

Social Development

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Social Development ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Province of New Brunswick
PO 6000, Fredericton NB E3B 5H1 CANADA

ISBN #978-1-4605-4112-8 (Bilingual print edition)
ISBN # 978-1-4605-4113-5 (PDF: English edition)
ISBN #978-1-4605-4114-2 (PDF: French edition)

ISSN #1921-7056 (Bilingual print edition)
ISSN #2368-5700 (PDF: English edition)
ISSN#2368-5700 (PDF: French edition)

24-01452 | 2024.11 | Printed in New Brunswick

TRANSMITTAL LETTERS

From the Ministers to the Lieutenant-Governor

Her Honour the Honourable Brenda Murphy
Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick

May it please Your Honour:

It is my privilege to submit the annual report of the Department of Social Development, Province of New Brunswick, for the fiscal year April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Honourable Cindy Miles
Minister of Social Development

Her Honour the Honourable Brenda Murphy
Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick

May it please your Honour:

It is my privilege to submit the annual report of the Department of Social Development, Province of New Brunswick, for the fiscal year April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Honourable Lyne Chantal Boudreau
Minister responsible for Women's Equality and Seniors

From the Deputy Minister to the Minister

Honourable Cindy Miles
Minister of Social Development

Madam:

I am pleased to be able to present the annual report describing operations of the Department of Social Development for the fiscal year April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Jim Mehan
Deputy Minister

Table of Contents

Transmittal Letters	3
Ministers' Messages	5
Deputy Minister's message	7
Government Priorities	8
Highlights	9
Performance Outcomes	11
Division overview and highlights	16
Financial information	22
Summary of staffing activity	24
Summary of legislation and legislative activity	26
Summary of Official Languages activities	28
Summary of recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General	29
Report on the <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act</i>	31

MINISTERS' MESSAGES

The Honourable Cindy Miles

As the newly appointed Minister of Social Development, it is both an honor and a privilege to present this annual report, which reflects the hard work, dedication, and flexibility of the department throughout the past year.

This year was a remarkable period of growth for the department. Collaborative efforts led to policy development and improvement that will directly benefit New Brunswickers.

The department introduced and proclaimed the *Child and Youth Well-Being Act*, the first in our province's history dedicated solely to the overall safety and security of children and youth. This Act was designed to create a safe, supportive, and fair environment for children to grow, learn, and develop to their fullest potential.

In partnership with municipalities across New Brunswick, the provincial government has helped introduce community service hubs to address homelessness and provide different resources to individuals without stable housing. The department continues working closely with municipalities, partners, and stakeholders to determine which specific services should be available via the hubs.

The Department of Social Development recognized more communities in the province as Age-Friendly, by taking sustainable action to become welcoming places for all ages. This network of communities in the province has now reached 16! Additionally, the department negotiated and signed the Canada-New Brunswick Aging with Dignity funding agreement (2023-24 to 2027-28) that aims at improving access to quality long-term care services across the province.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the entire team in the department for their continued commitment and dedication. I also want to thank the partners and stakeholders for their unwavering support and collaboration. As we look to the future, I know we are all committed to building on successes and will continue to accomplish our goals, together.



Honourable Cindy Miles
Minister of Social Development

The Honourable Lyne Chantal Boudreau

I am pleased to present the 2023-2024 Annual Report for the Department of Social Development.

Although I am new to the position as Minister, I am already struck by the hard work and dedication of the departmental staff and the community partners. I have witnessed real passion and professionalism, that are evidenced in the pages of this report.

Over the past year, the department took numerous steps towards improving the long-term care system in New Brunswick.

To help seniors cope with the rising cost of living, the department implemented the Low-Income Seniors' Affordability Supplement to recipients of the Low-Income Seniors' Benefit which remained in place until the Low-Income Seniors' Benefit was permanently increased to \$600 on April 1.

This year has also allowed us to witness the further expansion of the Nursing Home Without Walls program. What started five years ago as a pilot project in four locations has now expanded to more than 20 sites across the province. This network continues to grow, and it is exciting to see more seniors able to live independently in their communities.

For the seniors who need the level of care provided by a nursing home, we continued to add new nursing home beds to the network as part of the 2018-2023 Nursing Home Plan. In addition to all of this, the department signed the Canada-New Brunswick Aging with Dignity funding agreement (2023-24 to 2027-28) which aims at improving accessibility to quality long-term care services across New Brunswick.

I am proud to witness the continued work and collaboration of the department and all the valued partners across the long-term care sector. I am confident that together, we will succeed, ensuring every senior in the province is free to age with independence and dignity.



Honourable Lyne Chantal Boudreau
Minister responsible for Women's Equality and Seniors

DEPUTY MINISTER'S MESSAGE

On behalf of the Department of Social Development, I am pleased to present the annual report for 2023-2024.

The Department of Social Development is responsible for helping individuals across the province reach their full potential. This report gives us a chance to celebrate our achievements and reflect on the challenges we faced over the past fiscal year.

For the children and youth of New Brunswick, we were able to continue to build on the foundation that was laid last year and saw the *Child and Youth Well-Being Act* proclaimed. With this statute in place, we now have modernized protection and support for young New Brunswickers, with the introduction of the first stand-alone legislation dedicated to the well-being of youth in the province's history.

To help with the rising costs of living, we introduced a monthly household supplement for recipients of social assistance and youth engagement services to help with the rising cost of food and shelter. This was in addition to the Low-Income Seniors' Affordability Supplement, which increased the payment to \$600 as of April 1.

The department has worked to improve access to community services for individuals, no matter what level of care they require. The Nursing Home Without Walls concept, which was piloted in four rural communities, leverages nursing homes to offer support services directly to the community. The program is continuing, with 20 approved sites and counting!

Over the past year, the staff of this department and our invaluable partners have shown their continued devotion and commitment to the people of New Brunswick. I have been able to witness this firsthand every day and am confident it will be evident in the pages of this report.



Jim Mehan
Deputy Minister

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Strategy and Operations Management

The Government of New Brunswick (GNB) uses leading business practices to develop, communicate and review strategy. This provides the Public Service with a proven methodology to execute strategy, increase accountability and continuously drive improvement.

