



Accountability Report

2018–2019

Community Services



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Accountability Report 2018–2019

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Community Services for the year ended March 31, 2019 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 2018-19 Business Plan.

Minister: Honourable Kelly Regan (Original signed by)

Deputy Minister: Tracey Taweel (Original signed by)

Message from the Minister



At the Department of Community Services, we believe all Nova Scotians want to provide for themselves, contribute to their communities, and lead fulfilling lives.

Since 2015, we've been transforming our social services system to better meet the needs of our clients. To ensure the changes we're making do just that, we've continually sought the input of our clients, stakeholders, communities, and staff.

This past year, we implemented a new wage exemption so that people receiving income support can keep more of the money they earn before seeing a reduction in their income assistance payments, and exempted child maintenance from income assistance calculations, so that money earmarked for children benefits children. We also doubled the Poverty Reduction Credit for individuals and couples, introduced a new Personal Items Allowance to support people temporarily staying in homeless shelters and transition houses, and implemented a pilot program with Halifax Regional Municipality to provide free bus passes to people receiving income assistance, as well as their spouses and dependents. In the new fiscal year, we will implement a Standard Household Rate for people receiving income assistance that will see their payments raised to the policy maximum plus a rate increase.

Through government's \$20-million, multi-year Poverty Reduction Blueprint, we continue to partner with communities, non-profits, sectors, and other government departments to test new ideas to help Nova Scotians living in poverty access their basic needs.

In 2018-2019, we introduced EDGE, an employment pilot program for Nova Scotians aged 18 to 26, who receive income assistance. The program, designed in part by youth, is a first for Nova Scotia. Additionally, high school-aged students who are clients of the department and are looking to gain work experience and explore careers within their community now have more opportunities through the Career Rising program.

We're also expanding the services and programming available for persons with disabilities who are able to pursue paid employment, and we've boosted support for day programs for youth with disabilities. Over the next few years, we'll work with community organizations and groups to build Standing Together, a provincial action plan to prevent domestic violence and support victims and their families. This \$9 million, multi-year investment that will enable community groups and government to test new, innovative ideas, and explore best practices.

These are just a few of the initiatives we undertook this past year to help Nova Scotians lead their best lives. Please read more about this work here in the Department's 2018-2019 Accountability Report.

In closing, I wish to offer my personal thanks to the staff of Community Services. Through their dedication and commitment, they're making lives better for the Nova Scotians we serve.

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, 2019			
Program & Service Area	2018-2019	2018-2019	2018-2019
	Estimate	Actuals	Variance
(\$ thousands)			
Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	836	887	51
Policy and Innovation	11,692	11,165	(527)
Corporate Services Unit	4,367	4,253	(114)
Service Delivery	93,860	95,771	1,911
Strategic Services	12,034	11,988	(46)
Disability Support Program	351,548	352,520	972
Child, Youth and Family Support Program	95,506	102,927	7,421
Housing Services	58,326	57,978	(348)
Employment Support and Income Assistance Program	350,352	345,749	(4,603)
NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women	11,177	11,580	403
Total: Departmental Expenses	989,698	994,818	5,120
Additional Information:			
Fees and Other Charges	4	14	10
Ordinary Recoveries	19,303	19,308	5
Total Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	19,307	19,322	15
TCA Purchase Requirements	2,106	745	(1,361)
Provincial Funded Staff (FTE's)	1,621.5	1,653.4	31.9

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Department of Community Services expenses were \$5.1 million or 0.5% higher than estimate.

The Child, Youth and Family Support Program was \$7.4 million over estimate primarily due to an increase in the number of emergency location placements for children with complex needs. Service Delivery was \$1.9 million over estimate primarily due to supports for children in care exceeding planned; and net increased spending of \$0.4 million occurred in various other program budgets.

These overages were partially offset by lower than estimated spending in the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program, due to lower caseloads and lower than anticipated expenditures in employment programs.

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 commenced in late 2018-19.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

The Department's FTEs were higher than Estimate primarily due to increased demand for supports for children in care of the province.

Measuring Our Performance

2018-19 Business Plan Accomplishments

The following describes key accomplishments against actions identified in the 2018-19 Business Plan. The accomplishments are presented in the context of the overall outcomes the department aims to achieve:

Outcome: Clients are safe from abuse and violence

- A new Alternative Family Care program has been implemented so that, in the event of Child Protection involvement, children can continue to live in their community with those they have close relationships with, such as grandparents and extended family members. This program has been successful in providing support to almost 300 children in Nova Scotia since its inception.
- The Department has developed and restructured placement and residential options to better support youth in care, specifically targeting groups of children and youth with particular needs. These new options will allow a more focused approach based on the needs of individual children.
- The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women continued to work with stakeholders to develop *Standing Together: A Provincial Action Plan to Prevent Domestic Violence*. It continued its engagement in the Halifax Domestic Violence Court Working Group and in the community-driven Restorative Conversations project funded by the Department of Justice. The Office has also continued to participate in the coordinated work on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and support of the Mi'kmaq Women Leaders Network.

