September 10, 2018

Re: You are entitled to the records - 2018-07341-COM

Community Services received your application for access to information under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act on August 26, 2018.

In your application, you requested a copy of the following records:

A copy of the briefing notes included in the minister's Legislative Briefing Binder for the 2018 fall session of the House of Assembly.

Responsive records have been located and are attached.

You have the right to ask for a review of this decision by the Information Access and Privacy Commissioner (formerly the Review Officer). You have 60 days from the date of this letter to exercise this right. If you wish to ask for a review, you may do so on Form 7, a copy of which is attached. Send the completed form to the Information Access and Privacy Commissioner, P.O. Box 181, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2M4.

Please be advised that a de-identified copy of this disclosure letter and the attached response to your FOIPOP application will be made public after 14 days. The package will be posted online at https://informationaccess.novascotia.ca. The letter will not include your name, address or any other personal information that you have supplied while making your application under FOIPOP

Please contact Sheetal Ajay at 902-424-0279 or by e-mail at Sheetal.Ajay@novascotia.ca, if you need further assistance in regards to this application.

Sincerely,

Lynn Hartwell
Deputy Minister

Attach.
Department of Community Services
Information Notes

Sitting of the Legislature
Fall 2018
### Child, Youth and Family Support (CYFS)

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### Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)

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## Housing Nova Scotia (HNS)

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Child Welfare Changes and Impact on Workload

KEY MESSAGES:

• Our staff do incredible work, often in difficult conditions. It’s hard for any of us to really understand the complexities they deal with every day.

• We continually monitor caseloads. to ensure that the social workers who provide front line support to children and youth in the care of the Minister have what they need to carry out their important duties.

• Community Services implemented several suggestions from staff to address concerns, and we will continue to work within available resources to make sure staff can carry out their work safely, and in the best interest of the children.

• We are filling every vacant position in Child Protection on a priority basis.

• We are using all available resources, including relocating social work positions across county, office and regional boundaries.

• We also created 14 additional front line Child Protection positions through the reassignment of vacancies from other program areas and geographical regions.
• We added two float Casework Supervisors to assist with workloads.
Canadian Citizenship of Former Children in Care

KEY MESSAGES:

• Our primary consideration is to ensure the safety and protection of children.

• Placement of a newly arrived child to Canada into care is a very rare occurrence in Nova Scotia.

• The status of children arriving in Canada/Nova Scotia is fully considered during their immigration approval process.

• The Department has reviewed its practice and recently put into policy the required steps to confirm and clearly understand a child’s immigration and citizenship status upon a child coming into care.
Cultural Relevance of Child Welfare Programming

KEY MESSAGES:

• It is important to maintain and support a child’s culture while they are in care.

• Community Services develops a comprehensive plan for each child entering care, and maintaining a child’s culture is a significant part of that plan.

• Community Services continues to work closely with the 13 First Nations communities and Mi’kmaw Family and Children’s Services to do a better job at addressing the needs of Mi’kmaw children and their families.

• Community Services is also increasing its focus on helping African Nova Scotian children find permanent placement with adoptive parents within the African Nova Scotian community.
Child Advocacy Office and Child Death Review

KEY MESSAGES:

- The death of a child is the worst thing that could ever happen.

- While children are in our care, we are their guardians and we take that responsibility very seriously. Ensuring their safety and well-being is always our first priority.

- Since Government started reporting on child deaths in 2004, no child has died as a result of abuse or neglect in the care of the Minister.

- However, when a child-in care dies under any circumstances, a review is automatic.

- Community Services revised its policy to include the Ombudsman in both of its existing child welfare reviews in their role as Youth Ombudsman for children in care.
Motherisk Laboratory Impact

KEY MESSAGES:

• We take child custody and protection very seriously.

• Hair strand analysis was just one of a number of tools the department used in child protection cases. However, these results alone would not be the single determining factor in the outcome of a case.

• Community Services stopped using Motherisk as soon as issues about their test results became known in 2015.

• The Department suspended hair strand testing for child protection cases in Nova Scotia effective April 2016.

• Since that time, we have relied on other established methods of testing and social work practice.

• The department provided an opportunity, on request, to review the files of clients whose child welfare involvement may have been impacted by hair strand testing completed by Motherisk lab.

• The department has now identified the child protection files where Motherisk was used.
• Given the time range when these services were used, the number of files to be reviewed is extensive.

• The department has prioritized the review of about 90 files where the child entered the permanent care of the Minister.
Adoption Records

KEY MESSAGES:

• We understand that people want to know where they came from.

