

Healthier Together

A Strategic Health Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador



Healthier Together: A Strategic Health Plan for

Newfoundland and Labrador sets out the major long-term goals

for the health and community services system and identifies the objectives, actions, and targets which will be pursued over the next five years. It is a plan for the whole system, and each of the organizations within the system will be asked to develop or modify their strategic and operational plans to ensure they are supporting the same basic goals and directions.

Challenges Facing the Health & Community Services System

As part of the process of reforming the system, the challenges facing Newfoundland and Labrador's health and community services system must be identified and understood. The key challenges affecting the system in this province include:

- **health status of the population** - while citizens report in surveys that they feel generally healthy, Newfoundland and Labrador has among the highest rates of circulatory disease, cancer, and diabetes. Additionally, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians tend to rank high on the risk factors of smoking, obesity, alcohol consumption, and inactivity which are strongly linked to many chronic diseases;
- **demographic change** - the population size and structure in Newfoundland and Labrador is undergoing significant change. The population is declining, showing the largest percentage decline of any province in Canada. Additionally, urban areas are becoming more populated while many rural regions are seeing population decreases, the average age of the population is increasing, and more and more young people are leaving. These factors are creating greater costs for the province's health care system;
- **quality and accessibility of health services** - quality and access issues in this province exist in the areas of primary health care, location of services, organizational boundaries, long-term care and supportive services, and mental health services. Improvements in each of these areas will improve the quality and accessibility of health services in this province; and
- **sustainability of health services** - the health and community services system is facing increased costs during a time of fiscal restraint. Higher costs will continue to occur with new technologies, pharmaceuticals, and the aging of the population. These pressure will challenge government's ability to sustain the system unless continued efficiencies and new models of service delivery can be achieved.

Vision

For all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to enjoy the best possible health and well-being.

Mission

To provide quality health and community services to improve the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Guiding Principles for Decision-making

Decisions on the future of health and community services in the province must be based on a strong set of guiding principles. The principles outlined below will underlie all decision-making in the health and community services system. It is critical that these principles are used consistently throughout the entire system to guide decisions from the smallest to the most significant.

Mechanisms will be developed to ensure these principles are widely known throughout the health and community services system and applied in a practical manner when decisions are being made. A method for balancing these principles is essential because it is not possible to maximize every principle in every decision. Achieving the best balance among the principles, taking into account the facts and circumstances of each issue, is the best approach.

The following principles will be used to guide Newfoundland and Labrador's health and community services system into the future:

• **people-centred**

- the health and community services system regards the interests of people as the central priority when making decisions. The needs of individuals, families, and communities are identified and addressed by implementing a coordinated approach to service delivery and helping individuals participate in decision-making to improve their health and well-being;

• **accessibility**

- health and community services are reasonably located and user-friendly so that all people in the province can obtain the services they need in a timely fashion;

• **accountability**

- the outcomes of health and community services are measured, assessed, and publicly reported to achieve maximum effectiveness. Included in this principle are both the health and community services system's accountability, through the government, to the people of the province and accountability of the individual for his/her responsible use of the system and personal health practices;

• **affordability**

- growth in the publicly-funded health and community services system must be within the resources available and not jeopardize the availability of other public services;

• **equity**

- every person has a fair opportunity to attain his/her full health potential. Policies and services are developed to reduce the differences in health status that are associated with factors such as socio-economic status, gender, age, ability, and culture;

• **evidence-based**

- services provided by the health and community services system are based on sound research evidence proving they are safe, effective, and necessary. The focus must be on providing services that improve health outcomes and the movement of resources to services where the greatest health results can be achieved;

• **quality**

- health and community services are delivered within acceptable clinical standards, by qualified service providers, and in an environment of teamwork, creativity, and commitment; and

• **sustainability**

- the publicly-funded health and community services system is structured and supported in a way that ensures stability of human resources, efficient use of financial resources, and long-term affordability.

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Goals and Objectives

The strategic health plan identifies three major goals for Newfoundland and Labrador's health and community services system as well as objectives and targets within each goal. The new directions set out under each of the three goals address the challenges this province is facing and aim to work towards the best possible solutions.

GOAL I

Improve the Health Status of the Population of Newfoundland and Labrador

Objectives:

1. Increase healthy behaviours and supports;
2. Improve health outcomes and reduce negative impacts of select diseases;
3. Improve healthy growth and development for children and youth.

A wellness strategy will be developed and implemented to support this goal. A provincial coordinating committee of stakeholder groups will be established to further refine the wellness priorities, coordinate initiatives inside and outside the public sector, and provide continuing leadership and guidance. The wellness strategy will be built on the parameters of health promotion, illness and injury prevention, health protection, and early intervention.

GOAL II

Improve the Capacity of Communities to Support Health and Well-Being

Objectives:

1. Develop and enhance community partnerships and resources that focus on health and well-being;
2. Enhance individual and family participation in community groups and organizations which enable them to make healthy decisions.

There are many types of communities that have a stake in the health and community services system - traditional communities such as municipalities or regional groups; associations or support groups related to specific disease conditions; volunteer groups and networks which provide supportive services to target populations like seniors or persons with disabilities; and volunteer agencies which raise funds and carry out charitable works in line with the goals of the system. Additional emphasis needs to be placed on the critical role community groups play in the health and well-being of individuals and families. To support this goal, a healthy communities strategy which promotes community champions, regional coalitions, community partnerships, partnerships with the private sector, and community-based research will be implemented. Further work will be done to encourage participation in, and partnership with, community groups that have a health and well-being focus.

GOAL III

Improve the Quality, Accessibility, and Sustainability of Health and Community Services

Objectives:

1. Ensure communities have reasonable access to a core set of primary health care services;
2. Improve the quality and accessibility of secondary and tertiary care in the province;
3. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the health and community services system;
4. Develop and strengthen services in the areas of long-term care and supportive services and mental health.

A health services strategy focused on the areas of primary health care, location of services, mental health services, and long-term care and supportive services will be implemented to work towards quality, accessibility, and sustainability. *Healthier Together* sets out a new direction for primary health care as the central focus of the delivery of health and community services. The new direction promotes a team-based, interdisciplinary approach to service provision where physicians, nurses, and other health professionals cooperate in providing services.

A new approach for determining the location of health and community services in the province will also be developed. A new set of location standards will be established through a planning exercise which will include discussions with communities and stakeholders throughout the province. Mental health services is another area where work is needed. Therefore, a mental health strategy for the province will be built on a number of current initiatives that provide the basis for sound policy direction. Through consultation with stakeholders a broader mental health strategy will be developed. Finally, a strategy will be developed to deal with the challenges currently being faced in the long-term care sector. More options for care and alternate community-based models will be explored to meet the needs of this sector.

Conclusion

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to ensuring the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have a quality, accessible, and sustainable health and community services system. Reform and renewal are necessary to sustain the health and community services system in Newfoundland and Labrador. The directions outlined in *Healthier Together: A Strategic Health Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* will foster a health and community services system which is reflective of the needs of today's population.



GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND
AND LABRADOR

Department of Health
and Community Services

P.O. Box 8700, West Block, Confederation Building
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada A1B 4J6
e-mail: strategichealthplan@gov.nf.ca

A copy of *Healthier Together: A Strategic Health Plan*
for Newfoundland and Labrador is available at:

www.gov.nf.ca/health/strategichealthplan