Outcome: Clients are able to meet their basic needs

- The Poverty Reduction Credit provides financial assistance to Nova Scotians living in poverty. In 2018-19, the department doubled the Poverty Reduction Credit, bringing it to \$500 for the year. This increased support will help those Nova Scotians living on the lowest incomes to improve their financial situation.

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- The department has been co-leading the creation of a cross-governmental Blueprint to Reduce Poverty in Nova Scotia. Fiscal year 2018/19 saw the conclusion of the second year of this provincial commitment to address poverty. To date, \$6 million has been spent on 136 projects, many of which show particular promise.
- The department has implemented the Rapid Re-Housing Program, which provides short-term support to single men who are experiencing episodic or transitional homelessness. It is focused on getting people into housing and out of shelters as quickly as possible. In 2018/19, of those who completed the program, 56 of 59 individuals were permanently housed from the shelter system. The department continues to work with participants who are admitted to the program to increase the number of participants housed.
- The department introduced a Bus Pass program which provides all Income Assistance clients in HRM, along with their dependents, with an annual bus pass, allowing them better access to work opportunities and community involvement. A total of 9,836 people benefitted from the Bus Pass program in 2018/19.
- In 2018/19, the department introduced a Personal Items Allowance of \$101 monthly for income assistance recipients temporarily staying in homeless shelters or transition houses to assist with the cost of purchasing personal items.

Outcome: Clients are attached to the labour market

- The Youth Development Initiative budget was doubled to allow for increased community projects and work experiences for young people. Participation increased from 75 in 2017/18 to 90 in 2018/19, and several offices were able to deliver employment-focused projects for the first time.
- In 2018, the department piloted a new program for ESIA youth aged 18-26, called EDGE, in Kentville and Halifax. The program provides wrap-around employment services delivered via peer groups and individualized mentorship. This program is aimed at removing obstacles to employment and supporting young adults to achieve independence. Since its inception, 54 youth have participated in the pilot.

Outcome: Clients are included in the community

- One Small Option Home opened in 2018/19 (New Glasgow), and another has since opened (Isle Madame). Service providers have been selected to run an additional six homes. These homes will begin opening in 2019/20, meaning more people will live in community settings.
- \$1 million in funding was made available to Adult Service Centers, residential providers, and select other community service providers on a one-time basis to expand day program capacity. This allows us to serve additional participants, provide more hours to existing participants, and serve more diverse participants. This will mean that more people will have the opportunity for an improved quality of life through social engagement, community volunteering, skill development, and employment.

Outcome: Clients have control of their own lives

- The department invested \$1.5M in community independent and/or supported living programs to support an additional 36 individuals. Funding was offered to participants of the

following three programs: Flex Independent, Independent Living Support, and Alternative Family Support. Individuals were supported to live in a community-based option, moving from 24/7 residential support settings, hospital, or family residences.

- All participants who had been waiting for Enhanced Funding Support component of the Direct Family Support for Children and the Flex Individualized Funding programs began receiving their funding in 2018/19. A total of 50 individuals were being supported to live successfully in community with new investment in Enhanced Funding by the end of fiscal year 2018/19.
- The Department implemented an enhanced wage exemption structure in October 2018, improving how wages for both regular and supported employment are treated. This has meant more people are able to keep more of the money they earn and improve their own quality of life.

Outcome: Supports and services are accessible

- DCS has implemented a Respite Coordination Service across the province so that families providing care for their loved ones with disabilities can more easily find appropriate matches for their needs and current situations.

Outcome: Supports and services are delivered efficiently

- The new Collaborative Case Management (CCM) system will provide the technology required to support the department in achieving its transformation goals. It will enable consistent and better coordinated delivery of services, more holistic approaches to case planning and case management, and will support evidence-based decision-making at all levels. The new system will also provide digital self-service options for clients, including the ability to apply for ESIA and DSP benefits online. In early 2018/19, the Department met with a diverse group clients, staff, and service providers to learn about the process of applying for ESIA and DSP benefits – from the client’s perspective. The insights gained through this work will serve as a critical input into the CCM solution design. In December 2019, the province entered into a partnership with VitalHub Inc. as the CCM system provider. The system will be developed and implemented over several phases.

Outcome: The system of supports and services is a balanced mix of prevention and intervention

- A second Families Plus program has been implemented in New Glasgow. This is helping families who need extra support with the intensive services necessary to keep them both safe and in their family home.
- In 2018-19, the department operationalized sexual violence prevention and supports. This will enable a continued coordinated response to sexual violence prevention and supports in Nova Scotia.
- Sponsorship in the Educate to Work program continued to increase from 198 students in 2017/18 to 217 in 2018/19. Improved case management support and better-informed Education Plans have resulted in improved completion rates, from 45% to 70%, **exceeding the completion rates of the general population.**

- In 2018/19, the department expanded the Career Rising Program to include two new sites (Bridgewater and North Sydney). This program is delivered in partnership with the NS Co-operative Council, and provides skills development camps and work experience within the agricultural and resource sectors. It supports dependents of ESIA clients, youth in care and youth at risk, ages 15 to 19, to learn employability skills, earn wages, save for post-secondary, connect to community, and help meet local industry labour market needs. In 2018/19, Career Rising was acknowledged as an innovative practice by the OECD.
- The Inspiring Success Program was also introduced, which provides work experience for ESIA-sponsored post-secondary students and DCS-attached youth to gain government work experience.

