

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

Children, Seniors and  
Social Development





## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, I am pleased to present the 2023-24 Annual Report for the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, which was prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. This report covers the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

Working alongside our community partners and other government entities, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development is committed to ensuring an inclusive, accessible and socially progressive province that supports children, youth, families, seniors, persons with disabilities, and those living with poverty. The department supports the development and delivery of policies and programs designed to improve overall social well-being for all individuals across the life span; enhances accessible communities; promotes healthy aging; ensures child and adult protection; and collaborates with Indigenous Governments and Organizations to provide services to Indigenous children, youth and families as well as support their journey to assert jurisdiction over child and family services. The department's policies, practices and services focus on respecting diversity, increasing equity and reducing barriers to self-determination while emphasizing prevention, early intervention and protection to ensure that all individuals in the province are supported to thrive. The Annual Report for 2023-24 demonstrates the department's progress on objectives set out in year one of the 2023-26 Strategic Plan to achieve these goals.

As Minister, my signature below demonstrates my accountability for the results reported within this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Pike". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon. Paul Pike  
Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development



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## Departmental Overview

### Organizational Structure

The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development (CSSD) is a category 1 Provincial Government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, which focuses on improving the well-being, inclusion and social development of individuals, families and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

During 2023-24, CSSD's programs and services were provided through the following four branches:

1. **Child and Youth Services:** responsible for front-line service delivery of child protection, kinship, in-care, youth services, adoptions and youth corrections programs at the regional level. This branch ensures that a wide array of responsive services are available to meet the needs of children, youth and their families in three regions (Metro, Central West and Labrador).
2. **Corporate Services and Performance Improvement:** responsible for ensuring fiscal, human and information resources are available to provide client services within a quality framework. The four key corporate areas are: Finance and General Operations; Information Management; Policy and Planning; and Quality and Performance Improvement.
3. **Policy and Programs:** responsible for policy, program and legislative development in the following areas: Child Protection and Support Services; Children In-Care; Adoptions; Youth Corrections; Youth Services; Disability Policy; Aging and Seniors; and Adult Protection.
4. **Prevention and Early Intervention:** focused on improving well-being and supporting individuals, families, and communities to realize their full potential. The branch administers and delivers the Income Support Program, as well as other social supports, and leads policy development related to income and social supports, poverty reduction, the community sector, and prevention and early intervention to foster the best long-term outcomes for the people of the province.

## Staff and Budget

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Minister's Office and Executive Support	16	\$1,450,400
Corporate Services and Performance Improvement	109	\$7,467,400
Child and Youth Services	636	\$141,203,200
Policy and Programs	37	\$4,439,500
Prevention and Early Intervention	229	\$226,989,400

As of March 31, 2024, CSSD had 1027 positions - 918 permanent, 92 temporary and 17 contractual. The Provincial Office has 180 positions which carry out work in all the identified lines of business. Below is a breakdown of the number of employees per region.

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

- Central-West: 238 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: 117 positions, with offices located in Cartwright, Forteau, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Hopedale, Labrador City, Makkovik, Nain, Natuashish, Rigolet and Sheshatshiu; and

- Metro: 276 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 216 positions with offices located in: in St. John's, Mount Pearl, Carbonear, Marystown, Clarendville, Gander, Lewisporte, Grand Falls-Windsor, St. Albans, Springdale, Stephenville, Corner Brook, Channel-Port- aux-Basques and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

As of March 31, 2024, CSSD had total expenditures of \$396,862,675 for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Additional information is included in the Financial Information section.

## **Vision**

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

CSSD collaborates with a broad array of partners and community organizations 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.

## **Mandate**

CSSD 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, youth and adults 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.



The mandate for the department is primarily established under the following legislation:

- **Accessibility Act;**
- **Adoption Act, 2013;**
- **Adult Protection Act, 2021;**
- **Children, Youth and Families Act;**
- **Income and Employment Support Act;** and
- **Young Persons Offences Act.**

## Lines of Business

The department fulfils this mandate through the following lines of business:

- Adoptions - finds permanent homes for children available for adoption.
- Adult Protection - protects adults who do not understand or appreciate the risk of abuse and neglect.
- 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 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 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.

