based on a restorative practice approach.

In 2012-2013, the department will enhance our restorative practices. Restorative approaches foster healthy relationships, and by doing so, build more sustainable communities that are independent, self-reliant and secure.

2.3 Get back to balance and ensure government lives within its means

Every department and agency of government has a role to play in achieving this priority by exploring new and innovative ways to achieve greater efficiency and improved program outcomes, by streamlining or transforming service delivery, and by improving productivity or share services with other government departments or entities.

Priority: Performance and Accountability

To build and maintain a strong, responsive, and sustainable social services system requires a consistent and integrated departmental strategic direction, and a set of tools and processes to monitor and report on the progress of our programs and services.

In 2012-2013, the department will establish an outcome based accountability framework that clearly outlines and defines the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of all the core business areas within the Department of Community Services. To track the progress of our programs, the framework will include relevant performance indicators and targets.

3.0 Budget Context

Community Services			
	2011-2012 Estimate	2011-2012 Forecast	2012-2013 Estimate
Program & Service Area	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	1,556	1,524	1,589
Corporate Services Unit	10,891	9,569	9,048
Policy and Information Management	8,292	8,151	8,846
Field Offices	13,915	13,212	14,110
Services For Persons with Disabilities	254,786	258,927	260,557
Family and Children's Services	192,444	183,568	188,803
Housing Services	123,697	115,945	104,729
Employment Support and Income Assistance	370,776	377,224	381,234
Housing Authority and Property Operations	8,727	8,725	9,008
Total Departmental Expenses	985,084	976,845	977,924
TCA Purchase Requirements	1,200	700	100
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	1,678	1,612	1,662

4.0 Performance Measures

Outcome: Increased number of Nova Scotians living independent of income assistance

Measure/ Rationale	Base Year Data	Targets	Trends	Strategic Priorities and Actions
Number and % of NS living in poverty (LICO) – identifies NS who are at or below the poverty line	2006: 76,000; 8.4% of the NS population	reduce the number and % of NS living in poverty	2008: 75,000; 8.3% 2007: 74,000; 8.2%	ESIA Model Design and implementation Improved income supports
Number and % of children living in poverty (LICO) - identifies children who are at or below the low income cutoff	2006: 16,000; 8.7% of the NS children	reduce the number and % of children living in poverty	2008: 14,000; 7.9% 2007: 15,000; 8.4%	
Average monthly beneficiaries as a % of the NS population - represents the % of low income households dependent, in whole or in part, on Income Assistance to meet their basic needs in the context of the NS population	2005-06: 5.5% of the NS population	2012-13: reduce the caseload by 3,000	2011-12: 4.7% 2010-11: 4.7% 2009-10: 4.6% 2008-09: 4.6% 2007-08: 4.8% 2006-07: 5.1%	
% of Income Assistance (IA) recipients with wage income - is an indication of recipients with labour market attachment and their ability to achieve a greater degree of self-reliance and independence	2010-11: 9.2%	2012-13: increase by 1,500	TBD	
% of youth (16 - 24) receiving Income Assistance assisted to enhance their employability - youth in financial need have opportunities to transition to employment and self-reliance	2005-06: 30.7% of youth assisted	2011-12: 43% 2013-14: 45%	2010-11: 42% 2009-10: 40% 2008-09: 37% 2007-08: 37.5% 2006-07: 34.4%	

Outcome: Improved health and diversity of people living in affordable and public housing

