

A newsletter for and about
Community Services staff

Fall 2004, Volume 1, Number 4



*Building strong, healthy
communities together*

the Outlook

An illustration of two stylized human figures in grey, one on the left and one on the right, both holding up a large, light blue letter 'O' that forms part of the word 'Outlook' in the main title.

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National Child Day Celebrated with 50 New Child Care Spaces

At a ceremony held at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in November, 50 new, portable, subsidized child-care spaces for low-income families in Nova Scotia were announced. Funding for these additional child-care spaces is being made possible under the Multilateral Framework for Early Learning and Child Care.

There are now more than 2,750 subsidized spaces in Nova Scotia, 398 of which are portable. Portable subsidized child-care spaces were introduced in 2000.

The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia operates Red, Yellow, Blue and You!, a gallery tour and studio program for children ages three to five in licensed child-care programs. Using specially designed art kits and the gallery collection as inspiration, young visitors engage in interactive dialogue and hands-on art activities.

This program is offered in partnership with the Department of Community Services through the Early Childhood Development Initiative, a federal, provincial and territorial agreement to enhance services for children and families.



Community Services Minister David Morse talks with a child who participates in the Art Gallery's Red, Yellow, Blue and You! program for young learners funded by the Department of Community Services under the Early Childhood Development Initiative.

DEPUTY'S UPDATE

In the coming months, Community Services will be continuing work in a number of areas – both internally and in the forefront in the community – that will help make our department more accessible and responsive to clients and help make our services more effective overall. This issue of the Outlook profiles just some of the work that staff have begun and some others that we will undertake in the coming months.

Work on the Community Supports for Adults Renewal Project is moving forward. Staff analyzed the feedback we received from the community on a renewed system of supports for people with disabilities. Clients, families, service providers, advocates and community members took the time and the opportunity to share with us their comments on the CSA Renewal discussion paper. A summary document has been released and the Department will implement a Direct Family Support program in January, a provincial Supported Apartment program in mid-2005 and an Alternate Family Support program late in 2005. The summary paper is available at www.gov.ns.ca/coms.

Some new construction projects were also started recently. A new residential and outreach centre, profiled on p. 7, has been built in Sydney on behalf of the Cape Breton Victoria Children's Aid Society. Construction is also progressing in Inverness on a new MacDonald Hall (see p. 7), a group home to be built to replace an aging but much-loved residence in the community. Finally, a new provincial building is being built in Granville Ferry, Annapolis County. The new building will house Department of Community Services and the Family and Children's Services Agency of Annapolis County.

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Made-in-Nova Scotia Initiative Takes Silver



A made-in-Nova-Scotia initiative has taken a silver medal for excellence in innovative management in a prestigious national competition hosted by the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC).

The Nova Scotia Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) ranked second in the country for excellence in horizontal management. The SCI is a partnership of more than 40 between federal, provincial, municipal and First Nations organizations working collaboratively to address complex issues with citizens groups in the Bras d'Or Lakes and Annapolis/Fundy watersheds.

SCI was singled out for excellence in leadership in horizontal collaboration and community sustainability. It competed against 95 other entries across Canada. The gold prize for the same category went to the partners in the Vancouver Agreement/Downtown East-side Project and the bronze to the Government of Ontario for collaborative work in service delivery. The award ceremony was held on September 1, 2004, at the annual IPAC conference in Vancouver.

Community Services staff joined others from Health, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Fisheries, Energy, Environment & Labour, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations, the office of Aboriginal Affairs, Transportation & Public Works, Health Promotion and the department of Education on this award-winning project. Congratulations to Wayne Bona, Marian MacDonald, Lori Nearing and Brian Taylor, Community Services' contingent on the Nova Scotia team, for their contributions and outstanding work!

Program Profile: NCB

The Nova Scotia Child Benefit is the provincial government's contribution to the National Child Benefit (NCB) initiative. The Nova Scotia Child Benefit is provided to all low-income families to help them with the cost of raising children under the age of 18. Over 60,000 children in Nova Scotia receive this benefit.

There is no need to apply separately to qualify for the Nova Scotia Child Benefit. Benefits from this program are combined with the federal Canada Child Tax Benefit into a single, non-taxable monthly payment.