Government Priorities

Our vision for 2023-2024 is a vibrant and sustainable New Brunswick. To make progress towards this vision, we must focus on our government's priorities:

- energize private sector;
- vibrant and sustainable communities;
- affordable, responsive, and high-performing government;
- dependable public health care;
- world-class education; and
- environment

HIGHLIGHTS

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, Social Development focused on these government priorities through the following initiatives:

Seniors and Long-Term Care

- 210 new nursing home beds were opened, with 120 in Moncton, 60 in Fredericton and another 30 in the Miramichi. It was also announced that two new nursing homes will be built in Oromocto and Moncton within the next two years, adding 120 new beds to the province's long-term care system.
- New initiatives to help seniors age in place were announced in 2023. In May, mobile x-ray services were extended to long-term care residents province wide. This service, offered through Extra-Mural program, and funded through Health, will allow nursing home residents to be tested in place, rather than going to the hospital. In November, a policy change for spousal contributions to facility-based care was announced, ensuring at least 60 per cent of household income will remain with the spouse at home. In March, the Nursing Homes Without Walls program expanded to its 20th location.

Families and Children

- On January 26, 2024, the *Child and Youth Well-Being Act* was proclaimed in New Brunswick. This marks the first time in our province's history that an Act is dedicated solely to the overall safety and well-being of children and youth. This important legislation focuses on the best interests, protection, participation, earlier intervention, and well-being of children, youth, and young adults. Programs and services have been redesigned to ensure alignment with the new Act and its philosophy.
- In accordance with the *Child and Youth Well-Being Act*, programs have been expanded to support youth and young adults up to the age of 26, who cannot live at home. These programs aim to provide better outcomes for youth and young adults by supporting them through community involvement, education, training, employment, and housing.
- Social Development partnered with other provinces and schools of Social Work in New Brunswick to create and adopt a new assessment tool specifically for kinship families. This relationship-based assessment tool will provide better support for children and youth, when they cannot live at home, to live with people with whom they have a positive relationship.

Affordability

- As of December 2023, seniors are now eligible for an additional \$200 affordability supplement to the Low-Income Seniors Benefit. The benefit was increased to \$600 effective April 1, 2024
- A monthly \$200 household supplement for Social Assistance recipients and Youth Engagement Services recipients to help with the rising cost of food and shelter was made effective February 1, 2024.

Improving Access to Information

- In March of 2024, Social Supports NB, a user-friendly website that contains information on government programs and services, launched a new live-chat support function that is available 8 am to 10 pm AST.
- The department has invested in other tools to improve the way clients and partners interact, such as a new online foster and adoption application portal, and digital inspection tools that share information between staff and nursing homes.

Increased Funding

- The department provided a \$2.50 per hour wage increase for those working in the care sector, representing an investment of \$44.9 million. The province provides \$9.7 million to increase the wages for group homes, community residences and family support and attendant care, as well as

\$8.8 million to support the increased costs for home support agencies who provide long term care and disability support services.

- The province successfully negotiated and signed the Aging with Dignity bilateral agreement aimed at improving access to quality long-term care services. Through the Canada-New Brunswick Aging with Dignity Agreement, \$2.4 million will be invested in life safety and essential equipment upgrades in adult residential facilities, \$1.7 million to upgrade call bell systems in nursing homes and \$1.6 million for the replacement of nursing home beds.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

The information below outlines some of the department's priorities and how we measured our performance.

Outcome #1

Client experience

Description of Priority

- Client experience is the result of each interaction a client has with the department – whether in person, online or by telephone. Clients of Social Development include New Brunswickers receiving services, as well as our partners within the community and government. Client experience speaks to what we care about, what our organization is focused on, and what we strive to deliver daily.
- Outcome: Enhance client experience by providing personalized, timely, supportive services.

Why is it important?

The client remains at the centre of everything we do, and we strive to provide an environment where the people we serve can reach their full potential and have a rewarding experience.

Overall Performance

Success for client experience looks like:

- Increased opportunities to provide feedback;
- Improved communications and collaboration;
- Reduced burden when interacting with the department;
- Expanded technological options to interact with the department; and
- Improved integrated, holistic supports.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome:

Timely Access to Long-Term Care (LTC) Services.

An initiative was launched to reduce the time it takes for an eligible individual to receive LTC services. This initiative resulted in a 30 percent reduction in wait time. Primary areas of focus included:

- Implementation of a dedicated Intake Social Worker in each zone to manage the front end of service delivery; this individual is responsible for completing the 5-day telephone call to new applicants as well as triage clients to the appropriate assessment pathway. The goal of this initial contact is to provide information, identify the appropriate pathways for assessment as well as introduce interim care supports as needed.
- Early identification and the prioritization of applications through standardized criteria with the aim of supporting timely transition to community care. This includes applicants who are hospitalized and awaiting LTC assessments.
- Promotion of the Canada Revenue Agency's financial application for a streamlined process for individuals requesting a financial subsidy.

Helping Seniors Stay at Home Longer

The Nursing Home Without Walls program aims to enhance the experience of aging by empowering older adults and their care partners to age in place. Initiated by researcher Dr. Suzanne Dupuis-Blanchard from the Université de Moncton, as a Healthy Seniors Pilot project, this program facilitates healthy aging at home by providing access to essential knowledge, support, and services. By enabling older adults to age in place, Nursing Home Without Walls contributes to prolonged independence, minimizing the need for

premature admission to long-term care facilities and decreasing unnecessary emergency department visits.

- Each Nursing Home Without Walls site is led by a nursing home that develops collaborations with the community to meet the needs, goals and gaps in support and services to age in place. Older adults, care partners, community members, and Nursing Home Without Walls staff collaborate to develop appropriate services, at no cost, for older adults and their care partners that leverage community and nursing home assets. This community model involves cultivating strong connections while working in ways that redefine aging as a positive process where older adults are valued and engaged in community while optimizing autonomy.
- A commitment made as part of the *Stabilizing Health Care: An Urgent Call to Action*, was fulfilled with the Nursing Home Without Walls program being implemented at 20 sites across the province in 2023-24. The provincial expansion and program implementation was supported through a partnership with Healthcare Excellence Canada, the Université de Moncton, and Social Development. Further expansion is planned for 2024-25.
- As of March 31, 2024, 20 locations were established with 700 participants enrolled.

