



Fiscal Year 2023-24  
**Quality and  
Sustainability Plan**



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## Message from the Interim President and CEO



Nova Scotia Health is working to create the healthcare system that our patients and families deserve. Our *2023-24 Quality and Sustainability Plan* is the priority roadmap that will guide us. The priorities outlined in this plan align with [Action for Health](#), government's improvement plan for health care.

Our priority initiatives are foundational to creating the changes we need in our health system – to provide the care that Nova Scotians can count on.

Our team of more than 30,000 employees, physicians, volunteers, researchers and learners remain committed to our mission of striving for excellence in health, healing and learning and their hard work is reflected in this report. Please join me in recognizing our frontline employees and thanking them for going above and beyond every day.

We are advancing the following priorities in 2023-24:

- Patient access and flow
- Digital solutions
- Equity and engagement
- Health services and models of care
- Infrastructure
- System health human resources
- Emergency health services

With these priorities at the forefront, we are committed to striving towards improving the overall Nova Scotia Health experience for our patients, employees and physicians.

Much of this work is already underway and will continue to gain momentum as we move closer to our vision of healthy people, healthy communities – for generations.

**Karen Oldfield**  
Interim President and CEO

## Action for Health

*Action for Health* is the provincial government's strategic plan to improve the health care system in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia Health's priorities are closely aligned with Action for Health ensuring we are all working towards the same thing—a better health care system for Nova Scotians.

### Our Solutions for Healthcare

We are advancing six core solutions, each with its own objective for creating an efficient, modern, equitable, and respectful health ecosystem. The work, actions, and investments generated by these solutions will make an impact in the short and the long term.

- Solution One: Become a magnet for health providers
- Solution Two: Provide the care Nova Scotians need and deserve
- Solution Three: Cultivate excellence on the frontlines
- Solution Four: Build in accountability at every level
- Solution Five: Be responsive and resilient
- Solution Six: Address the factors affecting health and well-being

<https://novascotia.ca/actionforhealth/>

## Our Mandate

Health care in Nova Scotia is the collective responsibility of Nova Scotia Health, the Izaak Walton Killam Health Centre (IWK Health) and the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW). These partners work with a number of government and community-based organizations and service providers to address prevention of disease and injury, promotion of health and wellness and delivery of health services, including emergency care, primary healthcare, mental health and addictions, acute care, continuing care and end of life care.

The *Health Authorities Act* establishes the roles and responsibilities for DHW and Nova Scotia Health.

**DHW** is responsible for:

- **Providing leadership by setting strategic policy direction, priorities and standards for the health system.**
- **Ensuring appropriate access to quality care through the establishment of public funding for health services that are of high value to the population.**
- **Ensuring accountability for funding and for the measuring and monitoring of health-system performance.**



**Nova Scotia Health** is responsible for:

- **Governing, managing and delivering health services across the province.**
- **Implementing the strategic direction set by DHW.**
- **Engaging with the communities we serve.**

Nova Scotia Health is the largest health organization in Atlantic Canada — and the largest employer in Nova Scotia. We serve a population of more than one million Nova Scotians and provide a wide array of specialized services to other Atlantic Canadians, within our \$3 billion budget. Nova Scotia Health operates from one specialty hospital, the QEII Health Sciences Centre, nine regional hospitals, and more than 30 community hospitals and health centres. Our team includes employees, physicians, researchers, learners and volunteers. We work in partnership with community groups, schools, governments, foundations and auxiliaries, and community health boards.

Within the organization, there are about:

- **24,800 employees**
- **6,000 volunteers**
- **6,500 learners**
- **2,960 physicians and 550 medical residents**
- **37 community health boards**
- **41 hospital foundations and 33 auxiliaries**  
*(Fiscal 2022-23)*

# Our 2023-24 Quality and Sustainability Plan Priorities

Nova Scotia Health, along with the IWK and Tajikeyimik, deliver health services and quality care to Nova Scotians every day – from birth to end of life, in the community and hospitals and health centres, all around the province.

This work is done in collaboration with health system partners: the Departments of Health and Wellness, Seniors and Long-term Care, the Offices of Addictions and Mental Health and Healthcare Professionals Recruitment, and Emergency Health Services.

Our health system partners have come together to identify health transformation priority initiatives, that will help advance the province's **Action for Health** plan. These initiatives strengthen the health care system that connects Nova Scotians with the right care, from the right provider, in the right place, at that right time.

## A. Access and Flow

### Acute Care Priorities

The healthcare system is complex and continues to experience high demand for services. To create additional capacity and improve access, we must advance our work on flow and transition of care within our communities and facilities.

