

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

Health and Community Services



MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

I am pleased to present the 2024-25 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 second 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 2024-25, the Department of Health and Community Services continued to implement Health Accord NL recommendations, focusing on integrated, person-centered care. Early intervention and mental health supports were expanded through virtual services and community-based programs. Dementia and restorative care services also expanded, helping more individuals remain in their homes and communities. The province also enhanced access to medications through national partnerships and supported seniors aging at home with targeted grants. These efforts reflect a continued transformation of health care delivery across the province.

In the second year of this three-year strategic planning cycle, we made significant progress in our strategic priorities: population health, recruitment and retention, and system transformation. We expanded training opportunities, introduced new supports for students and professionals, and improved access to care through integrated services. These efforts reflect our commitment to building a sustainable, inclusive health system that meets the evolving needs of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and partners as the department commits to provide the highest quality of health care services to the people of this province.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Krista Howell".

Hon. Krista Lynn Howell, BN RN
Minister of Health and Community Services

Table of Contents

Departmental Overview	3
Organizational Structure	3
Staff and Budget	4
Expenditures – Where Health Dollars are Spent.....	5
Vision	6
Mandate	6
Lines of Business	6
Highlights and Partnerships	7
Report on Performance	15
Strategic Issue 1: Population Health	15
Goal	16
2024-25 Objective	16
Discussion of Results.....	21
Strategic Issue 2: Recruitment and Retention.....	23
Goal:	24
2024-25 Objective:	24
Discussion of Results.....	26
Strategic Issue 3: System Transformation	28
Goal:	29
2024-25 Objective:	29
Discussion of Results:.....	35
Opportunities and Challenges	38
Financial Information	40

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.

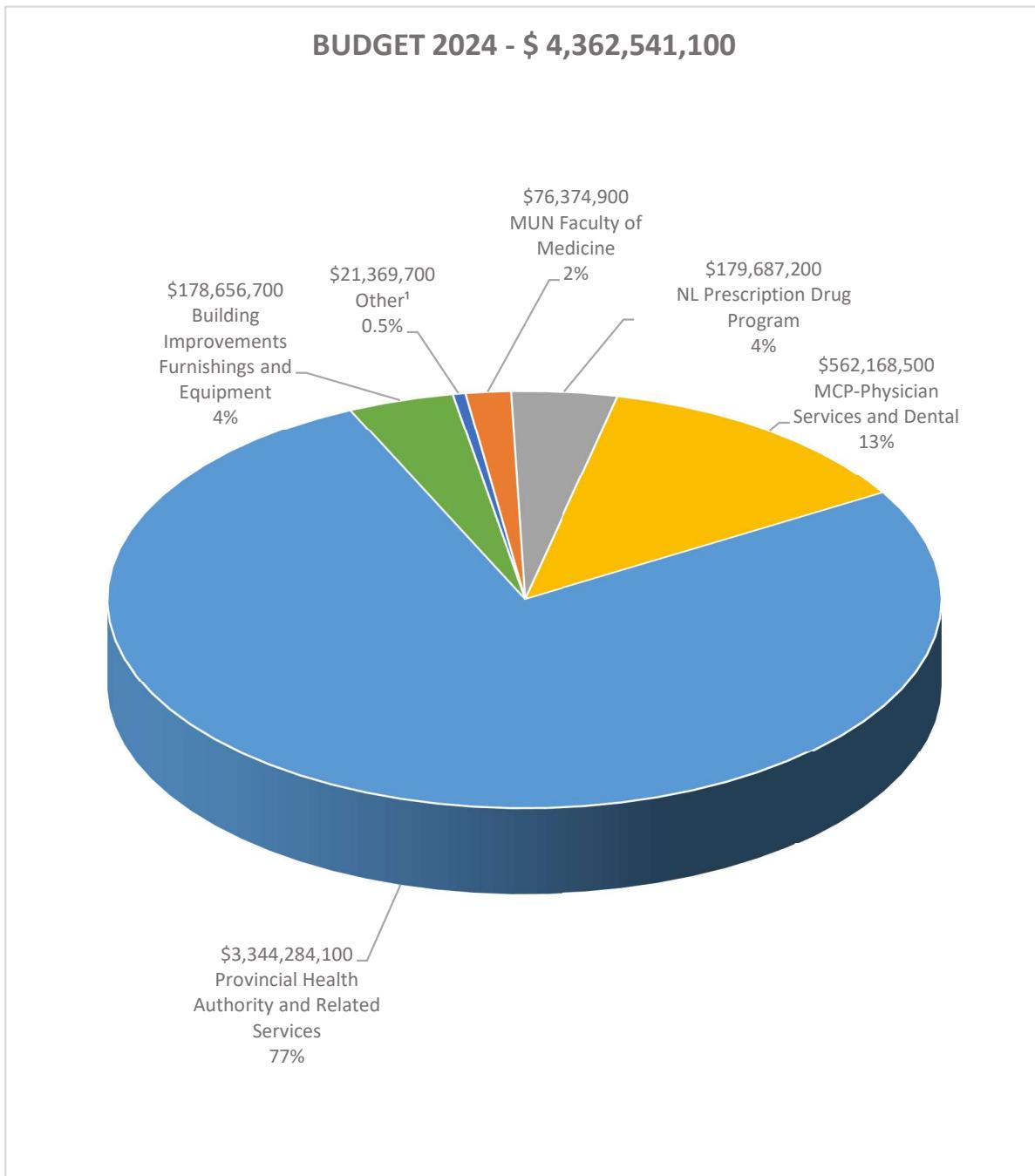
Under its mandate, the Department works to provide leadership, coordination, monitoring, and support to the Provincial Health Authority, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services (NLHS), and other entities that deliver health care programs and services across the province. It also ensures the quality, 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, 2025, the Department employed 262 staff in four locations across the province: Confederation Building – West Block, Major's Path in St. John's (30), Grand Falls-Windsor (31), and Stephenville (12).