Outcome #2

Employee experience

Description of priority

- Our responsibility is to always focus on our interactions with work colleagues to make each day a positive experience for everyone. We strive for an employee experience that includes healthy workplace culture, opportunities to learn, growth and be involved, work-life balance, recognition, and reaching our full potential as employees of Social Development.
- Outcome: Strengthen Social Development to be an employer of choice.

Why is it important?

Employees that are equipped with the right tools, skills, training, and information to do their jobs well will result in a rewarding experience for everyone and make each day a positive experience for our colleagues as well as our clients.

Overall performance

Success for employee experience looks like:

- improved talent management approach;
- leveraging technology to improve employee experience;
- enhanced internal information sharing;
- employee wellness and engagement are supported; and
- improved access to resources and training supports, initiatives or projects undertaken.

Initiatives or projects /actions undertaken to achieve the outcome:

Employee Training, Development and Supports

- Training: Social Development supported over 40 learning and development opportunities across the department. This is important as learning and development opportunities are essential to promote a workforce that is competent and capable, which supports employee satisfaction, enhances recruitment and retention, as well and client experience.
- Leadership Development: Social Development supported the investment into 61 current and future leaders through Evolving Leaders, Women in Leadership, and Core 500 leadership training for social work supervisors.
- Supports: The Culture Champions Committee was established as a forum for Culture Champions to gather to discuss departmental initiatives, to brainstorm solutions, and to innovate. The Culture

Champions are empowered to promote an employee experience that will build a healthy, positive culture. This desired culture will be developed organically over time through this group, with the goal of Social Development being an employer of choice.

Outcome #3

Quality services

Description of priority

- Quality services speak to the services and resources we offer to New Brunswickers. Our responsibility is to focus and ensure that the services we offer provide the best outcomes for New Brunswickers, ensuring we have the right tools and resources available. We hope to deliver a positive experience through quality services.
- Outcome: Improved client outcomes by monitoring and modifying services.

Why is it important?

We will deliver a positive experience through quality services. These services are continuously monitored and assessed to ensure they generate positive outcomes for our clients and the population of New Brunswick.

Overall performance

Success for quality services looks like:

- aligned community care and supports;
- infrastructure and partnerships are leveraged;
- improved consistency, efficiency, and effectiveness of services;
- reduced barriers and increased innovation;
- increased collaboration with service providers; and
- evaluated and adapted services.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome:

Supporting Long Term Care

- To ensure seniors have appropriate care, the department opened 210 new nursing home beds under the 2018-2023 Nursing Home Plan: Gordon Hall, Moncton (60 beds); Ocean Hall, Moncton (60 beds); Mount Saint Joseph, Miramichi (30 beds); Medley Hall, and Fredericton (60 beds).
- In September 2023, Social Development and the New Brunswick Medical Society formed a joint working group to reduce the administrative burden physicians faced from clients requiring medical documentation to access departmental benefits. The working group has reviewed 29 medical forms and recommended improvements to simplify the delivery of benefits and services.
- Effective January 2024, a policy change was implemented for spousal contributions to facility-based care to ensure at least 60 per cent of the household income remains with the spouse at home.

Child and Youth

- On January 26, 2024, the new *Child and Youth Well-Being Act* was proclaimed, which includes improvements such as serving young adults up to age 26. This included 16 internal engagement sessions and 20 external sessions held to develop regulations for the new *Child and Youth Well-Being Act*.

Outcome #4

Financial responsibility

Description of priority

- Financial responsibility means that we are providing the best services possible while working within our approved budget and being accountable to New Brunswick taxpayers.
- Outcome: Improved shared financial responsibility.

Why is it important?

It is important to spend wisely and to utilize and share available resources to the best of our ability. It is important for each of us to ensure that we use the tax dollars we are entrusted with to get the best results for our clients.

Overall performance

Success for financial responsibility looks like:

- increased financial understanding and accountability;
- available resources are leveraged;
- re-aligned financial resources to meet outcomes;
- increased strategic investments to support long-term outcomes; and
- ensured accountability of partners and service providers.

Initiatives or projects undertaken to achieve the outcome:

Outcome Based Contracts

The department invested public dollars with organizations that are aligned with our stated priorities and strategies, and who can deliver outcomes for our clients through the use of outcome-based contracts for GNB and Social Development. In the Spring of 2023, all new contracts related to homeless emergency shelters were established with outcomes to help measure effective performance and results for our clients.

OVERVIEW OF DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS

Vision:

Strong partnerships for better lives.

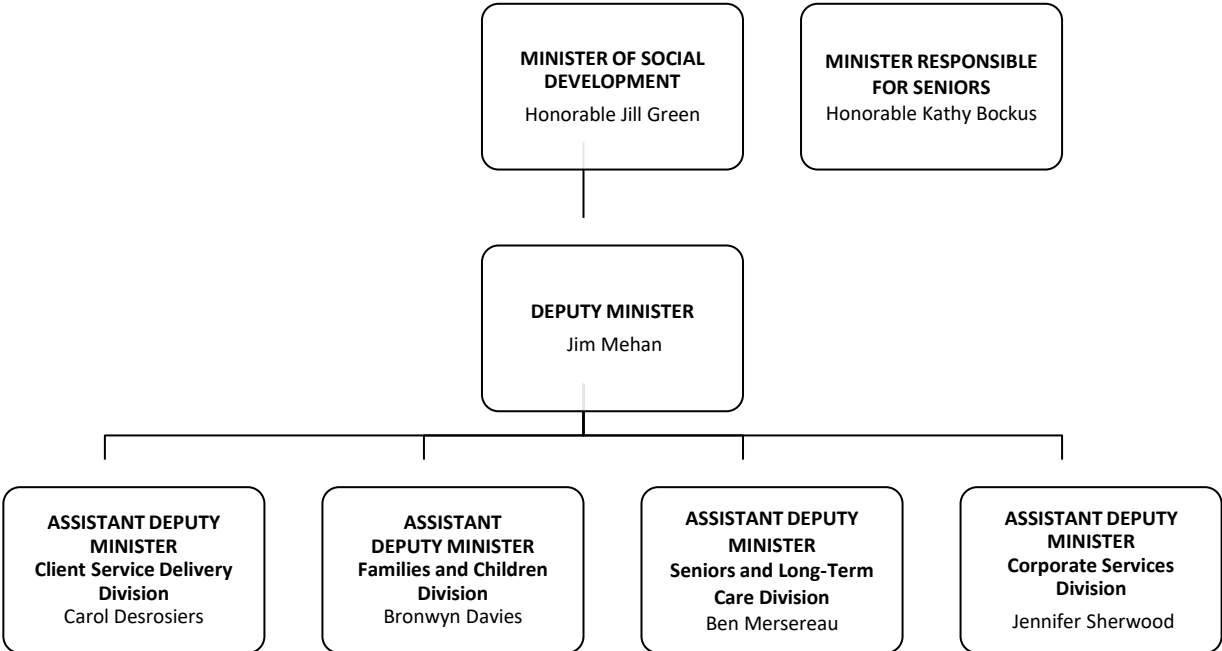
Mission:

