

HOMEFIRST





HOME FIRST

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Message from Premier David Alward

Senior care is a priority of our government as the challenge of the changing demographic will be with us for the coming years. Through the consultation sessions that were held as part of the *Premier's Panel on Seniors: Living Healthy, Aging Well*, today's seniors have told us they want choices if and when they decide they need more support. They want their care to be accessible, affordable and coordinated.

As a government, we recognize seniors want to live with dignity and respect and in their own homes for as long as possible. We want to help them achieve that goal.

Our government is committed to improving the long-term care system and meeting the challenges that arise with an increase in the aging population and demand for services.

The growing senior population and their desire to have choice in how they are cared for are transforming the long-term care industry and how services are to be delivered. Our seniors deserve to have access to the right services at the right time in the right place.

Our government believes that it is important for seniors to remain in their homes for as long as possible so they may continue to live independently and be active members of their community.

We need to make the decisions now that will support an affordable and sustainable system of options for those requiring long-term care well into the future. I am proud to say that our government is making those decisions.

The *Home First* strategy is a three-year initiative to offer support and services for seniors to remain healthy, independent and in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

Developed in partnership with stakeholders, caregivers, professionals, multiple government departments and both health authorities, but more importantly with seniors themselves, the underlying principle of *Home First* is that by providing enhanced supports at the community level now, the need for more costly forms of care services can be delayed or avoided in the future. It has been demonstrated that cost goes down as a result of improving quality of care.

We are all committed to enhancing the well-being and quality of life of our seniors.

The *Home First* strategy is a step towards ensuring that we continue to meet the challenges of an aging population. This is our opportunity to work hand-in-hand with our partners to ensure that seniors will have a greater potential for independence and remain in their homes for as long as possible. We know this is where they want to be.

Honourable David Alward, Premier



Message from Minister Madeleine Dubé

The Department of Social Development is committed to ensuring all seniors are supported in aging well and receiving the care they need to maintain their quality of life.

We know that given a choice, most seniors prefer to be at home than in a hospital, special care home or nursing home. Too often, seniors are waiting in hospitals with health care needs that could safely be met in the comfort of their own homes with the proper support.

When seniors are able to stay in their own home, they remain connected to their family and friends, their regular way of life and their community.

I am pleased that our *Home First* strategy will allow our seniors to do that. The strategy will assist seniors in maintaining their independence and remaining in their homes and communities.

Home First represents a fundamental change in philosophy and practice whereby hospital admissions, lengthy hospital stays, and transfers directly from hospital to residential facilities are considered last resort options, only after all other community-based options have been fully explored.

Our goal is to provide a new direction for healthy aging and care in New Brunswick. This direction is based on what we have heard from seniors, families and care providers; and is also informed by national and international best practices.

New Brunswick has the second highest ratio of seniors in Canada. Such a demographic transformation presents tremendous challenges for our province in the provision of long-term care services.

However, it also presents great opportunities to be innovative and work together on new ways of meeting these challenges.

The *Home First* strategy is a collaboration of all our partners to ensure we capitalize on the opportunities to provide the proper supports and care to our seniors at home.

By working together, we have an opportunity to change the landscape of wellness, healthy aging and maintaining independence throughout New Brunswick.

There is tremendous value in our seniors remaining in their homes for as long as possible, to continue living in the company of their loved ones and in the familiar surroundings of the community they call home.

I am proud the *Home First* strategy is going to allow us to plan and work together to meet the current and future needs of our senior population in New Brunswick.

Honourable Madeleine Dubé, Minister of Social Development



Message from Minister Hugh Flemming

New Brunswick's population is aging and that raises new challenges for our health-care system. In fact, baby boomers will represent a larger segment of our population than youth and the working-age labour force, by 2026. Our government is committed to find innovative ways to meet seniors' needs today, but we also have to adapt to the needs of future generations.

In New Brunswick, about 25 per cent of our hospital beds are occupied by seniors waiting to be admitted in a nursing home or a special care home. We know those patients would prefer to be home with their family and maintain their quality of life. In this regard, we have been working closely with the departments of Social Development and Healthy and Inclusive Communities, the regional health authorities and a number of other partners to find ways to help our seniors stay in their homes.

The *Home First* strategy is a new direction for healthy aging and care in New Brunswick.

By focusing on the strengths of our communities, we will implement new preventative services to enable seniors to return home more quickly and avoid nursing home admissions. In addition to being supported by a community-based family physician, many seniors will benefit from home rehabilitation and reablement with enhanced support from the Extra-Mural Program and home support workers. We will help people to manage their illness or condition and learn or relearn the skills necessary for daily living. Our Extra-Mural Program is already providing exemplary home health-care services, including supportive care, rehabilitation and palliative care. The *Home First* strategy will further strengthen its effectiveness, efficiency and reach, with more emphasis on seniors aging well at home.