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Minister's Office	6	\$ 509,200
Executive Support	14	\$ 1,646,700
Communications	4	\$ 361,900
Financial Services	16	\$ 692,100
Information Management	9	\$ 944,400
Administrative Support	0	\$ 804,400
MCP St. John's	9	\$ 474,500
MCP GFW	31	\$ 1,942,400
Audit Services	13	\$ 972,100
Pharmaceutical Services	21	\$ 1,534,600
NLPDP Assessment Office	12	\$ 627,900
Physician Services	17	\$ 1,696,700
Regional Services	9	\$ 626,800
Senior's Health Care	8	\$ 773,700
Provincial Blood Coordinating Program	5	\$ 416,300
Infrastructure Management	1	\$ 112,000
Public Health	27	\$ 2,473,100
Mental Health and Addictions	14	\$ 1,074,100
Primary Health Care	5	\$ 427,800
Policy and Planning	13	\$ 1,520,900
Health Workforce Planning	5	\$ 469,500
Data Governance and Privacy	9	\$ 783,500
Air and Road Ambulance	10	\$ 1,253,200
Recruitment and Retention	4	\$ 509,500
Total	262	\$ 22,647,300

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/department>.

Highlights and Partnerships

During 2024-25, the Department advanced a number of initiatives, including those in partnership with federal/provincial/territorial committees and organizations, other Provincial Government departments and agencies, NLHS, municipalities, educational institutions and community-based groups. Below are some highlights of the work undertaken in 2024-25.

Contracts Awarded for Urgent Care Centres for Northeast Avalon

In April 2024, contracts for leases were awarded for two urgent care centres, one at Topsail Road for \$1.2 million annually, and the other at Stavanger Drive for \$900,000 annually. These centres will treat non-life-threatening medical issues. The Stavanger Drive location will also be the location of an ambulatory care hub for the metro region. These new centres support the Province's goal to enhance health care access, recruit professionals, and modernize services.

Governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada Sign Bilateral Agreement to Help Residents Age with Dignity

In May 2024, the Provincial and Federal Governments signed a bilateral agreement with \$78 million federal funding over five years to improve health care for seniors in the province. This includes hiring more clinical staff, improved long-term care standards, enhancing home and community care, supporting dementia care, and improving palliative and end of life care. It also aims to strengthen the workforce with a geriatric medicine fellowship and wage increases for personal support workers. The initiative builds on a previous \$256 million agreement with commitments to improve health information systems and engage with Indigenous partners.

Integration of Ambulance Services

In June 2024, the Provincial Government integrated all ambulance services under NLHS, based on Health Accord NL recommendations. Nearly 500 private sector

paramedics joined NLHS, creating a workforce of about 850 professionals. Emergency ambulance services are now dispatched and coordinated by NLHS.

In October 2024, the Provincial Government reached the next phase in the integration of ambulance services throughout the province as Medavie Health NL Inc. was identified as the selected proponent to design, manage and operate a single, integrated road and air ambulance service in the province, on behalf of NLHS. Medavie Health NL Inc. will be partnering with PAL Airlines and Air Borealis to deliver the integrated fixed and rotary wing air ambulance service.

Tuition Relief Program to Help Attract New Nurses Introduced

In June 2024, the Provincial Government introduced a new tuition relief program for nursing students, which started in September 2024. This initiative includes over \$2 million in funding, offering up to \$8,000 in tuition relief for the first two years, supporting government's recruitment and retention initiatives. It targets Bachelor of Science in Nursing students at satellite sites and practical nursing students at the Centre for Nursing Studies and College of the North Atlantic.

Recruitment and Retention Incentives for Retired Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners

In June 2024, the Provincial Government reinstated incentives for retired nurses to return to work. Eligible registered nurses and nurse practitioners can receive a reimbursement of license fees up to \$500 with a commitment of 390 hours per year. This initiative, available until March 31, 2025, follows a 2022 Nursing Think Tank recommendation.

MyHealthNL Launched to Increase Access to Health Care

In July 2024, the Provincial Government launched the MyHealthNL app, providing residents with digital access to their personal health information. Users can view lab results, radiology reports, dispensed medications, allergy information and other e-health resources, such as a health library, as well as providing access to Bridge the gap

which is an online resource designed to support mental wellness. Budget 2024 allocated \$5 million for MyHealthNL as part of a \$4.1 billion health care investment.

Increased Seats at Memorial University's Faculty of Medicine

Memorial University's Faculty of Medicine increased its seats from 80 to 85 in September 2024, with a \$2 million investment from the Provincial Government. This expansion aims to retain more medical graduates in Newfoundland and Labrador, enhancing local healthcare sustainability. Another five seats will be added in September 2025. Previously, 69 of the 80 seats were for local residents.

Details of Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan Announced

In July 2024, the Provincial Government announced the details of the Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan to support seniors' health, dignity, and independence. Key initiatives include a \$400 annual Aging Well at Home Grant to eligible low-income seniors to help with supportive services such as snow clearing and grocery delivery, a \$400 monthly Caregiver Benefit for the caregivers of seniors with complex needs, increased funding for home repair and modification programs, enhanced influenza vaccines, and a \$500 annual supplement for food and heating in coastal Labrador communities. The plan also promotes social inclusion and age-and dementia-friendly communities.

New Incentive for Physicians to Join a Family Care Team

In September 2024, a \$75,000 incentive was introduced for salaried physicians joining family care teams for at least one year. This is retroactive for current team physicians and complements other incentives such as the Physician Signing Bonus which ranges from \$100,000 to \$150,000 for the five-year return-in-service. The initiative aims to ensure patients receive timely care from a range of health professionals.

New Hip Fracture Unit at St. Clare's Mercy Hospital

In September 2024, the establishment of a new hip fracture unit at St. Clare's Mercy Hospital was announced. The unit will improve care for patients recovering from hip

surgery and reduce surgical wait times. The 12-bed dedicated hip fracture unit at the hospital will provide best practices for patients recovering from hip surgery and will aim to decrease elective surgery cancellations by 100 per year. NLHS expects hip fractures to rise from 530 to 800 annually due to an aging population.