- Seniors and Aging - promotes healthy aging across the lifespan and fosters a healthy society that honours, listens to and includes seniors in building stronger, more dynamic communities.
- Youth Services - assists youth in need of protective intervention during their transition to early adulthood.

Additional information about the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development can be found on the department's website: [www.gov.nl.ca/cssd](http://www.gov.nl.ca/cssd).

## Highlights and Partnerships

### Highlights

Throughout 2023-24, CSSD continued to deliver on its commitment to enhance the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by strengthening the social advancement of this province. Much of the work CSSD completes is in conjunction with internal and external partners, giving rise to significant achievements that are beyond the scope of the established goals and objectives for the department, as outlined in CSSD's Strategic Plan 2023-26. Toward this end, CSSD has many initiatives and partnerships to highlight this year, which include:

- **Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Accessibility Plan 2024-2026:** The Provincial Government's first Accessibility Plan was released in December 2023. The plan aims to promote and foster equity to build a more accessible and inclusive province and was informed by contributions of stakeholders including persons with disabilities, representatives from the Network of Disability Organizations, and all Provincial Government departments. **The Accessibility Act** required all public entities to prepare and make accessibility plans public by December 31, 2023.
- **Poverty Reduction Plan:** The Provincial Government launched a new Poverty Reduction Plan in November 2023, following extensive consultations focused on helping to improve the health and well-being of individuals and families throughout the province. Informed by community stakeholders, Indigenous and municipal governments, and experts, including people with lived experience, the plan has four key focus areas and associated actions to better support the well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians: Reducing Childhood Poverty, Employment Interventions, Improving Income and Supporting Seniors.
- **Summer Camp Inclusion Grant:** A new grant was introduced to provide financial assistance for children with disabilities to attend summer camps. The Summer Camp Inclusion Grant provides funding of up to either \$1,000 to families

with children who require support, or up to \$5,000 to organizations providing summer camps who wish to hire support workers to accommodate children with disabilities.

- **Increased Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit:** The Provincial Government has increased the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit by 300 per cent as part of a heightened focus on reducing child poverty. This increase is benefiting more than 16,000 children up to age 18.
- **Funding Programs for Seniors:** Funding programs, such as the Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative, demonstrate CSSD's continued commitment to create a more inclusive and age-friendly Newfoundland and Labrador. The fund supports initiatives that promote healthy aging, social inclusion and intergenerational activities. A total of 148 organizations received funding in 2023-24 (increased from 112 in 2022-23, or 32%).

## Partnerships

- **Collaboration with Community Organizations:** In 2023-24, CSSD collaborated with Stella's Circle and Choices for Youth (as well as the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, with Federal funding through the Canada – Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Development Agreement), on the delivery of the Employment Stability Pilot. Participants in the pilot are working more and have higher incomes because of the enhanced earnings exemptions and supports provided through the pilot. Of the 184 pilot participants in 2023-24, 65 increased their employment to where they no longer require monthly assistance from the Income Support program. Another 26 participants increased their hours, thereby reducing their reliance on Income Support. Overall, the average reduction in Income Support benefits for participants was \$231 a month.
- **Collaboration with City of St. John's:** CSSD continues to provide the City of St. John's financial support for its para-transit system and, in partnership with the City of St. John's, a bus pass pilot that provides free metrobus passes to people

in receipt of Income Support, seniors in receipt of the Guaranteed Income Supplement and youth services clients in the metrobus catchment area.

- **Federal/Provincial/Territorial Collaboration:** CSSD continued to work with federal and provincial counterparts through forums established to promote interjurisdictional discussion, to discuss new and emerging issues and work collaboratively on key issues, including those related to child welfare; disability supports; income support; Indigenous children and youth in care; poverty; and seniors.

## Report on Performance

### Issue 1: Improved Delivery of Services to Children and Youth

Throughout 2023-24, CSSD was actively focused on recruitment and retention of child welfare social workers. This included the hiring of an HR Strategist to develop a recruitment and retention plan as well as the implementation of a signing and retention bonus. Through achievements during the 2023-24 reporting period, CSSD has been working to address issues related to the recruitment and retention of child welfare social workers, who play such a critical role in protecting and supporting the health and well-being of children and youth in the province.