In 2001, the Government of Nova Scotia took a significant step to help families on income assistance. Children's benefits were removed from the welfare system and are now delivered through the Nova Scotia Child Benefit. This way, families continue to receive children's benefits when they leave the income assistance system.

The NCB is improving the situation for families with children and is making a difference in preventing and reducing child poverty. In 1999 (latest statistics available), 18 months after the NCB began, the percentage of low-income families in Nova Scotia was 16.8%, down from 19.7% in 1998. We recognize, however, that challenges remain in addressing child poverty and helping low-income families.

For more information on the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, phone Canada Customs and Revenue Agency at 1-800-387-1193.

DEPUTY'S UPDATE

(continued from page 2)

Community Services staff have also been working on bringing our website up-to-date. Aging technology has made updating our website difficult. As a result, information is often out of date or difficult to find. In order to ensure information on our programs and services is available and accessible to all Nova Scotians, new external and internal websites are under development and will be launched very shortly.

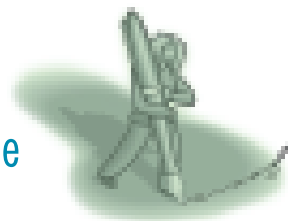
Finally, I would like to thank staff across the province who joined in Employee Recognition Week (p. 4) celebrations in October. This was a brand new program for Community Services, and a great deal of hard work went into making it a success. Regional/divisional action teams were instrumental in coordinating local activities and to the week's success. The steering committee has been working to make this program a reality. We had a wonderful week filled with social events, contests and a great deal of fun. A very special part of Employee Recognition Week were celebrations in honour of our first winners of the Minister's Awards for Excellence program. Congratulations to the many staff who were nominated for an award – your colleagues clearly respect and value your contributions.

In the spirit of employee recognition, I would like to thank each and every staff member for a job well done. Your contributions continue to make this department more effective and responsive to the clients we serve. Thank you.



Marian F. Tyson, QC,
Deputy Minister, Community Services

Colleague Chronicles: Patrick Smale



Name: Patrick Smale

Region: Western

Position: Program Administrative Officer, Housing Services

Patrick Smale is based in Middleton and has worked with Housing Services for the past five years. He delights in the challenge of matching the province's programs and services to a client's individual circumstances.

Interests: Patrick has been married to Carmen for 20 years, and are eagerly awaiting the arrival of their first child in May 2005. Together, this adventuresome duo have become intricately involved with Nova Scotia's Red Cross emergency response team. After succeeding in increasing levels of intensive training, Patrick and Carmen are now Emergency Response Teams leaders in the Valley area. They coordinate responses for emergencies, large and small. From house fires to hurricanes, Patrick and Carmen coordinate access and delivery of essential services to Nova Scotians affected by an emergency, such as food and shelter.

"My time with Community Services has fostered my zest for helping others," says Patrick. "There is a great deal of cross-over between my work with Community Services and my volunteer role with the Red Cross. Both roles complement each other so well."

Past Lives: Patrick has an extraordinary array of past professions, from deep-sea diver to professional mini-sub pilot. He's lived and worked around the world, in places including Scotland, Italy, Malta, Yugoslavia, Australia, the Caribbean and Canada's Maritimes and west coast.

"My time with Community Services has fostered my zest for helping others," says Patrick. "There is a great deal of cross-over between my work with Community Services and my volunteer role with the Red Cross. Both roles complement each other so well."

Patrick Smale Program Administration Officer, Housing Services



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Employee Recognition Program

The Department launched its Employee Recognition Program in October, to show appreciation for the contributions staff make on a daily basis in service to clients across the province. This brand-new program is the first of its kind for Community Services and has been the subject of a great deal of interest among other provincial departments.

For Employee Recognition Week, a steering committee and their respective action teams worked together to coordinate special events in local offices to celebrate Employee Recognition Week, held October 18 – 22. In Community Services offices across the province, a wide variety of celebrations were held to honour staff.

Action teams were an essential part of the Week's success. Many offices held informal coffee breaks to provide busy staff with a chance to stop and enjoy some treats with their colleagues. From contests to social get-togethers, staff came together in the spirit of fun and appreciation.