Construction Starting on Humber Valley-White Bay Community Health Centre

In October 2024, construction of a new community health centre in Deer Lake commenced. The new centre will increase access to health care services for residents and consolidate all existing health care services in the region, including the Deer Lake-White Bay Family Care Team, into one location.

It will be approximately 30,000 square feet and includes offices and clinical space to support team-based care delivered by health care professionals such as family physicians, registered nurses, and others.

Construction of New Adult Mental Health and Addictions Centre Completed

In October 2024, construction was completed on time for the new adult Mental Health and Addictions Centre in St. John's, representing another successful public private partnership infrastructure project in NL. NLHS was given full operational control of the facility and began the process of moving equipment and staff to the new facility, which opened in spring 2025.

The new, 240,000-square-foot, six-story, state-of-the-art facility has 102 beds and will provide a modern approach to mental health and addictions-based care, which links physical and mental health services, offering patients and their families holistic and integrated care.

Governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada Sign Bilateral Agreements to Improve Access to Health Care

In November 2024, the Provincial Government signed agreements with the Government of Canada to increase wages for home support workers and improve access to and affordability of drugs for rare diseases.

Through an amendment to the Aging with Dignity Agreement, announced in May 2024, the Government of Canada will provide more than \$25 million in new funding over the next five years for home support workers. Funding from this agreement will contribute to an increase in wages for 6,000 agency-based home support workers, who assist clients with daily living, providing personal, behavioural, and household support to help them maintain independence and age safely at home.

The Government of Canada will provide \$22 million to improve access to drugs for rare diseases, early diagnosis and screening, starting with the funding to support the province in providing access to select drugs under the National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases.

Provincial Government Selects Site for New Acute Care Hospital Campus on Northeast Avalon

In November 2024, the Provincial Government announced the site for a new acute care hospital campus in Kenmount Crossing, St. John's that will help modernize the delivery of health care services. Recommended by Health Accord NL, the new hospital further advances the Provincial Government's actions to ensure that modern infrastructure exists to support the transformation of health care in Newfoundland and Labrador. It will serve as the home of the new hospital and new Cardiovascular and Stroke Institute for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Two New Positron Emission Tomography – Computed Tomography (PET-CT) Scanners Announced for Hospitals in Newfoundland and Labrador

In November 2024, the Provincial Government announced that two new PET-CT scanners are being added to the Health Sciences Centre in St. John's and Western Memorial Regional Hospital in Corner Brook. to improve mortality rates for cancer, cardiac disease, and stroke patients.

Legislative Amendments Improving Recruitment of Health Care Professionals

In December 2024, the Provincial Government made legislative amendments to respond to requests from regulatory bodies, improve recruitment and retention of health professionals, and make it easier for health care professionals to relocate to NL. The amendments passed include:

- changes to the **Medical Act, 2011** authorizing the College of Physicians and Surgeons of NL to register and license physician assistants in the province, which will facilitate the introduction of this profession to the province;
- changes to the **Registered Nurses Act** which authorizes the College of Registered Nurses of NL to register and license registered psychiatric nurses, which will assist in bringing registered psychiatric nurses to Newfoundland and Labrador; and
- the creation of a new **Nurses Act** which creates the NL College of Nurses as the regulator for all nursing professions in province, including registered nurses, nurse practitioners, registered psychiatric nurses, and licensed practical nurse.

New Provincial Locum Recruitment Program for Physicians Launched

In January 2025, the Provincial Government and NLHS launched a Provincial Locum Recruitment Program to increase access to health care. The program provides opportunities for physicians to work as locums throughout the province, including communities that have had recruitment challenges. Effective January 1, 2025, incentives are available to locum physicians employed by NLHS and private practice locum physicians, including a locum bonus of \$10,000 for physicians who provide more than 25 days of locum services per fiscal year.

New Recruitment and Retention Initiatives for Emergency Services

Also in January, the Provincial Government announced additional incentives to attract new recruits and support existing paramedicine staff in the province. These incentives are based on recommendations from Health Accord NL to ensure health care providers are in place to offer direct care and services to residents, and to provide work-life balance. The new suite of supports and incentives for new recruits and paramedicine staff includes:

- A skills advancement program for emergency medical responders to become primary care paramedics;
- A tuition relief program for primary care paramedic students and advanced care paramedic students; and
- An educational travel subsidy for paramedicine students when travel is required for laboratory and clinical education.

Five New Dialysis Machines Announced for Western Memorial Regional Hospital

In February 2025, the Provincial Government announced \$103,000 in funding for five new dialysis machines at Western Memorial Regional Hospital in Corner Brook. The investment in new dialysis machines is based on Health Accord NL recommendations placing greater emphasis on health promotion and chronic disease management. Adding dialysis machines at Western Memorial Regional Hospital will allow greater flexibility for NLHS in scheduling treatments to meet operational needs and, more importantly, accommodate patients' needs.

Breast Cancer Screening Expanded to Individuals Aged 40 to 49 Years Old

In February 2025, the Provincial Government announced that individuals between the ages of 40 to 49 years are eligible for the Provincial Breast Screening Program as part of the commitment to improving access to health services and health outcomes for residents. With this expansion, individuals between the ages of 40-74 years can access breast cancer screening through self-referrals. This aligns with Health Accord NL recommendations to place greater emphasis on health promotion and chronic disease management.

