

# Strategic Plan

2025-2026

Social Supports  
and Well-Being







## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister responsible for the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being, I am pleased to present the department's Strategic Plan for the period October 29, 2025 to March 31, 2026. This plan builds upon the strategic directions and commitments of our government and identifies the department's key goals and objectives to be accomplished throughout the 2025-26 planning period.

The Department of Social Supports and Well-Being focuses on ensuring that policies, practices and services respect diversity, increase equity and reduce barriers to self-determination while emphasizing prevention, early intervention and protection to ensure that all individuals in the province are supported to thrive. Together with our community partners, and other government departments, the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being is committed to ensuring an inclusive, accessible and socially advanced province that values its children, youth, families, and all individuals across the life span.

This plan is submitted in accordance with the requirements for a category 1 entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. As Minister, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan, and the achievement of the specific goals and objectives contained herein.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joedy Wall".

Hon. Joedy Wall

Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being

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## Overview

### Mandate

The Department of Social Supports and Well-Being (SSWB) supports individuals, families and communities in Newfoundland and Labrador in achieving improved social well-being and reduced poverty and delivers programs and services to support children and youth who have experienced abuse or neglect. The department collaborates with the community sector to foster their role in social and economic development. Further, it promotes the values of inclusion and diversity and leads the development of policies, programs and partnerships to improve services and overall social development across the lifespan of residents within the province.

### Lines of Business

- Adoptions - finds permanent homes for children available for adoption.
- Child Protection and In-Care - helps ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth in need of protective intervention.
- Community Sector - collaborates with the community sector to foster their role in the social and economic development in the province.
- Community Youth Corrections - provides services to youth who come into conflict with the law between their 12th and 18th birthdays.
- Disability Policy - removes barriers, increases accessibility and enhances the inclusion of persons with disabilities through government policies and programs.
- Income Support Benefits - provides financial support to qualifying people, primarily aged 18 to 64, to assist with basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter, as well as other supplementary benefits based on a person's needs.
- Increasing Income Security - prevents, reduces, and alleviates poverty, and fosters opportunities through leading government-wide policy development for all individuals and families to share fully in our society and economy.

- Youth Services - assists youth in need of protective intervention during their transition to early adulthood.

Additional information can be found on the department's website:

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/sswb/>

## Staff and Budget

Branch <sup>1</sup>	# of Employees	Budget
Minister's Office and Executive Support	17	\$1,488,000
Corporate Services and Performance Improvement	111	\$7,269,000
Child and Youth Services	686	\$182,001,000
Policy and Programs	38	\$11,294,900
Prevention and Early Intervention	226	\$273,407,200

As of October 29, 2025, SSWB had 1078 positions – 907 permanent, 139 temporary and 32 contractual.

The Child and Youth Services Branch is structured into Central-West Region, Labrador Region and Metro Region, as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> On October 29, 2025, a new Healthy Communities Branch was created within SSWB. Work is underway to establish this Branch. This table does not include information related to the Healthy Communities Branch.

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2026

- Central-West: 258 positions, with offices located in Baie Verte, Bonavista, Botwood, Channel-Port-aux-Basques, Clarenville, Conne River, Corner Brook, Deer Lake, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Harbour Breton, Holyrood, Lewisporte, Marystown, Musgrave Harbour, Placentia, Roddickton, Springdale, St. Alban's, St. Anthony, Stephenville, Summerford and Whitbourne;
- Labrador: 128 positions, with offices located in Cartwright, Forteau, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Hopedale, Labrador City, Makkovik, Nain, Natuashish, Rigolet and Sheshatshiu; and
- Metro: 294 positions, with offices located in Bay Roberts, Bell Island, Conception Bay South, Ferryland, Harbour Grace, and St. John's.

The Income Support Service Delivery Division, within the Prevention and Early Intervention Branch, has 212 positions with offices located in: in St. John's, Carbonear, Marystown, Clarenville, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Stephenville, Corner Brook, Channel-Port-aux-Basques and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

The department's 2025-26 gross budget is \$475,460,100.