• This is a difficult issue because not all adopted children want to know their birth families, and not all birth parents want to reunite with their birth children.

• The Adoption Information Act takes a balanced approach.

• Adoptees and birth parents can both receive non-identifying information, which includes medical information, physical description, interests and levels of education, through Adoption Disclosure Services staff.

• Obtaining non-identifying information does not require consent from the other party.

• The Act also allows government to share identifying information when parties give us permission to do so.
Wood Street Campus

KEY MESSAGES:

• The safety and well-being of children in care is our top priority.

• Community Services continues to use private clinical service providers to avoid further disruptions to clinical services.

• We will continue to work with the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority to find solutions to address the gaps in services for children in care.

Prepared by: Shauna Clark, Director, Residential Services, 902-424-8333
Date: August 3, 2018
Contact: Shauna Clark, Director, Residential Services, 902-424-8333
Secondary Contact: Sandy Graves, Executive Director, Service Delivery, 902-424-6348
Department: Community Services
Sexual Violence Prevention and Supports

KEY MESSAGES:

• Sexual violence continues to be a serious health, social and public safety issue that affects many Nova Scotians.

• Community Services continues to work with communities to help victims and survivors of sexual violence get the support they need, and promote education and awareness on the issue.

• The online training course, Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence, will continue to be available, and a new module focusing on African Nova Scotian perspectives is being developed.

• Work continues as part of our ongoing funding commitment to help prevent and respond to sexual abuse and exploitation of youth and children, including human trafficking.

• Government’s funding for the prevention of sexual violence and support for victims spans several departments.
• The funding ranges from:
  • more than $1 million for prevention and intervention through Community Services;
  • Justice’s $90K for independent legal advice under a program with the federal government;
  • and, $300K for trauma therapy and $1.362 million for nurse examiner programs through Health and Wellness.
Transformation of Child Welfare

KEY MESSAGES:

• Safe and healthy children, youth and families are key to building a stronger Nova Scotia.

• We’re transforming Nova Scotia’s Child Welfare system to provide the best support and protection possible for children in care.

• Community Services aims to improve results for young people and families at risk of abuse or neglect, strengthen the communities that support them, and make the system more sustainable.

• Our goal is to move from a child welfare system that is crisis-driven, to one that focuses on prevention and early intervention.

• That’s why we updated our legislation to:
  • Ensure children are protected, and families can be supported before they are in crisis;
  • Enhance our prevention and early intervention programming;
  • Improve the foster care system;
• And work with communities to improve our collective response to the needs of victims and survivors of sexual abuse.
Leary Fraser Road – Construction Underway

KEY MESSAGES:

- The existing building is undergoing general maintenance as it’s a government resource that needs to be maintained.

- The safety and well-being of children in care is our top priority.

- As such, we are always concerned about having a range of placement options for children coming into care.

Prepared by: Kathleen Rogers, Project Director, Child, Youth & Family Supports, 902-424-4585
Date: August 5, 2018
Contact: Leonard Doiron, Executive Director, Child, Youth & Family Supports, 902-424-8256
Department: Community Services
Foster Family Supports

KEY MESSAGES:

• We all know that when a child comes into the care of the province, the best placement is in a loving home.

• The number of foster parents in Nova Scotia is growing.
• Right now, there are about 680 foster families – a 13% increase over last year – but we need more.

• Parenting children in care is hard work.

• Over the past couple of years, we changed how Community Services supports foster families so they can provide the most opportunities for children in care.

• Changes – such as increasing the per diem per child, raising the babysitting rate, and raising the amount foster families receive for recreation – have resulted in foster families receiving, on average, about $900 more per child annually.

• We’ve heard from foster families that the changes are extremely helpful toward covering the costs of supporting children in care.
• We will continue to work very closely with the Federation of Foster Families, and foster parents, to find ways to help them care for vulnerable children and youth.
# Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)

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Simplified Rate Structure and Enhanced Employment Income Exemption Structure

KEY MESSAGES:

• We’re committed to helping Nova Scotians in need.

• That’s why we’re transforming our system - so Nova Scotians have the resources and self-confidence they need to build better lives for themselves and their families.

• After seeking the input of advocacy groups and organizations, ESIA clients, and staff, and analyzing information, we have determined that a **Standard Household Rate** for people on income assistance is the best option for benefitting Nova Scotians on income assistance.