Working together with individuals, families, and community partners to improve people’s lives.

The four strategic themes: client experience, employee experience, quality services and financial responsibility define how the department will achieve its vision of ‘strong partnerships for better lives’ and frame the department’s goals and objectives.

The Department of Social Development manages programs and services designed to provide protection and care for individuals and families, while also fostering independence and self-sufficiency. The department works with service providers and community partners who also play an important role in contributing to a safe, secure, and healthy New Brunswick. The department is structured in four divisions as seen on the following organizational chart that integrates in a team-based approach to support the citizens of New Brunswick.

High-Level Organizational Chart





DIVISION OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS

Client Service Delivery Division

Overview

The **Client Service Delivery Division** is responsible for delivering Social Development's programs and services to clients of the department, managing day-to-day client relations and operations, establishing, and managing relationships with community partners, and maintaining performance excellence. The division consists of four zones and the Client Service Delivery Support Branch.

The zones are responsible for the delivery of programs and services in core business areas to individuals and families. The core business areas include child well-being and youth services, homelessness, income support, disability support services, and long-term care.

The **Client Service Delivery Organizational Support Branch** is responsible for facilitating the implementation of key priority initiatives within the Client Service Delivery Branch. The team works closely with both Central Office and Zone(s) to guide implementation and monitoring quality improvement activities. The team leads executive and operational supports including: Medical Advisory Board coordination, Emergency Social Services, Integrated Front-End as well as the Intelligent Computer Exchange (ICE) Telephony Platform Business Ownership

Highlights

- The branch worked closely with the Child and Youth Well-Being branch to co-lead the design and implementation of a new service delivery model for On-Going Child Protection Services. The pilot demonstrated success with the introduction of the Child in Temporary Care Social Worker, Human Service Counsellor(s) and Service Requisition Administrative Support as well as enhanced partnership with Public Health Nursing. The new service delivery model has resulted in Social Workers having more time to spend with children, youth, and families and less time is required for administrative tasks such as service requisitions for payment to vendors and community service providers.

Families and Children Division

Overview

The **Families and Children Division** is responsible for planning, designing, and monitoring department programs related to child and youth services, including integrated service delivery, income support, health services, disability support, homelessness, and supportive housing. This includes the interpretation of program guidelines, procedures, policies, standards, regulations, and legislation. The division focuses efforts on changing how it delivers services to improve people-centeredness, efficiency and sustainability while maintaining quality. The division consists of the Child and Youth Well-Being Branch, the Income Support Branch, the Disability Support and Health Services Branch, and the Homelessness Support Team.

The **Child and Youth Well-Being Branch** is responsible for designing, implementing, and monitoring strength-based programs and services to help protect and promote the safety and well-being of newborns, children, youth, and young adults. This branch works in partnership with colleagues, other departments, and community-based services to ensure timely and culturally responsive services and resources that result in the best outcomes for children and youth. The vision of the Branch is the safety, well-being, a sense of belonging and lifelong connections for every child/youth in New Brunswick. Priority is given to strengthening family engagement by including family involvement strategies such as Family Group Conferences and Immediate Response Conferences to give voice to children, youth, and families.

This Branch includes Child and Youth Protection, Children and Youth in Care, Children's Resource Services, Kinship, Adoption, Expectant Parent and Birth Parent Services, Youth Engagement and Young Adult Services, Family Supports for Children with Disabilities, Collaborative Approaches, and services under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. As well, the branch works in collaboration with other departments and community organizations in developing and supporting programs that will ensure better outcomes for children, youth, and young adults. The Branch is also a partner in Integrated Service Delivery, as well as the Provincial Integrated Support Committee, which are multidisciplinary partnerships intended to improve services to children, youth and young adults deemed at-risk or having complex social, emotional, physical, medical, and/or mental-health needs.

The **Income Support Branch** is responsible for providing individuals and families in need with financial benefits and supports. This branch also has the responsibility for planning, designing, and monitoring services delivered through the Disability Support Program for adults with disabilities. The goal is to support individuals and families, to help them achieve and maintain self-reliance and, where appropriate, to enhance their potential for employment with self-sufficiency program services.

The **Disability Support and Health Services Branch**, a newly established branch which was previously located under Income support, has the responsibility for two programs, Disability Support and Health Services. Disability Support is responsible for planning, designing, and monitoring services delivered through the Disability Support Program for adults with disabilities. The goal is to support individuals and families, to help them achieve their highest level of functioning and self-autonomy and to offer programs and services that support autonomy and self-sufficiency.