Also during Employee Recognition Week, Years of Service certificates were granted to staff who have been with the department more than five years. Certificates were presented to staff for milestones of five years or more to recognize and celebrate longevity in public service. Certificates are awarded in increments of five years, up to 35 years plus. Certificates were awarded in district and regional offices across the province.

An important part of Employee Recognition Week were the first annual Minister's Awards for Excellence. The Awards celebrate excellence by an employee or team in

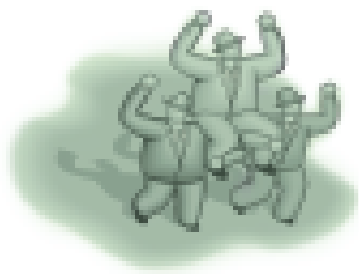
*Marian F. Tyson, QC, Deputy Minister,
Community Services*



Margaret Hunt, of the Truro district office, helps to prepare breakfast for staff during Employee Recognition Week.

In the spirit of employee recognition, I would like to thank each and every staff member for a job well done. Your contributions continue to make this department more effective and responsive to the clients we serve. Thank you.

*Marian F. Tyson, QC, Deputy Minister,
Community Services*



support of the objectives of our department. There are also a limited number of Highly Commendable and Honourable Mention certificates awarded to others who were nominated.

This year, there were 10 award recipients, one individual and one team of nine. The first Minister's Award was presented to Alan Cuvelier, Manager of Assessment Services, for his work in strengthening the supports and tools used by staff in the delivery of Employment Support Services across the province.

The second Minister's Award went to the Child Benefit Adjustment Process Improvement Team, with representatives from the Programs and Information Technology Branches. This initiative focused on improving the delivery of the CBA program.

The 2004 Minister's Awards recipients were Dave Ryan, Bev Corbin, Shiela Burke, Geri Mead, Melody Grant, Brian Flemming, Shannon Quinn, Brenda Murray, Melinda Melanson and Alan Cuvelier.

Two award winners, Dave Ryan and Melinda Melanson, recently presented on the successes of the Child Benefit Adjustment project to Deputy Ministers. The presentation was very well received and Deputy Ministers shared their appreciation for their tremendous achievements.



Community Services Minister (far right) with Minister's Award recipients from the Child Benefit Adjustment Process Improvement Team.



NEWS BRIEF

Helping Families on Assistance Buy School Supplies

The Department of Community Services once again provided almost \$1 million in assistance to help families who receive income assistance to buy school supplies. Families will receive \$50 for each child between the ages of five and 12, and \$100 for each child aged 13 years and over who are registered for and attending public schools. Families are not required to apply for this funding. This is the fifth year in a row we have provided funding to support the learning needs of children in families who receive assistance.

Students can use the funding to buy school supplies and pay various school fees, such as locker charges. About 8,200 students between the ages of five and 12 will receive the funding, along with about 5,300 students over the age of 13.

Regional Roundup

Central

Congratulations Graduates!

In March & June 2004, twenty-one DCS employees from Central Region successfully graduated from one of four Leadership Development Programs offered to Front Line Managers, Middle Managers, Executives and Individual Contributors. These programs are offered through the Public Service Commission and courses run over an average of six months, requiring both the dedication and enthusiasm of its participants to successfully complete this wonderful training opportunity. Congratulations the following DCS Central Region participants:

Frontline Managers

Frank Bensted
Blair Cassidy
Karen Lawley
Joy McEwan
Catherine Meaney
Lynn Orton
Venita Rodrigue

Middle Managers

Deborah Ellsmere
Derek Jessome
Sheryl Kingston
Warren Olsen
Ann Osborne

Executive

Lorna MacPherson
Virginia O'Connell

Individual Contributors

Janice Bellefeuille
Wendy Clark
Ronald Connors
Vondalee Hanrahan
Charline MacDonald
Melinda Melanson
Virginia Messervey

Western

Scary Silent Auction

October was Breast Cancer Awareness month. To raise money to support breast cancer research, the staff of the Digby District Office held a silent auction on a scary halloween pumpkin. The pumpkin was intricately carved by Income Assistance Artist, Tracie Dugas. The lucky winner was Lisa Gillis who paid \$35 for the ghoulish creature. The staff contributed to the cause and a donation of \$135 was made to the Atlantic chapter of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. Staff look forward to making this an annual event as Tracie, the resident scary pumpkin artist, is already getting ready for next year's spooky design.



