

2022–2023
Annual Report

**Health and
Community Services**





MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

I am pleased to present the 2022-23 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 Department's accomplishments during the final year of the three-year planning cycle for the 2020-23 Strategic Plan, as well as the overall achievement of the Department's three-year goals. As Minister of Health and Community Services, I acknowledge my accountability for the preparation of this report, as well as the accomplishments and any variations in results contained herein.

As the people of Newfoundland and Labrador adjust to a new normal created by the COVID-19 pandemic, my Department continues to address the issues stemming from its impact on our health care staff and the health care system. At the same time, with the support of our stakeholders, we have remained diligent in achieving the goals and objectives set out for us in the Department's 2020-23 Strategic Plan: supporting public and population health; improving quality and access of care; and advancing health innovation and efficiency.

The end of this strategic planning cycle sees Health Accord NL conclude its work and present a blueprint for a reimagined health care system. It also sees the completion of all 54 recommendations outlined in **Towards Recovery**, which will continue to transform the mental health and addictions system in the province for years to come. As we move forward from the challenges presented to us during the last three years, we will continue to strive for meaningful change to meet the health care needs of all Newfoundland and Labradorians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Osborne". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Hon. Tom Osborne
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 Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services – the new provincial health authority – 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.

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/>.

Staff and Budget

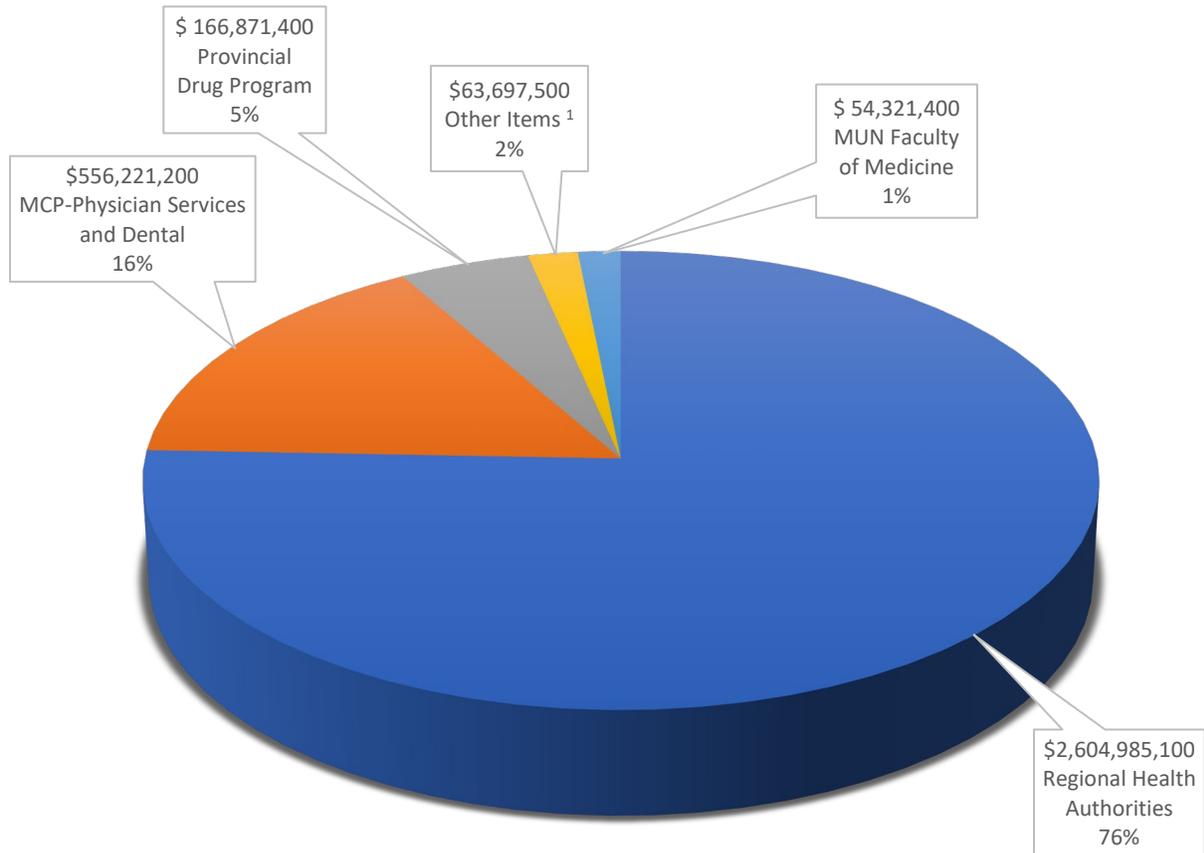
As of March 31, 2023, the Department employed 231 staff in four locations across the province: Confederation Building (West Block) (160 people with 12 who work remotely), Major's Path in St. John's (26), Grand Falls-Windsor (33), and Stephenville (12).