Provincial Government to Begin Offering Shingles Vaccine

In March 2025, the Provincial Government announced that it will offer the shingles vaccine to residents 65 to 70 years of age and immunocompromised residents over the age of 70 as part of the provincial immunization program, starting June 1, 2025. The increased access to the shingles vaccine complements the Seniors Health and Well-

Being Plan, which includes coverage of the enhanced immune response influenza vaccines for seniors 65 years of age and older.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Expanding Access to Fertility Services

As announced in March 2025, the Provincial Government is improving access to fertility services in the province, including in-vitro fertilization (IVF) and egg preservation, that will eventually eliminate the need to travel outside of the province to access IVF treatment, improving the quality of life and well-being for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians seeking treatment. These improvements are based on recommendations in a report completed by Thinkwell Research Inc., that examined the viability of offering IVF treatment in-province, the financial subsidy to assist with the cost of IVF, and service delivery options.

The IVF subsidy has been increased to a one-time funding of up to \$20,000. This is an increase from the previous funding of \$5,000 per IVF cycle up to a maximum of three cycles. HCS is consulting with stakeholders to create a plan to establish IVF services within the province, which may include legislative changes, procurement and infrastructure requirements, and human resource implications.

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 introduced initiatives that help improve health outcomes for all Newfoundland and Labradorians, as it continues to implement strategies to modernize the health care system and creatively recruit and retain health professionals during a global shortage. This Annual Performance Report will focus on reporting results for the 2024-25 objective in each of these three priority areas.

Strategic Issue 1: Population Health

The Department of Health and Community Services remains committed to enhancing the health and well-being of individuals and communities across Newfoundland and Labrador. Building on the foundational work of Health Accord NL, the department continues to implement initiatives that support a reimagined health care system focused on prevention, early intervention, and equitable access to care.

In 2024-25, the department advanced several key initiatives aimed at addressing the social determinants of health and reducing health inequities. Pharmaceutical access was broadened through a bilateral agreement with Health Canada for the National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases.

Early intervention supports for children and youth were expanded through programs such as the Strongest Families Institute. Access to mental health and addictions

services was further enhanced through Doorways, the 811 HealthLine, and Bridgethegapp.ca.

Community-based care also saw significant growth, with increased programming for dementia care, rehabilitation and restorative care, and adult day services. To support aging in place, a new grant program was introduced to help individuals remain in their homes longer.

The department also initiated the development of three of the six Public Health Core Programs—Communicable Disease Control, Growth and Development in the Early Years, and Environmental Public Health. In collaboration with Well-Being NL, efforts were made to embed a Health in All Policies approach across government, ensuring that health and wellness considerations are integrated into decision-making across sectors.

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.

2024-25 Objective

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

Indicators:

Indicator	Results
Completed a review of the NLPDP Access, Assurance and 65+ Plans with recommendations to be advanced	Review completed and recommendations developed.

regarding potential changes to coverage and financial assessment processes	
Increased early intervention programs for children and youth (e.g., Strongest Families Institute, Doorways)	<p>The department continues to focus on expanding access to e-services such as the Strongest Families Institute (SFI), which provide evidence-based, virtual mental health and parenting support to children, youth, and families. These services remain a vital part of the province's stepped-care model, offering timely, stigma-free support that can be accessed from home—especially important for rural and remote communities.</p> <p>In 2024-25, the department funded a new program through Strongest Families Institute, the Strongest Beginnings Program. This program equips expecting and new parents/ caregivers with positive parenting skills early in the child's life by providing an accessible, distance-based, e-mental health platform using paraprofessional telephone coach support.</p> <p>Doorways continued to provide rapid access to mental health and addictions counselling services. Doorways locations offer a walk-in service while some locations provide same-day or next day services or appointments by phone. There are 24 Doorway locations for youth as of March 31, 2025. This is a decrease from 28 sites in 2023-24, due to challenges with recruitment and retention. An evaluation of the Doorways program is in progress.</p>

Increased programming for community-based dementia care and restorative rehabilitation care	<p>The Enhanced Dementia Care Program, which provides care and accommodation for individuals with moderate to advancing dementia in a secure community-based setting, was successfully launched in the 2024-25 fiscal year. Twenty-seven individuals participated in the program as of the fiscal year end.</p> <p>The Rehabilitation and Restorative Care Program was launched in 2024-25 and provides care and accommodation and offers low level rehabilitation and restorative care to older adults in a community-based setting. It offers services in two sites with 78 clients end of the 2024-25 fiscal year.</p>
Increased options for adult day programming	<p>The Adult Day Program, established in 2023, provides out of home respite and support with social and recreation for individuals with cognitive and physical impairments. While the program did not expand in 2024-25, an evaluation of the program was conducted from April 2024 to March 2025 to determine success and options for expansion in other personal care homes across the province.</p>
Increased access to mental health and addictions services, via Doorways, 811 HealthLine and Bridgethegapp.ca	<p>The number of Doorways locations dropped slightly in 2024-25 to 82 (from 84 in 2024) due to recruitment and retention challenges.</p> <p>Despite, there were 16,762 Doorways visits in 2024-25 down slightly from 17,482 visits in 2023-24. This is alongside sustained support through the 811 HealthLine and Bridgethegapp.ca.</p>

	<p>The 811 HealthLine continues to be a reliable access point, with an increase in mental health-related calls (6,256 in 2024-25 up from 6,007 in 2023-24)</p> <p>Bridgethegapp users (monthly average from past 12 months) was 7,494 in 2024-25 a decrease from 11,178 in 2023-24.</p> <p>While usage has declined, the platform remains a key component of the province's mental health strategy, offering self-help tools and resources.</p> <p>The province has clearly increased access to mental health and addictions services through infrastructure growth and diversified service delivery. The observed decreases in usage may reflect shifts in how individuals engage with services, rather than reduced need or availability. Continued monitoring and evaluation are in progress that will help ensure services align with needs.</p>
<p>Increased access to pharmaceuticals through bilateral agreements with Health Canada (e.g., National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases and National Pharmacare)</p>	<p>Newfoundland and Labrador signed the National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases in November 2024 which broadened access to new pharmaceuticals for rare diseases.</p> <p>To help improve access to the drugs under this Strategy, the financial eligibility criteria of the NLPDP Assurance Plan has been modified. The Assurance Plan maximum allowable net family income threshold of \$150,000 annually has been removed for individuals seeking coverage for any drug therapy that falls under this National Strategy.</p>