Health Services is responsible for the day-to-day operations, planning, designing, and monitoring of the department's Health Services Program. The Health Services Program offers several health and medical benefits, and services to Social Development clients that have an active health card. Services include Mobility & Adaptive Equipment Loan Program; Dental Program; Hearing Aid Program; Medical Supplies/Services Program; Orthopedic Program; Ostomy/Incontinence Program; Prosthetic Program; Respiratory Program; Therapeutic Nutrients Program; and the Vision Program. Health Services is also responsible for Healthy Smiles, Clear Vision, and the NB Cleft Palate Program. Specific client groups eligible through health services include Social Assistance recipients and their dependents, Health Card-Only clients (individuals with extensive health needs who are unable to cover the cost of services), clients served within the Child and Youth Services Program, Long-Term Care clients residing in Adult Residential Facilities, Nursing Home clients, and Mental Health clients residing in facilities.

The **Homelessness Support Team** is responsible for the planning, design and monitoring of all departmental supportive housing and homelessness programs and services. These include the following: emergency shelters, supportive housing projects to address systemic gaps, and identifying opportunities for improvements in existing homelessness infrastructure, including outreach programs, Out of the Cold operations and affiliated policy and program delivery.

Highlights

- On January 26, 2024, the *Child and Youth Well-Being Act* was proclaimed in New Brunswick. It is the first time in our province's history that an Act is completely dedicated to the overall safety and well-being of children and youth. This important legislation focuses on the best interests, protection, participation, and earlier intervention and well-being of children, youth, and young adults. Programs and services have been redesigned to ensure alignment with the new Act and philosophy.
- In collaboration with other provinces and schools of social work in New Brunswick, the department created and adopted an assessment tool specifically for kinship families. This relationship-based assessment tool better supports children and youth, when they cannot live at home, to live with people with whom they have a positive relationship.
- Enhanced programs for youth and young adults up to the age of 26, who cannot live at home, are aimed at providing better outcomes for youth and young adults by supporting them through community involvement, education, training, employment, and housing.
- The Disability Support Program worked collaboratively with the Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour to ensure there is equal pay for equal work and a full elimination of stipends for adults with disabilities working in New Brunswick. This work occurred within the parameters of the Employment and Support Services Program (ESSP).
- The Homelessness Support team was established with an executive lead and four homelessness strategists, one in each of the zones. The team negotiated a per diem rate with existing emergency shelter operators for consistency, including consistent outcomes.
- Three Homelessness Hubs were implemented in each of the urban cities. As well, professional outreach teams were enhanced in the urban cities and in Sussex, Woodstock and Miramichi.
- Supportive housing initiatives were developed and funded, such as the Josh Project in Moncton.

Seniors and Long-Term Care Division

Overview

The **Seniors and Long-Term Care Division** is responsible for the planning, design and monitoring of Social Development programs related to seniors and adult protection. This includes the interpretation of program guidelines, procedures, policies, standards, regulations, and provincial legislation. This division focuses efforts on changing how it delivers services to improve efficiency and sustainability while maintaining quality. The division consists of the Adult Community Resources Branch, the Adult Client Services Support Branch, and the Operational Excellence Branch.

The **Adult Community Resources Branch** is responsible for monitoring quality and compliance of licensed adult residential facilities and nursing homes throughout the province who provide care across the continuum of care. Adult residential facilities include special care homes, community residences, memory care and generalist care. The department's objectives are to improve residents' quality of life, help safeguard their dignity, and ensure that appropriate, quality residential services are provided as efficiently as possible within available resources. This is accomplished by ensuring compliance with all relevant acts, regulations under the acts, departmental standards, and policies. The purpose of this monitoring is to enhance accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in the planning and delivery of these services to adults and seniors.

The **Adult Client Services Support Branch** is responsible for planning, designing, and monitoring programs and services provided to seniors at home and in the community. The Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat falls within this branch and functions as the point of contact to facilitate the central alignment, coordination, planning and liaison for matters and issues related to seniors and healthy aging within government. The programs and services under the branch include the Adult Protection Program, the Long-Term Care Program, Home Support Services, Adult Day Centres, Home First initiatives, Healthy Seniors Pilot Project, Age-Friendly Communities Recognition Program, and The Healthy Aging Champions Program. This branch also delivers training to Social Development staff in the adult and senior services and program areas throughout the province.

The **Operational Excellence Branch** is responsible for providing operational support to licensed non-profit and fee-for-service nursing homes in the province. This support consists of operational funding, advisory services, personal protective equipment supply management, and the administration of capital repairs, renovations, and replacement projects. The branch also provides support in international recruitment for workers in the long-term care sector, infrastructure support for adult residential facilities, and contract management.

Highlights

- Expanded the number of Nursing Homes Without Walls sites to 20 locations around New Brunswick. The Nursing Home Without Walls program aims to enhance the experience of aging by empowering older adults and their care partners to age in place.
- Changed the policy for spousal contributions to facility-based care to ensure that at least 60 percent of the household income remains with the spouse at home.
- Opened 210 new nursing home beds under the 2018-2023 Nursing Home Plan: Gordon Hall, Moncton (60 beds); Ocean Hall, Moncton (60 beds); Mount Saint Joseph, Miramichi (30 beds); Medley Hall, Fredericton (60 beds).
- Through the Canada-New Brunswick Aging with Dignity Agreement, invested \$2.4 million in life safety and essential equipment upgrades in adult residential facilities, as well as \$1.7 million to upgrade call bell systems in nursing homes and \$1.6 million for the replacement of nursing home beds.
- Expanded the number of memory care and generalist care homes around New Brunswick (83 generalist beds and 18 memory care beds added in 2023-2024 fiscal). This supports the province's long-term care system and helps ensure that nursing homes beds are maintained for those that require that level of care.
- Continued collaboration with the Extra Mural Program to implement Enhanced Clinical Services in adult residential facilities (ARF). This enables clinical services being able to be provided to those living in ARF's, reducing hospital visits, visits to medical clinics.

Corporate Services Division

Overview

The **Corporate Services Division** provides advice, resources, and support services to enable the department to deliver programs and services to clients. The division consists of Shared Analytics, Digital Transformation, Finance and Administration, Human Resources, Organizational Development, Policy and Legislative Affairs, and Strategy and Advisory Services.

The **Shared Analytics Branch** supports the Departments of Social Development and Health in achieving their strategic goals of high-quality data and data systems, conducting statistical and quantitative analyses, creating explanatory and predictive models, and evaluating machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms. These actions foster evidence-based decision-making in the planning, management, and accountability of the health care system and Social Development's operations.

