

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

Health and Community Services



MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

I am pleased to present the 2023-24 Annual Performance Report of the Department of Health and Community Services. In accordance with the requirements of a Category 1 entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, the report outlines the accomplishments during the first year of the three-year planning cycle for the Department's 2023-26 Strategic Plan. As Minister of Health and Community Services, I acknowledge my accountability for the results reported in this annual report, the achievements, and any variations contained herein.

Throughout 2023-24, the Department of Health and Community Services continued to develop and implement initiatives based on the recommendations provided by Health Accord NL. Budget 2023 saw a record contribution to health care in the province and we began to see changes to how health care services are delivered to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. As well, the amalgamation of five legacy organizations into one single integrated provincial health authority came into effect on April 1, 2023, and has helped create a provincial approach for our health care service delivery.

In the first year of this three-year strategic planning cycle, we made great strides in focusing on our three strategic issues: population health, recruitment and retention, and system transformation. We will continue to work diligently to address the social determinants of health, actively recruit and retain physicians and health professionals, and continue to modernize the health care system, providing inclusive health care to all.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and partners as the Department continues to work for to provide the highest quality of health care services to the people of this province.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' and 'H' followed by a horizontal line.

Hon. John Hogan, K.C.
Minister of Health and Community Services

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Departmental Overview

Organizational Structure

The Department of Health and Community Services is responsible for the overall strategic direction and priorities for health and community services throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

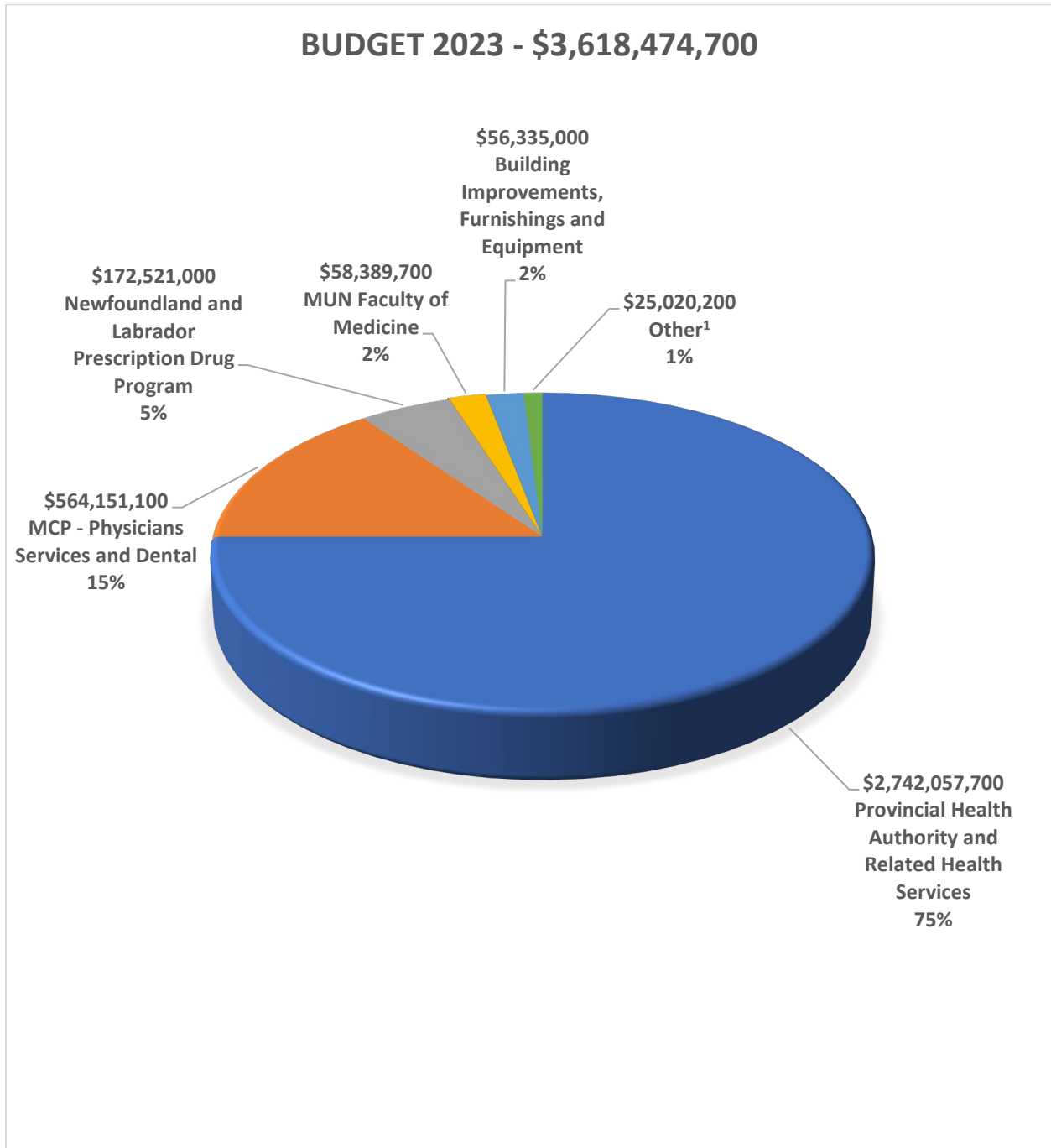
Under its mandate, the Department works to provide leadership, coordination, monitoring, and support to the Provincial Health Authority, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services (NL Health Services), and other entities that deliver health care programs and services across the province. It also ensures the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the health care system. As well, the Department is responsible for effectively administering and providing funding for insured medical and hospital services, dental and pharmaceutical services and the purchase of seats and bursary programs for students in select health professional or technical fields, to build capacity and help create a stable health workforce.