#### Goal:

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

#### 2023-24 Objective:

By March 31, 2024, CSSD will have implemented initiatives to improve the delivery of services for children and youth.

Indicator	Report on Performance
Hired a HR strategist to develop a recruitment and retention plan for social workers.	During 2023-24, CSSD hired a HR strategist to develop a recruitment and retention plan for social workers. Efforts are focused in three primary areas: providing financial incentives, improving the work environment and implementing operational efficiencies.
Implemented a signing and retention bonus for frontline Child and Youth social workers.	In 2023-24, CSSD implemented a signing and retention bonus to support recruitment and

	<p>retention of Social Worker I and IIs working in frontline Child and Youth Services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A \$2900 one-time non-pensionable retention bonus for a one-year return-in-service agreement.</li> <li>• A geographically based non-pensionable signing bonus for a two-year return-in-service agreement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ \$10,000 annually for positions on coastal Labrador;</li> <li>○ \$8,000 annually for positions in Labrador-Grenfell Health, excluding coastal Labrador;</li> <li>○ \$7,000 annually for positions in communities off the Trans-Canada Highway, excluding the above, and;</li> <li>○ \$5,000 annually for all other positions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Commenced implementation of priority recommendations from the Continuum of Care Review.	<p>During 2023-24, CSSD commenced implementation of several recommendations from the Continuum of Care Review. Work undertaken included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of an array of residential options congruent with child/youth needs such as establishing need-based, specialized placements and supports.</li> <li>• Strengthened permanency planning for children/youth related to adoption and/or reunification to keep children/youth out of care.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued support of child/youth well-being outcomes.</li> <li>• Continued expansion of training and educational offerings to ensure foster families can provide a safe environment to meet the increasingly complex needs of children and youth.</li> <li>• Expanded services for youth transitioning to adulthood by establishing semi-independent/independent placement options.</li> </ul>
Commenced implementation of priority recommendations from the Child Welfare Service Delivery Model and Workload Review.	<p>In 2023-24, CSSD commenced implementation of several recommendations from the Child Welfare Service Delivery Model and Workload Review. Work included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging in consultations with regional and provincial office staff by hosting a series of focus groups. Areas of discussion included mobile case management, expanding the use of Social Assistance Workers, virtual service delivery and the development of provincial intake and after hours/on call models of service delivery.</li> <li>• Establishing a Provincial daytime intake model of service delivery, which has had a positive reception.</li> <li>• Launching a provincial after hours/on call pilot in the summer of 2024 utilizing dedicated afterhours social workers. An evaluation of this pilot will be used to finalize a provincial model.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing the role of Social Assistance Workers (social worker assistants) with the intent to grow the number of workers to better support the social work teams and ensure their scope of practice reflects the important work they do. To date eighteen new temporary positions have been added to support the work of the Child and Youth Services Branch.</li> </ul>
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## Summary

During the 2023-24 reporting period, CSSD has focused on the recruitment and retention of child welfare social workers. A new HR Strategist was tasked with developing a recruitment and retention plan. One piece of this plan was the implementation of a signing and retention bonus for frontline social workers. Work toward improving recruitment and retention will continue in 2024-25.

## 2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, CSSD will have implemented additional initiatives to improve the delivery of services for children and youth.

## 2024-25 Indicators

- Implemented additional initiatives to support the recruitment and retention of social workers.
- Continued implementation of the priority recommendations of the Child Welfare Service Delivery Model and Workload Review.
- Continued implementation of priority recommendations of the Continuum of Care review.

## Issue 2: Social Well-Being

In 2023-24 fiscal year, through collaborative work across departments and agencies, and with the broader community, CSSD led the development and implementation of a Poverty Reduction Plan. CSSD also worked collaboratively with other lead departments to inform the Five Point Housing Plan released in 2023-24 and the Seniors Health and Well-being Plan. Collectively, these and other initiatives were previously referred to as the Social Well-Being Plan and form part of government's overall approach to Social Well-Being. The Poverty Reduction Plan and other work completed in the 2023-24 reporting period will reduce poverty in line with the vision of Health Accord NL and help improve the well-being of people in this province.