The **Digital Transformation Branch** provides strategic leadership intended to transform how we deliver value to New Brunswickers through a citizen-centered design of end-to-end processes that benefit the

business while offering better experiences through innovative products and services. The Digital Transformation Team works on enterprise change both across GNB and within Social Development to improve experiences for all New Brunswickers by supporting timely access to information and services that are easy to understand and use.

The **Finance and Administration Branch** is responsible to ensure the department's financial resources are spent within government's fiscal framework. The Branch provides information and advice to ensure consistency in budgeting, contract administration, financial reporting and administration, as well as conducting internal audits for the department's programs and services. The Branch is made up of four units: Budget and Financial Reporting, Audit Services, Accounting and Administrative Services, and Contract Administration.

The **Human Resource Services Branch** provides support and consulting services to the department to increase organizational effectiveness and to maximize performance through our people. Team members work collaboratively to meet its mandate and objectives, while supporting the strategic goals of both the department and the Government of New Brunswick. The team is responsible for strategic workforce planning and succession management, performance management, human resources related training, the development and implementation of health, safety, and workplace wellness programs, and the establishment of linguistic profiles. It serves as the primary vehicle for the delivery of Human Resource Services to the department. The human resource consultants have the lead role and responsibility for recruitment, as well as all employee relations, and collective agreement management and interpretation.

The **Organizational Development Branch** is responsible for the department's learning and development framework which is inclusive and aimed at increasing organizational effectiveness. The Branch leads the expansion and continuous improvement of learning and development opportunities to enhance employee, partner, and client experience and engagement. Additionally, the Branch provides advice, support, and communication functions across the department in all program areas.

The **Policy and Legislative Affairs Branch** is responsible for developing policy and legislative proposals for the department and for the coordination of legislative activities. The Branch provides ongoing support and advice in the interpretation and application of departmental legislation and is the departmental lead in working with Office of the Attorney General on legal matters. The Branch is the departmental lead on several interdepartmental and Federal, Provincial, Territorial groups, including the Seniors Forum and the Ministers Responsible for Social Services Forum. The branch supports departmental responses to inquiries and investigations by Legislative Officers. They are also responsible for providing advice on all privacy related issues and preparing responses to all access to information requests. In addition, the Branch facilitates the appointment process for agencies, boards and commissions related to Social Development.

The **Strategy and Advisory Services Branch** is responsible for strategic planning and alignment within the department. The branch leads the department's strategy planning process, organizational performance, and continuous improvement efforts throughout the department by providing organizational expertise in the areas of project and portfolio management, change management, and continuous improvement. The Branch supports all areas of the department by facilitating key planning and reporting activities, and the alignment of key departmental initiatives as drivers of performance. It leads the initiative management efforts of departmental priorities and acts as a liaison with the Executive Council Office to coordinate alignment with GNB's strategy.

Highlights

- Modernized the way the department operate through technology enhancements such as the development of online foster applications; using technology to inspect nursing homes and the ability to produce digital inspections reports. Over 800 people used 211 live-chat support when applying for the Canada Housing Benefit on www.socialsupportsnb.ca, 318 since January 2024, 24 percent of which were over the age of 65. These enhancements save client and staff time and allows clients new ways to interact with the department.

- Led the creation of custom data solutions to support program areas, including expansion of the Corporate Reporting Solution, new reports, and dashboards.
- Since Fall 2023, the department has visited seven university and college campuses to recruit social workers and paraprofessional support staff. During these visits, department representatives shared their rewarding experiences working at Social Development. In late 2023 and early 2024, the department hired 30 Social Workers through conditional offers made to upcoming 2024 graduates from various social worker programs.
- Aligned strategic priorities with its departmental strategic framework, performance measures and worked with business leads to complete priorities. This included leading the quarterly strategic alignment meetings with a focus on strategic planning, accountability and leading through intent for priority projects over the upcoming fiscal year.
- Continuation of the expansion of training and development opportunities within the department and providing supporting tools for employees to enhance their learning so all employees can easily access opportunities in a variety of delivery methods, including self-paced modules, instructor-led virtual, and in person. Since Fall 2023, the Branch has delivered six people leader training modules on human resource related topics such as, the hiring process, onboarding, performance management, and the remote work policy.
- Awarded contracts for the three nursing homes in Moncton, Miramichi and Oromocto during the 2023-24 fiscal year.
- Supported the successful negotiation and signing of the Aging with Dignity bilateral agreement aimed at improving access to quality long-term care services and prepared to assume the Provincial co-chair role of the Seniors Forum for 2024-25.
- Supported legislative, regulatory and policy development for the new *Child and Youth Well-Being Act*, which was proclaimed and came into effect on January 26, 2024, along with the supporting regulatory framework.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

For the fiscal period ending March 31, 2024 (\$000's).

This financial overview was prepared based on the best available information at the time of publication, and therefore, may not correspond exactly with the figures that were subsequently published in the public accounts.

Revenues, expenditures, and capital amounts related to the New Brunswick Housing Corporation (NBHC) have been removed from Social Development's Financial Information section as NBHC became a stand-alone corporation as of April 1, 2023. Financial information related to NBHC will be reported in its annual report.