Staff and Budget

As of March 31, 2024, the Department employed 241 staff in four locations across the province: Confederation Building – West Block, Major's Path in St. John's (31), Grand Falls-Windsor (31), and Stephenville (12).

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Minister's Office	4	\$326,800
Executive Support	15	\$1,774,800
Communications	4	\$355,700
Financial Services	15	\$375,500
Information Management	11	\$983,700
Administrative Support	0	\$931,900
MCP St. John's	8	\$412,300
MCP GFW	31	\$1,840,700
Audit Services	13	\$903,100
Pharmaceutical Services	19	\$1,347,800
NLPDP Assessment Office	12	\$621,500
Physician Services	15	\$1,306,500
Regional Services	17	\$1,483,100
Provincial Blood Coordinating Program	3	\$185,700
Infrastructure Management	1	\$109,800
Public Health	25	\$2,539,000
Mental Health and Addictions	9	\$760,000
Primary Health Care	6	\$526,500
Policy, Planning and Evaluation	14	\$1,808,400
Health Workforce Planning	4	\$393,400
Air and Road Ambulance	10	\$1,236,200
Recruitment and Retention	5	\$605,700
Total	241	\$20,828,100

Expenditures – Where Health Dollars are Spent



¹ This includes salaries, professional services, and the operating budget of the Department of Health and Community Services.

Vision

The Department of Health and Community Services' vision is for individuals, families, and communities to achieve optimal health and well-being.

Mandate

The mandate of the Department of Health and Community Services is to provide leadership and direction for effective and efficient delivery of health and community services.

Lines of Business

The Department's main lines of business include:

1. Policy, Planning, Program Development and Support – The Department provides a leadership role for developing policies, legislation, and plans.
2. Monitoring and Reporting – Regular monitoring and evaluation of legislation, programs, plans, and funding outcomes are important to maintain the effectiveness of the health and community services system.
3. Provincial Public Program and Services Administration – While the Department does not directly deliver most health care services, there are programs for which the Department provides direct supervision, control, and service delivery.

Additional information about the Department of Health and Community Services, its mandate and lines of business can be found at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/departments/>.

Highlights and Partnerships

During 2023-24, the Department advanced a number of initiatives, including those in partnership with federal/provincial/territorial committees and organizations, other Provincial departments and agencies, NL Health Services, municipalities, educational institutions and community-based groups. Below are some highlights of the work undertaken in 2023-24.

Provincial Health Authority Came in Effect

On April 1, 2023, a single Provincial Health Authority came into effect with the amalgamation of the four former regional health authorities and the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI). Now known as NL Health Services, this new entity is aimed at streamlining programs and services, as well as associated corporate services such as human resources, payroll and finance. Health Accord NL recommended one health authority to ensure consistent and quality health care delivery across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Expanded Scope of Practice for Pharmacists Improves Access to Health Care

As of April 2023, pharmacists are now able to extend prescriptions to a maximum of 12 months, rather than the 90 days previously permitted under regulations. Additional changes also allow for the assessment and prescribing for four additional ailments and conditions: conjunctivitis; fungal nail infections; herpes zoster – shingles; and uncomplicated urinary tract infections, as well as the prescribing of hormonal contraception. With these additions, pharmacists are now able to assess and prescribe for a total of 33 ailments and conditions.

Governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada Partner to Raise Awareness of Dementia and Promote Dementia-Inclusive Communities

In July 2023, the Provincial and Federal Governments announced an investment of \$716,000 for the Partnering for Dementia Friendly Communities Project in NL. This funding supports the implementation of Canada's national dementia strategy, and raises awareness about dementia, with a focus on reducing stigma and encouraging dementia-inclusive communities.

Eight rural and urban communities, representing a diverse geography—Clareville, Corner Brook, Mary's Harbour, Placentia, Roddickton-Bide Arm, Springdale, Stephenville, and Twillingate—will work with community engagement coordinators and local partners to create action plans that will guide their efforts to become dementia friendly.

New Physician Signing Bonus Program to Support Physician Recruitment

In July 2023, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, in collaboration with NL Health Services, launched the Physician Signing Bonus Program. This program is open to physicians who take on positions within NL Health Services, including new Family Care Teams (FCTs).

Funding is tiered and dependent on practice location, with \$100,000 available to those practicing within the Northeast Avalon and \$150,000 available for physicians practicing in rural Newfoundland or Labrador. Full bonuses are available to physicians who agree to practice full-time for five years, with flexible service arrangement options available. Candidates that sign on to work in "difficult-to-fill" positions within the province are eligible for a top-up of an additional \$25,000 under this program.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's All-Party Committee on Substance Use and Addictions

In September 2023, an All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions was announced in response to the continued need for prevention, early intervention, treatment and support for people living with mental health, substance use and addiction issues, with an emphasis on youth and young adults. Building on the work of [Towards Recovery](#), the committee will closely look at the interrelationship between these issues and other social determinants of health, such as housing, poverty and education. The committee's goal is to provide recommendations on improvements to existing programs and services, and the development and implementation of new ones where necessary, to better serve the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians into the future.