Rebuilding Health Care Together: the Provincial Health Plan 2013-2018, envisions a stronger health-care system. We want all New Brunswickers, and especially our seniors, to be supported in better managing their health conditions at home and in their community. Home and community-based care and support is often a more effective patient-focused model of care, reducing pressure on more expensive and resource-intensive acute care services.

The philosophy of the *Home First* strategy aligns to our overall objective to provide the right kind of care to the patient in the right place by the appropriate professional in the most effective, efficient manner possible.

Seniors are our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles who took care of us not too long ago. Everyone grows older and it is our responsibility to respond to their health-care needs with the proper support, in the comfort of their homes and communities, as long as possible.

Honourable Hugh J. Flemming, Q.C., Minister of Health



Message from Minister Dorothy Shephard

As Minister of Healthy and Inclusive Communities, and as the minister responsible for seniors, it's a pleasure to be part of the *Home First* strategy.

Our government's focus is on promoting wellness and healthy aging, and on supporting seniors to make the choices that are right for them. Our goal is to improve the well-being of New Brunswickers early on, in order for them to live longer and in better health.

This will alleviate the pressure on nursing homes and the health care system.

As part of the *Living Healthy, Aging Well* tour in June 2013, seniors were very clear: they want to stay in their own homes and be part of their communities for as long as possible.

The development of the *Home First* strategy has been a real collaborative effort between the departments of Social Development, Health, and Healthy and Inclusive Communities to make sure we are focusing on healthy aging and long-term care.

While having an aging population can present challenges, it also gives us the opportunity to reflect upon the aging process as a celebration of lives well-lived.

Transforming the conversation around aging into a positive one is part of our government's plan to rebuild New Brunswick.

To achieve that, our government offers programs and services to support seniors and their families throughout their life journey. The Senior Goodwill Ambassador program, the new toll-free information line for seniors and the senior wellness clinics are examples of the work being done to encourage active living. We are also keeping a focus on seniors as we renew the *New Brunswick Wellness Strategy* and are working to develop an approach to encourage and support communities to become age-friendly.

The Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities is proud to be a part of the *Home First* strategy as it will assist seniors to remain as healthy and independent as they can, for as long as they can.

Honourable K. Dorothy Shephard, Minister of Healthy and Inclusive Communities



Glossary

Age-Friendly Community

As defined by the World Health Organization, age-friendly communities encourage active aging by creating opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.

Allied health profession

In the context of the *Home First* strategy, allied health professions are considered to be therapeutic and rehabilitative health occupations. The mix of professionals may change depending on the health needs of a community.

Alternate Level of Care (ALC)

When a patient is occupying a hospital bed and does not require the intensity of resources or services provided, the patient is designated ALC.

Continuum of Care

The range of care and supports available to seniors including prevention, community services, care at home, residential care and health care.

Rehabilitation

Services that help seniors to maximize recovery after illness or injury.

Reablement

Services that help seniors learn or relearn the skills necessary to adapt to living independently and to carry out activities of daily living while living with impairment.

Introduction

New Brunswick has the second highest percentage of people aged 65 and older in Canada.

While an aging population creates significant social and economic challenges for our province, it also presents an opportunity for New Brunswick to make positive changes to improve the quality of life of our seniors by delivering more effective and sustainable health and long-term care services into the future.

Seniors have stated that they want to stay at home and in their communities for as long as possible. Evidence shows that community-based care is often the most appropriate and cost-effective means of providing care. This consistency between what seniors want and demonstrated quality improvements compels New Brunswick to embrace a new way of thinking about how home and community-based care and supports should be structured, funded and delivered.

This shift in focus to enhancing care in the community requires the attention of all New Brunswickers. Caring for our seniors is everyone's responsibility.

In November 2012, the *Summit for Healthy Aging and Care* brought together experts and professionals in senior care, family caregivers and seniors themselves. The discussion focused on what quality of life should look like for seniors in New Brunswick and how by working together this can be achieved. The message was clear that seniors want to stay in their homes and communities for as long as possible and need the proper supports to do so.

Government has heard these messages and is responding by delivering a new strategy for seniors called *Home First*. The *Home First* strategy is a three-year plan to enhance healthy aging and care for all seniors in New Brunswick. It represents a shift away from nursing home care toward a greater focus on healthy, active aging, and on home and community-based care integrated across sectors



New Brunswick is ready to reset priorities for all future policy developments around healthy aging. The first priority must be to ensure an increasing number of older adults are enabled to live independent lives and continue to actively engage in family and community life. The second priority is to provide supports to those older adults who may require services to manage chronic illness, health-harming behaviours and social isolation so they may also contribute to their communities to the best of their abilities. With strategic effort and a commitment by many, healthy aging will be achieved.

excerpt from *Living Healthy, Aging Well*
— A report by the Premier's Panel on Seniors



As noted in a presentation to the recent Seniors Summit, our aging population will be one of the defining public policy themes for the next decade and beyond.

This dramatic demographic shift will present an unusually large number of complex and inter-related opportunities and challenges, which in turn will have a fundamental impact on the economic, social and cultural fabric of our province.