	<p>Newfoundland and Labrador communicated to Health Canada that it is ready to engage in discussions on National Pharmacare.</p>
Implemented a grant program to help people aging at home	<p>The Aging Well at Home Grant was introduced in 2024-25. Applications for the program opened in July 2024 and closed on February 28, 2025.</p> <p>In January 2025, the financial eligibility criteria for the grant expanded, resulting in a significant increase in the number of applications submitted. There have been 6,958 grants approved for a total of \$2.8 million.</p>
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)	<p>The work on standard development for three of the six Public Health Core Programs has been initiated. A Medical Officer of Health has been added to the public health team to lead the development of standards for the core programs. Jurisdictional scans have been completed and key informant interviews and broader consultation are in the planning stages.</p>
Collaborated with Well-Being NL to facilitate/coordinate a Health in All Policies approach across government	<p>The collaboration with Well-Being NL to facilitate/coordinate a Health in All Policies approach across government has been initiated. A Policy and Program Development Specialist has been hired to lead the work in Health in All Policies. Health and Health Equity Impact Assessment Tools are in the initial phases of development.</p>

Discussion of Results

In 2024-25, the Department of Health and Community Services made significant progress in advancing initiatives that support the health and well-being of residents across Newfoundland and Labrador. The department expanded community-based dementia care and rehabilitation and restorative care, as well as increased options for adult day programming, supporting individuals to remain active and engaged in their communities.

Early intervention efforts for children and youth were strengthened through expanded programming, including increased access to services offered by the Strongest Families Institute. These initiatives are aligned with the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Stepped-Care Model and contribute to improved mental health outcomes for young people and their families. Access to mental health and addictions services via the 811 HealthLine continued to grow, complementing additional entry points, including Doorways and Bridgethegapp.ca.

The decline in Doorways visits is influenced by a combination of operational and systemic factors. Incomplete data submission from one health zone for March 2025 may be distorting overall figures, while some schools (where youth Doorways operate) have reduced their hours of operation compared to the previous year. In the Labrador-Grenfell Zone, staffing shortages have led to a reduction in drop-in hours. Expanded outreach efforts, such as harm reduction teams engaging more frequently with community agencies, and the hiring of in-house social workers at two correctional facilities is redirecting individuals away from Doorways. The growing availability and use of peer support services, including the Lifewise Warm Line, also offer alternative options that may be contributing to the shift. The decline in Bridgethegapp is related to the inability to implement key platform upgrades for user navigation, functionality, and overall support. These improvements were not advanced during the fiscal year, impacting user engagement and satisfaction. A full platform refresh is currently

underway, led by the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Brand Office to address these issues and improve the user experience moving forward.

Pharmaceutical access was enhanced through a bilateral agreement with Health Canada for the National Strategy for Drugs for Rare Diseases. This effort aims to improve affordability and availability of drug for rare diseases for residents. The department looks forward to engaging in further discussions with Health Canada on the National Pharmacare Agreement.

To support aging in place, a new grant program was implemented to assist individuals in remaining in their homes. Additionally, work began on the development of three of the six Public Health Core Programs -Communicable Disease Control, Growth and Development in the Early Years, and Environmental Public Health—laying the groundwork for a more robust and responsive public health system.

The department also collaborated with Well-Being NL to advance a Health in All Policies approach, ensuring that health and wellness considerations are integrated across government departments and policy areas. This collaborative effort reflects a commitment to addressing the broader social determinants of health and promoting equity across the province.

Objective 3: By March 31, 2026, the Department of Health and Community Services will have continued to support initiatives aimed at improving population health and wellness.

Indicators:

- Increased access to medical withdrawal management services
- Began establishing sober living recovery homes
- Expanded access to health care services and supports for residents of the province

- Reduced wait times for substance use and addictions inpatient treatment
- Drafted Health in All Policies Framework
- Completed the Population Health Assessment analysis
- Increased rates for community-based service providers
- Increased options for community-based continuing care
- Began the establishment of a Provincial Human Papillomavirus Screening Program

Strategic Issue 2: Recruitment and Retention

The Department of Health and Community Services continues to prioritize the recruitment and retention of health care professionals to ensure a strong, sustainable workforce capable of meeting the evolving health care needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Recognizing the importance of building local capacity, the department has implemented a range of initiatives to support students, attract new professionals, and retain existing staff across the health system.

In 2024-25, the department introduced additional bursaries and grants with return-in-service agreements, where appropriate, to increase the domestic supply of health care professional students. Tuition relief initiatives were also implemented for students enrolled in the Practical Nurse Program and the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, helping to reduce financial barriers and encourage enrollment. Additional incentives were implemented to support paramedicine students inclusive of a skills advancement program for emergency medical responders training to become primary care paramedics, as well as an educational travel subsidy for paramedicine students who are required to travel as part of their educational program.

To further support student success and reduce attrition, three dedicated student success positions were established at the College of the North Atlantic and the Centre for Nursing Studies, focusing on program evaluation and academic support. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to strengthen the health workforce pipeline.

A comprehensive Health Workforce Framework was developed to guide the production of health human resources in alignment with Health Accord NL recommendations.

The department continued to promote health careers through the targeted recruitment campaign WorkInHealthNL and introduced a community toolkit and incentive program to encourage local participation in recruitment and retention efforts. These tools empower communities to play an active role in welcoming and supporting health care professionals.

To further expand training opportunities, the number of seats for Newfoundland and Labrador students in Memorial University's undergraduate medical education program was increased, ensuring more local students have the opportunity to pursue medical careers close to 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.