Subsidy Rates Increased for Operators of Personal Care Homes and Community Care Homes

Also in September 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services increased monthly rates provided for government-subsidized beds in personal care homes and community care homes, which will support operators to accept more residents who require a higher level of care. The additional annual investment of approximately \$15.4 million will provide operators with increased subsidy rates, allowing them to support residents with higher care needs, help with recruitment and retention of personal care home workers, and allow for patients currently in acute care beds to receive care in personal care homes.

Provincial Government Releases Public Health Framework

As well, in September 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services released the [Public Health Framework for Newfoundland and Labrador](#), which lays out the essential functions of public health, such as health protection; disease and injury prevention; health promotion; health surveillance and population health assessment; and emergency preparedness and response.

To provide these functions, public health will act through six core programs, identified by the framework as:

- Communicable disease prevention and control;
- Population health assessment, surveillance and epidemiology;
- Growth and development in the early years;
- Environmental public health;
- Health promotion and non-communicable disease and injury prevention; and
- Health emergency management.

Additionally, the Department is exploring processes that can be used to aid a Health-in-All-Policies approach, as recommended in Health Accord NL and enshrined in the **Public Health Protection and Promotion Act**.

Provincial Government Launches Pilot Project for Pediatric Patients with Type 1 Diabetes

In October 2023, the Provincial Government and NL Health Services began a one-year pilot project to determine the feasibility of a provincial continuous glucose monitoring program.

Eligible pediatric patients will use continuous glucose monitors that provide blood sugar measurement every few minutes via a small sensor inserted under the skin. The sensor sends information to an attached transmitter and other technology, such as a smart phone. The devices allow the patient, caregiver, or health care provider to monitor blood sugars more frequently and easily than current monitoring devices—such as needle pricking—and can send alerts about high or low blood sugar to prevent hyperglycemic and hypoglycemic events.

Provincial Government Increasing Access to Health Care Through Virtual Care Contract

In November 2023, as part of the Provincial Government's continued efforts to re-imagine health care delivery in Newfoundland and Labrador, NL Health Services

launched a new virtual care solution, Teladoc, to increase access to health care for rural areas and residents who do not have a primary care provider.

The virtual care service includes:

- Virtual primary care for residents who do not have a primary care provider and have registered on Patient Connect NL. This access will be through a virtual physician available Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.;
- A virtual emergency room that will ensure virtual physician coverage 24 hours per day, seven days per week to emergency departments in select rural health care facilities that do not have local physician coverage; and
- Other needed physician coverage such as urgent care centres.

A contract valued at \$11 million annually has been awarded to Teladoc to provide virtual technology, as well as physician coverage for two years. The new virtual care service is another pathway to improving access to care.

Opening of the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor

As of November 2023, the Lionel Kelland Hospice opened, offering 24/7 medical care for people at the end of life, as well as support programs that meet the emotional, cultural and spiritual needs of residents and their families. The service has 10 private suites with spaces that enable families to be together as they journey with their loved ones during the last days of life. Serving people of all ages and cultural backgrounds, the hospice offers both residential and community outreach programs.

Provincial Government Launches the Personal Health Record

In January 2024, the Provincial Government and NL Health Services introduced a new online service that will improve the way Newfoundlanders and Labradorians access the health care system. The Personal Health Record will be available online through MyGovNL and give residents access to laboratory results, dispensed medications, x-ray reports, and allergies. Residents will also have the option to allow family members to

access the service. In addition, residents can also access mental health and health information resources.

An app is also being developed for release that will incorporate the Personal Health Record and allow residents to check on information related to prescribed medication and refills to have more informed discussions with their health care providers.

Eventually, updates to the app will provide additional services such as the ability to schedule medical appointments with NL Health Services, including with FCTs and participating physicians, and assist patients in navigating the health care system.

Provincial and Federal Governments Sign Bilateral Agreement to Improve Health Care Over Three Years

In March 2024, the Provincial Government and the Government of Canada announced the Working Together Agreement, a bilateral agreement to invest almost \$256 million to support Newfoundland and Labrador's three-year action plan to improve health care services across the province.

The plan will:

- expand access to family health services;
- increase health workers and health services to reduce backlogs;
- increase mental health and substance use services; and
- modernize health data systems to ensure more patients can access care.

Report on Performance

In consideration of the strategic directions of the Provincial Government, as well as the Department's mandate and financial resources, the Department of Health and Community Services identified three key priorities for the 2023-26 planning cycle:

1. Population Health
2. Recruitment and Retention
3. System Transformation

The Department of Health and Community Services has targeted initiatives that help improve health outcomes of all Newfoundland and Labradorians, as it continues to implement strategies to modernize the health care system and creatively recruit and retain health professionals in a global shortage. This Annual Performance Report will focus on the reporting of results for the 2023-24 Objective in each of these three priority issues.

Strategic Issue 1: Population Health

The Department of Health and Community Services recognizes the importance of focusing on initiatives aimed at improving the overall health and well-being of the people of the Province. Health Accord NL provided a comprehensive list of recommendations for re-imagining health care in order to address the needs of people in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. This contributed to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's efforts to support health promotion and wellness with a focus on healthy eating, physical activity, living smoke and vape free, supporting new parents, child and youth development, injury prevention, and mental health promotion.

Addressing the social determinants of health is an essential piece to improving the health and well-being of the population and has a great impact on the health inequities experienced by individuals and their communities across the province. During 2023-24, the Department began to implement initiatives that help address the social determinants of health, such as smoking cessation programs; mental health supports through

Bridgethegapp.ca and the 811 HealthLine; substance use and addictions support through Opioid Dependence Treatment Hubs; expansion of the Home Dementia Care Program; as well as a review of the eligibility criteria for beneficiaries of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Plan (NLPDP).