We are investing in our system to:

- **Enhance care in communities to reduce the demand for hospital services.**
- **Optimize the patient journey through the hospital setting; recognizing that hospital systems are ecosystems of interconnected departments and services.**

- **Support a home-first approach for patients, recognizing recovery at home is better for many Nova Scotians.**



### Care Coordination Centre (C3)

Improving patient experience, optimal flow through and access to Nova Scotia's health care system requires a coordinated approach. We will continue to build upon this approach by using real-time data and with expert decision-making ability in the Care Coordination Centre (C3). This centre will become the key information source and act as the central coordination and navigation tool for Nova Scotia Health's acute care system.

C3 is improving how we coordinate the movement of patients throughout their healthcare journey. Investing in C3 is translating into:

- **Improved patient access and flow.**
- **Efficient bed management and discharge planning.**
- **Better scheduling of staff.**
- **More collaboration between health zones across the province.**

## Surgical Access and Quality Improvement

We recognize that many Nova Scotians are impacted by wait times for surgery. Moving forward, we will continue to improve these wait times— improving patients access to timely, equitable and high-quality perioperative care by:

- **Investing to complete additional surgeries.**
- **Investing in local initiatives to improve surgical access and identifying new ways to increase capacity.**
- **Developing future focused surgical and health human resources strategies.**

- **Launching electronic referrals to better manage and coordinate access to surgical care and diagnostic imaging services, distribute demand across the system and support timely access to care.**
- **EReferrals support complete and appropriate referrals, help prevent lost or misdirected referrals and delays, and improve communication with patients and providers.**



## B. Digital Solutions

### Digital Health Strategy

Nova Scotia Health along with system partners will continue to leverage and invest in technology to advance work across the system. We will define the critical role to support and enable continued innovation in health through technology. By building on the existing work, we will advance virtual care options both in community and in healthcare facilities, with a focus on improving access for Nova Scotians.

An integrated digital health strategy will be our roadmap to advance this work. The strategy will enable us to develop a multi-year digital solutions investment roadmap. It will serve as a cornerstone for digitization initiatives, such as:

- **One Person One Record (OPOR)**
- **Care Coordination Centre (C3)**
- **Expanding virtual care**
- **Introducing a patient portal access point to support Nova Scotians as they navigate the health system.**

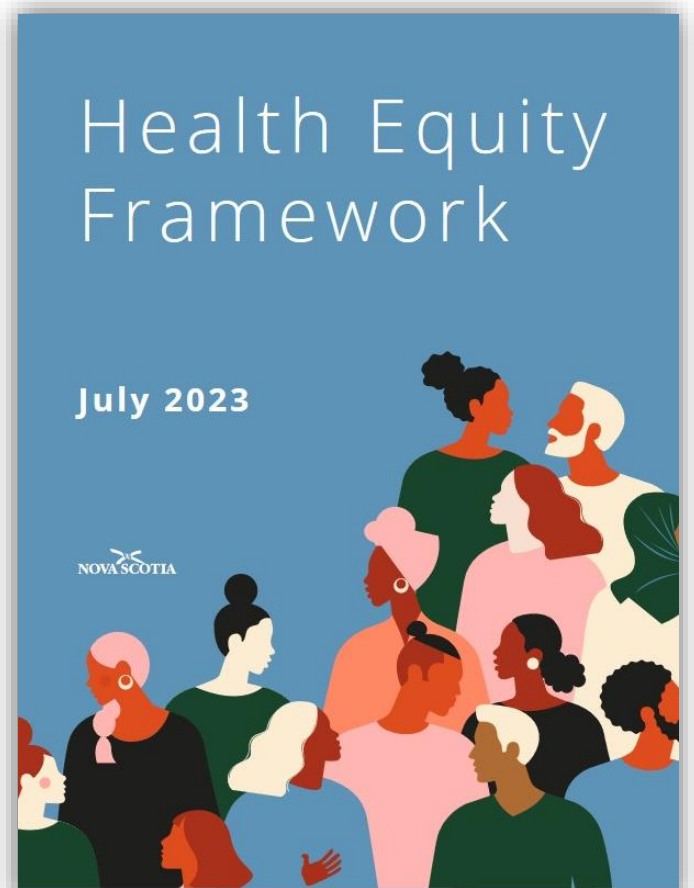
## C. Equity and Engagement

### Health Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Nova Scotia's healthcare system strives to be more equitable, diverse and inclusive, representing all the communities we serve. By engaging with the people who make up our province, we can learn from community voices, partnerships and lived experiences to help shape our future.

While applying the equity lens to education, policy, talent and leadership development, we will continue to build on existing strategies to:

- Create system-level guiding principles and frameworks to advance health equity in Nova Scotia.
- Establish performance benchmarks and indicators, improved data collection and other evidence-based approaches that support a more accountable system.
- Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health's 2023–26 Accessibility Plan is complete. The plan will guide our thinking and actions to remove barriers for those with disabilities working, learning or volunteering within our organizations.