Outcome: DCS staff and delivery partners are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives

- The majority of organizations receiving annual discretionary grant funding now have signed agreements. These agreements outline operating expectations and funding arrangements. Working directly with numerous service providers, DCS has established agreements that clearly outline accountabilities and reporting requirements on specific client outcomes.

Supplemental Information

The following 3-year trends provide insight into the Department of Community Services performance:

Measures	Three-year Trends
Average monthly ESIA caseload	2016/17: 26,454 2017/18: 26,076 2018/19: 25,509
Monthly average number of ESIA beneficiaries (including dependents)	2016/17: 39,323 2017/18: 38,985 2018/19: 38,183
Monthly average number of ESIA children dependents	2016/17: 10,447 2017/18: 10,437 2018/19: 10,371
Percentage of income assistance cases with earnings from employment	2016/17: 11.6% 2017/18: 11.4% 2018/19: 11.4%
Average earnings from employment for income assistance clients	2016/17: \$531.2 2017/18: \$520.8 2018/19: \$554.5
Average length of stay for income assistance clients	2016/17: 4.62 years 2017/18: 4.64 years 2018/19: 4.95 years

Measures	Three-year Trends
Number of children in the care of the Minister	2016/17: 1,020 2017/18: 1,043 2018/19: 995
Percentage of children in care placed for adoption	2016/17: 13.1% 2017/18: 16.2% 2018/19: 15.8%
Monthly average number of foster parents	2016/17: 570 2017/18: 632 2018/19: 672
Percentage of DSP participants in community-based living	2016/17: 77.8% 2017/18: 78.9% 2018/19: 79.2%
Service request list as a percentage of the DSP caseload	2016/17: 24.6% 2017/18: 27.9% 2018/19: 30.8%

** The items listed under the "Other DCS Accomplishment" section in previous year's Accountability Report have been re-organized under their associated outcome in this year's Report.*

Additional Information about DCS

Department of Community Services 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 the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Employment Support and Income Assistance

- **Employment Support and Income Assistance** delivers two programs to Nova Scotians who are struggling to meet their basic needs: Income Assistance and Employment Support Services.
- **Income Assistance** provides a personal and shelter allowance to support recipients in accessing basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter. A special needs allowance may also be provided to assist with needs unique to the recipient's health or current circumstances, such as special dietary requirements, transportation for medical needs, childcare, and telephone for health and safety reasons. There are approximately 25,500 households receiving income assistance. This equates to approximately 38,000 beneficiaries.
- **Employment Support Services** provides employment-related supports to both youth at risk, and ESIA clients to help facilitate movement toward employment and independence. Approximately 4,600 Income Assistance beneficiaries receive support from Employment Support Services monthly.
- The average cost per case is around \$770/month (including administrative costs and ESIA payments).

- The overall program budget is \$350.4 million, with approximately 420 staff.

Child, Youth and Family Supports

- **Child, Youth, and Family Supports (CYFS)** delivers programs to ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect, and that children receive the care essential for their well-being. CYFS provides services to children, youth, and families under three main umbrellas: Prevention and Early Intervention, Child Protection, and Placement Services.
- **Prevention and Early Intervention** programming helps address issues early to ensure the healthy development, safety, and well-being of vulnerable and at-risk children and youth, prevent family breakdown and; mitigate the need for more intrusive, statutory interventions.
- **Child Protection Services** has the mandate under the *Children and Family Services Act (CFSA)* to protect children from abuse or neglect, while making every effort to keep families together. Even when matters proceed through the court system, families often work cooperatively with child protection social workers. The circumstances that bring a child or family to the attention of child protection dictate the type of services the child or family may require.
- **Placement Services** matches children with resources when children are unable to remain in their own homes on a temporary or long-term basis. These resources include Foster Care, Adoption, and Residential Services. Foster Care encompasses recruitment, monitoring, and support for foster families. Adoption includes assessment and approval for those families seeking to provide permanency for children through adoption as well as support based on the child's identified needs. Residential Services are provided via a combination of 19 government and private facilities, licensed in accordance with the *Children and Family Services Act (CFSA)*.
- The overall program budget is \$95.5 million, with approximately 784 staff and 102 service providers.
- There are approximately 995 children in the Minister's care.

Disability Support Program

- The Disability Support Program serves 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 program is to support participants at various stages of their development and independence through a range of programs. These are provided through community-based-residential and vocational/day programs.
- The overall program budget is \$351.5 million, with approximately 98 staff and over 100 service providers.
- There are approximately 5,500 participants served through the DSP program.

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on 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.
- To advance these goals, the office works collaboratively across government departments, agencies, academia, community groups, and women-serving organizations, and is responsible for operational and administrative supports to transition houses, women's centers, and Alice House.
- The overall program budget is \$11.2 million, with 9 staff.
- The office funds Nova Scotia Native Women's Association, 10 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 disclosing 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 <i>Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act</i>	Fiscal Year 2017-2018
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	Not applicable
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	Not applicable