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Health and Community Services will have implemented initiatives that address the social determinants of health and improve population health and wellness outcomes for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Health and Community Services will have implemented initiatives to improve health and wellness of the population.

Indicators:

- Increased usage of smoking cessation programs;
- Increased usage of Bridgethegapp.ca and programs located therein;
- Increased access to Opioid Dependence Treatment Hubs;
- Increased access to services provided by 811 HealthLine;
- Reduced wait times for mental health and addictions services;
- Expansion of the Home Dementia Care Program;
- Increased Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program (NLPDP) beneficiaries through a review of eligibility criteria for the Access, Assurance and 65+ Plans; and
- Completed indicator framework for the population health assessment.

Indicator	Results
Increased usage of smoking cessation programs	In 2022-23, the Department expanded access to the Mental Health and Addictions (MH&A) smoking cessation program. In 2022-23, there were 1,586 unique clients enrolled in the smoking cessation program. In 2023-24, there was an increase to 1,853 unique clients for both Nicotine Replacement Therapies and Champix/Zyban, showing an increase of 267 clients or 16.8 per cent.
Increased usage of Bridgethegapp.ca and programs located therein	Bridgethegapp.ca total users by fiscal year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023-24 - 146,965 • 2022-23 - 1,103,764 • 2021-22 - 77,864 • 2020-21 - 90,497 • 2019-20 - 59,132
Increased access to Opioid Dependence Treatment Hubs	Total number of active clients at regional Opioid Dependency Treatment (ODT) Hubs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023-24 - 721 clients • 2022-23 - 633 clients • 2021-22 - 579 clients
Increased access to services provided by 811 HealthLine	<p>The 811 HealthLine currently provides appointments with a Nurse Practitioner (NP), Dietician services and mental health and addictions crisis intake and referral services.</p> <p>In 2023-24, the 811 HealthLine virtual service was expanded to enable NPs to extend ongoing documented prescriptions of benzodiazepines and stimulants, and phase in new prescriptions through a managed care model.</p> <p>As well, 988, a national three-digit number for suicide prevention and</p>

	<p>emotional distress was implemented in November 2023, as an additional access point of support for people who are thinking about suicide, in emotional distress, or worried about someone else who may be thinking about suicide.</p> <p>Between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023, there were 15,053 mental health crisis calls received, and between the same time period in 2023-24, there were 14,707 mental health crisis calls received</p>
Reduced wait times for mental health and addictions services	<p>Wait times for community counselling have been reduced across the province, with some regions eliminating wait times altogether with the introduction of same-day walk-in counselling services, such as Doorways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Q4 2016-17 to Q1 2022-23, the median wait time for community counselling decreased in Eastern Zone – Urban and Rural (-39 days) and was unchanged in Central Zone. • As of Q1 2022-23, there is no wait time to access community counselling in Labrador-Grenfell Zone and Western Zone. <p>The total Doorways locations increased from 35 locations in 2018 to 87 locations in 2024.</p>
Expansion of the Home Dementia Care Program	<p>The Home Dementia Care program has seen an annual rise in new enrollments each year since 2019-20. The program has reached 546 clients over the past five years, with a year-over-year increase shown below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023-24 - 266 clients • 2022-23 - 157 clients • 2021-22 - 82 clients

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020-21 - 23 clients • 2019-20 - 18 clients
Increased Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program (NLPDP) beneficiaries through a review of eligibility criteria for the Access, Assurance and 65+ Plans	The review was put on hold; no changes to eligibility criteria were implemented in 2023-24.
Completed indicator framework for the population health assessment	Work on the indicator framework for the population health assessment has begun.

Discussion of Results

Bridgethegapp.ca was highly promoted during the COVID-19 pandemic, given the increased worry, uncertainty and isolation felt by many, and, as a result, experienced a significant surge in usage in 2022-23. The decline in usage in 2023-24, compared to the previous year, is offset by expanded service offerings within the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Stepped-Care Model and increased system access points, including Doorways walk-in locations and the 811 HealthLine.

A review of the eligibility criteria for NLPDP's Access, Assurance, and 65+ Plans was put on hold. A review of the plans will take place in 2024-25, with recommendations to be brought forward for consideration.

Work on the indicator framework for the population health assessment began in 2023-24; however, it was determined that dedicated epidemiological resources were required. As a result, procurement of an epidemiologist and supports is currently taking place and once secured, will facilitate the population health assessment.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2025, the Department of Health and Community Services will have supported further initiatives that improve population health and wellness.

Indicators:

- Completed a review of the NLPDP Access, Assurance and 65+ Plans with recommendations to be advanced regarding potential changes to coverage and financial assessment processes;
- Increased early intervention programs for children and youth (e.g., Strongest Families Institute, Doorways);
- Increased programming for community-based dementia care and restorative rehabilitation care;
- Increased options for adult day programming;
- Increased access to mental health and addictions services, via Doorways, 811 HealthLine and Bridgethegapp.ca;
- Increased access to pharmaceuticals through bilateral agreements with Health Canada (e.g., National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases and National Pharmacare);
- Implemented a grant program to help people aging at home;
- Initiated work on development of three of the six Public Health Core Programs (Communicable Disease Control, Growth and Development in the Early Years, Environmental Public Health); and
- Collaborated with Well-Being NL to facilitate/coordinate a Health in All Policies approach across government.