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Minister's Office	4	\$ 336,600
Executive Support	15	\$ 1,920,500
Communications	3	\$ 272,900
Financial Services	14	\$ 893,300
Information Management	11	\$ 1,093,900
Administrative Support	0	\$ 1,042,100
MCP St. John's	6	\$ 312,900
MCP GFW	33	\$ 1,940,100
Audit Services	12	\$ 846,400
Pharmaceutical Services	19	\$ 1,386,400
NLPDP Assessment Office	12	\$ 612,600
Physician Services	14	\$ 1,264,700
Regional Services	15	\$ 1,355,700
Provincial Blood Coordinating Program	3	\$ 184,000
Infrastructure Management	1	\$ 110,800
Public Health	25	\$ 2,076,500
Mental Health and Addictions	10	\$ 936,800
Primary Health Care	6	\$ 402,600
Policy, Planning and Evaluation	11	\$ 1,609,300
Health Workforce Planning	4	\$ 388,200
Air and Road Ambulance	8	\$ 1,108,700
Recruitment and Retention	5	\$ 519,600
Total	231	\$ 20,614,600

*as of March 31, 2023

Expenditures – Where Health Dollars are Spent

\$3,446,096,600



¹ This includes salaries and operating budget of Department of Health and Community Services as well as total building improvements, furnishings and equipment.

Highlights and Partnerships

During 2022-2023, the Department of Health and Community Services advanced a number of initiatives, working collaboratively with federal/provincial/territorial (F/PT) committees and organizations, other provincial government departments and agencies, municipalities, regional health authorities (RHAs), educational institutions, community-based groups, and individuals. The following are some of the notable achievements the Department made over the past year.

Agreement with the University of Ottawa Heart Institute

In April 2022, Eastern Health signed an agreement with the University of Ottawa Heart Institute to help address the cardiac surgery waitlist in Newfoundland and Labrador. With the new arrangement, the University of Ottawa surgeons can practice in the province, or depending on the need, patients may travel to Ottawa to receive surgery and care. This short-term strategy helped address cardiac surgical backlogs, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the cyber-attack in 2021.

Expansion of the 811 Service

In May 2022, the Provincial Government expanded the 811 Service to include all services traditionally offered through the Provincial Mental Health Crisis Line. This change enabled individuals in need of crisis response or mental health and addictions support to dial 811, day or night, to speak with a registered nurse who is a trained crisis intervener, enhancing the capacity to assist individuals in real time during a crisis.

Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador

In June 2022, the Provincial Government launched **Our Path to Resilience**, a five-year action plan with an equity-based lens that includes 12 targeted actions and aims to reduce suicide incidents in Newfoundland and Labrador by enhancing monitoring, surveillance and research. The plan fulfills a **Towards Recovery** commitment to

develop a Life Promotion Suicide Prevention Plan, focusing on reducing stigma and empowering communities to build resilience and inclusiveness.

Provincial Government and Community Partners Support Vulnerable Populations and Public Safety

In June 2022, the Happy Valley-Goose Bay Acute Response Team was established, which brought together senior leaders and decision-makers from the Provincial Government, Indigenous Governments and Organizations, the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and Labrador Grenfell-Health. The team meets regularly and strives to ensure the safety and well-being of the homeless individuals who present with multiple and complex needs.

