



# **Accountability Report**

## 2023–24

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Seniors and Long-Term Care



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Accountability Report 2023–2024

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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the *Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care (DSLTC)* for the year ended March 31, 2024, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the *DSLTC* outcomes necessarily include estimates, judgments, and opinions by *DSLTC* management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of *DSLTC* 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 *DSLTC 2023-24 Business Plan*.

Original Signed By  
Hon. Minister Barbara Adams

Original Signed By  
Deputy Minister, Tracey Barbrick

## Introduction

The Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care supports the social and economic well-being of older adults and is mandated with improving the quality of care for those accessing continuing care services, including long-term care and home care.

The priorities reported on below showcase the Department's commitment to supporting those who are accessing continuing care services to age as well as possible in their homes and communities.

## Measuring Performance

### Long-Term Care (LTC)

- Full implementation of LTC facilities operating within a protected and unprotected funding model was completed by April 1, 2023. This ensures that money assigned to direct care staffing and food costs gets used for its intended purpose.
- Over \$35 million was available in 2023-24 to help increase the standard of care to at least 4.1 hours of care per resident in nursing homes for those facilities who were ready to implement. Half of all nursing homes in Nova Scotia were delivering 4.1 hours of direct care by the end of the fiscal year, with the remainder well on their way through active recruitment.
- Implementation of the InterRAI resident assessment in all nursing homes in Nova Scotia is complete. This online care management tool will support care planning, data collection and allow for broader reporting to the Canadian Institute of Health Information in future years.

### Home and Community Care

- The Department improved access to direct funding programs as a home support option. Changes made December 1, 2023 now align funding parameters across multiple programs to improve access and consistency for clients/families and reduce administrative burden for clients/families.
- Victoria Order of Nursing (VON) nursing clinics have been expanding throughout the province to more efficiently deliver nursing services in the community. Full clinics currently exist in Halifax (expanded in 2023) and New Glasgow (opened late 2023). VON began phased implementation of virtual (telephone) nursing in late October 2023 as a measure to build nursing capacity. Currently virtual visits are underway in HRM, Lunenburg, Colchester/East Hants, Queens, Annapolis Valley and Tri-County area with more locations started every week.
- Electronic medication dispensers are reducing medication-only nursing visits. In 2023-24, medication dispensers were issued to clients 292 times.
- CAPABLE is currently being piloted in three locations: Dartmouth, Central Halifax, and Kings County. It is expected to serve 300 clients in the pilot. In 2023-24, 48 clients enrolled in the program. CAPABLE is a person-directed, home-based program to increase independent at home by setting goals, learning new skills, and gaining confidence. They are supported by an occupational therapist (OT), a

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registered nurse (RN), and a tradesperson who work together with the person to set the goals and direct-action plans to improve health, independence, and safety.

### Recruitment and Retention

- The Continuing Care Assistant (CCA) training grant continued, providing free tuition to CCA students. Over 1,000 students were enrolled in CCA programs across the province by March 2023 and another 1,000 were enrolled by March 2024. All free tuition students sign a two-year return of service agreeing to work in continuing care in Nova Scotia.
- Included in the CCA training grant is the work and learn program, which provides a unique opportunity to gain real life experiences in continuing care, working two days and studying three days per week. In 2023-24, 985 students were enrolled in the program.
- The Department continued to work with a recruitment team that supports continuing care employers. As of March 31, 2024, 169 international recruits were in the immigration process, and 94 domestic hires started working in the province.
- Thank you bonuses were given to some current employees, such as CCAs in the Nova Scotia publicly funded health sector. Incentive bonuses were also offered to encourage nursing staff who have left permanent jobs in the Nova Scotia publicly funded health sector to return (this bonus closed on March 31, 2023). A retention bonus was offered to encourage current nurses in the publicly funded health sector to sign a return of service in 2024. Eligible nurses received a one-time maximum \$10,000 payment attached to return of service agreement for 2 years of service to the continuing care sector.
- The sector benefited from an investment of over \$1.3 million in the Professional Development and Human Resources Innovation Fund. Projects include education programs to increase the skills of those already working in continuing care, recruitment campaigns, and orientation programs.

### Long-term Care Infrastructure

- The Department's Long-Term Care Infrastructure Renewal Plan supports current and anticipated needs using a balanced approach of replacement, renovation, and building additional rooms to ensure Nova Scotians have appropriate access to quality long-term care. In 2023-24,
- 14 facilities broke ground and or in active construction that representing over 1,590 beds;
- Villa Acadienne, a 96-bed replacement facility in Digby, was open to occupancy in September 2023;
- Three Assisted living complexes in HRM converted 72 publicly funded and licensed nursing home beds; and
  - Yarmouth Heights had 21 assisted living beds converted to publicly funded and licensed nursing home beds.
- Working towards the goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030, all new and

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renovated nursing homes are designed to meet applicable accessibility standards in healthcare facilities. New design standards ensure nursing homes are being constructed with barrier-free access throughout the entire facility making spaces accessible to everyone, including residents, staff and visitors.