Measure/ Rationale	Base Year Data	Targets	Trends	Strategic Priorities and Actions
Number and % of households unable to access acceptable housing (core housing need) -represents households that fall below adequacy, suitability or affordability standards	2006: 43,800 households; representing 12.1% of all NS households	decrease the number and % of households unable to access acceptable housing	2006: NB - 10.3% PE - 12.6% NL - 14.2%	Housing Strategy
% of co-operative housing organizations that move from a default position (project in difficulty) to a healthy, functioning coop - in terms of financial, democratic and physical condition	2010-11: 28% of co-operative housing organizations are in a default position	2011-12: reduce to 19% in default 2013-14: reduce to 10% in default		
Number of households assisted with health and safety related home repairs - number of existing affordable homes preserved in good condition, and adapted to make the housing more accessible so low income households can continue to live independently in their own homes.	2005-06: 2,429 households	2011-12: ¹ 2,000 2013-14: 2,000	2010-11: 2,100 2009-10: 2,150 2008-09: 2,355 2007-08:2,400 2006-07: 2,540	
Public housing vacancy rate - measure of the department's capacity to accommodate the demand for public housing	Base year to be establish for 2010-11 - TBD	2011-12: 3% vacancy rate		

¹This target reflects an increase in the size of the grants allowing for deeper coverage but fewer grants. In the fall 2010, the grant assistance for the Provincial Housing Emergency Repair Program and the Senior Citizens Assistance Program was increased from \$5,000 to \$6,500.

Outcome: Improved educational, justice, health, social and economic determinants of children in care and children of income assistance recipients

Measure/ Rationale	Base Year Data	Targets	Trends	Strategic Priorities and Actions
Number of children in care placed for adoption - it is in a child's best interest to be placed for adoption as quickly as possible as secure stable family environment is an important factor in healthy child development	2005-06: 116 children	2011-12: 105 or more children 2013-14: TBD	2010-11: TBD 2009-10: 125 2008-09: 121 2007-08: 105 2006-07: 87	Adoption strategy and learning and growth strategy
Number of spaces¹ in regulated child care settings - is a measure of the department's commitment to provide safe child care	2006-07: 13,249 spaces	2011-12: 15,418 2013-14: 15,620	2010-11: 15,245 2009-10: 14,485 2008-09: 14,135 2007-08: 13,455	
% of child care spaces subsidized - an indicator of the availability of child care for low income families	2006-07: 23% (3,045 subsidies) of licensed child care spaces were subsidized	2011-12: 28.7% (4,427) 2013-14: 28.3% (4,427)	2010-11: 27% (4,177) 2009-10: 27% (3,925) 2008-09: 24% (3,425) 2007-08: 23% (3,154)	

¹To better measure the capacity of the child care system, this measure was changed to include both full and part time spaces.

Number of families with children with a disability participating in the Direct Family Support program - enables a family to care for a disabled child at home benefitting from all aspects of family and community living	2005-06: 1,104	2012-13:1,090 2013-14: TBD	2011-12: 1,050 2010-11: 952 ¹ 2009-10: 952 2008-09: 1,044 2007-08: 1,082 2006-07: 1,133	Continue to implement the revised income eligibility guidelines, so more families can qualify
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¹This decreasing trend reflects the aging of children out of the Direct Family Support program for children to the adult program.

Outcome: Maximize client independence, self-reliance and improve social inclusion

Measure/ Rationale	Base Year Data	Targets	Trends	Strategic Priorities and Actions
Number of clients served by adult service centres - measures the department's ability to provide access to programs that will enhance the quality of life of persons with disabilities	2006-07: 1,770 clients	2012-13: 2,000 2013-14: 2,100	2011-12: 1,980 2010-11: 1,950 2009-10: 1,950 2008-09: 1,870 2007-08: 1,770	
% of SPD licensed facilities with escalated non-compliance - measure of the quality of SPD licensed facilities	2010-11: 30%	2012-13: 30% 2013-14:20%	2011-12: TBD	Provide consultation and support to facility operators to assist them in coming into compliance. Implement an IT system to better track and monitor compliance.
Licensing turn-around time for processing initial licenses, renewals, and change requests - measure of the department's performance in meeting government's 10 day service standard	2010-11: 99.1%	2012-13: 95% or higher 2012-13: 95% or higher	2011-12: 93.4%	Implement new IT system to gain efficiencies in business processes.