Provincial Action Plan: Reducing Alcohol Harms and Costs in Newfoundland and Labrador

In July 2022, the Provincial Government released the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan: Reducing Alcohol Harms and Costs in Newfoundland and Labrador**. The plan acknowledges the influence of the social determinants on individuals, families and communities and recognizes the need for a comprehensive approach to ensure equitable access and promote healing. It aims to prevent alcohol-related harms through screening, brief intervention, referral and treatment, and includes 13 actions to be completed by March 2026. Progress will be monitored through future annual reports using indicators such as alcohol sales, consumption rates, alcohol-related deaths and injury, hospitalizations, and treatment wait times.

Recruitment and Retention of Healthcare Professionals

Extraordinary Every Day Campaign

In July 2022, the Provincial Government launched 'Extraordinary Every Day', a recruitment campaign to attract and retain health care professionals in Newfoundland

and Labrador. This campaign highlights the province's distinctiveness and offers insight into their potential working environment.

Expansion of Family Practice Program

In August 2022, the Department of Health and Community Services expanded the Family Practice Program, offering \$150,000 to new family practice physicians who open a family practice clinic, or join an existing family practice in the community, in exchange for a five-year service commitment, as well as including first-year residents in its eligibility criteria. Since its launch, 15 physicians have received funding from the Family Practice Program to open or join a family practice.

Come Home Incentive and Expansion of Eligible Health Professions

In October 2022, the Provincial Government announced the Come Home Incentive to encourage health care professionals, specifically physicians, nurses, and paramedics from Newfoundland and Labrador, who have been living outside the province for at least six months to come home and work. Incentives vary between \$50,000 and \$100,000 for a three- to five-year return-in-service (RIS) agreement. The program also includes incentives for non-Newfoundland and Labrador individuals, who may receive between \$25,000 and \$50,000 for a three-to five-year RIS agreement.

In January, 2023, the Provincial Government expanded the program's eligibility criteria to include clinical psychologists, respiratory therapists, radiation therapists (including dosimetrists), cardiology technologists and medical physicists, with incentives ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for a three- to five-year RIS agreement.

Dementia Care Action Plan

In March 2023, the Provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador launched a comprehensive three-year Dementia Care Action Plan. The plan's primary objectives

are to raise awareness, enhance support and services for individuals with dementia and their caregivers, and improve the workforce's ability to provide better care for those affected by the disease. Aligned with Health Accord NL recommendations, the plan focuses on bolstering community capacity to support individuals with complex needs, thereby reducing the reliance on institutional care and unnecessary acute care visits.

Completion of All 54 Recommendations in the Towards Recovery Action Plan

In March 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services proudly announced the successful fulfillment of all 54 recommendations outlined in the five-year plan,

Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for

Newfoundland and Labrador. Since **Toward Recovery's** launch in 2017, the Provincial Government made significant progress, establishing new infrastructure, a provincial stepped care model, and various programs and services, including e-mental health and virtual care options, better access to opioid dependence treatment, and the transition of health services from the justice system. The implementation of the recommendations in **Towards Recovery** continues to transform the mental health and addictions system in the province to one that is person-centred, recovery-focused and provides the right care, at the right time, closer to home.

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 2020-23 planning cycle:

1. Supporting Public and Population Health
2. Improving Quality and Access
3. Advancing Health Innovation and Efficiency

Within each priority area, a three-year goal along with annual objectives and indicators were identified. This report includes progress and results toward the three-year goal and the 2022-23 objectives.

Issue 1: Supporting Public and Population Health

The Department continued to build capacity in identified areas in the health care system to help government better respond to and contribute to positive health outcomes for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This helped to support the Government's strategic directions of "healthier people" and "better living."

During the 2020-23 period, the Department implemented initiatives that influence the economic, physical, and environmental conditions that help individuals achieve optimal health and well-being and shape the health of the population. The strategic planning cycle during this time period created a unique set of challenges for the Department and its partners, as it worked to complete its goals and objectives alongside the ongoing and ever-changing demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, the Department was able to able to significantly advance work on its initiatives.

For the 2022-23 fiscal year, the Department focused on reviewing its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and entered into an agreement with the Public Health Agency of Canada, as part of its proof of vaccination program. It also began implementing actions

in both **Our Path of Resilience** and the **Provincial Alcohol Action Plan**, aimed at improving positive health outcomes of the population.

Goal

By March 31, 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services will have improved its capacity to contribute to positive health outcomes for the people of the province.

