

Accountability Report 2017–2018

Department of
Community Services

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Accountability Report 2017–2018

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Community Services for the year ended March 31, 2018 is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Community Services' Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department of Community Services outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Department of Community Services management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Department of Community Services management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Department of Community Services 2017-2018 Business Plan.

Minister: Honourable Kelly Regan (Original signed by)

Deputy Minister: Lynn Hartwell (Original signed by)

Message from the Minister



People often turn to the Department of Community Services when they feel they have no other option. For some, it's the loss of a job, or raising a child with complex needs, or fleeing an abusive relationship. For others, it's trying to overcome addictions, or dealing with mental health challenges, or living with physical disabilities that make living at home impossible. Whatever the situation, people in need must be supported; they do not need to be policed or labeled by misguided thinking.

At the Department of Community Services, we want all Nova Scotians to have the dignity, self-esteem, and self-confidence they need to enjoy productive and fulfilling lives. We want all Nova Scotians to grow and succeed.

Throughout the last four years, staff of the Department have been working to reshape the organization's culture so that programs and services put clients first. By doing so, departmental supports can more effectively and consistently respond to the needs of clients so clients, in turn, can overcome challenges and move forward with their lives.

Such reshaping takes listening, caring, and a willingness to challenge long-standing practices and introduce changes that test new ideas.

- Changes such as the introduction of an annual bus pass with HRM so that clients, their spouses, and children can make medical appointments, travel across town to see family and friends, and visit a library without having to justify month after month their need for access to transportation.
- The kind of change that encourages people on income assistance to find employment by allowing them to keep more of the money they earn. The more they work, the more financially secure they become.
- Change that sees parents who receive child support to help raise their children keeping that support because it's no longer deducted from their income assistance payments.
- Change that builds small options homes for people who can and want to live in communities, and that recognizes poverty as everyone's fight by putting funds in the hands of communities and groups who know best how to combat it.
- The kind of change that puts the focus where it needs to be – on preventing domestic violence and child abuse from occurring in the first place, on providing the supports and services needed to restore and strengthen families, and on helping foster families so that all children know the love of a caring home.
- The kind of change that changes lives.

The 2017-2018 Accountability Report for the Department of Community Services is an overview of the department's work this past fiscal year to put these changes and others in place. We know there is much more to do, but the department has made substantive and tangible progress –

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progress that is now directly benefitting Nova Scotians in need. Please take a few moments to read about it.

In closing, my personal thanks to the staff of Community Services, who, through their tireless dedication to this work, are committed to the Nova Scotians we serve. And, most importantly, a very special “thank you” to our clients and the people who advocate on their behalf – you continue to teach and guide us.

Thank you.

Kelly Regan

Minister, Community Services

Financial Results

Accountability Report - Financial Table and Variance Explanation			
<i>Department of Community Services</i>			
For the Year Ending March 31, 2018			
Program & Service Area	2017-2018	2017-2018	2017-2018
	Estimate	Actuals	Variance
(\$thousands)			
Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	825	882	57
Policy and Innovation	10,323	8,043	(2,280)
Corporate Services Unit	4,338	4,184	(154)
Service Design and Delivery	103,115	106,874	3,758
Disability Support Program	333,330	337,781	4,451
Child, Youth and Family Support Program	92,460	96,794	4,334
Housing Services	47,528	48,997	1,469
Employment Support and Income Assistance Program	348,543	345,043	(3,500)
NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women	9,159	9,202	43
Total: Departmental Expenses	949,621	957,800	8,179
Additional Information:			
Fees and Other Charges	422	57	(365)
Ordinary Recoveries	18,364	19,087	723
Total Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	18,786	19,144	358
TCA Purchase Requirements	783	-	(783)
Provincial Funded Staff (FTE's)	1,603.0	1,621.9	18.9

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

These overages were partially offset by lower than estimated spending of \$3.5 million in the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program due to lower caseloads and lower than anticipated expenditures in Employment Support Programs, and net savings of \$0.9 million in various other program budgets.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

The Department's TCA variance is due to the time required to complete the initial phase of the Digital Services project. The project is expected to commence in 2018-19.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

The Department's FTEs were higher than Estimate due to a delay in achieved Transformation savings.