Strategic Issue 2: Recruitment and Retention

The Department of Health and Community Services recognizes the importance of both recruitment and retention strategies to ensure that it has a robust and sustainable health workforce to meet the diverse health care needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Concurrently, there is a need to build capacity and create clear career pathways by expanding and maximizing health profession education and training programs.

While the global shortage of health care professionals remains a challenge for all jurisdictions, the Department of Health and Community Services is continuing to develop and implement creative solutions and offer attractive incentives, to remain competitive in a global labour market and economy.

International recruitment missions to global jurisdictions with medical and health profession programs comparative with those in Newfoundland and Labrador offer a stream of health professionals who can enter our health workforce in a timely way. At the same time, the Department works with health profession regulatory bodies to alleviate and remove unnecessary barriers for highly qualified and capable health professionals to seamlessly enter the health workforce.

In 2023-24, the Department made significant progress in recruitment and retention of health professionals. These include adding seats in Memorial University's Medical Residency Program, creating clear pathways for internationally-educated and trained health professionals; helping stabilize and grow the long-term care workforce, and encouraging Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working and living abroad to come home.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Health and Community Services will have continued to implement policies and programs that directly support and improve

recruitment and retention initiatives that lead to a stable workforce to ensure we are globally competitive.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Health and Community Services will have continued to provide funding and support to attract and retain health care professionals across the province.

Indicators:

- Completed a Health Human Resource Plan for the province;
- Increased number of seats in the Medical Residency Program;
- Increased number of internationally-educated health professionals licensed to practice;
- Increased measures to incentivize Newfoundlanders and Labradorians living away to return to the province to work in their field;
- Implemented additional bursaries and grants with return in service agreements, where appropriate, to increase domestic supply of health care professional students;
- Continue to implement measures to stabilize the long-term care workforce;
- Increased accessibility for Licensed Practical Nursing students with Blended (D2L) Program;
- Completed study on attrition root causes and solutions for the Practical Nursing Program;
- Completed Midwifery Feasibility Study for a possible program offering in Atlantic Canada; and
- Continue to work with Keyin College to support International Personal Care Attendant Program.

Indicator	Results
Completed a Health Human Resource Plan for the province	<p>A Health Human Resource Framework has been drafted outlining key pillars and objectives based on alignment with Health Accord NL.</p> <p>The Health Human Resource Plan contracted to Deloitte is near completion.</p>
Increased number of seats in the Medical Residency Program	<p>Five seats reserved for International Medical Graduates (IMGs) were added within MUN's Family Medicine Residency Program beginning in July 2023.</p> <p>The first cohort included 4 of 5 of the seats filled from IMGs trained in Ireland, which is a one of the countries identified for an expedited pathway to licensure in the province, and as a result of a previous recruitment mission to Ireland.</p>
Increased number of internationally-educated health professionals licensed to practice	<p>Two categories of registration for physicians were created: Clinical Assistant and Associate, which will help enhance the pool of physicians available for licensure in the province.</p> <p>In addition, the College of Physician and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador (CPSNL) created a pathway for internationally trained practitioners who are trained and licensed in select countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Medicine: Approved jurisdictions by College of Family Physician of Canada: Ireland, United Kingdom, United States and Australia. • Specialists: Approved jurisdictions by Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Canada: Ireland, United

	<p>Kingdom, United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa.</p> <p>A Ukrainian Physician licensure support program was implemented to assist physicians with up to \$10,000 to aid in the cost of licensure. As of March 31, 2024, 35 applications have been received, with 11 approved applications.</p> <p>The College of Registered Nurses Newfoundland and Labrador (CRNNL) launched an expedited pathway for applicants who have been educated in jurisdictions where the nursing education and regulatory framework align with that of Canada. As of March 31, 2024, there were over 340 offers made to nurses as part of the India mission.</p> <p>There were recruitment missions to India and Dubai, with additional recruitment ongoing from Jamaica for Licenced Practical Nurses (LPNs), Ethiopia for Personal Care Attendants (PCAs), and other international locations. As a result of the Dubai (CHARM) mission, there were 84 conditional offers made to various health professionals, with 63 nurses accepting offers and working towards licensure and immigration. As well, three medical radiation therapists were offered laboratory x-ray positions and are in discussions with NL Health Services regarding community placement before immigrating.</p> <p>An International PCA Pilot Program has been implemented, as well as the IEN to LPN Bridging Program. Offers have also been made to 47 PCAs in Ethiopia and</p>
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	<p>are working toward immigration processes through the EMPP pathway. There are 13 Jamaican IENs who were completing bridging towards LPN in the province.</p> <p>The Nursing Community Assessment Services (NCAS) incentive has been implemented to assist IENs in obtaining licensure as either RN or LPN. As of March 31, 2024, there have been 13 applications to complete NCAS, which are being reviewed by NL Health Services.</p> <p>The Supervised Practice Experience Partnership Program (SPEPP) was implemented to encourage IENs and local-trained nurses to complete currency of practice hours where required, without having to complete full bridging.</p>
Increased measures to incentivize Newfoundlanders and Labradorians living away to return to the province to work in their field	<p>The Come Home Incentive was implemented in September 2022 for various occupations and has had multiple occupations added since. As of March 31, 2024, the list of eligible health professions included physicians, NPs and RNs, LPNs, advanced care paramedics, clinical psychologists, radiation therapists (including dosimetrists), cardiology technologists, medical physicists, respiratory therapists, registered midwives, nuclear medicine technologists, electroneurophysiology technologists, clinical pharmacists, cardiovascular perfusionists.</p> <p>Up to March 2024, there were 149 health professionals who accepted the Come Home Incentive.</p>