2022-23 Objective

Objective: By March 31, 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services will have continued to implement initiatives aimed at supporting population and public health.	
Indicator	Results
Implemented actions related to Our Path of Resilience , the five-year provincial suicide prevention and life promotion plan	<p>The action plan was launched in June 2022, aimed at reducing the incidents of suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador.</p> <p>The Our Path of Resilience Steering Committee and four working groups were established to support the implementation of the five-year action plan. Work is underway to support all 12 recommended actions.</p>
Implemented actions from the Provincial Alcohol Action Plan	An Alcohol Action Plan Steering Committee and four working groups were established to support the implementation of the five-year action plan. These working groups are interdepartmental and have health authority representation, community organizations, and persons with lived experience. Work is underway to support all 13 recommended actions.

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<p>Entered into an agreement with the Public Health Agency of Canada to support the maintenance of the pan-Canadian proof of vaccination program to support ongoing public health priorities</p>	<p>Newfoundland and Labrador entered into agreement with the Public Health Agency of Canada on March 31, 2023. This was to support the maintenance of the pan-Canadian proof of vaccination program. This work enabled residents to have access to their COVID-19 vaccination record and use it for international travel.</p>
<p>Began drafting a public health framework</p>	<p>A public health framework is drafted and work is underway with marketing to prepare for public release.</p>
<p>Continued a review of the COVID-19 pandemic response</p>	<p>Public Health continues to closely monitor COVID-19 activity and implement appropriate public health measures and recommendations based on current epidemiology.</p> <p>In accordance with the Public Health Protection and Promotion Act, HCS continues working with stakeholders on the development of the public health framework, as well as regulations and standards.</p> <p>In September 2022, HCS tabled the, “Report to the House of Assembly on the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency”, to the House of Assembly. It provides details on the impact of the global pandemic on the province, as well as HCS’ responses to protect Newfoundland and Labradorians through public health measures. The report can be found here.</p>

2020-2023 Goal Reporting

Goal: By March 31, 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services will have improved its capacity to contribute to positive health outcomes for the people of the province.

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Indicator	Results
Completed the implementation of all recommendations from Towards Recovery: A Vision for a Renewed Mental Health and Addictions System for Newfoundland and Labrador	Effective March 2022, all 54 recommendations in Towards Recovery were substantially completed. The final Towards Recovery report will be publically released in 2023.
Implemented a Health in All Policies framework	Since the release of Health Accord NL's report, work is ongoing to reflect Calls to Action and to align government's approach to Health in All Policies, including the development and implementation of a framework.
Expanded Primary Healthcare Delivery	<p>A provincial policy framework was implemented for the new Collaborative Care Teams, which are now known as Family Care Teams (FCTs).</p> <p>As well, HCS has created and implemented Patient Connect NL, a provincial list of individuals who have identified as being without a primary care provider. The goal is to connect these individuals to a FCT or primary care provider in their area as soon as one becomes available.</p>
Strengthened government's ability to respond to public health emergencies	The Department continued to take an all-hazards approach to public health emergency management and worked with the regional health authorities. Moving forward, the Department will collaborate with the newly-formed provincial health authority, NLHS, to ensure consistency across its regional zones.
Implemented digital solutions for the prevention and management of chronic disease	Remote patient monitoring (RPM) is being used to support chronic disease self-management in all health zones of the province. RPM is available to patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, congestive heart failure, and diabetes, although, disease-specific RPM

	programming varies by health zone. Work is underway to upscale and integrate RPM across the province.
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Discussion of Results

Primary health care supports individuals, families, and communities in the prevention of illness and maintenance of health. The multi-disciplinary team approach and wrap-around services provided by Family Care Teams and the Patient Connect NL platform, has been successful to meet the primary care needs of residents of NL. Its success has led to the expansion of more FCTs to identified locations across the province, based on need.

A Health in all Policies (HiAP) Framework was developed in draft in 2021-22; however, the finalization of the document was delayed, pending release of the Health Accord NL Blueprint, which was presented to Government in June 2022. The Department of Health and Community Services is revising the HiAP Framework to align with Health Accord NL and the **Public Health Protection and Promotion Act**.

