

Community Services, Seniors and Labour

2011-2012 Budget Highlights

- An increase of \$750,000 to Social Assistance benefits to end including the National Child Benefit as an income source for purposes of determining program eligibility. As a result, 800 families including 1,600 children will receive increased Social Assistance benefits.
- \$2.2 million in Housing grants for the construction of 56 new affordable housing units across the province.
- An increase to Community Care Facility per diem rates from \$63.65 to \$65.56 to support 540 community care clients in 36 licensed facilities across PEI. This represents an investment of \$350,000 for 2011-2012.
- An increase of \$819,000 to meet increased utilization for the Disability Support Program. Currently there are over 1,200 clients receiving Disability Support Program benefits.

The Department of Community Services, Seniors and Labour issues approximately 5,500 cheques each month through the Social Assistance and Disability Support Program. A direct deposit option is being implemented to ensure secure and timely delivery of payment.

There are approximately 3,700 cases receiving social assistance benefits in Prince Edward Island, representing some 5,700 Islanders.

The department provides 476 family housing units and 1,152 seniors housing units across Prince Edward Island through nine housing authorities.

Prince Edward Island has the third largest population of seniors in Canada. They represent 15.1 per cent of all Islanders.

Last year, the Child Care Subsidy program provided 1,400 low-middle income families with 2,100 children with the cost of licensed child care.

Major Accomplishments – 2007-2011

Since 2007, an additional \$5.0 million has been invested in the social assistance program to increase the benefit level for food, shelter and community care per diems. In the last four years the per diem rates in the program have increased by 34 percent, representing an investment of \$2.5 million.

Effective April 1, 2011, the Social Assistance Program will cease calculating the National Child Benefit as an income source for the purposes of determining eligibility for social assistance benefits. This represents a \$750,000 investment into approximately 800 families and benefits 1,600 children.

Since 2007, spending in the Disability Support Program has increased by 35 percent or by \$2.8 million.

In 2009, the provincial government became a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Enhancements are being made to the child care subsidy program as part of the Preschool Excellence Initiative. Effective September 1, 2011, \$300,000 will be reinvested in the program to increase the per diem by 10 percent and the income thresholds by \$2000.

A new 34-unit seniors housing building is being constructed in Summerside at a cost of \$4.0 million. This is the first time in over 20 years that a government has constructed a new building for seniors.

During the past four years, the department has added approximately 130 new units to the existing affordable housing stock and has made significant progress in renovations.

In 2010, government invested \$2.5 million in a new child and youth centre in Tracadie for young people who are under the protection of the Director of Child Protection.

In 2008, a review of the Child Protection Act was carried out, leading to the modernization of the act and enhancements to services.

The second edition of Women in Prince Edward Island: A Statistical Review was released in October, 2010. As with the first edition, this review is intended to provide a profile of women's participation in education, business, government, and other aspects of community life.

Minimum wage increases have been implemented through six stages since 2008, and two more are planned in 2011. The minimum wage increased from \$7.50 to \$9.60 as of October 1, 2011, a 28 percent increase since 2008.

Established the Disability Action Council, a group of 19 members from advocacy groups, service organizations, government departments, businesses and community members. The Disability Action Council has identified eleven recommendations as having been addressed with significant progress made.