Measuring Our Performance

2017-18 Business Plan Accomplishments

The following describes key accomplishments against actions identified in the 2017-18 Business Plan, as established in the context of overall outcomes the department has chosen:

Outcome: Clients are safe from abuse and violence

- In 2017-18, DCS continued to encourage innovative programming that focused on preventing and responding to sexualized violence, especially among children and youth. This included operationalizing sexual violence prevention and supports as a formal program area within the Child, Youth and Family Support (CYFS) program; disbursing \$225K to communities across NS to implement innovative, grassroots sexual violence prevention initiatives (i.e. the Prevention Innovation Grant program); completing the evaluation of the Sexual Violence Strategy; facilitating community engagement with African Nova Scotia communities across NS; initiating the development of an African Nova Scotian training committee to develop a new training module; and developing and promoting new public awareness materials.
- The Department also extended new services and supports to youth aged 16-18 inclusive to help them transition successfully to adulthood. Practices and processes have been altered to align with CYFS amendments for the provision of services to children aged 16-18 years, and community partners are working collaboratively with DCS toward this service provision. Additionally, collaborative and prevention/early intervention focused services are being provided to youth in a coordinated effort with ESIA partners, where applicable. This includes employment-focused programming for youth living in child welfare residential facilities, which promotes independence and self-sufficiency in a safe and secure environment, and provides some of the most vulnerable children in Nova Scotia with improved opportunities to live fulfilling lives.

Outcome: Supports and Services are delivered efficiently

- In 2017-18, DCS began the design of its Digital Services to deliver information, supports, and services more efficiently to clients. The Department worked with clients, staff and service providers to inform the design process. In partnership with Internal Services, DCS also released an RFP in January 2018 to procure an IT solution and resources that will support the implementation of Digital Services.

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- In the fall of 2017, the Department implemented a streamlined reimbursement process for the expenses of children in care to support foster parents, and developed an online submission tool to reduce inconsistencies in application and long processing times. As a result, the average turnaround processing time has been reduced from multiple weeks to just three business days, making it easier for foster parents to manage the financial costs associated with foster care.
- The Department also began to improve access and transportation services for children, youth, and families by adding additional resources to these services in the Eastern and Central regions. These additional resources will help the department deliver transportation services more efficiently to CYFS clients.

Outcome: Clients are included in the community

- DCS began to modernize and improve the services and supports available through the Disability Support Program and to move more participants to the community. To date, the Independent Living Support (ILS) and Flex Individualized Funding programs have been expanded to provide more community supports for participants. DCS achieved its goal of expanding the Flex Independent Program - \$789,500 was invested, providing for 20 additional individuals to receive Flex Independent funding. The Department has also made significant progress in enhancing the existing ILS Program, including increasing the hours of support maximums from 21 to 31, in order to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the department has been working with communities to build eight new small options homes. Service providers have been identified in Isle Madame, Clare and New Glasgow to date. This will provide greater choice and independence for up to 31 DSP participants.
- In December 2017, DCS implemented an automatic payment for recreation expenses for foster parents. This included a 20% increase in the amount of recreation funding available per child, per year. This increase will help more children in foster care to take part in recreation activities within their community.
- DCS has allocated a specialized staff resource and developed targeted materials to improve foster care recruitment within African NS communities, to ensure we are better able to meet the different needs of those communities.
- In 2017-18, DCS made changes to the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program in an effort to connect clients to supports and services in their communities, and to identify service gaps and barriers to social inclusion. With the announcement of the DCS Bus Pass Pilot Project, the Department is making transportation available to approximately 16,000 clients, spouses, and dependents in Halifax. It will provide clients with better access to transportation, to help them be more involved in their community, make it easier to find a job, and improve access to community supports and services.

Outcome: Clients are able to meet their basic needs

- DCS has continued to update and simplify the current ESIA financial benefit system. In August 2019, the Department will exempt child support from the calculation of eligibility for Income Assistance, putting more money in the pockets of parents on assistance.

Work has also continued on the Client Segmentation and Risk Model with the intent of better meeting the specific needs of ESIA clients (implementation targeted for 2019/20).