The Department of Health and Community Services is proud of the completed implementation of the recommendations outlined in **Towards Recovery** and its meaningful impact on the mental health and addictions system for Newfoundland and Labradorians for years to come. While acknowledging that more work remains, the implementation of all 54 recommendations in **Towards Recovery** has yielded remarkable outcomes:

- Over 1,100 individuals with complex mental illnesses have been assisted by 15 Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams and Flexible Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) Teams across the province.
- Doorways counselling walk-in clinics have expanded to 66 locations, with 43,000 visits recorded since 2017.
- More than 8,500 mobile crisis response team visits and nearly 350,000 sessions on Bridge the gapp since March 2018.

- Approximately 6,300 families have been referred to the Strongest Families Institute, with 100 per cent rating the service as excellent or very good, and 99 per cent confirming that they learned useful techniques.

Issue 2: Improving Quality and Access

Having access to quality health care services is essential for the health of the population. In improving access to services, the Department considers the appropriateness of services and how they are delivered. Traditional health service delivery models have not kept up with the pace of change in many areas of health care. Many services can be safely and efficiently delivered in a more innovative fashion and can be delivered using health care providers such as nurse practitioners, pharmacists, midwives, and paramedics. Additionally, services that were traditionally delivered in a hospital or institutional setting can now be safely delivered to patients in their homes, such as home-based dialysis.

By adopting modernized health care delivery models, the Department is working to improve access to services. In support of Government's strategic directions of, "a more efficient public sector" and "healthier people", the Department of Health and Community Services is working to improve access to quality services in areas such as mental health and addictions and long-term care and community supports, as well as exploring new and innovative ways of improving access to other services, including expanding the availability of virtual services.

During 2020-2023, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department focused on improving access and quality of health care by specifically increasing the number of nurse practitioners and advanced care paramedics, and expanding access to midwives in the province. As well, the Department worked to ensure continued support for community and home-based services for people with complex mental health needs and for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In 2022-23, the Department expanded the Home Dementia Care Program. Work also began on implementing the integrated air and road ambulance system, a key Call to Action from Health Accord NL, as well as on a Senior’s Care Framework. FCTs were rolled out and work was initiated on virtual ERs to help increase access in the areas of primary and emergency care.

Goal

Goal: By March 31, 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services will have improved access to healthcare services and quality of care by adopting modern service delivery models.

2022-23 Objective

Objective: By March 31, 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services will have implemented further service delivery models aimed at increasing access and quality of care.	
Indicator	Results
Implemented Provincial Stepped Care Model for mental health and addictions services	Under the Towards Recovery Action Plan, HCS developed and implemented a Provincial Stepped Care Model that outlines three key access points: 811, Doorways and Bridge the gapp, and from there, standardized triage, assessment and access to timely care. Ongoing work aims to further promote this model of care for mental health and addictions services in the province.
Continued to expand the Home Dementia Care Program	In 2022-23, in Eastern Health, 166 individuals received services under this program and 99 in Central Health. The program has been expanded to Western Health and staff recruitment is underway.
Begun implementing integrated air and road ambulance services	In 2023, \$9.0 million was allocated to begin integrating 60 separate ambulance services to a single ambulance service

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	<p>with centralized dispatch as part of health care modernization.</p> <p>A Steering Committee of Deputies has been struck to oversee this service delivery transformation. Technical, HEMS (Health Emergency Management Services) Planning and Fairness Advisors have been hired to support the process. NLHS has ordered vehicles to set a foundation for provincial ambulance operations, and commenced work to expand existing dispatch capacity at the Miller Centre Medical Communications Centre.</p>
Worked with partners to initiate work on a standardized provincial approach to expansion and enhancement of virtual ERs	A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued in 2022. A vendor will be in place and operationalized in 2023. Province-wide operations of virtual ERs are developed and will be operationalized by NLHS.
Begun implementation of Collaborative Community Teams	There were eight Collaborative Care Teams implemented (now known as Family Care Teams) during the planning period. These included four with Eastern Health, two with Labrador-Grenfell Health, one with Central Health, and one with Western Health. There are an additional four in progress for Clarenville, Conception Bay North, Downtown St. John's Metro and Labrador West.
Initiated an evaluation of the Short Stay Option in Personal Care Homes Demonstration Project	The Short Stay Option in the Personal Care Homes Demonstration Project was initiated and evaluated. Based on positive outcomes of the evaluation, this has been approved as a new permanent service option for residents.
Initiated the development of a Frail Elderly Program	Consultations were held with regional health authority stakeholders to help inform the development of a Seniors Care Framework.