During the course of this study, we have learned a lot about how other jurisdictions are coming to grips with a similar reality. There is much in the way of new ideas and best practices that can be adapted to our environment. However, there is also a tremendous opportunity for advancing an innovative New Brunswick based agenda as well.

excerpt from *Living Healthy, Aging Well*
— A report by the Premier's Panel on Seniors

and services. The needs and preferences of seniors and their families will be met through individualized care and support that are based on a model of shared responsibility and sustainability.

The *Home First* strategy is the foundation of an integrated system of health and social care. It represents a fundamental change in philosophy and practice whereby hospital admissions, lengthy hospital stays and transfers directly from hospital to residential facilities are considered last resort options, only after all other community-based options have been fully explored. This kind of transformative change will require a shift— by individuals, families, care providers and professionals— in the way that home and community-based care is understood, valued and integrated into the broader health and social care system.

The *Home First* strategy addresses recommendations contained in the report from the *Premier's Panel on Seniors: Living Healthy, Aging Well* which was released in December 2012. As called for in the report, the *Home First* strategy will help support seniors to maintain their health and independence by transforming the health and social care systems into an integrated continuum of care that is more sustainable and that better meets the needs of seniors.

Many of the necessary elements for change are already in place, but the success of *Home First* requires ongoing collaboration with our partners in the community. This new approach to senior care will require action from citizens and communities in order to be successful. It is a model of shared responsibility that positions government services as one part of the equation of improving quality of life for our seniors. The Government of New Brunswick is committed to working with seniors and families, communities and service providers to make *Home First* a success for our seniors.

Developing the Strategy

The development of the *Home First* strategy was a collaborative effort among the departments of Social Development, Health and Healthy and Inclusive Communities along with the Horizon and Vitalité health networks. It incorporates what has been heard from citizens, caregivers and professionals, with extensive research on innovative practices from across Canada and in other parts of the world.

Over the last few years, seniors have consistently said they want to stay in their own homes for as long as possible, and that they need the proper support to do so. This message was delivered clearly at the *Summit for Healthy Aging and Care* held in November 2012, and stated again by seniors in communities throughout the province during the series of *Living Healthy, Aging Well* citizen engagement sessions hosted by the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities in June 2013.

Seniors and stakeholders have also said there is need for improved access to home and community-based supports, better integration of health and social care services, and an enhanced focus on prevention and well-being. Research and recommendations contained in the report from the *Premier's Panel on Seniors: Living Healthy Aging Well* reinforce these statements. And further research on national and international best practices has ensured the *Home First* strategy contains innovative and leading initiatives, while being responsive to the needs of New Brunswickers.

During stakeholder sessions for *Home First* held in November 2013, participants were engaged in an exercise to help determine the priorities for the *Home First* strategy. Participants included staff from various government departments and the Horizon and Vitalité health networks, representatives of various community groups, service provider organizations and physicians from around the province. They were all asked what future outcomes related to senior care were most important to focus on over the next three years. Their feedback was used to determine the initiatives in the *Home First* strategy.



This report is built upon the following foundational principle: That New Brunswick be a place where aging is a positive experience because we value, respect and recognize the integral role older adults play in our families, in our communities and in our society.

That as New Brunswickers we appreciate the diversity of experiences and understand the different age-related issues facing men and women.

excerpt from *Living Healthy, Aging Well*
— A report by the Premier's Panel on Seniors



Vision

“Healthy aging enabled by appropriate supports and care within a responsive, integrated and sustainable system” is the vision of *Home First*.

Success in implementing the *Home First* vision will result in a future where New Brunswick seniors experience enhanced quality of life. Seniors will enjoy healthier aging, will feel safe and secure in their own homes and will be supported in their communities. They will have access to a wide range of home supports and home health services, as well as specialized care options to help them regain their independence following a life-changing event and be better supported in managing chronic illness.