• The Standard Household Rate will increase rates for all ESIA recipients to the maximum level clients are eligible for, as well as:
  
  o increase rates by an additional 2% for clients who able to work
  
  o and by 5% for clients who are unable to work.

• With the new work incentive, people receiving income assistance will be able to earn more money, while seeing income assistance payments reduced at a slower rate.

• This helps people better meet their basic needs and encourages them to pursue employment opportunities.
• We are improving the wage exemption so that it is more generous to clients by reducing benefits at a slower rate. Clients will be able to keep more money in their pockets each month.

• For clients who can work - the more you work, the more you prosper financially.
New Case Management Approach for Employment Support Services

KEY MESSAGES:

- We are committed to building a stronger province where all Nova Scotians can grow and succeed.

- Over the last two years, we’ve consulted with clients and stakeholders to get input on employment supports.

- Based on their input, a new case management approach has been developed to ensure we better understand and meet the needs of our clients.

- We are transforming our employment supports to ensure they are consistent, appropriate, and focused on individual needs. The new approach to case management will help us do this.

Prepared by: Joy Knight, Director, Employment Support Services, 902-424-6389
Date: August 2, 2018
Contact: Joy Knight, Director, Employment Support Services, 902-424-6389
Secondary Contact: Brandon Grant, Executive Director, ESIA, 902-424-6966
Department: Community Services
Transformation Engagement
Client First Voice, Staff, and Stakeholders

KEY MESSAGES:

- The department’s work to transform the program and the system is founded in part upon the feedback that we received from clients, their advocates and the advice and expertise of many others.

- The department has held two rounds of ESIA Transformation Engagement Sessions, with representatives from 128 organizations. They included advocacy groups, poverty networks, women’s centres, transition houses, and many others.

- We also met with many more organizations individually about our transformation work, and held information sessions with approximately 320 ESIA staff.

- Most important, we sought the input of our clients through 19 focus groups across the province with 180 individuals participating.

- More than 1700 surveys were completed by clients who did not want to participate in the focus groups. The feedback received has informed our transformation work.
• We continue to meet with clients and advocacy groups on our progress, and we will go out on more engagement sessions this fall.

• Our commitment to hearing from clients, staff, and stakeholders through these engagement sessions is in addition to the approximately 2,800 correspondence requests received and responded to by DCS on an annual basis.
Employment Support and Income Assistance Youth Initiatives

KEY MESSAGES:

• Key to breaking the cycle of poverty is helping children and youth secure the education and opportunities they need to succeed.

• In this year’s budget, government invested $1.8 million to support youth at risk, dependents of income assistance recipients, and children in care.

• These investments include an early intervention pilot project, doubling of the Youth Development Initiative budget, and funding for employments supports for youth in residential care.

• We have increased support for the Career Seek Program, and introduced an Educate to Work for Dependents stream that provides dependents of people on income assistance financial support to study at NSCC.

• Our Career Rising program has provided leadership, employability skills training, and work experience for dependents of ESIA clients and youth in care.
These programs are helping to reduce and eliminate barriers, so our youth can get the education they need to succeed in life.
Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities

KEY MESSAGES:

- We are building a stronger province where all Nova Scotians can grow and succeed.

- Part of this work includes expanding the supports and programming available through ESIA for Persons with Disabilities so they can work.

- Recent enhancements to the Workplace Support Program have expanded the reach and supports available to help Nova Scotians with disabilities find and maintain employment or complete their post-secondary education.

- Also, our Ability Works and Work Activity Program supports clients with disabilities on income assistance by helping them participate in activities that will lead them to securing employment.

Prepared by: Joy Knight, Director, Employment Support Services, 902-424-6389
Date: August 2, 2018
Contact: Joy Knight, Director, Employment Support Services, 902-424-6389
Secondary Contact: Brandon Grant, Executive Director, ESIA, 902-424-6966
Department: Community Services
Bus Passes – Enrollment Status

KEY MESSAGES:

• We want to build a stronger province where all Nova Scotians can grow and succeed.

• Lack of transportation is often a huge barrier to ESIA clients, preventing them from getting to their medical appointments, school, job opportunities, and participating in social and community events.

• Last December, we entered into a new agreement with HRM to introduce a project that gives bus passes to more Nova Scotians on income assistance.

• We are now rolling out the passes out to eligible clients and their families.

• Recipients, along with their spouses and children, will receive a bus pass to meet their transportation needs.

• This will also remove the administrative burden for clients in getting a bus allowance, who have had to secure a doctor's note confirming the number of medical appointments they must have each month.