2020-2023 Goal Reporting

<p>Goal: By March 31, 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services will have improved access to healthcare services and quality of care by adopting modern service delivery models.</p>	
Indicator	Results
<p>Increased home-based supports for individuals with complex needs</p>	<p>In 2022-23, over 2,600 individuals with complex needs received support through Home First, including those receiving community-based end-of-life care.</p> <p>Funding was also allocated to support improved infection prevention and control practices in personal care homes to support the delivery of safe quality care in community-based settings.</p> <p>Over 1,000 individuals with complex mental health needs continue to be supported by Flexible Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) teams throughout the province. Funding was also allocated to support modernizing the community care home sector and to address aging infrastructure and accessibility requirements to build continuity of care, prevent housing breakdowns and support individuals to age in place.</p>
<p>Expanded access to midwifery services in the province</p>	<p>In March 2023, \$500,000 was allocated for the expansion of midwifery services province-wide, specifically new practices in the Labrador-Grenfell zone and one in the Eastern zone (urban or rural) by spring 2024. This will bring the midwifery workforce up from four full time equivalents (FTEs) to 11 FTEs.</p>

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	<p>HCS approved a five-year plan and budget that will have midwifery services available in all five zones by 2027-28, with an anticipated midwifery workforce of 20 FTEs.</p> <p>Midwives were added to Signing Bonus eligibility and the Come Home Incentive to support recruitment for new practices and stabilize Central zone’s midwifery practice in Gander.</p> <p>HCS approved the funding of a feasibility study for an Atlantic Midwifery Education Program to support the growth of the profession in the region.</p>
<p>Increased the number of Advanced Care Paramedics working in the provincial road ambulance system</p>	<p>The number of Advanced Care Paramedics (ACP) working in NL has increased by over 150 per cent since 2019, to a current total ACP workforce of 125.</p>
<p>Increased access to supports and services for people living with Autism Spectrum Disorder</p>	<p>HCS, in collaboration with NLHS and other stakeholders, has supported ongoing training and development for professionals, which has increased the complement of evidence-based interventions and services available to children, youth, and adults with autism and their families.</p>
<p>Expanded virtual care services to provide residents with access to healthcare providers without leaving their community</p>	<p>In April 2020, the Department expanded the scope of 811 by including nurse practitioner services.</p> <p>The Department continued to fund the fee code for virtual care for physicians during the reporting period. This fee code supported residents’ access to care throughout the pandemic when access to health care was particularly challenging.</p>

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<p>Implemented provincial models for select healthcare services</p>	<p>Work with the four RHAs continued for the reporting period. Committees are comprised of member from HCS, the four RHAs and Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI). The areas under consideration included cardiology, pharmacy, laboratory, and pain management. This work continues in select areas such cardiology. With the implementation of Health Accord NL in 2022, including the Call to Action for a single provincial health authority, select areas such as pharmacy paused.</p>
<p>Increased the number of nurse practitioners providing care in the community</p>	<p>To help build capacity and create a clear career pathway, HCS has worked with nursing schools to double the seat capacity in Nurse Practitioner Programs from 20 to 40 students.</p> <p>HCS has re-implemented the signing bonuses for nurses who accept employment in difficult-to-fill positions, implemented measures through the Nursing Think Tank, Request For Proposals (RFPs) for a core staffing review of nurses, recruitment and retention incentives for long-term care, the Come Home Incentive, and incentives for NPs who accept employment in FCTs. New positions have been created for FCTs as part of the NP-led clinic model.</p> <p>Funding has also been provided for six NP positions for the Home Dementia Care Program (two each in Eastern Health, Central Health, and Western Health). Western Health has not been able to recruit yet but other positions have been filled.</p>

	HCS has also funded four NPs through the Home First Program, in addition to the Home Dementia Program positions.
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Discussion of Results

The Department has been successful in its objective of increasing the number of advanced care paramedics and nurse practitioners providing care in the community. It continues to look for opportunities to build capacity and pathways to employ nurse practitioners in key positions in the health care system, as they work to a full and expanded scope of practice. Their meaningful impact is particularly felt in community-based services, with the FCTs, Home Dementia Care Program, and Home First Program and is a priority for recruitment and retention efforts.