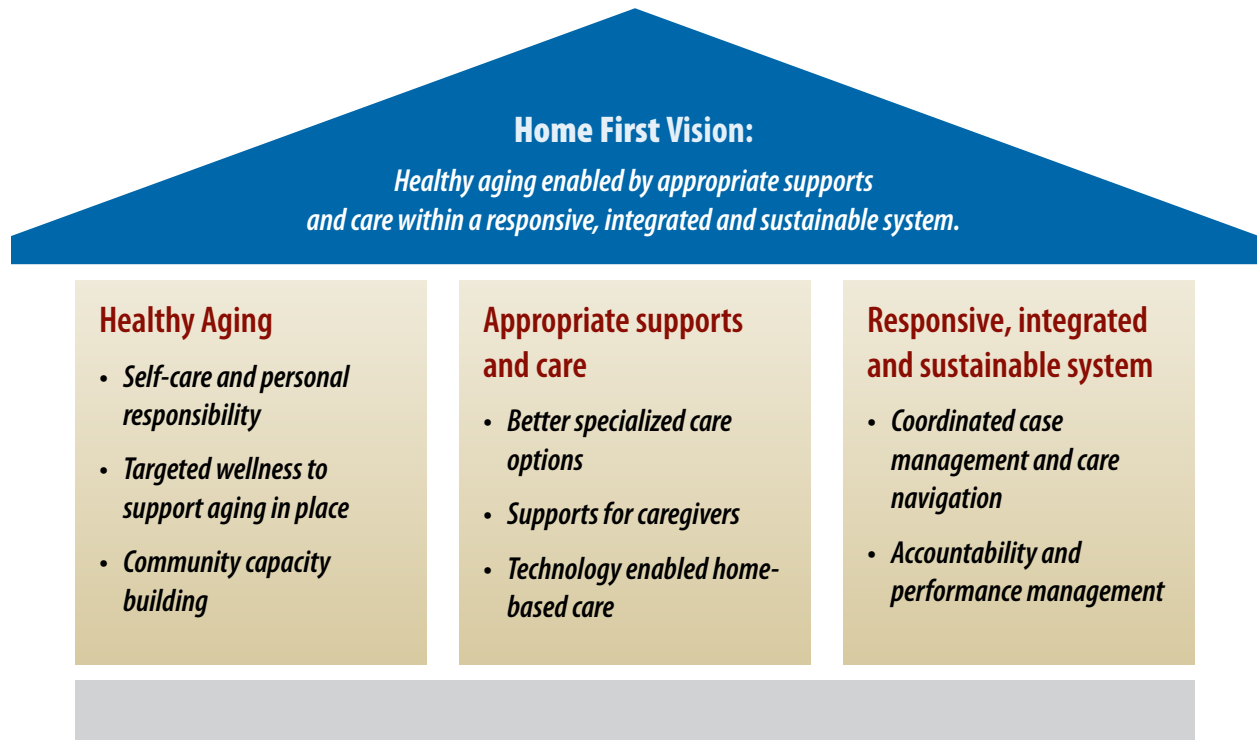
Seniors, families, physicians and other health and social care professionals will strive to support seniors in their homes for as long as possible, with placement in residential facilities being a last resort. However, when placement in a nursing home, special care home or specialized care bed home is necessary, seniors will receive person-centred care from experienced and skilled caregivers. New technologies will make it easier for seniors to stay at home and will improve residential care.

Seniors and caregivers will find it easy to access and navigate services. Family and friends who are caregivers will be supported to continue delivering care to their loved ones and will be recognized for their invaluable contribution to senior care. Formal caregivers will also receive enhanced training and improved working conditions to ensure that New Brunswick has a skilled workforce to care for seniors.

The *Home First* vision is supported by three pillars for success:

1. **Healthy Aging**
2. **Appropriate Supports and Care**
3. **Responsive, Integrated and Sustainable System**

Each pillar contains strategic themes that support the *Home First* vision.



To achieve the *Home First* vision, the Government of New Brunswick will implement new, innovative approaches and initiatives to support seniors to live in their own homes and continue to be part of their communities. The following pages give a brief explanation of the initiatives to be launched over the next three years to make *Home First* a reality in New Brunswick.

Healthy aging for seniors will be achieved through a focus on healthy living and wellness in a supportive and age-friendly community.

Theme: Self-care and personal responsibility

Home First gives seniors the tools they need to make healthy choices and to be active participants in the maintenance of their personal health and wellness.

Initiatives

Establish Seniors Resource Centres

Seniors and their families have said they need more information regarding access to community resources and support networks to enable them to live healthy and age well. When seniors have access to strong supportive resources they are able to make informed decisions related to their health and wellness. A network of Seniors Resource Centres will be established throughout the province that will serve as one-stop shops for seniors and their families/caregivers looking for information related to healthy aging. This network of seniors' resource centres will be operated by community non-profit organizations and will be encouraged to form partnerships with existing community resources, including Regional Wellness Consultants from the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities.

Promote the Wellness Movement to seniors

Healthy, active aging means getting involved in your community and taking ownership of your own well-being. The Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities' *Wellness Movement* encourages all New Brunswick community groups, individuals, families, schools and workplaces to make a commitment to their individual and collective wellness. The *Wellness Movement* will now be promoted as an ongoing initiative rather than a campaign that is only promoted six months of the year. The department will also continue to expand its reach and will aim to increase awareness of the *Wellness Movement* among target groups, including seniors.

Theme: Targeted wellness to support aging in place

Home First will support seniors to age in place through the promotion of wellness.

Initiatives

Implement wellness clinics for seniors

Wellness clinics, specifically for seniors, will be held annually across the province. Government has partnered with a bilingual community non-profit organization that will offer a minimum of one clinic per year in each of the 12 regions they serve. The objective of the clinics, which will be open to all citizens on a drop-in basis on the day of the event, will be to provide seniors, their family members and caregivers with access to health and wellness professionals such as pharmacists, gerontologists, nutritionists and recreational therapists. Those attending a clinic will get information about medication management, chronic disease management, falls prevention, the benefits of staying physically active and other healthy aging tips. Seniors will also be able to have their sugar and cholesterol levels checked as well as their blood pressure which could serve as early detection of potential health issues.