2024-25 Objective:

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:

Indicator	Results
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Implemented additional bursaries and grants with return in service agreements, where appropriate, to increase domestic supply of health care professional students	<p>The department and NLHS continued to utilize bursaries to target difficult-to-fill positions.</p> <p>In 2024-25 the department funded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a one-time increase to Bachelor of Science in Nursing Bursary amounts for rural and remote locations to a maximum of \$20,000; • a clinical placement grant program for Clinical Psychologists; and • a travel subsidy program for paramedicine students.
Implemented a tuition relief initiative for the Practical Nurse Program and the Bachelor of Science (Nursing)	<p>The tuition relief program was implemented for Practical Nurse and Bachelor of Science (Nursing) students in September 2024. It is also planned to expand to include primary care paramedics and advanced care paramedics.</p>
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	<p>Three student success positions were approved and implemented. All student success positions were filled in Winter 2025. Student success and attrition will be measured after the positions have been in place for 12 months.</p>
Developed a Health Workforce Framework to produce health human resources to support Health Accord NL recommendations	<p>The Framework was developed during the reporting period. Five engagement sessions were held with stakeholders and feedback was incorporated into the Framework in preparation for its release in May 2025.</p>
Developed the Recruitment and Retention Strategy to recruit new health professionals and retain current health professionals	<p>The Recruitment and Retention Strategy was developed during the 2024-25 fiscal year and was held to be finalized upon</p>

	release of the Health Workforce Framework.
Continued marketing and promotion through the targeted recruitment campaign WorkInHealthNL	<p>A recruitment campaign was launched in January 2025 in Canada, Ireland and UK with the WorkinHealthNL brand through channels such as Meta, LinkedIn, Display, Online Video, WebHealth Network and Search.</p> <p>The campaign focused on introducing people to our province and the opportunities available, as well as sharing more about incentives, lifestyle and working here.</p>
Implemented a community toolkit and incentive for communities to participate in recruitment and retention of health care professionals	<p>The launch of the Community Recruitment and Retention Incentive Program in February 2025 which allowed municipalities, Indigenous Governments, and Organizations to submit applications for funding to assist with actions that support recruitment and retention of health professionals.</p> <p>A community toolkit was launched in January 2025, designed to provide information and resources for creating welcoming communities for health care professionals.</p>
Increased number of seats for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at Memorial University's undergraduate medical education program	Memorial University's Faculty of Medicine expanded the number of seats for NL students from 80 to 85 in September 2024 and a further increase from 85 to 90 seats will take place in September 2025.

Discussion of Results

The Department of Health and Community Services continues to implement innovative strategies to strengthen the health workforce and ensure a sustainable supply of health care professionals across Newfoundland and Labrador. These efforts are focused on

both attracting new talent and supporting the success of students currently pursuing health-related education.

To increase the domestic supply of health care professionals, the department introduced additional bursaries and grants with return-in-service agreements, helping to reduce financial barriers and encourage students to practice in the province upon graduation. Tuition relief initiatives were also implemented for students enrolled in the Practical Nurse Program and the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, further supporting access to education.

Recognizing the importance of student retention and academic success, three dedicated student success positions were established at the College of the North Atlantic and the Centre for Nursing Studies. These roles focus on program evaluation and student support, contributing to reduced attrition, and improved outcomes for learners.

A Health Workforce Framework was developed to guide the strategic production of health human resources in alignment with Health Accord NL recommendations. Complementing this, the department continued development of a comprehensive Recruitment and Retention Strategy aimed at attracting new professionals and retaining those already working in the system.

The WorkInHealthNL recruitment website continued to be a key promotional tool, targeting both local and out-of-province audiences to highlight the benefits of working in Newfoundland and Labrador's health care system. In addition, a community toolkit and incentive program were launched to empower communities to actively participate in the recruitment and retention of health professionals.

To expand training opportunities for local students, the number of seats for Newfoundland and Labrador students in Memorial University's undergraduate medical education program was increased, ensuring more students can pursue medical careers close to home.

Objective 3: By March 31, 2026, the Department of Health and Community Services will have implemented initiatives that recruit and retain an increased number of health care professionals for the provision of health care services and contribute to a robust and stable workforce.

Indicators:

- Continued to implement key health workforce strategies that support the Health Human Resources Framework
- Updated Health Workforce Modelling Tool and projections for selected health professional groups
- Continued to build a minimum data set with key indicators for health workforce planning
- Continued to develop and implement strategies that build quality workplaces and support retention
- Continued to utilize and build recruitment initiatives to target difficult-to-fill positions
- Continued to engage and support students in health education programs
- Continued to engage high school students to promote health professions as careers of choice
- Formalized seat purchases for select out-of-province health education programs

Strategic Issue 3: System Transformation

Transformation of our health system is essential to meet the health care needs of people and communities across Newfoundland and Labrador. The Department of Health and Community Services remains focused on building a more integrated, responsive, and sustainable health care system – one that ensures individuals receive the right care, at the right time, from the right provider. Achieving a balanced approach to health care delivery – between community and inpatient care, rural and urban services, and virtual and in-person care – continues to be a key priority.

In 2024-25, the department advanced several initiatives to improve access and coordination across the health system. New access points to primary care providers were established, helping individuals connect more easily with the care they need. Enhanced access to personal health information empowered patients to take a more active role in managing their health, while improved collaboration among health care providers supported more seamless and coordinated care.

These efforts contributed to timely access to primary health care through Family Care Teams (FCTs), reduced wait times for specialist services, and strengthened emergency care through improvements to the provincial ambulance system and expanded virtual care options. The department also continued to address and prevent surgical backlogs and supported seniors in aging safely and comfortably 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.