• Eligible clients have been receiving their bus passes in a phased approach throughout the summer.
• The first recipients began the process of getting their bus passes on June 23.

• The passes will include the client’s photo, which is required by HRM on all annual passes.

Prepared By: Marcel d’Entremont, Policy Analyst, Income Assistance, 902-424-1543
Date: August 3, 2018
Contact: Pam AuCoin, Director, Income Assistance, 902-424-6104
Secondary Contact: Brandon Grant, Executive Director, ESIA, 902-424-6966
Department: Community Services
Child Support Maintenance Exemption

KEY MESSAGES:

- We agree that the money owed to children should go to children or their caregivers.

- That’s why we are fully exempting child support payments in calculating income assistance eligibility.

- These changes will put more money into the hands of some low-income families with children on income assistance.

Prepared By: Nichola Baker, Manager, Prevention, Detection and Recovery Unit, 902-424-8783
Date: August 3, 2018
Contact: Pam AuCoin, Director, Income Assistance, 902-424-6104
Secondary Contact: Brandon Grant, Executive Director, ESIA, 902-424-6966
Department: Community Services
Nova Scotia Court of Appeal Decision – Employment Requirements and Benefits Suspension

KEY MESSAGES:

• We know that it is best for people to be connected to work, school, and community when they can.

• Under the program, people who can work are required to actively participate in employment activities.

• We accept the decision of the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal and are developing a new approach regarding employment participation requirements and benefits suspension.

• An Interim Policy has been developed that aligns with the court decision so that only the personal allowance of the person who has not met requirements is reduced.

• New regulations will be developed to align with approaches that encourage client participation in employment, encourage movement towards self-sufficiency, and address our overall transformation goals.
Nova Scotia Court of Appeal Decision – Shelter Costs

KEY MESSAGES:

• We respect the Court of Appeal’s decision regarding ESIA Regulation 46, which gives an ESIA Casework Supervisor the discretion to override regulations to provide special needs assistance in emergency situations.

• Staff and legal counsel are currently in the process of reviewing the details of the decision to understand what it means for the department and to determine the way forward.

• We have no additional comments at this time.
Building Income Security

KEY MESSAGES:

Employment Income Exemption Structure

- With the new wage exemption structure, people receiving income assistance will be able to earn more money, while seeing income assistance payments reduced at a slower rate.

- This helps people better meet their basic needs and encourages them to pursue employment.

- For clients who can work - the more you work, the more you prosper financially.

Poverty Reduction Credit

- The Poverty Reduction Credit provides additional financial support to the most financially vulnerable.

- It is available to single people and couples, who do not have access to the same level of federal and provincial supports available to people with children.

- The recent increase to the PRC from $250 to $500 annually will mean recipients will now have more money in their pockets to help them meet their needs.
Personal Items Allowance

- We have introduced a new Personal Items Allowance of $101 per month for people temporarily living in homeless shelters and transition houses across the province to help them purchase essential items.

- We heard directly from stakeholders and clients that this was a missing piece in our policies.

- We are pleased to be able to close that gap.
Shelter Nova Scotia Funding

KEY MESSAGES:

• Shelter Nova Scotia is very important to our communities and the people they serve.

• The organization oversees the operation of six facilities including Metro Turning Point, the province’s largest emergency shelter for homeless men, and Barry House that provides emergency shelter for women and their dependent children experiencing homelessness.

• Shelter Nova Scotia supports people in times of crisis, serving about 1,200 people each year.

Prepared By: Marcel d’Entremont, Program/Policy Analyst, ESIA, 902-424-1543
Cyd Lepage, Homelessness Project Lead, ESIA, 902-424-3652
Date: August 9, 2018
Contact: Pam AuCoin, Director, Income Assistance, 902-424-6104
Secondary Contact: Brandon Grant, Executive Director, ESIA, 902-424-6966
Department: Community Services
Cape Breton Community Housing Association – Request for Homeless Serving System

KEY MESSAGES:

- In line with Government’s commitment to building safe and connected communities, Housing Nova Scotia is working with communities to respond to the need for homelessness supports.

- We are taking a targeted, strategic approach to partnering with community to ensure that supports are focused on housing vulnerable clients.

- We were proud to provide funding to the Cape Breton Community Housing Association to hire housing support workers, support a trusteeship program, and provide 10 youth rent supplements.

- We are also excited about the 25 recently announced rent supplements for 2018-19 targeted for people in Cape Breton who are experiencing homelessness.
Disability Support Program

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ARC/RRC Planning and Financial Implications Project

KEY MESSAGES:

- Our move toward smaller community-based homes will allow residents to be more included in their communities.