Expenditures	Budget	Actual	Variance Over (Under)	% Over (Under)	Note
Corporate and Other Services	\$13,139.8	\$21,284.9	\$8,145.1	62.0%	1
Income Security	285,767.3	311,879.3	26,112.0	9.1%	2
Child Welfare and Youth Services	168,561.3	202,411.0	33,849.7	20.1%	3
Seniors and Long-Term Care	1,020,687.9	1,017,387.9	(3,300.0)	(0.3%)	
Other Benefits	60,434.0	48,250.3	(12,183.7)	(20.2%)	4
Total	\$1,548,590.3	\$1,601,213.4	\$52,623.1	3.4%	

Numbers are expressed in thousands

Capital	Budget	Actual	Variance Over (Under)	% Over (Under)	Note
Nursing Home Services – Capital Program	\$12,000.0	\$18,317.1	\$6,317.1	52.6%	5

Numbers are expressed in thousands

Revenues	Budget	Actual	Variance Over (Under)	% Over (Under)	Note
Licences and Permits	\$33.0	\$28.0	(\$5.0)	(15.2%)	
Miscellaneous	4,375.0	5,735.8	1,360.8	31.1%	6

Revenues	Budget	Actual	Variance Over (Under)	% Over (Under)	Note
Conditional Grants – Canada	27,000.0	31,224.5	4,224.5	15.6%	7
Total	\$31,408.0	\$36,988.3	\$5,580.3	17.8%	

Numbers are expressed in thousands

Notes on significant variances:
1. Over budget mainly due to costs related to Mount St. Joseph, Rising Tide Community Initiatives Inc., nursing home laundry services, HelpFind, implementation costs for Homelessness and Gender Based Violence, digital transformation and the installation of new interview rooms for Child Welfare.
2. Over budget due to caseload increases in the Extended Benefits Program and Transitional Assistance Program and also increased expenditures related to homeless shelters.
3. Over budget due to cost increases related to Children in Care, Child Protection, Family Supports for Children with Special Needs, Stabilization, Complex Cases, and Kinship.
4. Under budget mainly due to lower than anticipated expenditures in the Healthy Seniors Pilot Project, Child Tax Benefit, and the New Brunswick Seniors Home Renovation Tax Credit.
5. Over budget due to expenses related to the Aging with Dignity Program and Safe Long Term Care, as well as inflationary pressures on budgeted work.
6. Over budget due to higher-than-expected overpayment recoveries and family court payments.
7. Over budget due to the timing of the signing of the Aging with Dignity Funding Agreement. Federal funding began in 2023-24 but was not budgeted for.

SUMMARY OF STAFFING ACTIVITY

Pursuant to section 4 of the *Civil Service Act*, the Secretary to Treasury Board delegates staffing to each Deputy Head for his or her respective department(s). Please find below a summary of the staffing activity for 2023-2024 for Social Development.

NUMBER OF PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES AS OF DEC. 31 OF EACH YEAR			
EMPLOYEE TYPE	2021	2022	2023
Permanent	1,318	1,322	1,164
Temporary	163	153	102
TOTAL	1,481	1,475	1,266

The decrease in employees in 2023 is due to the NBHC becoming a stand-alone corporation as of April 1, 2023 which included approximately 150 employees moving from Social Development to NBHC.

The department advertised 71 competitions, including 47 open (public) competitions and 24 closed (internal) competitions.

Pursuant to sections 15 and 16 of the *Civil Service Act*, the department made the following appointments using processes to establish merit other than the competitive process:

APPOINTMENT TYPE	APPOINTMENT DESCRIPTION	SECTION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE ACT	NUMBER
Specialized Professional, Scientific or Technical	An appointment may be made without competition when a position requires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a high degree of expertise and training; a high degree of technical skill; recognized experts in their field 	15(1)	20
Equal Employment Opportunity Program	Provides Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and members of a visible minority group with equal access to employment, training and advancement opportunities.	16(1)(a)	7
Department Talent Management Program	Permanent employees identified in corporate and departmental talent pools, who meet the four-point criteria for assessing talent, namely performance, readiness, willingness and criticalness.	16(1)(b)	0
Lateral transfer	The GNB transfer process facilitates the transfer of employees from within Part 1, 2 (school districts) and 3 (hospital authorities) of the Public Service.	16(1) or 16(1)(c)	14

APPOINTMENT TYPE	APPOINTMENT DESCRIPTION	SECTION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE ACT	NUMBER
Regular appointment of casual/temporary	An individual hired on a casual or temporary basis under section 17 may be appointed without competition to a regular properly classified position within the Civil Service.	16(1)(d)(i)	39
Regular appointment of students/ apprentices	Summer students, university or community college co-op students or apprentices may be appointed without competition to an entry level position within the Civil Service.	16(1)(d)(ii)	0

Pursuant to section 33 of the *Civil Service Act*, there were no complaints alleging favouritism was made to the Deputy Head of Social Development nor were any complaints submitted to the Ombud.

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Please complete the following table with the information relevant to your department.

BILL #	NAME OF LEGISLATION	DATE OF ROYAL ASSENT	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
#31	<i>An Act to Amend the Nursing Homes Act</i> https://www.legnb.ca/en/legislation/bills/60/2/31/an-act-to-amend-the-nursing-homes-act	June 16, 2023	The amendments focused on nursing home admission policies, specifically providing authority to regulate alternate admission criteria in exceptional circumstances.
#9	<i>An Act Respecting the Child and Youth Well-Being Act</i> https://www.legnb.ca/en/legislation/bills/60/3/9/an-act-respecting-child-and-youth-well-being	December 13, 2023	Enabled required consequential amendments for the proclamation of the new <i>Child and Youth Well-Being Act (CYWBA)</i> . It also introduced necessary amendments to the CYWBA to support its new regulatory framework.

NAME OF REGULATION	EFFECTIVE DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
<i>Family Income Security Act</i> Amendment to General Regulation	April 1, 2023	Amendments to Regulation 95-61 of the <i>Family Income Security Act</i> to reflect updated social assistance rates that align with the annual increase to the NB consumer price index summary and clarified the treatment of payment for lost wages in the exemption of compensatory awards.
<i>Family Income Security Act</i> Amendment to General Regulation	July 1, 2023	Amendments to Regulation 95-61 of the <i>Family Income Security Act</i> to exempt child related Canada Pension Plan (CPP) benefits and to confirm that Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) benefits are treated the same way that CPP benefits are.