Implement the renewed Wellness Strategy

The New Brunswick Wellness Strategy aims to enable wellness for all New Brunswickers. The Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities supports the implementation of wellness initiatives in schools, communities, workplaces and in citizens' homes. Efforts are made to encourage people to lead healthy lifestyles by promoting social connectedness, mental fitness, healthy eating, increased physical activity and living tobacco free. As part of *Home First*, the renewed *Wellness Strategy* will include initiatives to encourage seniors to make positive changes in their lifestyle to age well and maintain their independence for as long as possible.

Theme: Community capacity building

Home First will focus on collaborating with community partners and service providers for the prevention of illness and injury by creating age-friendly communities, improving the availability and safety of seniors' housing options and providing timely access to necessary health equipment and information.



Initiatives

Develop a seniors' health, well-being and home safety assessment

Nursing home admissions and chronic disease increase significantly between the ages of 70–74 years. Internationally, early intervention initiatives are helping keep seniors healthy and safe in their own homes. These early intervention initiatives promote access to appropriate supports and avoid the high costs of care when a senior needs



services after a crisis. Social Development will introduce early intervention initiatives by delivering voluntary home consultations to seniors aged 70 to encourage early access to health care and social services. Through this initiative, seniors will be provided with information on wellness, and health and social services that will help to create safe and healthy home environments for seniors. Seniors say they often have to make the decision to leave their homes because they are unable to afford minor repairs and adaptations to make their homes safe. The home consultation will help assess seniors' needs and provide eligible seniors with financial assistance for small in-home repairs. Meeting caregivers' needs are also an important part of helping keep seniors at

home. This initiative will also assess caregiver needs and will provide relief care to caregivers by expanding the availability of respite spaces in day centres for seniors across the province.

Develop Age-Friendly Communities

With an aging population, it is essential that our municipalities and communities adapt to meet the changing needs of the population. The report *Premier's Panel on Seniors: Living Healthy, Aging Well* recommends that municipal and regional service districts develop strategic plans that reflect the principles of age-friendly communities, in particular planning considerations in regards to zoning and development. The *Summit for Healthy Aging and Care* in November 2013 helped to envision what quality of life for seniors in New Brunswick should look like. It demonstrated the need for a model of shared responsibility for senior care and set the stage for the development of a provincial community collaborative through which we will all work together to improve senior care and the aging experience in New Brunswick. Also, during the province-wide citizen engagement tour completed in June 2013 by the Minister of Healthy and Inclusive Communities, seniors expressed their desire to be able to remain in their communities and provided input on how to make New Brunswick age-friendly. The Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities will develop an approach to encourage age-friendly communities across New Brunswick. Based on the criteria developed by the World Health Organization, this initiative will involve working in collaboration with municipal governments to encourage and support communities in becoming age-friendly.

Develop a province-wide affordable housing plan for seniors

Seniors want to age at home for as long as possible. They need access to safe and affordable housing so they can continue to enjoy a high quality of life in their own homes and communities. The housing strategy for New Brunswick recognizes that seniors need supports to remain independent in their own homes and communities. This strategy has helped to successfully provide necessary housing supports for seniors. The Department of Social



Development understands that along with a provincial housing strategy, there is a need to focus specifically on seniors housing. Social Development will develop a five-year plan to expand affordable housing options for seniors in New Brunswick.

Improve access to home-based medical equipment

Access to necessary medical equipment is essential to helping seniors maintain independence; remain at home and to return from the hospital to home. The departments of Health and Social Development will be working together to ensure seniors are provided with timely and appropriate access to necessary medical equipment.

Collaborate on the toll-free seniors' information line

Seniors and their families have said they need more information about the programs and services available to them. On October 1, 2013, the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities launched a new toll-free information line for seniors, families and caregivers to receive information on government services and programs related to seniors. To ensure this toll-free line offers the most comprehensive information, Healthy and Inclusive Communities will continue to work with the departments of Health and Social Development to ensure that the information on provincial government programs and services for seniors is up-to-date. This will help seniors navigate the system and easily find the information they need.

Explore the role of paramedics in delivering community-based care

Paramedics respond to seniors' needs in the community. The Department of Health, in partnership with Ambulance New Brunswick, the regional health authorities and other key stakeholders will explore ways in which the skills and knowledge of paramedics can be used to help seniors remain in their homes and communities.

Renew the Senior Goodwill Ambassador Program

Seniors who volunteer in their communities make valuable contributions to society. The Senior Goodwill Ambassador Program has been renewed with the goal of promoting well-being among seniors. Twenty-seven volunteer seniors were appointed in the fall of 2013 to promote healthy active living among their peers and other citizens by sharing information on how to age well. Volunteers are encouraged to work with Regional Wellness Consultants and the Active Communities Consultants from the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities and to join their local wellness network. Having seniors engaged in their communities through this program has the benefit of addressing social isolation, which is a major concern for our aging population. This program offers seniors the opportunity to share their knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for living well with fellow New Brunswickers.

