

Newfoundland & Labrador  
**College of  
Social Workers**

Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Budget  
*2022 Pre-Budget Submission*

The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers (NLCSW) regulates the practice of social work in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) under provincial legislation titled the Social Workers Act, SNL 2010, c.S-17.2. The vision is Excellence in Social Work.

As an organization, NLCSW is committed to advancing health and social policy in the public interest through a social justice framework. The NLCSW believes that health and social policy development must reflect the social determinants of health framework as outlined in our social policy position framework [https://nlcsw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/NLCSW\\_Social\\_Determinants\\_of\\_Health\\_Policy\\_Framework.pdf](https://nlcsw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/NLCSW_Social_Determinants_of_Health_Policy_Framework.pdf).

While we are still amid a global pandemic, the NLCSW recommends that Budget 2022 contain priorities for enhancing the health and social well-being of individuals, families, and communities in NL in several priority areas. These areas include 1) mental health, 2) health care, 3) children and youth, 4) poverty reduction, and 5) seniors.

#### Mental Health

- Integration of social workers in the K-12 education system.
- NLCSW continues to recommend the integration of social workers in the K-12 education system. This is also a key recommendation in the Big Reset Report (Premier's Economic Recovery Team) that was released in 2021. Children and youth spend a significant portion of their time in schools. This is an environment in which they learn and grow; academically, socially, emotionally, and developmentally. The mental health needs of children and youth remain a primary concern for parents, educators, and health care professionals. COVID-19 has exacerbated many of the issues impacting on children and youth including social isolation, poverty and food insecurity, anxiety and increased use of screen time, stress in the home, and increased risk of exposure to violence in the home. Nationally and internationally, social workers are a vital and integral part of the school team. However, Newfoundland and Labrador is the only Canadian jurisdiction where social workers are not a core part of the school environment. As one of the largest providers of mental health services in the province, social workers in schools can provide the necessary specialized services, supports and programs to address the mental health needs of students while providing schools and

educators with integral resources and supports in promoting academic achievement for all students. For more information visit [https://nlcsw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/social\\_workers\\_in\\_education\\_system.pdf](https://nlcsw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/social_workers_in_education_system.pdf)

## Health Care

- [Advance community teams](#)

The ongoing work of Health Accord NL is important and timely. The focus on community teams is fundamental to health care reform and improving access to health care in NL, reducing health care costs, and improving health care outcomes across the social determinants of health. As health care needs become more complex, addressing the physical, mental, cultural, and social aspects of health across the lifespan is crucial. Community teams, when optimized to their full capacity with the integration of professionals including social work, can be the bridge leading to health care reform that not only enhances individual health but the health of our population.

## Children and Youth

- [Continue to invest in crucial services for children and youth](#)

The delivery of child protection and in care services is complex and requires continued and enhanced funding. Ensuring that issues such as capped caseloads and human resource planning pertaining to recruitment and retention remains a priority is important.

The implementation of \$25 a day child-care is progressive and timely. It is important that families have access to regulated, accessible, and high-quality child-care, and that space is available for all families that need to avail of this service. Increased capacity for affordable child-care is an issue that will need to be explored in the 2022 budgetary priorities

## Poverty Reduction

- [Investments and policy directions to reduce, alleviate and prevent poverty through the provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy.](#)

COVID-19 highlighted many social inequities which were augmented throughout the pandemic. Issues related poverty, low income, food insecurity and homelessness continue to impact on the health and well-being of people. It is therefore important that policy initiatives be guided by the social determinants of health framework. Income is a key social determinant of health; one that provides access to the other determinants of health such as housing, education, and food security. NLCSW advocates for an appropriate basic income for those living below the poverty line. In addition, as work commences on the review of the minimum wage, it is important to ensure that the minimum wage is progressive and that benchmarks are set for annual increases. For more information on NLCSW's recommendation pertaining to the minimum wage see [https://nlcsw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Minimum\\_Wage\\_Consultation\\_2019.pdf](https://nlcsw.ca/sites/default/files/inline-files/Minimum_Wage_Consultation_2019.pdf).

A review of the income support program to ensure that income support rates can adequately meet the needs of those requiring this support is also an important and timely strategy.

## Seniors

- Enhancements to financial supports to seniors

There are many financial supports that would assist seniors to live independently. This includes:

- An increase in home support hours and flexibility in how those hours can be utilized so that seniors can remain in their home of choice for as long as possible.
- Improved access to safe, affordable housing options.
- Enhanced dental and vision care coverage, and access to specialized equipment such as wheelchairs regardless of where one is living.
- An increase in the long-term care allowance.