- The process will take several years, and engaging partners early is key to success.

- Our focus is on listening to the people that we serve and doing what’s right for each program participant.

- That’s why we’re working with the Adult Residential Centre/Regional Rehabilitation Centre Association (ARC/RRC Association), DCS staff, participants, their families and other community stakeholders, to fully understand what we need to have in place as we move toward more community-based supports.
Investing in Community Capacity

KEY MESSAGES:

- Community Services is changing the Disability Support Program to amplify our focus on participant choice.

- We want to ensure that the supports we provide are accessible, flexible, and responsive.

- We are committed to providing individuals with inclusive places to live and work within the communities they call home.

- Last year Community Services invested:
  - $1 million toward increasing employment and day program supports,
  - $2.1 million to develop more small option homes, and
  - $750,000 to support more individuals to live in the community through a new program called Flex Independent.

- This year, the Department has allocated an additional:
  - $2.1 million to create additional small option homes and;
  - $4 million to expand programming for participants.

Prepared By: Leah Darton, Coordinator, Disability Support Program, 902-424-0081
Date: August 15, 2018
Contact: Joe Rudderham, Executive Director, Disability Support Program, 902-424-4496
Secondary Contact: Vicki Black, Director, Disability Support Program, 902-424-6296
Department: Community Services
Disability Support Program Waitlist

KEY MESSAGES:

• We recognize that being on a waitlist is difficult for people who request support, or who request changes to how we support them.

• Community Services is changing the Disability Support Program to amplify our focus on participant choice.

• We want to ensure that the supports we provide are accessible, flexible, and responsive.

• We are enhancing the Waitlist and Placement Policy to ensure a provincially consistent approach to providing the right support for applicants to the Disability Support Program.
Human Rights Complaint

KEY MESSAGES:

• We are dedicating the resources needed to design a system that puts clients first – that will ensure that our programs can effectively respond to what people need, versus what’s available, and that respects individuals’ choices.

• Getting this right takes time as every client has different needs to be supported and deserves to be respected.

• While the direction we are taking takes time, we are confident that what we’re doing better supports the individual needs of our clients and can better keep them safe as they transition to community living.

• Most of our clients already live in communities.

• Approximately 80% of our current participants live in community homes – whether that’s at home with their families or in smaller community homes.

• About 20% of program participants are in larger residential facilities, which range in size from 10 participants to just over 200 participants.

Prepared by: Randy Acker, Director, Disability Support Program, 902-424-8263
Date: August 13, 2018
Contact: Joe Rudderham, Executive Director, Disability Support Program, 902-424-4496
Secondary Contact: Randy Acker, Director, Disability Support Program, 902-424-8263
Department: Community Services
Roadmap Progress

KEY MESSAGES:

- Nova Scotians with disabilities want to be supported to live more independently in the community.

- Community Services is working with clients and families, service providers, and communities to design the future of our programs and supports.

- In 2018/19, Government has allocated $6.1 million to:
  - help more people with disabilities move from institutions into the community;
  - enhance respite care, and;
  - fund more complex cases.

- Community Services has initiated a multilateral planning project with community partners and colleagues from the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

- The goal for this project is to determine the program, financial, and systemic impacts of closing large-scale facilities in Nova Scotia.
Policy on Autism and Complex Cases

KEY MESSAGES:

- The province is committed to working to ensure that Nova Scotians with autism, their families, and caregivers get the support that they need.

- Community Services continues to work with the departments of Education and Early Childhood Development, Health and Wellness, and Justice to support Nova Scotians with autism and their families.

- The Direct Family Support for Children program helps with costs for respite for families caring for children with disabilities at home.

- At Community Services, the Disability Support Program provides a range of community-based, residential, and vocational/day programs.

- We know that there is always more that can be done to improve the lives of Nova Scotians with disabilities.
Direct Family Support for Children Funding

KEY MESSAGES:

- The Direct Family Support for Children program helps with costs for respite for families caring for children with disabilities at home.

- For eligible families with more complex support needs, the Enhanced Family Support for Children program provides a higher level of support.

- We know there are children and adults with disabilities whose needs are more challenging, and we want to help them and their families.

- That’s why we eliminated the waitlist for the Enhanced Family Support program – to provide families with additional support to care for their loved ones at home.
**Sunset Adult Residential Centre Client Discharge**

**KEY MESSAGES:**

- The health and well-being of our clients is always our first priority.