Appropriate Supports and Care



Appropriate supports and care will be provided in a person-centred manner by both formal and informal caregivers who are supported to meet the needs of seniors.

Theme: Better specialized care options

Home First will broaden and improve the range of specialized care services for seniors who have significant health care needs, with a focus on managing chronic disease, providing rehabilitation and reablement services, and delivering effective health and social care services.

Initiatives

Enhance rapid rehabilitation and reablement services for seniors

When seniors have timely access to community-based rehabilitation services they can recover from illness and injury and return home faster following a hospital stay. Once they have recovered, intensive reablement services can help a senior regain the skills, confidence and independence needed to enjoy a high quality of life. The Department of Health will partner with the regional health authorities, Social Development and other key stakeholders to deliver enhanced rehabilitation and reablement services for seniors. The Extra-Mural Program and home support services will be enhanced to support rehabilitation and reablement in the home.

For those who cannot stay at home, more options for care need to be developed in the community. An impact study on the special care home sector will be undertaken to identify expanded and alternate models of service provision for these facilities. The study will result in some facilities being equipped to provide a higher level of individualized care than is currently being offered. The special care home environments and support services will be tailored to the populations served.

The study will look at expanding the scope of special care homes to include services such as rehabilitation and reablement, convalescence, relief care and expanded case management functions. This enhanced service will promote quality of life by enabling faster recovery and minimizing disability. It will also prevent unnecessary hospital admissions, emergency department visits, and premature admission to residential care. The study will also address the issue of vacant special care home beds throughout the province.

Develop a neighbourhood-based model of home support services

Enhanced home support services are essential to the success of *Home First*. The Department of Social Development will make changes to how home support services are delivered to ensure the system is more efficient for both seniors and home support workers. A new neighbourhood model of home support services will have a sole agency providing service in a particular neighbourhood, with one home support worker serving more than one senior. For this initiative, neighbourhoods are defined as geographic neighbourhoods or congregate living arrangements, such as a seniors' building. This will provide more coordinated care services for seniors and reduce travel for workers.

Enhance the Extra-Mural Program home-based stroke care

Many stroke survivors and their families require home-based rehabilitation to meet their ongoing post-stroke physical, psychological and social health needs. Their caregivers also need education and support to assist them in their role as a caregiver. The Extra-Mural Program will work with its partners to provide services and support community re-integration for seniors who have experienced a stroke. Stroke survivors will have access to integrated health and social services in their homes so they can leave the hospital sooner, recover faster and re-integrate back into their communities.

Enhance the Extra-Mural Program home-based geriatric assessment and management service

The Extra-Mural Program will conduct a demonstration project of a home-based geriatric assessment and management service. The program's interdisciplinary team will work with family physicians, geriatricians, social workers, pharmacists and mental health workers to provide timely assessment, care and services to frail seniors in the familiar environment of

their homes. These seniors will receive timely diagnosis and treatment of conditions, as well as help to coordinate the community services and supports necessary to help prevent hospitalization and admission to residential care.

Develop community-based dementia care

With the increasing number of seniors being diagnosed with dementia and Alzheimer's disease, it is essential that these seniors and their families feel supported in managing the disease and maintaining quality of life.





Dementia and Alzheimer’s disease can be successfully managed in the community when the appropriate supports are in place. More families are asking for dementia care services, including information and supports, to be accessible in their communities so they can continue to provide care to their loved ones at home. The Department of Social Development will collaborate with community partners such as geriatricians, allied health professionals, the Alzheimer’s Society and service providers to deliver essential dementia care services in the community. This will include providing early intervention services such as **First Link®**, which connects individuals and families affected by Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia with resources and support as soon as they receive a diagnosis.

Develop a provincial palliative care strategy

Many individuals wish to receive palliative care services at home or in settings other than a hospital. A palliative care strategy, developed by the Department of Health, will focus on delivering services in the community and helping all New Brunswickers, including seniors, plan for end-of-life care. It will also provide health professionals and other caregivers with the knowledge and support they need to provide effective palliative care services.

Roll-out the drug information system

A new drug information system that collects information about medication dispensed to individuals from community pharmacies will be accessible to authorized health professionals. This system will support drug safety for all New Brunswickers, including seniors in the community, by ensuring health professionals have accurate information about an individual’s medications, and support coordinated care among health care professionals across acute care facilities, community settings and in emergency situations.

Implement family health teams

As part of the *Primary Health Care Framework*, the Department of Health is currently implementing family health teams throughout the province. These teams are being implemented based on community needs, including seniors' needs, as identified in the ongoing community health needs assessments being conducted across the province. Family health teams include physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses and a broad range of other interdisciplinary healthcare providers. The teams work together to provide comprehensive, accessible and coordinated family health services to a defined patient population. Family health teams improve continuity and comprehensiveness of care for patients by coordinating their care and helping them navigate the system.