	Recruitment missions were also conducted to Ireland and the UK targeting Canadians living abroad who are training as physicians.
Implemented additional bursaries and grants with return in service agreements, where appropriate, to increase domestic supply of health care professional students	Uptake of provincial student bursaries with return-in-service commitments increased by more than 20 per cent. Additional bursary funding has been allocated; for example, 20 enhanced bursaries were approved for clinical psychology students.
Continue to implement measures to stabilize the long term care workforce	<p>Recruitment and retention bonuses were implemented for RNs (including NPs), LPNs and PCAs in long-term care.</p> <p>NL Health Services reported that 2,220 individuals accepted the retention bonus (including 312 RNs, 792 LPNs and 1116 PCAs).</p> <p>As of March 2024, 495 accepted the recruitment bonus (including two NPs, 68 RNs, 168 LPNs and 257 PCAs).</p>
Increased accessibility for Licensed Practical Nursing students with Blended (D2L) Program	Development of the D2L (distance learning) program is nearing completion and will increase Practical Nurse Program capacity.
Completed study on attrition root causes and solutions for the Practical Nursing Program	This study has been completed, with recommendations outlining strategies to reduce attrition.
Completed Midwifery Feasibility Study for a possible program offering in Atlantic Canada	This study is ongoing and nearing completion.
Continue to work with Keyin College to support International Personal Care Attendant Program	The Department and NL Health Services continue to support an International Personal Care Attendant (IPCA) program. Students have begun arriving in the province for final clinical components of the program and commencing work with NL Health Services on an ongoing basis.

Discussion of Results

The Come Home Incentive is the most successful recruitment campaign for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. It continues to help recruit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and those with ties to Newfoundland and Labrador, back to the province, in a variety of health professions. While it offers competitive and attractive incentives for ex-patriate Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, incentives are also available for non-Newfoundland and Labrador residents.

Incentives continue to be implemented for long-term care workers to help stabilize and grow the long-term care workforce. The recruitment bonus has been successful for attracting new health professionals, including NPs, RNs, LPNs and PCAs. The retention bonus has been successful for securing RNs, LPNs, and PCAs currently working in the long-term care system.

CRNNL launched an expedited pathway for applicants who have been educated in jurisdictions where the nursing education and regulatory framework align with that of Canada, such as the one created for RNs in India. As a result of the India recruitment mission, there were over 340 offers made to nurses with others are working towards immigration and licensure.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2025, the Department of Health and Community Services will have implemented further initiatives to attract and retain health care professionals for the provision of health care services that contribute to a stable workforce.

Indicators:

- Implemented additional bursaries and grants with return in service agreements, where appropriate, to increase domestic supply of health care professional students;
- Implemented a tuition relief initiative for the Practical Nurse Program and the Bachelor of Science (Nursing);

- Increased student success/reduced attrition through implementation of two student success positions (program evaluation and student success) at the College of the North Atlantic and Centre for Nursing Studies;
- Developed a Health Workforce Framework to produce health human resources to support Health Accord NL recommendations;
- Developed the Recruitment and Retention Strategy to recruit new health professionals and retain current health professionals;
- Continued marketing and promotion through the targeted recruitment campaign Work in Health NL;
- Implemented a community toolkit and incentive for communities to participate in recruitment and retention of health care professionals; and
- Increased number of seats for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at Memorial University's undergraduate medical education program.

Strategic Issue 3: System Transformation

Transformation of our health system is essential to meet the health care needs of our people and communities across the province. The Department continues to work on improving our health care system to ensure that individuals receive the right care, at the right time, by the right health care provider. As we work to ensure a provincial approach to health care delivery, it is imperative to ensure that the system has balance between community and inpatient care, through rural and urban service delivery, as well as virtual and in-person care.

In 2023-24, the Department created more access points to primary care providers, providing individuals with access to personal health information, and helped improve collaboration between health care providers. These initiatives help ensure timely access to primary care providers through FCTs, reduced wait times for specialists, improved essential emergency care through the Province's ambulance system and virtual care strategies, addressing and preventing surgical backlogs, and allowing seniors to be supported to age in place in their homes and communities.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Health and Community Services will have improved health care delivery for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador by providing a more balanced and efficient health care system.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Health and Community Services will have commenced improving and strengthening the delivery of and access to health care by implementing initiatives that support a provincial approach to health care delivery.

Indicators:

- Established 18 Family Care Teams across the province;
- Increased the number of patients attached to a Family Care Team;
- Decreased non-emergent visits to emergency departments;
- Implemented appropriate virtual care modalities to meet patient needs;
- Reduced wait times for non-urgent elective surgeries;
- Continued to develop a provincial Emergency Department Program;
- Increased utilization of community-based supportive care options for seniors;
- Increased utilization of Short Stay option in personal care homes;
- Reduced number of individuals placed in long-term care from acute care; and
- Commenced integration of ambulance services and dispatch systems.