2024-25 Objective:

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:

Indicators	Results
Initiated the establishment of four new Family Care Teams	<p>Three new FCTs were launched (became operational) within fiscal year 2024-25 in Labrador West, Gander/Gander Bay and Baie Verte/Springdale.</p> <p>There are now 20 operational FCTs, three non-operational FCTs, and three in the planning stages.</p>

Increased the number of patients connected to a Family Care Team	The number of patients connected to an FCT increased by 41.65 per cent from 55,455 on March 31, 2024, to 78,550 by March 31, 2025.
Continue to reduce the number of patients waiting to be attached to a Primary Care Provider on the provincial patient Registry (Patient Connect NL)	The number of patients waiting to be connected to a Primary Care Provider decreased from 48,416 on May 31, 2024 (the earliest date data is available) to 45,106 by March 31, 2025, reflecting a 6.84 per cent reduction.
Enhanced service delivery through the expansion of virtual care services in primary care and emergency care	<p>Teledoc provides access to virtual primary care for residents of the province without a family physician. Teladoc completed over 23,500 consultations from April 2024-March 2025. This is up from almost 4,000 between the launch date of November 2023 and March 2024.</p> <p>811 Healthline has enhanced access to primary care for residents of NL through Virtual Nurse Practitioner (NP) appointments which resulted in 61,900 encounters in 2024-25, with 95 per cent of these encounters completed by an NP. This is an increase of 55 per cent from 2023-2024 (39,852 encounters).</p> <p>The expansion of the Virtual NP service through the 811 Health Line has resulted in a 49 per cent increase in utilization of NPs, from 27,847 NP hours in 2023-2024 to 41,480 hours in 2024-25.</p> <p>Teladoc also began providing virtual emergency room (vER) and virtual urgent care (vUC) services throughout the province in November 2023. This service was initially in two vER sites and two vUC sites. In 2024-25, the service expanded to</p>

	<p>a total of eight vER sites and three vUC sites. Teladoc encounters increased from 519 vER encounters and 1,429 vUC encounters from Nov 2023 to March 2024 to 3,958 vER encounters and 3,383 vUC encounters in 2024-25.</p> <p>811 HealthLine also offers virtual fast track in six emergency departments. In September a vUC site was added in St. Albans. The 811 HealthLine virtual fast track and vUC service resulted in 12,800 encounters in 2024-25.</p>
<p>Developed a provincial centralized intake for orthopedic and cataract surgeries in response to a recommendation from 2023 Provincial Surgical Backlog Task Force Report</p>	<p>Centralized Intake for cataract surgeries went live in February 2025. Centralized intake for Orthopedic surgeries was being prepared to go live in May 2025.</p>
<p>Decreased usage of non-emergent visits to emergency departments</p>	<p>Reducing non-emergent visits to emergency departments (ED) remains a key priority. In 2024-25, several strategic initiatives were implemented to improve access to appropriate care and divert patients from unnecessary ED use.</p> <p>As of March 2025, there were 20 operational FCTs across the province, significantly increasing access to primary care. The number of patients connected to FCTs continues to grow, helping ensure timely care in community settings rather than EDs.</p> <p>Since its launch in November 2023, the province's virtual primary health care service has registered over 21,000 patients and completed more than 35,000 assessments—93 per cent of which were conducted by phone. This expansion of virtual care has provided residents with</p>

	<p>convenient, timely access to health professionals for non-emergency concerns.</p> <p>The 811 HealthLine has also been enhanced to allow residents to schedule virtual appointments with nurse practitioners for urgent, non-emergency issues via phone, text, or video. This service has become a vital access point for care, especially in rural and remote areas.</p> <p>811 asks clients where they would have gone if 811 had not been available. The 811 redirection rate is the percentage of clients who answered this question who would have gone to the ED but were directed elsewhere. From April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2024, the 811 redirection rate is 87.1 per cent</p> <p>In addition, the province is leveraging innovative technologies such as MEDXR HoloLens to deliver specialized services virtually, reducing the need for travel and ED visits. Community-based care options, including urgent care clinics and expanded primary care services, are being promoted to offer more accessible and affordable alternatives to emergency departments.</p> <p>Advance Care Planning is also being encouraged to help individuals and families make informed decisions about their care, potentially reducing unnecessary or inappropriate ED visits.</p>
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	<p>Together, these initiatives reflect the government's commitment to transforming the health system by improving access, enhancing service delivery, and ensuring that emergency departments are reserved for true emergencies.</p>
<p>Consolidated dispatch, ground and fixed wing air ambulance operations</p>	<p>Dispatch and ground operations were consolidated in June 2024 and work was ongoing to consolidate fixed wing operations.</p> <p>NLHS is finalizing a contract with Medavie Health Services to assume management of both the provincial road ambulance and air ambulance programs. As part of the contract Medavie and its subcontractor PAL will assume management for air ambulance operations and are contractually obligated to consolidate air ambulance operations to one provider. The lead time to acquire aircraft (up to 18 months) may extend the consolidation process.</p>
<p>Completed procurement and contracting of a managing operator for the integrated ambulance system</p>	<p>In October 2024, Medavie Health NL Inc. was identified as the selected proponent to design, manage and operate a single, integrated road and air ambulance service in the province. Contract negotiations were ongoing throughout 2024-25.</p>
<p>Finalized province-wide implementation of dispatch and communications technology systems</p>	<p>Province-wide dispatch systems have been implemented. As of June 1, 2024, NLHS began receiving all ambulance calls through its Provincial Medical Communication Centre (PMCC). The PMCC dispatches all call requests for ground ambulance (routine and emergency calls), air ambulance and</p>

	<p>community paramedicine, across the province.</p> <p>Province wide activation of the Province Wide Radio System (through Justice and Public Safety) went live on June 1, 2024. NLHS, as a user, can now communicate by radio with ambulances throughout the province from its Provincial Medical Communications Center in St. John's.</p> <p>NLHS is also working to deploy the Electronic Patient Care Record System (ePCR). The system includes a laptop in every ambulance to gather and transmit patient care information to a central data base. The data can be analyzed for performance reporting and medical quality assurance. While ePCR is now operational in most urban regions, deployment in rural ambulance bases has been challenged in both training capacity and cell phone/high-speed internet connectivity.</p> <p>NLHS is in the process of signing a contact Medavie Health Services to manage the provincial road and air ambulance programs. Medavie has developed a strategy to address these implementation challenges.</p> <p>The full deployment of communications technology and electronic Patient Care Record systems province-wide will be achieved within 18 months of contract signing.</p>
Commenced design and development of a helicopter Emergency Management System (EMS) implementation plan	HCS and NLHS have commenced developing helicopter EMS capacity, including the contracting of a new service

	provider in 2025. Further helicopter EMS system planning will be completed by the new managed service provider within 12 months of contract signing.
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Discussion of Results:

In 2024-25, the department made significant progress in expanding access to primary health care through the establishment of four new FCTs bringing the total to 20 operational teams, with three more in the planning stages. As a result, the number of patients connected to a FCT increased by 41.65 per cent, from 55,455 in March 2024 to 78,550 by March 2025. This growth reflects strong momentum toward improving access to primary health care across the province.