Establish a community-based allied health professional team

A community-based team of allied health professionals will support family health teams and provide therapeutic and rehabilitative support to seniors in order to maintain health and independence. In conjunction with family health teams, a community-based allied health professional team will provide therapeutic and rehabilitative services in multiple settings including health clinics, community centres and other settings in the community. The allied health professionals will provide primary health care services and link patients to other aspects of the health care system such as the Extra-Mural Program, public health, mental health and addictions and other community-based programs and services.

Theme: Supports for caregivers

Home First will improve supports for both informal and formal caregivers, so they can provide optimal care to seniors in the home setting.

Initiatives

Enhance supports for caregivers

Family and other caregivers are essential to caring for seniors. In many cases, these caregivers are the reason many seniors are able to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Evidence shows that family caregivers are often invisible and vulnerable, and must be supported physically, emotionally and financially. Decreasing caregiver strain can prevent early admissions to residential facilities and prevent the caregiver from using the health care system themselves. Caregivers will be supported through the creation of incentives and recognition programs for those providing care to seniors at home.

Develop and implement a human service model for senior care workers

Senior care workers are instrumental in supporting and caring for seniors. In order to provide quality services, senior care workers must have the knowledge and competencies necessary to care for our seniors.

The Department of Social Development will support the improvement of training programs to increase the skill levels of senior care workers in both homes and residential facilities. The training will include how to best serve seniors with high care needs and will be based on the philosophy of providing flexible person-centred support.

Social Development will also assist in the completion of a Joint Human Services Review with all the sectors who have senior care workers. This will establish standards for job competencies, training and curriculum, and career progression across the long-term care continuum. This will improve recruitment and retention of an appropriately skilled workforce to care for seniors.

Theme: Technology enabled home-based care

Home First will ensure effective use of technology to improve access to services, enhance the care experience and provide reassurance to seniors and their caregivers.

Initiatives

Develop an electronic health records system for the Extra-Mural Program

The Extra-Mural Program will implement an integrated electronic health record that will replace the current paper-based system. The system will be linked to the *One Patient One Record* initiative through the Department of Health and provide the Extra-Mural Program team with up-to-date information when visiting seniors in their homes. It will enhance appropriate and timely communication with professionals such as physicians, helping to achieve better health outcomes for individuals and helping seniors to better self-manage their health conditions.

Expand the Extra-Mural Program Telehomecare Service

Individuals who have access to health support information are able to better manage their chronic health conditions and avoid unnecessary trips to their doctor's office or hospital. The Extra-Mural Program will expand the Telehomecare service throughout the province. Seniors with chronic breathing problems or heart conditions will have access to in-home monitoring of their health conditions. They will be given the education and support needed to help them manage independently and avoid emergency room visits and hospitalization.

Expand the use of CareLink

CareLink is a remote monitoring technology that enables family caregivers to monitor their loved ones using in-home wireless sensors, such as bed or door sensors and/or cameras that allow for real time monitoring and communication between seniors and their family. Those who have used *CareLink* have been very pleased with the technology, giving them peace of mind that their loved ones are safe, even when they are at a distance. The Department of Social Development will work to raise awareness of the *CareLink* system among seniors and their families and provide support to help family members develop comfort in using the technology.

Pillar 3

Responsive, Integrated and Sustainable System



A responsive, integrated and sustainable system contains a continuum of care that is accessible for seniors, bridges the gap between health and social services and has a central philosophy of rehabilitation and reablement.

Theme: Coordinated case management and care navigation

Home First will focus on integrating care services to provide easy access and seamless delivery of both health and social care services.

Initiatives

Design a model for integrated health and social services

Broadening the range of care and support services available to seniors in the community will help to meet varying needs, allowing more seniors to maintain health and independence. Based on successful implementation in other provinces and countries, the departments of Health and Social Development, along with the regional health authorities, will work together to develop an alternate model of senior care that will fill a gap between home-based care and residential care. This model will integrate services to help seniors access primary health care, wellness and social services close to their home. The model will be informed by other successful models, but will be based specifically on the needs of New Brunswickers. It will be designed to support ongoing independence by offering daily access to health care, personal support and respite services in a single environment, such as a clinic or community centre. This service will be available to seniors requiring varying levels of care, giving them the option to remain at home.

Improve integration of health and social services

Seniors have expressed a desire for integrated services that allow them to access the care and support they need as quickly and as easily as possible. An efficient

and sustainable service delivery model integrating primary, acute and long-term care will be designed to produce a more seamless continuum of care for seniors. This initiative will identify the steps a senior must go through to access services from the various government departments and develop an action plan to support seniors in navigating the various health and social services. An example of the kind of steps that will be taken to integrate services includes developing a single care plan for health and long-term care services. This will help to better manage chronic conditions, and reduce unnecessary trips to the emergency department and admissions to the hospital. It will also ensure that placement in residential facilities is only considered after all other home-based options have been exhausted.

Improve the hospital discharge process

New Brunswick has one of the highest rates of patients in hospital beds who no longer need hospital care, and who would benefit from being in a more appropriate care setting. The Department of Health will work with the regional health authorities and Social Development to identify solutions that will optimize discharge planning and reduce the length of stay for patients who need an alternate level of care.