Indicator	Results
Established 18 Family Care Teams across the province	Health Accord NL envisioned 35 FCTs in 3–5 years. Twenty-three (23) teams have been announced and are at varying stages of implementation. Four are fully operational; 13 are partially operational and six are in the planning stage.
Increased the number of patients attached to a Family Care Team	As of March 31, 2024, there were 55,455 patients connected to Family Care Teams. For reference, as of March 31, 2023, there were 28,267 patients connected to family care teams, which is a 98 per cent increase.
Decreased non-emergent visits to emergency departments	Improving access to primary care and non-urgent care is essential to help decrease non-emergent visits to emergency departments. Current initiatives contributing to decreasing non-emergent visits to the emergency department include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCTs in various stages of implementation across the province.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A provincial Virtual Care program to increase capacity of primary and emergency health care delivery. • The 811 HealthLine allows individuals to speak to a RN 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. NP appointments are also available by video and phone. • NL Health Services operates a community walk-in clinic within Eastern Urban Zone. • A pilot project is underway whereby mobile clinics bring primary care to people and communities in the province who require non-urgent care and are unable to access a primary care provider. • Multiple financial incentives are in place to fill vacancies and alleviate primary care provider shortages. <p>The Department is monitoring data from the Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (CTAS) captured by NL Health Services from 2022-2024, which shows a minimal decrease in overall number of patients seen in the ED who are seeking non-urgent care (CTAS 4-5). However, further analysis is required.</p>
Implemented appropriate virtual care modalities to meet patient needs	<p>A pilot mobile Primary Health Clinic (PHC) is in place within NL Health Services' Eastern Urban Zone and Central Zone, with plans for continued expansion into other zones based on patient needs. In addition, a provincial virtual care program has been</p>

	established to provide PHC to patients registered on Patient Connect NL waiting to be attached to a primary care provider.
Reduced wait times for non-urgent elective surgeries	<p>The most recent wait time data (for Q1/Q2 2023-24) released by the Canadian Institute for Health information shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For hip replacement: 48 per cent (as compared to 76 per cent in 2019) of NL patients met the benchmark versus 66 per cent of Canadians (NL ranked seventh place out of 10 jurisdictions reporting). • For knee replacement: 37 per cent (as compared to 72 per cent in 2019) of NL patients met the benchmark versus 59 per cent of Canadians (NL ranked eighth place out of 10 jurisdictions reporting). • For cataract surgery: 43 per cent (as compared to 63 per cent in 2019) of NL patients met the benchmark versus 70 per cent of Canadians (NL ranked ninth place out of 10 jurisdictions reporting). <p>The Department recognizes there are still challenges in meeting benchmarks for joint replacement and cataract surgeries; however, significant work is happening to address the wait list and backlog, such as increasing capacities for additional surgeries and improving administrative functions, such as central intake.</p>

Continued to develop a provincial Emergency Department Program	<p>Virtual Emergency Room Care (VER) has been utilized in most ERs across the province and continues to expand.</p> <p>VER provides remote emergency care physicians to virtually support emergency departments in rural and remote areas when there is no on-site physician. This improves and stabilizes access to emergency services.</p> <p>From April 2023-March 2024 there were 29,291 hours utilized as VER hours across the province to support ERs to remain open.</p>
Increased utilization of community-based supportive care options for seniors	<p>Adult Day Program – This program started in September 2023 and 23 clients were enrolled by March 31, 2024.</p> <p>Enhanced Dementia Care Program – This program started in March 2024 in one site and had one client enrolled by March 31, 2024.</p> <p>Rehabilitation and Restorative Care Program – This program started in March 2024 in two sites and had six clients enrolled by March 31, 2024.</p> <p>Home Support Program – The number of clients who received home support from the past four years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023-24 - 10,959 clients • 2022-23 - 11,323 clients • 2021-22 - 11,360 clients • 2020-21 - 10,780 clients <p>While the number of clients shows a small difference by -3.2 per cent from 2022-23 to 2023-24, there is still</p>

	<p>consistent enrollment in the Home Support Program. There had been some growth in 2021-2023; however, the number is reduced in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23, potentially due to the increased number of individuals seeking residential care to meet supportive needs. As well, the home support sector has reported challenges in recruitment and retention of staff, comparable to other jurisdictions.</p>
Increased utilization of Short Stay option in personal care homes	<p>The number of new clients enrolled into the Short Stay option through the first two years of the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023-24 - 128 clients • 2022-23 - 134 clients <p>There was no significant change.</p>
Reduced number of individuals placed in long-term care from acute care	<p>The number of individuals placed into long-term care from acute care for the past four years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023-24 - 1746 clients • 2022-23 - 1787 clients • 2021-22 - 1666 clients • 2020-21 - 1595 clients <p>There was an increase in 2022-23, which may have been due to staffing challenges in long-term care resulting in long-term bed closures. Therefore, this may show longer wait times and more people waiting in acute care for long-term placement. It is expected that there will be a future trend of decreasing numbers, with the increase of community-based options.</p>
Commenced integration of ambulance services and dispatch systems	<p>Budget 2023 committed \$9 million to commence ambulance integration in 2023-24. A Request for Proposal (RFP)</p>

	<p>was developed and issued for a vendor to design, manage and operate integrated provincial ambulance services.</p> <p>The Department of Health and Community Services received two qualified responses for the RFP. The successful proponent will be responsible for managing the program, staff, and budget on behalf of NL Health Services.</p> <p>As well, centralized dispatch operations coverage was expanded to all hospital-based service regions. In support, the province-wide implementation commenced for the electronic Patient Care Records system and P25 radio system.</p>
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Discussion of Results

Family Care Teams (FCTs) are health professionals who work together to deliver care that meet a patient's individual and social needs. Budget 2023 saw an investment of more than \$21 million in FCTs to help provide primary care. There are currently 19 FCTs in various stages of implementation throughout the province, with more than 55,000 patients connected. Budget 2024 includes \$30 million to hire additional health care providers for existing teams and to create new teams announced for 2024-25 in: Baie Verte and Springdale region; Lewisporte; Portugal Cove-St. Philip's; and Downtown St. John's. More teams are being funded and will be announced throughout the year.