Efforts to reduce the number of individuals waiting to be connected to a primary care provider through Patient Connect NL also showed positive results. Between May 2024 and March 2025, the number of patients on the registry decreased by 6.84 per cent, from 48,416 to 45,106.

Virtual care services continued to expand in both primary and emergency care. Since its launch in November 2023, virtual primary health care through Teledoc has registered over 21,000 patients. Virtual emergency room (vER) services also grew, with an additional seven sites added in 2024-25. Teladoc's vER and vUC services recorded 3,958 and 3,383 encounters, respectively, across eight sites, while the 811 HealthLine's vUC and virtual fast track services completed 12,800 appointments across seven sites.

To address surgical backlogs, the department launched a provincial centralized intake system for cataract surgeries in February 2025, with orthopedic surgeries planned to follow in May 2025. These initiatives respond directly to recommendations from the 2023 Provincial Surgical Backlog Task Force Report and are expected to streamline access and improve wait times.

Emergency services also saw significant developments. The department consolidated dispatch and ground ambulance operations under NLHS and province-wide implementation of the dispatch and communications system was finalized. As of June 1, 2024, all ambulance calls are now managed through the Provincial Medical Communication Centre, which coordinates ground, air, and community paramedicine services. Full deployment of communications technology and electronic patient care record systems is expected within 18 months of finalizing the managed service provider contract.

Additionally, planning for a helicopter Emergency Medical Services system began in 2025, with a new service provider contracted and further development to be completed within 12 months of contract signing.

Objective 3: By March 31, 2026, the Department of Health and Community Services will have continued to implement initiatives that improve health care delivery and rebalance the health care system.

Indicators:

- Continued development of Health Information System Project
- Increased number of patients connected to a Family Care Team
- Increased access to virtual care, including Virtual Primary Health Care, Virtual Emergency Care, and Virtual Urgent Care services
- Increased number of accounts on MyHealthNL
- Expanded the Comprehensive Respiratory Care Program
- Expanded Integrated Youth Services
- Opened two new urgent care centres
- Awarded the Integrated Ambulance Service contract, with the selected proponent commencing management of all integrated air, ground and dispatch operations for the next ten years

- Increased the amount of the fertility subsidy to support more individuals to access fertility services
- Improved access to Cardiovascular and Stroke Care
- Reduced wait times for MRI appointments across the province
- Expanded access to Mobile Primary Health Care
- Implemented a Child Youth Community Health model
- Increased access to PET Scans
- Decreased wait times for Autism Diagnosis
- Increased access to services provided by Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners

Opportunities and Challenges

Newfoundland and Labrador's aging population, geographic dispersion, and evolving health needs continue to challenge the province's health care system. However, these challenges also present a unique opportunity for bold and necessary transformation. The establishment of the Provincial Health Authority, guided by Health Accord NL, marks a major step toward a more integrated, efficient, and patient-centered system that remains responsive to the distinct needs of each region.

Key initiatives include the development of a single, integrated road and air ambulance service and the implementation of a modern Health Information System to support seamless, coordinated care among health professionals. These efforts are designed to close gaps in service delivery and improve continuity of care for patients across the province.

The recruitment and retention of health professionals remains a critical issue. The Provincial Government continues to invest in innovative strategies, including international recruitment missions and expanded scopes of practice, to build a more stable and diverse workforce. These efforts are helping to reduce reliance on temporary staffing and ensure more consistent access to care.

In support of these goals, the Provincial Government introduced legislative amendments in December 2024 to modernize health professional regulation—making it easier for qualified professionals to practice in Newfoundland and Labrador and supporting the integration of new roles such as physician assistants and registered psychiatric nurses.

The department is also committed to enabling health professionals to work to their full capacity. For example, nurse practitioners with the 811 HealthLine can now extend certain prescriptions, creating new access points for patients and reducing pressure on emergency and primary care services.

Beyond clinical care, it is recognized that improving health outcomes requires addressing the broader social determinants of health. Through collaboration with other departments and community partners, efforts are underway to support poverty reduction, housing, income support, child and senior care, gender equity, disability inclusion, and Indigenous health. This whole-of-government approach is essential to building a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable health care system for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Financial Information

	Department of Health and Community Services 2024-25 Fiscal Year		
	Actual Expenditure	Operating Budget	Original Budget
Minister's Office	\$ 432,406	\$ 437,820	\$ 326,800
General Administration	\$ 21,738,436	\$ 22,176,850	\$ 21,042,900
Memorial University Faculty of Medicine	\$ 76,374,900	\$ 76,374,900	\$ 76,374,900
Drug Subsidization	\$ 195,201,813	\$ 189,365,100	\$ 179,687,200
Medical Care Plan	\$ 586,737,853	\$ 587,077,985	\$ 562,168,500
Provincial Health Authority and Related Services	\$ 3,400,667,696	\$ 3,422,669,414	\$ 3,344,284,100
Building Improvements, Furnishings and Equipment	\$ 142,279,132	\$ 145,818,831	\$ 178,656,700
Total Department	\$ 4,423,432,236	\$ 4,443,920,900	\$ 4,362,541,100

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 2025.