Improve the process for long-term care assessment

Seniors who need long-term care services have said that the process can be confusing and want an easier way to access services. In collaboration with the Department of Health and the regional health authorities, the Department of Social Development will review the process for long-term care services to look for ways to make it easier for seniors to be assessed for services. This will ensure seniors have timely and appropriate access to long-term care services and will include the establishment of evidence-based wait time targets and monitoring across the province. Goals of this project include increasing the number of referrals and assessments conducted in the community, increasing consistency in assessment practices, and strengthening the partnership between Social Development, the Extra Mural Program and Mental Health.

Expand the Quick Response Home Care program to the community

The Extra-Mural Program will expand the Quick Response Home Care program, currently provided in five hospital emergency departments, to serve seniors in their own homes. The program prevents hospitalization and emergency department visits by enabling appropriate home and community-based supports and care for seniors. Providing this service in seniors' homes will enable the Extra-Mural Program to help seniors before they feel their only option is to go to the hospital emergency department.

Enable paramedics to refer seniors to the Extra Mural Program

Paramedics are often a point of first contact with the health care system when a senior has a health crisis. They frequently see seniors who would benefit from Extra-Mural Program services that can help avoid trips to the hospital or doctor's office. Paramedics will be able to refer seniors to the Extra-Mural Program for help before their health-related conditions require more intensive intervention.



Strengthen leadership for the Extra-Mural Program

A medical officer will be selected for the Extra-Mural Program. Medical expertise and support will help enhance access to safe, integrated care services for seniors in their homes. The medical officer will promote appropriate and timely referrals to the Extra-Mural Program, encourage physicians to make home visits and promote the philosophy of *Home First*.

Modernize the nursing home system

While the majority of seniors will be able to age at home, others will need to be cared for in a nursing home. It is essential that these individuals receive the highest quality of care and continue to maintain a good quality of life. Over the past decade the nursing home sector has been transforming itself to meet the changing needs of residents. In many cases, nursing homes are becoming community hubs for a variety of services focused on healthy aging and care.

Social Development will support the nursing home sector in its transformation efforts. Tools identified by the sector as essential for a successful transformation will be provided to all nursing homes, including iTacit software to assist in the recruitment and management of nursing home human resources. This software will also provide a platform to support professional development and ongoing training of employees, thereby assuring a competent and trained workforce to provide high quality resident care. In addition, all nursing homes

will be provided with a computerized clinical tool to enhance the assessment of individuals, generating data for developing resident care plans and providing quality, comprehensive data for province-wide benchmarking, policy development and risk management. The approach to funding nursing homes will be modernized to better reflect the complexities of nursing home operations and to support the sector as they move forward to implement a broad range of operational efficiencies and best practices. The responsibility to modernize the nursing home sector will continue to be shared by the sector and government.

Theme: Accountability and performance management

Home First will ensure seniors receive high quality care and support by developing policy and legislation that supports the *Home First* vision and through ongoing monitoring of the *Home First* initiatives.

Initiatives

Develop new legislation for the long-term care continuum

Government recognizes the need to strengthen its legislation around ensuring quality of care and protection for New Brunswick seniors across the continuum of care. The Department of Social Development will update the current legislation, accompanied by an appropriate regulatory framework, to support a new long-term care system in New Brunswick. These changes will ensure that all seniors receive quality of care that is appropriate to their needs, both at home and in residential settings.

Implement a Home First accountability framework

Home First will mean significant transformation to health care, social support and long-term care services for seniors. Implementation will require collaboration between government departments and community partners. Such change requires ongoing monitoring to ensure success and to manage shared responsibility. A joint accountability framework for the implementation of *Home First* will be established between the departments of Social Development, Health, and Healthy and Inclusive Communities, and the Horizon and Vitalité health networks. This will align performance measurement, financial incentives for change and provide consistent support for project implementation.

Develop a Seniors' Charter

Government is committed to ensuring that seniors are valued for the contribution they make to society. To help achieve this, the Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities will work with stakeholders and partner departments to develop a declaration that will outline New Brunswick's commitment to seniors. The declaration will include the principles that seniors should be treated with respect and dignity, be safe in their homes and communities, should be able to stay engaged as contributing members of their communities, and should have access to supports to help them remain independent to the greatest extent possible.

Conclusion

Seniors want to remain in their own homes. The initiatives outlined in this strategy are ambitious and challenge all New Brunswickers to make *Home First* a success. We must all be committed to these initiatives if our vision of enabling seniors to live in their homes for as long as possible is to be realized. This strategy will promote wellness and healthy active aging to help seniors make choices to improve their own well-being and quality of life, and will promote age-friendly communities to help seniors remain healthy and independent for as long as they can. It will also provide improved home and community-based supports, and faster access and better integration across the health and social care systems. This will help seniors to live in their own homes, in their own communities and remain independent for as long as possible.