- DCS has implemented a series of automatic payments to meet the needs of children in foster care and ease the administrative and financial burden for foster parents and social workers. The Department also increased the basic rate for foster parents in an effort to better meet families' financial needs. This included increasing the per diem rate for children up to nine years of age from \$17.50 to \$19, and for children 10 years of age and older from \$25.43 to \$27.50.
- DCS made enhancements to the provincial after-hours services to ensure children in care have access to the services they need. The Department also extended the support to include foster parents. Services have expanded to include telephone conversation, coaching, mentoring, referral to community resources, and attending in person when the situation warrants immediate action.
- The ESIA program, in partnership with the CYFS program, worked toward creating a continuum of supports that actively identified and supported youth from childhood through to employment, thus preventing reliance on ESIA and breaking the cycle of generational poverty. Consultations were held with youth living in child welfare facilities, and resulting employment-focused programming was implemented for youth living in residential facilities in HRM. The design is near completion for facilities in Western and North Eastern, and implementation is expected to take place in June 2018.
- The Provincial Government is developing a blueprint to break down poverty in Nova Scotia. The blueprint builds on work developed through Transformation initiatives, which is focused on redesigning programs to ensure they are effective and efficient in supporting low-income individuals and families to become independent, be a part of their communities, and reach their full potential. In 2017-18, DCS launched its community grants, funded 49 poverty reduction projects across the province, funded eight Poverty Reduction Government Innovations (PRGI) and launched two Social Innovation Labs focused on food security and transportation.

Outcome: Clients are attached to the labour market

- DCS has developed, improved and implemented targeted youth programming to reduce employment barriers. The Youth Development Initiative Program budget was doubled, and new communities were able to develop projects to meet the needs of their youth. As a result, approximately 300 youth participated in community projects and 72 youth benefited from a targeted wage subsidy.
- Changes to the wage exemption structure will mean that Income Assistance recipients will be able to keep more of the money they earn this year, removing an existing disincentive to work, and resulting in an improved financial position for more low-income Nova Scotians.
- DCS made significant improvements to supports that persons with disabilities need to stay in the workforce. New and improved partnerships with community agencies resulted in increased participation and labour market attachment outcomes for clients with Autism through the Ability Works Program. The Department committed ongoing employment support funding to 13 Adult Service Centres for 2018-19 and onward.
- DCS has continued to make improvements to post-secondary services in an effort to help

ESIA clients develop the skills they need to attach themselves to the labour market. Improvements to job development services for graduates is still under review and expected to be implemented within the ESIA Transformation 2019/20 timeline.

- In 2017-2018, investments totaling \$1.2 million were made in Day Program providers across the province. These investments were intended to help adults with disabilities gain employment, skills, and day programming opportunities to become more attached to the labour market. The funding was rolled out in March of 2017 and work is underway to expand Day Program capacity.

Other DCS Accomplishments

- DCS has made significant progress on the implementation of the Standard Household Rate (set to be rolled out in 2019-20) and on the implementation of the Enhanced Employment Income Exemption Structure (which will be implemented in October 2019). The introduction of the Standard Household Rate will allow clients to receive an increase in their income assistance payment, including a 5% increase to the rate for single clients who are disabled, fleeing an abusive situation, or either between 16-18 or 55 or over; and a 2% increase for all other clients.
- DCS has made significant progress in leading the creation of a cross-government Blueprint to Reduce Poverty in Nova Scotia, ensuring government departments are engaged in the work of poverty reduction. One of the main intents of the strategy is to test innovative approaches to poverty reduction from Nova Scotian communities.
- DCS is developing a temporary placement option with extended family or guardians within the CYFS program, to be implemented in 2018. Private families and guardians will be financially supported to look after children who are not in the Minister's care, but whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them. This will help prevent children from coming into the care of the Minister when care can be provided by families.
- Foster Care encompasses recruitment, monitoring, and support for foster families. DCS has continued to attract and invest in new foster families. Beginning in January 2017, the number of foster homes began to steadily increase for the first time in six years. The Department will embark on a rebranding of the foster care program with the intent of invigorating the process and increasing recruitment.
- DCS is expanding access to early intervention and intensive parenting programs. The implementation of a 2nd Families Plus site (intensive family preservation program) is planned for October 2018 in New Glasgow. This program will help families improve the conditions under which their children or young people live, and improve parents' ability to provide the best possible care for their children.
- DCS has made significant progress in providing one-to-one job coaching for Nova Scotians with autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disabilities, through the government's \$1.4 million in funding to Autism NS.
- DCS is also working toward implementing a Respite Coordination Program that will provide crucial support that increases the likelihood of participants being able to continue to live at home with support from their families. The four service providers that currently provide some respite coordination in specific geographic areas will be approached to deliver the new service throughout the province. It is anticipated services will begin in the

Fall of 2019.