Significant work is underway to transform the way community support health services are delivered to children, youth, individuals and their families, including those with autism. HCS, in collaboration with many partners, is developing the Child and Youth Community Health (CYCH) model and the Supporting Abilities program to address the needs of children/youth and adults, respectively, who require support to function well in their everyday lives at home and in educational and community settings. Through these programs, some existing services will be aligned with new services to help ease navigation and improve timely access to wrap-around and needs-based supports for families.

Issue 3: Enhancing Health Innovation and Efficiency

The purpose of health innovation is to improve people's health through better health policies, systems, products and technologies, and services and delivery methods. To maximize health innovation and efficiency, the Department is working to support the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI) in the development of innovative technologies to allow the public and health care providers to have easier access to health information.

In 2017-2020, the Department began implementation of provincial models for select administrative functions throughout the RHAs and NLCHI. Provincial shared service models improve business processes, reduce service duplication and lead to efficiencies in health care spending. With the announcement to a single Provincial Health Authority during the reporting period, the Department sought to increase efficiencies in the health system by continuing the development and implementation of shared administrative functions, such as procurement and supply chain, and information management and technology.

These initiatives support the Government's strategic direction of, "a more efficient public sector". The Department will also pursue advancements in health innovation and efficiency through the expansion of shared electronic medical records, and the development of an online person health information portal, which will increase access to health information.

For the 2020-2023 period, the use of virtual care and technologies to help support health service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic was the focus for the Department. With some programs and services running with limited capacities, there was a need to maximize time with patients to provide high quality care.

For the 2022-23 fiscal year, the Department continued to explore, implement, and expand virtual care strategies to provide greater health care access and improve efficiency.

Goal

Goal: By March 31, 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services will have enhanced health innovation and efficiency through enhanced digital services and streamlined service delivery.

2022-23 Objective

Objective: By March 31, 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services will have implemented further service delivery models aimed at increasing access and quality of care.	
Indicator	Results
Implementation of further enhancements to Bridgethegapp.ca	Bridge the gapp (BTG) continues to grow and evolve with additional content, service options and enhancements. In 2022-23, BTG introduced Bridget, a virtual assistant who helps individuals navigate the website and suggestion clinical tools and supports based on individual needs. In 2022-23, BTG also moved EVA, an Employee Virtual Assistant, over into the BTG infrastructure and expanded it to all health regions.
Worked with partners to develop a provincial virtual care strategy to guide the delivery and expansion of virtual care services within the province	A province-wide virtual care strategy has been developed and implementation is underway. The current solution focuses on ERs, primary care, cardiac, and cancer care throughout the province.
Launched Personal Health Record (PHR) to provide citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador with secure digital access to key personal health information and health services	During the COVID-19 pandemic, all residents of NL could access their COVID-19 vaccination record as part of a soft launch of the PHR. This work was implemented in collaboration with the Department and NLCHI. Limited access

	to the PHR is being launched in the Fall of 2023.
Worked with the Health Transformation team to review recommendations and actions from the Health Accord and initiate implementation activities for digital solutions	The Department works with the Health Transformation Team to review recommendations and actions from Health Accord NL. In 2022, an RFP for a new Health Information System (HIS) was issued. A new HIS was a key recommendation from Health Accord NL and is vital to the transformation of health care delivery across the province.

2020-2023 Goal Reporting

Goal: By March 31, 2023, the Department of Health and Community Services will have enhanced health innovation and efficiency through enhanced digital services and streamlined service delivery.	
Indicator	Results
Implemented a Virtual Care Action Plan	<p>Since 2020, Newfoundland and Labrador’s virtual care expansion was critical in meeting residents’ health care needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to support access across the continuum of care.</p> <p>A province-wide virtual care strategy is underway. The current solution focuses on ERs, primary care, cardiac, and cancer care throughout the province.</p> <p>HCS is continuing to develop this new virtual care strategy with the newly-formed NLHS.</p>
Maximized opportunities for virtual care	HCS continued to identify and maximize opportunities for virtual care, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, to avoid disruptions in services, maintain physical distancing and safety, and to prevent the creation of backlogs.

