

Spring 2017

Shift

Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population



Highlights

We all have various identities in our lives – we are athletes, artists, musicians, labourers, professionals, carpenters, etc.,...but we turn 65 and become “a Senior” ...the term used for everyone from the age of 65 – 105...It’s like calling the rest of the world ‘the juniors’ and stripping away all other identities or titles which allow us to be individuals. (From a contributor to the public consultations)

The Government of Nova Scotia is leading a shift in thinking and in practice that will benefit all Nova Scotians, including older adults, in all their diversity.

It’s time to reframe the discussion about aging and build on the good news and benefits of our demographic shift. An aging population reflects advances in population health and improvements in the social and economic well-being of Nova Scotians. Older adults offer knowledge, skills, experiences, and connections that help people and communities thrive. People of all ages, including older adults, have much to contribute.

The fact is a massive population shift is underway. The world is aging, and so is Nova Scotia. The first of the baby boomers have turned 70. By 2030—a little more than a decade away—more than one in four Nova Scotians will be aged 65 and over. Longer life expectancies and lower birth rates mean that, from now on, our population will be older.

In Nova Scotia, older adults help to sustain families, workplaces, communities, and the province as a whole. Unfortunately, ageist attitudes and stereotypes in our society perpetuate the notion that getting older is, in itself, a problem rather than a natural part of life. Ageism is stereotyping and discrimination based on a person’s chronological age. These attitudes have fueled intense public discussion and alarm about the prospect of an aging population and the future of our province.



OUR VISION: *Together, Nova Scotians value, promote, and support older adults and their contributions to our province.*

GOAL: *Value the social and economic contributions of older adults*

With their knowledge and experience, older Nova Scotians help drive our economy and keep our communities going.

Commitments

- **Value older adults as entrepreneurs**
Government will work with partner organizations involved in entrepreneurship education to promote entrepreneurship—including social entrepreneurship—as an option for older adults.
- **Value older adults in the workplace**
Government will work with employers and the public to promote the value of older workers and encourage their participation in the labour market. As an employer, government will lead the way in demonstrating how to be an age-friendly, inclusive, and intergenerational workplace that values its older workers.
- **Value unpaid community and volunteer work**
Government will work with the voluntary and not-for-profit sectors to involve older adults in all their diversity as community leaders, mentors, volunteers, and clients.

GOAL: *Promote healthy, active living*

With good health, older Nova Scotians can pursue their goals, live independently, and stay connected and contributing.

Commitments

- **Promote an inclusive and supportive population health approach throughout Nova Scotia's health system**
In planning for Nova Scotia's health system, government will take a comprehensive approach to improving the physical and mental health of Nova Scotians of all ages.
- **Reduce the impact of poverty on health**
Government will assess approaches to income security for all low-income Nova Scotians—particularly single people struggling with the cost of living—and will improve access to healthy, affordable food and intergenerational food literacy programs.
- **Promote physical activity and regular exercise**
Government will ensure that provincial initiatives encouraging healthy, active living are affordable and accessible to older and middle-aged adults.

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GOAL: Support aging in place, connected to community life

Aging in place means older Nova Scotians can grow older in their homes and stay involved and connected to their communities.

Commitments

- **Support community transportation**
Government will work with its partners to improve access to transportation in Nova Scotia, with a particular focus on rural communities.
- **Support appropriate, affordable housing**
Government will work with municipal and federal partners to invest in housing so that Nova Scotians can age in place in their homes and communities.
- **Support age-friendly community planning**
Government will work with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities and individual municipal governments to support the development of age-friendly communities and to support community planning that fosters aging in place and the continued economic and social participation of older adults.
- **Support social connections**
Government will work to ensure older adults stay socially connected and are able to participate in public policy development, in person and through digital technologies.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN



Understanding the diversity of older Nova Scotians and building on their strengths will help make Nova Scotia a better place for all of us.

Commitments

- **Base decisions and actions on evidence**
Government will find better ways to understand the experiences of older adults in all their diversity. We will improve how we collect and use information in order to deliver programs and services that respect the people we serve.
- **Learn from each other**
Government will launch a public education campaign that shows older adults in all their diversity. The campaign will dispel myths and misconceptions about older age and demonstrate the contributions of older adults to our province.

Find out more at novascotia.ca/shift



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