The health care system has been experiencing physician and nursing staff shortages, like other jurisdictions, that has been impacting the delivery of emergency services. While there have been occasions when NL Health Services have had to close an emergency department and divert patients to another emergency department, all

efforts are made to mitigate closures. Since September 2023, NL Health Services has experienced an increase in the use of virtual emergency rooms to maintain emergency department services in rural areas, and a corresponding decrease in the number of emergency department diversion hours.

The Department continues to work towards moving closer to meet national benchmarks for wait times for non-elective surgeries. Budget 2023 committed approximately \$2.9 million for travelling orthopedic teams and same-day hip and knee replacement initiatives. In September 2023, the travelling orthopedic program expanded to include Carbonear. It is anticipated that an additional 290 surgeries will be completed annually. There were 239 orthopedic surgeries completed in 2023-2024. The same-day hip/knee replacement program in St. Clare's Hospital achieved its target of performing 200 additional surgeries in the first year of the program. The program expanded to Corner Brook to complete more hip/knee replacements with 22 additional surgeries performed in 2023-24, as a result. In October 2023, a short-stay orthopedic pilot program was introduced in Gander whereby the length of hospital stay was reduced by providing rehabilitation in the community. 106 surgeries were completed in 2023-24, with 216 additional surgeries anticipated annually. Provincial centralized intake is under development for ortho and cataract surgeries in response to a recommendation from 2023 Provincial Surgical Backlog Task Force Report.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2025, the Department of Health and Community Services will have implemented further initiatives to improve health care delivery and support rebalancing the health care system.

Indicators:

- Initiated the establishment of 4 new Family Care Teams;
- Increased the number of patients connected to a Family Care Team;
- Continue to reduce the number of patients waiting to be attached to a Primary Care Provider on the provincial patient Registry (Patient Connect NL);

- Enhanced service delivery through the expansion of virtual care services in primary care and emergency care;
- Developed a provincial centralized intake for orthopedic and cataract surgeries in response to a recommendation from 2023 Provincial Surgical Backlog Task Force Report;
- Decreased usage of non-emergent visits to emergency departments;
- Consolidated dispatch, ground and fixed wing air ambulance operations;
- Completed procurement and contracting of a managing operator for the integrated ambulance system;
- Finalized province-wide implementation of dispatch and communications technology systems; and
- Commenced design and development of a helicopter Emergency Management System (EMS) implementation plan.

Opportunities and Challenges

Newfoundland and Labrador's demographics, aging population, and geographical dispersion continues to challenge our health care system. The newly formed Provincial Health Authority, a recommendation of Health Accord NL, presents many opportunities for integrated and streamlined services across the province, while still recognizing the unique needs of each region. This includes a single-integrated road and air ambulance service, as well as a new Health Information System to remove gaps in providing seamless continuing care among health professionals as part of the patient's treatment team.

Recruitment and retention of physicians, nurses and other health professionals will be an ongoing challenge, and it continues to require the Department to collaborate with stakeholders on creative and innovative solutions. Recruitment missions to compatible jurisdictions worldwide help attract health care professionals and contribute to a diverse and inclusive health workforce aimed at providing essential health care services and programs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. As well, the recruitment of nurses, helps lessen the reliance on travel/agency nurses.

As the Province recruits, it also continues to explore opportunities for an expanded scope of practice for different health professionals, as well as having health professionals work to their full professional capacity. For example, nurse practitioners working as part of the 811 Health Line may extend ongoing documented prescriptions of benzodiazepines and stimulants, helping to create another access point for people taking those medications and alleviating the need to visit a primary care provider or emergency department.

The Department recognizes that working with other stakeholders and departments to address the social determinants of health is needed to help improve health outcomes for people across the province. This includes working with other government departments responsible for poverty reduction, income support, housing, children and

seniors care, women and gender equality, supporting people with disabilities, and working with Indigenous governments and organizations. A collaborative approach is imperative to ensure a government-wide approach is taken to support inclusive health care for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Financial Information

Department of Health and Community Services 2023-24 Fiscal Year			
	2023-24		
	Actual Expenditure	Operating Budget	Original Budget
Minister's Office	\$ 317,881	\$ 347,600	\$ 336,600
General Administration	\$ 18,808,281	\$ 19,972,300	\$ 20,819,600
Memorial University Faculty Of Medicine	\$ 68,044,800	\$ 68,044,800	\$ 58,389,700
Drug Subsidization	\$ 169,007,138	\$ 185,935,001	\$ 176,385,000
Medical Care Plan	\$ 562,120,547	\$ 561,280,076	\$ 564,151,100
Provincial Health Authority and Related Services	\$ 2,889,023,364	\$ 2,785,510,600	\$ 2,742,057,700
Building Improvements, Furnishings And Equipment	\$ 55,138,551	\$ 50,673,223	\$ 56,335,000
Total Department	\$ 3,762,460,562	\$ 3,671,763,600	\$ 3,618,474,700

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Fiscal Year Ended 31 March 2024.