	<p>Telehealth equipment has been extended to more locations to support patients' access to health care providers including those in primary care and emergency departments (EDs), as well as specialists. Follow up appointments with oncologists, for example, helped patients avoid travel and attend appointments in their homes.</p> <p>Moving forward, the Department will be considering further opportunities in collaboration with the Health Transformation Team and the newly-formed provincial health authority.</p>
<p>Implemented a Personal Health Record</p>	<p>A soft launch was completed with the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination record. This work will continue to onboard further access to residents.</p>
<p>Implemented provincial models for select administrative functions</p>	<p>The Department increased efficiencies in the health system by continuing the development and implementation of shared administrative functions, such as procurement and supply chain, and information management and technology in collaboration with Shared Services in the RHAs. The announcement to a single health authority was recommended by Health Accord NL and the responsibility for this work would be that of the new provincial health authority moving forward after April 1, 2023.</p>

Discussion of Results

Since 2020, Newfoundland and Labrador's virtual care expansion was essential in meeting the health care needs of its residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. HCS continued to identify and maximize opportunities for virtual care strategies to support

access across the continuum of care, to avoid disruptions in services, to maintain physical distancing and safety, and to prevent the creation of backlogs.

The use of technologies and virtual strategies has had a meaningful impact on the health and well-being of those availing of mental health services and those in long-term care. This was especially important for residents in long-term care facilities who were isolated from friends and family due to pandemic restrictions. Virtual care strategies will continue to be explored by HCS stakeholders and partners, so more options can be continue to be offered for the delivery of health programs and services.

Opportunities and Challenges

Newfoundland and Labrador's aging population, geographic distribution, and outdated health care system have challenged the Department to update current practices and strategies and to evolve to help meet the health needs of the people of the province. As well, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged health care service delivery on a global level, with staffing shortages, supply chain issues, and inflated operational costs.

Recruitment and retention of physicians, nurses and other health care professionals remains an urgent issue, as optimal staffing levels are necessary to provide high quality health care. HCS continues to remain competitive in a global market economy by building capacity in educational institutions and programs, removing barriers to create clear career pathways, and providing meaningful incentives to those who choose to work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Primary care access is an ongoing challenge and impacts the number of patients seen in emergency departments. The Department continues to explore solutions with regulatory bodies, including allowing health professionals, such as LPNs, RNs, NPs, and pharmacists to work to a full or expanded scope of practice. This is already improving access, as pharmacists can assess additional minor ailments and extend prescriptions. As well, training opportunities for advanced care paramedics to provide life-saving procedures have allowed ERs to be overseen virtually, reducing ER closures and diversions. These actions have also contributed to the retention of health care professionals through increased job satisfaction for those working in an expanded capacity.

Virtual care strategies have helped remove barriers to access and have allowed people across the province to avail of much needed health programs and services. HCS continues to work with physicians, nurses and other health professionals to strike a balance in utilizing virtual care options and in-person appointments and visits. This ensures that patients continue to receive the right care, at the right time, by the right provider.

Financial Information

Department of Health and Community Services 2022-23 Fiscal Year			
	2022-23		
	Actual Expenditure	Operating Budget	Original Budget
Minister's Office	\$ 304,859	\$ 309,813	\$ 270,700
General Administration	\$ 20,109,748	\$ 20,906,089	\$ 23,176,800
Memorial University Faculty Of Medicine	\$ 56,821,400	\$ 56,821,400	\$ 54,321,400
Drug Subsidization	\$ 178,332,203	\$ 170,871,400	\$ 166,871,400
Medical Care Plan	\$ 555,709,112	\$ 555,107,649	\$ 556,221,200
Regional Health Authorities and Related Services	\$ 2,692,718,126	\$ 2,689,327,649	\$ 2,604,985,100
Building Improvements, Furnishings and Equipment	\$ 37,878,923	\$ 35,650,000	\$ 40,250,000
Total Department	\$ 3,541,874,372	\$ 3,528,994,000	\$ 3,446,096,600