- We work closely with our service providers to ensure we meet our clients’ needs.

- When a new placement becomes necessary, we work closely with the client and the family to facilitate that placement.

- Homes such as Sunset are independently-run entities that provide placement services for our clients.

- While our staff always work to support our clients, it’s the facility that determines whether a placement is accepted or continued.

Prepared By: Sandy Graves, Executive Director Service Delivery 902-225-8162  
Date: August 13, 2018  
Contact: Sandy Graves, Executive Director Service Delivery 902-225-8162  
Secondary Contact: Sean Marshall, Director Service Delivery 902-698-2141  
Department: Community Services
Small Option Homes Project

**KEY MESSAGES:**

- Government is moving forward on its commitment to develop eight community-based small option homes over two years.

- Community Services is changing how we support Nova Scotians with disabilities.

- Our move toward smaller community-based homes will allow residents to live inclusively as part of the community.

- In August, we called on vendors to apply for the opportunity to develop and operate five of the homes – two in Halifax Regional Municipality, and one each for Yarmouth, Kings, and Lunenburg counties.

- Work continues on the development of community-based homes in New Glasgow, Isle Madame, and Clare.
### Housing Nova

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Homelessness Supports (with focus on Cape Breton)

KEY MESSAGES:

• In line with Government’s commitment to building safe and connected communities, Housing Nova Scotia is working with communities to respond to the need for homelessness supports.

• We are taking a targeted, strategic approach to partnering with community to ensure that supports are focused on housing vulnerable clients.

• We were proud to provide funding to the Cape Breton Community Housing Association to:
  • hire housing support workers,
  • support a trusteeship program,
  • and provide 10 youth rent supplements.

• We are also excited about the 25 recently announced rent supplements for 2018-19 targeted for people in Cape Breton who are experiencing homelessness.
Affordable Housing in HRM

KEY MESSAGES:

• HNS welcomes HRM Council’s interest in ensuring its residents can access affordable housing.

• The Halifax Housing and Homelessness Partnership has been an important forum to discuss issues and actions related to affordable housing.

• HRM is a key member of the Partnership.

• HNS has made steady progress in the last several years preserving or creating affordable housing opportunities in HRM.

• We recognize that more work needs to be done.
National Housing Strategy

KEY MESSAGES:

• The National Housing Strategy was announced by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) in November 2017.

• Housing Nova Scotia has begun a negotiation process with CMHC to determine the details of a new 10-year bilateral funding agreement for Housing that would operationalize the National Housing Strategy objectives.

• The new funding would begin in April 2019.

• Nova Scotia welcomes the new housing funding that will focus on:
  • Investments in affordable housing;
  • A new portable rent supplement program;
  • And funding to preserve and regenerate social housing.
Public Housing – Investments and Maintenance

KEY MESSAGES:

• The safety and well-being of our tenants is a top priority.

• The condition of our units is an ongoing concern and Housing Authorities are working diligently to complete necessary work in a timely manner.

• We continue to make strategic investments to help preserve our Public Housing program.

• Last year we targeted over $8 million for capital repairs and renewal of public housing building systems and major components.
Cannabis Policy

KEY MESSAGES:

• The safety and well-being of our tenants is a top priority.

• The Province is preparing for the anticipated legalization of cannabis by the Government of Canada in October 2018.

• Until federal legislation comes into effect, it is still against the law to possess, use, cultivate, or sell recreational cannabis in Nova Scotia.

• We do not currently plan to prohibit the smoking of recreational cannabis in public housing units that are currently designated as smoking units.

• Units that are designated as smoke-free will remain smoke-free, including cannabis consumption.

• We do not plan to prohibit cultivation of cannabis in public housing units.

• It is our goal to balance protections to tenants who do not wish to be exposed to cannabis with the rights of tenants who wish to consume or cultivate cannabis, once federal legislation is enacted.
• We will monitor the situation following legalization, to ensure that both sets of rights are being protected, and to respond to any concerns raised by tenants.
Waitlist

KEY MESSAGES:

• We know that too many Nova Scotians are struggling to find safe, affordable housing.

• Housing Nova Scotia is committed to addressing the needs of seniors, families and persons with disabilities who need safe, affordable housing.

• Our strategic investments and partnerships with community and private partners are starting to pay off.

• We have reduced our wait list by 25% since March 2015, and are working to reduce it even more in the coming months and years.

• 1,500 new rent supplements are being made available over the next three years to further reduce the public housing waitlist.