NAME OF REGULATION	EFFECTIVE DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
<i>Family Income Security Act</i> Amendment to General Regulation	December 14, 2023	Amendments to Regulation 95-61 to exempt the Direct to Tenant Rental Benefit granted by the New Brunswick Housing Corporation from the calculation of Social Assistance. This ensured that Social Assistance recipients who received this housing benefit did not have their income support reduced as a result.
<i>Nursing Homes Act</i> Amendment to the Contribution Regulation	December 14, 2023	Amendment to ensure that the maximum required client contribution amount for nursing home care, when the spouse or common-law partner of the nursing home resident remains at home is 40 percent of the annual net family income.
<i>Child and Youth Well-Being Act</i> New General Regulation	January 26, 2024	Provides for general administration of the legislation.
<i>Child and Youth Well-Being Act</i> New Adoption Regulation	January 26, 2024	Provides the application, criteria, and process for adoptions.
<i>Child and Youth Well-Being Act</i> New Children and Youth Social Services Regulation	January 26, 2024	Prescribes requirements for Community-Based Care Resources (group home or other agency-based placement), Family-Based Care Resources (professional care home, contract home or other family-based placement), Foster Parents (kin foster home or regular foster home), and Kinship. It also includes provisions for new and existing services for children, youth, and young adults
<i>Child and Youth Well-Being Act</i> New Forms Regulation	January 26, 2024	Prescribes forms for applications made under the Act.

The acts for which the department was responsible in 2023-2024 may be found at:
<https://laws.gnb.ca/en/bycategory/cs?categoryId=departmentId&itemId=social>

SUMMARY OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACTIVITIES

Introduction

Focus 1

Ensure access to service of equal quality in English and French throughout the province:

- There is continuous management of the department's linguistic profiles to ensure there is enough capacity in guaranteeing that clients are being served in their language of choice. We also strive to improve linguistic team capacity through the hiring process and second-language training.
- As part of the onboarding process, new employees are required to complete the mandatory e-learning modules for Language of Service and Language of Work offered through the GNB Knowledge Center.

Focus 2

An environment and climate that encourages, for all employees, the use of the official language of their choice in their workplace:

- All communications and training to all staff is offered in both official languages.
- There is a section on the Intranet including information on second-language training and links to tools and resources to help employees practice their second official language.

Focus 3

Official bilingualism is a fundamental value conveyed by GNB and its employees.

- The department gathered information to complete the section in the department's annual report dealing with official languages.

Focus 4

Ensure public service employees have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the *Official Languages Act*, relevant policies, regulations, and the province's obligations with respect to official languages:

- The department emphasizes an employee's obligations under the *Official Languages Act* and provided them with the links for the e-learning modules Language of Work and Language of Service found on the GNB Knowledge Center.

Conclusion

Social Development continues to bring employee awareness of the responsibilities of the *Official Languages Act* in day-to-day work, and in the quality of programs and services provided to the public. The department also continues to promote both the Language of Service and Language of Work policies through its intranet site and onboarding process.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Section 1

Social Development did not receive any recommendations from the 2022 Auditor General's report.

NAME AND YEAR OF AUDIT AREA WITH LINK TO ONLINE DOCUMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
	TOTAL
2023 Volume 1 Chapter 3: Pandemic Preparedness and Response in Nursing Homes Department of Social Development	8

IMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TAKEN
Work with nursing homes to develop and implement a recruitment strategy for nursing home clinical care staff.	The department is currently involved in the People Pillar work under the Provincial Health Plan but believe that a focus on long term care is necessary, especially for the nursing home sector. To this end, the department has already spearheaded a Recruitment and Retention Task Force to establish a recruitment and retention strategy.
Update the infection prevention and control requirements in Nursing Home Standards to align with IPAC Canada best practice by providing access to a dedicated prevention and control professional per 150-200 beds depending on acuity levels.	Updated Standards and Guidelines have been developed. We agree with a further evolution of the program based on IPAC best practices. This will require significant investment and therefore will require government approval. Additionally, a support structure with appropriate expertise is required either within the department or with partners to ensure accountability and oversight.
Implement a formalized risk management strategy detailing sufficient procedures that reflect infection prevention and control best practices until a capital improvement plan can be developed.	The department will be completing an updated Facility Condition Assessment to inform the development of future capital improvement plans including proposed replacement and spatial renovation projects to address aging infrastructure. Any new construction will adhere to applicable nursing home design standards. These infrastructure plans will require significant investment and government approval.

IMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS TAKEN
Develop adequate enforcement mechanisms to support compliance with legislation, regulations, and standards	The department is beginning its work on the development of comprehensive Long-Term Care and Adult Protection Acts and in addition to developing a robust compliance framework. It is noted that the updated legislations and compliance mechanisms will require significant investment and government approval.
Publicly report the licence status of nursing homes online	While the licence status is posted on the doors of the nursing homes, it should be reported in an aggregate format that is readily accessible to the public and stakeholders.
Ensure corrective actions as noted in IPC audits have been implemented to support ongoing / future infection prevention and control risks	We agree with recommendation however it is dependent on the approval of an enhanced IPC program and appropriate resourcing (as noted above).
Regularly assess training needs of nursing homes and provide funding accordingly. Ongoing training should include infection prevention and control measures based on best practices.	Subject to federal funding approvals, the department will be developing a training plan which will consider an IPC component. On-going training needs would be part of the IPC program and is dependent on the approval of the program and resourcing.
Work with nursing homes and the Department of Health to develop outbreak management plans and procedures.	We have current plans for COVID as well as Influenza, but we recognize the need to look at all infectious disease to create a comprehensive guidance for outbreak management.

Section 2 – Includes the reporting periods for years three, four and five.

NAME AND YEAR OF AUDIT AREA WITH LINK TO ONLINE DOCUMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS	
	TOTAL	IMPLEMENTED
Update on Nursing Home Planning and Aging Strategy – 2020 Vol. II https://www.agnb-vgnb.ca/content/dam/agnb-vgnb/pdf/Reports-Rapports/2020V2/Chap4e.pdf	5	1
Group Homes and Specialized Placements – 2019 Vol. I https://www.agnb-vgnb.ca/content/dam/agnb-vgnb/pdf/Reports-Rapports/2019V2/Chap3e.pdf	16	9

REPORT ON THE *PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE ACT*

As provided under section 18(1) of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*, the Chief Executive shall prepare a report of any disclosures of wrongdoing that have been made to a supervisor or designated officer of the portion of the public service for which the chief executive officer is responsible. The Department of Social Development received one disclosure of wrongdoing in the 2023-2024 fiscal year.