### Goal

By March 31, 2026, CSSD will have led the development and implementation of a four-year Government-wide Social Well-Being Plan.

### 2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, CSSD will have released a Government-wide Social Well-Being Plan.

Indicator	Report on Performance
Gathered key stakeholder input.	In 2023-24, CSSD gathered key stakeholder input during the development of the Poverty Reduction Plan. Community stakeholders, Indigenous and municipal governments and experts, including people with lived experience, were engaged and helped to inform the plan.
Collaborated with other Government departments in	During 2023-24, CSSD collaborated with various Government departments in the development of the Poverty Reduction Plan. Officials met regularly

developing priorities and actions.	at a director-level working group and an ADM steering committee to develop priorities and actions related to social well-being and poverty reduction.
Developed a Government-wide Social Well-Being Plan.	In 2023-24, CSSD developed a Government-wide Poverty Reduction Plan, which was released on November 8, 2023. The three-year plan has four key focus areas and associated actions to better support the well-being of all people in the Province: reducing childhood poverty; employment interventions; improving income; and supporting seniors.

## Summary

In the first year of its 2023-26 Strategic Plan, CSSD worked with stakeholders and other Government departments to inform the development of a Government-wide Poverty Reduction Plan. The plan was finalized and released in November 2023. Additional information about the plan can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/cssd/feature/poverty-reduction-plan/>. CSSD also worked with other lead departments on a Five Point Housing Plan (released September 2023) and a Seniors Well-Being Plan, among other initiatives.

## 2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, CSSD will have implemented approved Year 2 CSSD actions and supported other departments with approved Year 2 actions.

## 2024-25 Indicators

- Implemented changes to the Income Support benefits structure.
- Increased NL Child Benefit.

- Expanded the former Prenatal-Infant Nutrition Supplement up to age 5 and renamed it the Prenatal-Early Childhood Nutrition Supplement.
- Implemented a targeted basic income for people aged 60 to 64 who currently receive Income Support and the Community Supports Program through the Department of Health and Community Services.

## Opportunities and Challenges

In its 2023-26 Strategic Plan, CSSD committed to strengthening the social advancement of the province to support the health and well-being of children and youth in the province, and lead initiatives to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. Actions to meet these commitments in 2023-24 presented the following opportunities and challenges:

### Opportunities

- Supporting the work of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Board to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- Opportunities to support social well-being through the ongoing implementation of the Poverty Reduction Plan, including ongoing review and improvements to the Income Support program.
- Implementation of recommendations from the Child Welfare Service Delivery Model and Workload Review and the Continuum of Care review.
- Leveraging collaborative relationships with community-based organizations and community partners to best meet the needs of people in the province, particularly those who experience social exclusion and poverty.

### Challenges

- CSSD continues to address the recruitment and retention of frontline Child and Youth Services social workers. Focused efforts are continuing to address workload challenges and determine optimal strategies for service delivery in hard-to-recruit areas of the province, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- Costs of living are impacting seniors on fixed income and individuals and families in low income, who are struggling with the high costs of necessities. This requires a long-term approach to well-being based on the social determinants of health and a focus on poverty reduction.

- Partnerships with community, government and external agencies are ongoing and aimed at reducing ageism and ableism and improving financial and internet literacy among seniors, persons with disabilities and people with low incomes.

## Financial Information

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

	Actual (\$)	Estimates- Amended (\$)	Estimates – Original (\$)
Minister's Office	255,332	261,500	261,500
Executive Support	1,186,447	1,187,300	1,188,900
Corporate Services and Performance Improvement	5,828,000	5,841,600	7,467,400
Child and Youth Services	164,290,900	165,288,700	141,203,200
Seniors and Aging	1,495,447	1,499,500	1,431,100
Disability Policy	1,173,611	1,223,200	1,275,500
Child Welfare Program and Policy	1,612,518	1,612,600	1,732,900
Income Support Regional Client Policy	11,258,944	11,369,500	12,197,100
Income Support Program and Policy	205,873,259	205,275,000	210,501,300
Poverty Reduction and Community Sector	3,888,217	3,904,400	4,291,000
<b>Total (Department)</b>	<b>396,862,675</b>	<b>397,463,300</b>	<b>381,549,900</b>