Prepared by: Louise Adongo, Manager, Policy and Corporate Supports, 902-424-7776
Date: August 2, 2018
Contact: Ed Lake, Executive Director, Housing Authorities, Housing Nova Scotia, 902-424-2220

Intended for Public Use
Rent Supplements

KEY MESSAGES:

• Rent supplements are an effective way to provide safe, affordable rental housing for low-income individuals, families and seniors.

• There are currently more than 1,700 subsidized rent supplement units housing Nova Scotians in housing need across the province.

• An additional 1,500 new rent supplements are being made available over the next three years to further reduce the public housing waitlist.

• Housing Nova Scotia continues to work with the private and not-for-profit sectors to maximize the value of our investment, to ensure that we can help as many Nova Scotians in need as possible.
Down Payment Assistance Program

KEY MESSAGES:

• Homeownership has become more challenging and out of reach for many young Nova Scotian families.

• Saving for a down payment remains one of the major barriers to homeownership, which is what the Down Payment Assistance Program pilot is designed to address.

• Since the launch of the Down Payment Assistance Program in May 2017, Housing Nova Scotia has assisted 211 households reach their dream of home ownership.
Cutten House Loan

KEY MESSAGES:

• The loan to Acadia University was authorized by the previous government and it was fully repaid with interest.

• The request from Acadia University was made through the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, but the loan was provided by Housing Nova Scotia on behalf of the Province.

• Providing a repayable loan for the provision of adequate and improved housing for students is consistent with the mandate of Housing Nova Scotia.
Baddeck Nursery School

KEY MESSAGES:

• We thank the Baddeck Nursery School Association, their board of directors, and volunteers for their dedication and commitment over their 45-year history.

• The landscape of early childhood education is changing with the implementation of the pre-primary program.

• Child care providers are being supported by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development through space conversion grants, infant incentives and workforce recruitment support.
## Status of Women

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Gender-Based Analysis

KEY MESSAGES

• Gender equality benefits everyone.

• The Province wants to effectively consider the impact of all policies, programs, and initiatives on women, men, girls, boys, and gender-diverse Nova Scotians of all backgrounds.

• While many advances have been made toward gender equality, government recognizes that there are significant gaps that need to be addressed in communities across the province.
Domestic Violence Leave

KEY MESSAGES

- Labour and Advanced Education tabled a bill relating to domestic violence leave following a consultation process with employers, labour, and advocacy groups.

- During the Law Amendments process, government amended the bill to include regulation-making authority, should government choose to use it, to require employers to pay employees for leaves, or a portion of a leave, from the workplace.

- The amended Bill received Royal Assent on April 18, 2018.

- Legislation will come into force on January 1, 2019 through proclamation.

- LAE, with the support and assistance of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, will be consulting with stakeholders on a few key issues in October to inform the development of regulations as well as online training related to domestic violence leave.
Conversion Therapy

KEY MESSAGES

• Government is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all Nova Scotians.

• The province does not cover or condone conversion therapy or the notion that anyone from the LGBTQ2 community requires treatment because of sexual orientation.

• It is not recognized as a billable service in Nova Scotia.

• We understand the concern around conversion therapy and the increased stigma, depression, and isolation associated with promotion of such beliefs.

• We are pleased that NSHA Public Health assisted the Sexual Health Centre in Cumberland County in offering a safer spaces education event in that area, and we support the promotion of inclusion.
Standing Together – Domestic Violence Plan

KEY MESSAGES

• A strong Nova Scotia is a province filled with opportunities, and where everyone feels safe.

• Women are 51% of our province.

• However, the reality is that women don’t always have the same access to economic opportunity and personal safety as men.

• We need to change that.

• We are starting to build an action plan, called Standing Together, to help prevent domestic violence and better support victims.

• Through this $9 million commitment over the next four years, we will work with community to find new ways to prevent domestic violence, and help us map the best path forward for Nova Scotia.

• Domestic violence is a complex issue that happens in all types of relationships.

• We know that women are the primary victims, while men are the primary perpetrators of domestic violence.
National Inquiry – Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

KEY MESSAGES

- Nova Scotia supports the National Inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

- The Mi’kmaw Women Leaders Network and the Status of Women worked together to ensure families were safe and supported during the Community Hearings in Membertou.

- We will continue to work with the National Inquiry, Federal, Provincial and Territorial partners, and Mi’kmaw organizations, as the Inquiry looks at the underlying causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and makes recommendations to end the high rates of violence.