- DCS has also dedicated annual funding to address sexual violence – the budget was approved and dedicated annual funding of \$755K has been allocated for Sexual Violence Prevention & Supports. Work is underway for the implementation of new programming to prevent and respond to the sexual abuse and exploitation of youth and children (including human trafficking), community mobilization for marginalized and underserved groups, and to continue the Prevention Innovation Grants.
- The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women has developed an approach for a Provincial Action Plan to prevent domestic violence. Standing Together represents a four-year, \$9M commitment, with a \$2M budget in 2018-19. Together with the Department of Justice, the Council has made significant progress on creating a continuum of programs to address domestic violence. It has supported the development of the Halifax Domestic Violence Court Program through active participation on the steering committee, working committee, and several task teams. The Halifax Domestic Violence Court Program was launched in February 2018.

Supplemental Information

The following three-year trends provide insight into the Department of Community Services performance:

Measures	Three - year trends
Average monthly ESIA caseload	2015/16: 26,783 2016/17: 26,454 2017/18: 26,076
% of income assistance cases with earnings from employment	2015/16: 12.1% 2016/17: 11.6% 2017/18: 11.4%
Average earnings from employment for income assistance clients	2015/16: \$525 2016/17: \$528 2017/18: \$531
Average Length of Stay for income assistance clients	2015/16: 4.18 years 2016/17: 4.62 years 2017/18: 4.64 years
# of children in the care of the Minister	2015/16: 1,023 2016/17: 1,020 2017/18: 1,043
% of children in care placed for adoption	2015/16: 12.6% 2016/17: 13.1% 2017/18: 16.2%
Average monthly # of foster parents	2015/16: 606 2016/17: 570 2017/18: 632
% of DSP participants living independently	2015/16: 16.8% 2016/17: 16.9%

	2017/18: 17.0%
% of DSP participants in community based living	2015/16: 76.7% 2016/17: 77.8% 2017/18: 78.9%
Waitlist as a % of the DSP caseload	2015/16: 22.5% 2016/17: 24.6% 2017/18: 27.9%

Additional Information About DCS

The department has three core business areas: Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA); Child, Youth & Family Supports (CYFS); and the Disability Support Program (DSP). The Department is also administratively aligned with Housing Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Employment Support and Income Assistance

- Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) provides financial assistance and supports to people struggling to meet their basic needs.
- There are approximately 26,000 households receiving income assistance. This equates to around 39,000 beneficiaries.
- Average cost per case is around \$780/month (including administrative costs and ESIA payments).
- Overall program budget of \$348.5 million, with approximately 423 staff.

Child, Youth and Family Supports

- Child Youth and Family Supports (CYFS) provides a variety of programs and services to support Nova Scotia's children, youth, and families.
- Prevention and Early Intervention offers a wide range of programs designed to prevent family breakdown and to support healthy development and well-being.
- Child Protection investigates reports of alleged child abuse and neglect, attempts to reduce the risk of harm and, when necessary, provides out-of-home support or placement services.
- Overall program budget of \$92.5 million, with approximately 815 staff and 92 service providers.
- There are approximately 1,000 children in the Minister's care.

Disability Support Program

- The Disability Support Program (DSP) serves children, youth, and adults with intellectual disabilities, long-term mental illness and physical disabilities in a range of community-based, residential and vocational/day programs.
- DSP promotes a participant's independence, self-reliance, security and social inclusion. The goal of the DSP is to support participants at various stages of their development and independence.
- Overall program budget of \$333.3 million (2017-18 estimate), with approximately 100 staff and 100+ service providers.
- There are approximately 5,400 participants served through the DSP program.

Housing NS

- Housing Nova Scotia (HNS) offers programs to help lower income Nova Scotians rent and maintain safe and affordable housing.
- HNS' five Housing Authorities provide affordable housing to thousands of low income seniors, families and persons with disabilities in provincially-owned rental units around Nova Scotia.
- There are approximately 18,000 people in public housing units.
- Overall program budget of \$387.4 million, with 11,560 housing units and 1,724 rent supplements.

Status of Women

- The Status of Women office provides research, policy advice, and information services in pursuit of equality, fairness, and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia.
- Its mandate is to bring issues affecting the lives of women and girls in Nova Scotia to the attention of the Minister of Community Services.
- The Office funds 11 transition houses, 9 women's centres, and 1 second stage housing organization.

Appendix A: Public Interest and Wrongdoing Act

Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labour Board.

A Wrongdoing for the purposes of the *Act* is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
- b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
- d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Community Services.

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2017-2018
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	NA
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	NA