## Primary Clients

SSWB serves a wide range of clients, primarily focusing on individuals and families who may be experiencing economic or social challenges, including:

- Children, youth and families;
- Low-income individuals and families;
- Persons with disabilities;
- Indigenous Governments and organizations; and
- Community organizations.

## Vision

A socially advanced province, where all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians live fulfilling lives of purpose, balance and meaning for them.

SSWB collaborates with a broad array of partners and community stakeholders and provides leadership in government to ensure that policies, practices, and services respect diversity, increase equity and reduce barriers, while emphasizing prevention, early intervention, protection, self-determination and self-reliance.



## Strategic Issues

### Issue One: Improved Delivery of Services to Children and Youth

In 2025-26, SSWB will focus on improving the delivery of services to children and youth. The recruitment and retention of frontline Child and Youth Services social workers has been a long-standing concern. The ability to deliver high quality services and achieve better outcomes for the children, youth and families served depends on SSWB's ability to recruit and retain social workers and other professionals. Foster families and family-based care provide nurturing, stable environments that promote emotional development, attachment, and well-being. SSWB will work to recruit, retain and support foster families and family-based care. SSWB is also committed to helping children and youth in care find permanent homes, which is essential to improving outcomes, and to providing a wide array of supportive services to address the increasing complexity of social and health-related issues facing children, youth and their families.

### GOAL

By March 31, 2026, SSWB will have improved delivery of services to children and youth.

### Indicators

- Implemented recruitment and retention initiatives for social workers.
- Implemented technology improvements for case management.

### 2025-26 Objective:

By March 31, 2026, SSWB will have implemented initiatives to improve the delivery of services for children and youth.

**Indicators:**

- Implemented initiatives to support the recruitment and retention of social workers.
- Implemented case management technology improvements.
- Added Social Worker positions to further work related to adoptions.
- Established a Foster Home Intake and Assessment Team.

**Issue Two: Improved Affordability**

In 2025-26, SSWB will focus on improving affordability for residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, with a particular focus on supports for low-income individuals and families. The cost of living in this province, and across the country, has increased in recent years. In 2025-26, further efforts to streamline and improve access to benefits and financial supports aim to make life more affordable for people in this province.

**GOAL:**

By March 31, 2026, SSWB will have improved supports for low-income individuals and families.

**Indicators:**

- Reviewed the Income Support Program to further streamline benefits.

**2025-26 Objective:**

By March 31, 2026, SSWB will have identified areas to enhance the Income Support Program.

**Indicators:**

- Completed review to streamline and improve the Income Support benefit structure.

## Annex A: Active Entities

The Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being is also responsible for two entities, which carry out their own strategic planning and performance reporting in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. These include:

### **Accessibility Standards Advisory Board**

The Accessibility Standards Advisory Board is responsible for advising and making recommendations to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities regarding the establishment and content of accessibility standards and the time periods for implementation.

Pursuant to section 9 of the **Accessibility Act**, the Accessibility Standards Advisory Board shall consist of a minimum of seven members and a maximum of nine members, including a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. Members are eligible for reappointment but shall not serve for longer than two consecutive terms.

### **Income and Employment Support Appeal Board**

The Income and Employment Support Appeal Board (IESAB) is an independent, arm's length body authorized to hear appeals on decisions regarding Income Support, as well as eligibility for employment supports funded by the Provincial Government. The IESAB is primarily governed by the **Income and Employment Support Act**; however, it is also responsible for appeals with respect to eligibility for benefits under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program (NLPDP), under section 40 of the **Pharmaceutical Services Act**, and section 4.2 of the **Health and Community Services Act** – Employability Assistance Agreement for Persons with Disabilities.

Pursuant to section 42 of the **Income and Employment Support Act**, the IESAB is comprised of a Chair, a Vice-Chair and a Member, one of whom must be a current or

former recipient of income or employment support. Three alternate members are also appointed, one of whom must also be a current or former recipient of income or employment support.