- The new 48 room Kiknu Long-Term Care Facility, opening in April 2024, is the first nursing home in the province to be built in a First Nations community. It will provide more culturally responsive care and multiple language services to Mi'kmaw seniors from across Nova Scotia.

### **Aging Well in Community**

- The Age Friendly Communities (AFC) Grants continued for 2023-24 with funding up to \$25,000 to support community-based organizations with initiatives that help older adults age well at home and in their communities. This year, the Department awarded 44 grants totalling \$538,994.
- The Seniors' Care Grant continued in 2023-24 with over 32,000 applications approved. Funding was increased from \$500 to \$750/year to assist seniors with the cost of professional health services (i.e. physiotherapy, mental health supports), household expenses (i.e., snow removal, lawn care, telephone/internet), and home heating.

### **Workplace Safety**

- The Home Care Lift Loan Program is funded by the Department and delivered by the Red Cross. The program provides proper lift equipment to aid staff in the safe handling of clients in their homes, which further supports clients in being able to remain in their homes longer. In 2023-24, approximately 65% (117) of referrals were from clients in community, with 35% (63) of referrals from clients in hospitals. The average duration of a lift loan was 122 days. A total of 161 new lifts were purchased through the program this year.
- The Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) continued to support the psychological health and safety of sector employees and their families.
- Safety Training Initiatives were provided through AWARE-NS and offer sector leaders and employees access to education and training to build their knowledge and keep themselves, and others, safe in the workplace.
- The Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (RTW) program provides direct access to healthcare resources to promote recovery and reduce the amount of time an injured/ill employee is away from the workplace. The program also supports employees to return to work post-injury on transitional work duties. Continuing care providers either deliver their own internal return to work program, subject to meeting the RTW program requirements, or participate in the program delivered by third-party provider, Dallas Mercer Consulting.
- Occupational Therapist Supports for Workplace Safety Program provides agencies with OT/PT supports for staff delivering services including instruction on safe use of home health equipment and mobility aids, and training to support application of safe work practices, including safe moving and handling of home support clients.

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For staff who have accessed the program, there has been a significant reduction in Workers Compensation Board claims, and employee satisfaction is high.

- Citing recent investments in workplace safety for long-term care and home care, the Workers' Compensation Board reported improvements in injury rates and the time it takes for workers to return to work in both these sectors. The injury rate in home care decreased by 15% in 2023 over 2022 (6.85 to 5.84 injuries per 100 covered workers), while in long-term care, the injury rate also decreased in that same period (4.09 to 4.08 injuries per 100 covered workers).



## Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

<b>Departmental Expenses Summary</b>			
<b>(\$ thousands)</b>			
	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>
<b>Programs and Services</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Actuals</b>	<b>Variance</b>
General Administration	1,207	1,460	253
<b><u>Strategic Direction and Accountability</u></b>			
Corporate Support and Strategic Initiatives	1,922	1,763	(159)
Continuing Care	6,097	6,034	(63)
<b><u>Service Delivery and Supports</u></b>			
Client Services	5,910	6,085	175
Home Care	374,833	408,540	33,707
Long-term Care	941,660	982,663	41,003
Amortization	349	—	(349)
<b>Total - Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>1,331,978</b>	<b>1,406,545</b>	<b>74,567</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Ordinary Revenues	11,092	26,307	15,215
Fees and Other Charges	—	—	—
Ordinary Recoveries	—	3	3
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries</b>	<b>11,092</b>	<b>26,311</b>	<b>15,218</b>
TCA Purchase Requirements	—	—	—
<b><u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u></b>			
<b>Department Funded Staff</b>	<b>125.5</b>	<b>114.7</b>	<b>10.8</b>
<b><u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u></b>			
Department of Seniors and Long-term Care expenses were \$74.6 million or 5.6% higher than estimate primarily due to \$45.7 million in travel staff expenses, \$20.8 million for increased enrolment in Expanded Home first, \$15.3 million for Aging with Dignity, \$13.3 million for the NSGU nursing settlement; partially offset by, (\$10.6) million decrease in home support utilization in both for-profit and non-profit organizations; and, (\$9.5) million decrease in operating costs related delays in capital projects.			
<b><u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u></b>			
Ordinary Revenues were \$15.2 million over budget primarily due to the new Aging with Dignity federal agreement.			
<b><u>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</u></b>			
N/A			
<b><u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u></b>			
The Department is reporting a variance of 10.7 FTEs under budget due to temporary vacancies.			

## 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 Labor 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 DSLTC:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2023-2024
The number of disclosures received	No disclosures were received by the Department in 2023-2024
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing.	N/A