Lisa Gillis, winner of the silent auction, and Tracie Dugas, pumpkin artist, pose with the scary, fundraising pumpkin.



"The new MacDonald Hall has been designed to meet residents' needs and will be an important addition to our community. This new centre will ensure that MacDonald Hall residents will not only be able to stay in their home community but live in the comfort of a brand-new home, with family and friends close by."

Rodney MacDonald, Minister,
Tourism and Culture



Eastern

MacDonald Hall

Tourism and Culture Minister Rodney MacDonald, on behalf of Community Services Minister David Morse, announced that a new residential centre would be built to replace the aging MacDonald Hall in Inverness County.

"The new MacDonald Hall has been designed to meet residents' needs and will be an important addition to our community," said Mr. MacDonald. "This new centre will ensure that MacDonald Hall residents will not only be able to stay in their home community but live in the comfort of a brand-new home, with family and friends close by."

The new home will be built adjacent to the existing MacDonald Hall and will offer enhanced accessibility, home-like comforts and ample green space for residents. The estimated capital costs are about \$600,000. The home will accommodate residents currently at MacDonald Hall.

The construction of a new MacDonald Hall is funded under the Community Supports for Adults program, which provides a wide range of services for adults with disabilities who need support to live in the community. Those services include group homes, small-option homes, adult residential centres, supervised apartments and adult service centres.

Northern

New Affordable Housing Units for Truro

Residents of Truro will soon have access to more affordable rental housing with the approval of a \$1.4-million, 24-unit project under the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing agreement.

The project, to be located on Prince Street in Truro, will receive funding from both levels of Government and the developer. The government of Canada is providing \$576,000 in up-front capital, the Province is providing \$359,000 in rent supplement funding, and Pinto Properties is providing 15 per cent of the development costs.

The project involves the conversion of an existing three-storey building. The second and third floors will be renovated to create a mix of one- and two-bedroom apartments, while the first floor will remain commercial. Construction on the project will begin immediately and is expected to be completed by March 2005.



NEWS BRIEF

New Residential and Outreach Centre for Cape Breton

Young people and families in the Cape Breton area will soon benefit from the services of Comhla Cruinn, a new residential centre in Sydney.

The new \$1-million centre is funded by the Department of Community Services and is being built in the Cossitt Heights area of Sydney. It was designed the needs of young people in mind and is adopting some of the best design features of community-based residences in Canada. From Comhla Cruinn, the Cape Breton-Victoria Children's Aid Society will offer residential and enhanced outreach services that focus on children and youth at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect.

The centre's name was selected through a contest inviting submissions by youth in care and child-welfare staff. The selected name of the centre is a Gaelic term meaning gathered together. Construction is underway and Comhla Cruinn expected to open in the coming months.

Adoption Month Celebrated with Additional Staff

November was National Adoption Awareness Month and Nova Scotia celebrated by adding seven additional adoption services staff. This change is one part of an overall strategy to help make the process smoother and more efficient for families interested in adopting children already in permanent care.

The Department of Community Services has been reviewing the current adoption process in Nova Scotia, exploring ways to improve areas such as administration and communication, as well as support services for adoptive parents. The department is continuing to work on ways to recruit and prepare more adoptive parents.

As a result of targeted consultations and other work during this review process, two pilot positions were filled in September for adoption services for children in permanent care. Now an additional seven positions will be created across the province, for a total of nine new staff who can help support more families wanting to adopt children currently in permanent care.

The additional staff will start in February to provide adoption applicants with information sessions, eligibility screening, pre-service adoption training, and adoption home studies. It is hoped that the additional staff will increase the numbers of adoption applicants and improve information and preparation services for these families. These staff will conduct more home studies and, ultimately, more approved applicants will be available to adopt children in permanent care in Nova Scotia.

DATES & EVENTS

- January 4 World Braille Day
- January 27 Family Literacy Day

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