Prepared by: Heather Ternoway, Director of Policy & Research, Status of Women 902-266-8137
Date: August 13, 2018
Contact: Justin Huston, CEO, Aboriginal Affairs, 902-478-4968
Secondary Contact: Stephanie MacInnis-Langley, Executive Director, Status of Women 902-237-9616
Department: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
## Other

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Corporate Agreement Management and Multi-Year Agreements

KEY MESSAGES:

• The top priority of the department and our service providers is to get the best results for the more than 150,000 Nova Scotians who rely on our programs.

• Service providers do incredible work on behalf of our most vulnerable citizens. Providing them with consistent expectations, and the department with improved information, will help us serve people better.

• The Corporate Agreement Management (CAM) Project will allow us to improve how we do business with our service providers, improve accountability for taxpayers, and allow organizations and government to better measure and track client outcomes. It will also honour the government platform commitment to create multi-year agreements.

Prepared by: Kathy Isnor, Project Director, 902-424-1896
Date: August 2, 2018
Contact: Kathy Isnor, Project Director, 902-424-1896
Secondary Contact: Dale MacLennan, Executive Director, Finance & Administration, 902-424-2750
Department: Community Services
Transformation Overview

KEY MESSAGES:

• Our transformation process is about large-scale transformation – the biggest wholesale change to the social services system in 50 years.

• We’re not just tinkering with the system and making small adjustments – this is about affecting real and positive change for Nova Scotians.

• DCS is fundamentally shifting its focus to increase prevention and early intervention programming, and support better education, employment and long-term independence for children, youth and families.

• In alignment with the Disability Support Program (DSP) Roadmap (“Choice, Equality, and Good Lives in Inclusive Communities”), we are:
  o reducing reliance on large facilities;
  o building capacity to better serve participants in communities, and;
  o enhancing programs to improve quality of life, independence and social and community inclusion for all participants.

• For low income Nova Scotians, we are:
  o shifting to an increased focus on providing employment and education supports so people no longer need income assistance or avoid the need for it altogether;
• working with youth and children in care so they can lead fully independent lives; and
• implementing a Standard Household Rate, which will increase rates for all ESIA recipients to the maximum level clients are eligible for, as well as increase rates by an additional 2% for clients who are able to work and by 5% for clients who are unable to work.

• We’ve also:
  • updated our legislation to ensure children are protected, and families can be supported before they are in crisis;
  • enhanced our prevention and early intervention programming;
  • improved the foster care system; and;
  • worked with communities to improve our collective response to the needs of victims and survivors of sexual abuse.
Spending and Investment in Transformation

KEY MESSAGES:

• DCS programs and services help protect the most vulnerable in our province.

• We are working to make sure the system responds to people’s needs and is sustainable.

• DCS’s transformation represents the biggest wholesale change to the social services system in 50 years, and so the department needs dedicated help from people with expertise in project management and delivery, change management, and all aspects of social services redesign and transformation.
Digital Services Request for Proposals

KEY MESSAGES:

• More and more Nova Scotians rely on digital technologies to learn about and receive government services. To meet these changing expectations, the department must modernize how it delivers vital supports and services, such as income assistance, to individuals in need.

• In January, we issued a Request for Proposals aimed at securing a technology solution for improving the department’s delivery of services to clients over the next three years and beyond.

• As we update our technologies, clients, who are able, can apply for support and work with their caseworkers online, reducing the need for appointments and phone calls. Directing clients online will also provide opportunities for clients to learn about other programs that may be helpful to them in moving forward with their lives.

• As part of our consultation, clients told us that they want to be able to access our services.

Prepared by: Andrea Cooke, Manager, Transformation, 902-424-8473
Date: August 2, 2018
Contact: Muhammad Azam, Project Director, Transformation, 902-424-1289
Secondary Contact: Kathleen DeCoste, Director, Transformation, 902-424-0407
Department: Community Services
Blueprint to Reduce Poverty

KEY MESSAGES:

- This is our second year of applying the government’s $20 million commitment toward poverty reduction.

- In recognition of the persistent challenges low-income Nova Scotians face, and through an all-of-government approach, we are working alongside communities and other sectors to test creative initiatives that tackle poverty through innovation.

- In our first year, Nova Scotians benefited immediately from
  - 49 community grant projects,
  - 7 government-led projects and
  - 2 Social Innovation Labs.

- In Year Two we anticipate similar numbers for projects.

- All projects will generate evidence and knowledge that will inform the Nova Scotia Poverty Reduction Blueprint which will guide efforts to improve social outcomes from 2021 onward.