## D. Health Services and Models of Care

### Cancer Care

The Cancer Care Program is committed to providing patients with the right care, in the right place, by the right provider, at the right time. The goal is to provide patients with care as close to where they live as is safely possible. The Oncology Transformation Project is a collaborative project with cancer care, industry and government. The goal is to build a single, seamless provincial oncology (clinical) information system, to enable the highest quality patient care and meet Cancer Care Program needs. When implemented, the solution will provide single-entry referral, triaging and scheduling of patients and real-time communications within and between all Cancer Care Program specialties and sites.

### Continuing Care

Continuing Care clients' health needs vary from client-to-client. Nova Scotia Health continues to work with health system partners to ensure that these clients receive timely and quality services that meet their unique needs at home, in their community or in long-term care. Building on the work underway, investment will support:

- **Expanding supports to help seniors live in their homes longer.**
- **Training and hiring more staff.**
- **Supporting staff who work in continuing care.**

### Primary Health Care

Primary health care is the foundation of the health system and, through working with others, we will continue to enhance access and attachment to comprehensive team-based primary health care. We will strengthen our foundation by making investments to:

- **Support people and communities to live well and manage their chronic conditions.**
- **Ensure enablers are in place to support a modernized primary health care system, including supporting our team.**
- **Create or strengthen 60 clinics that will connect more Nova Scotians to primary care they can count on, including through collaborative family practice teams, primary care clinics, after-hours clinics, urgent care centres and urgent treatment centres**
- **Provide more, faster access to care for patients who previously would have to use an emergency department or wait to see a healthcare professional at an existing location.**

### Public Health Renewal

With the goal of improving Nova Scotians overall health and wellbeing, we need to ensure the health status of the population is equitable. This will help reduce the demand on the primary and acute care health systems. It is key to long-term improvement of our province's health status. To achieve this work, public health will:

- **Build a public health system that is structured and resourced to meet the needs of all Nova Scotians.**
- **Apply an equity approach to all aspects of public health work.**

## Universal Mental Health Care and Addictions

Nova Scotia strives to become one of the most progressive mental health and addictions system in Canada as it works to offer universal mental health and addictions support. This system will enable patients to have access to equitable and accountable mental health care and addictions support, including:

- **A needs-based planning model to understand Nova Scotia's mental health and addictions needs and offer services to meet the needs of the population along the continuum of severity.**
- **Investing in our people with mental health and addictions Health Human Resource strategy.**
- **Invest in various pilot initiatives and launching of core services to fill in gaps.**



## E. Infrastructure

### Infrastructure Strategy and Priority Projects

Nova Scotian's healthcare needs are changing, and infrastructure is aging. We are adapting to meet these needs through capital infrastructure planning including enabling technology. As we continue to plan for and strengthen our infrastructure, we are investing in:

- **A modern infrastructure to support the health system for generations to come, including projects like the QEII New Generation Project, Cape Breton Health Care Redevelopment, South Shore Regional Hospital Redevelopment, North Cumberland Regional Hospital Redevelopment and others.**

- **The Nova Scotia Health Innovation Hub is a space for people in healthcare to collaborate on providing better healthcare. The space allows partnerships with health-care staff, researchers, industry innovators and government to address the challenges that exist in Nova Scotia's health system.**
- **An improved experience for patients, staff and families.**



## E. System Health Human Resources

### System Workforce

Our people are our greatest asset which is why we continue to recruit and retain the talented workforce that make up Nova Scotia Health. With a steadily growing population and an increasing shortage of health workers, there is a great need for a coordinated effort to bolster Nova Scotia's health workforce.

We need to invest to ensure that we have the necessary workforce to meet both immediate and future population needs. This will be done using the following approach:

- **Moving to an integrated, systematic approach and plan for health human resources.**
- **Streamlining and standardizing processes for recruitment and retention—both nationally and internationally.**
- **Investing in a wellness strategy for our people.**



## F. Emergency Health Services

### Emergency Care

Nova Scotia Health along with Emergency Health Services and the Department of Health and Wellness are investing in strategies and initiatives to ensure people with the most urgent needs receive care sooner, improve ambulance response times, and provide more places for people to receive care—reducing pressure on emergency departments.

Through the *Improving Emergency Care* plan, our investments will support:

- **Flow Lead and Offload Assessment Teams (FLOAT)**
- **Waiting Room Care Providers, Patient Advocates, Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners in Emergency Departments**
- **New, additional options for accessing care that's right for Nova Scotians including, expanded pharmacy services, virtual care, urgent treatment centre, mobile clinics and digital front door**

## Our Financial Strategy

### 2023-24 Financial Plan

Our 2023-24 financial plan is an extension of our strategic and priority plans and includes multi-year goals, milestones and financial responsibility. A summary can be seen below.

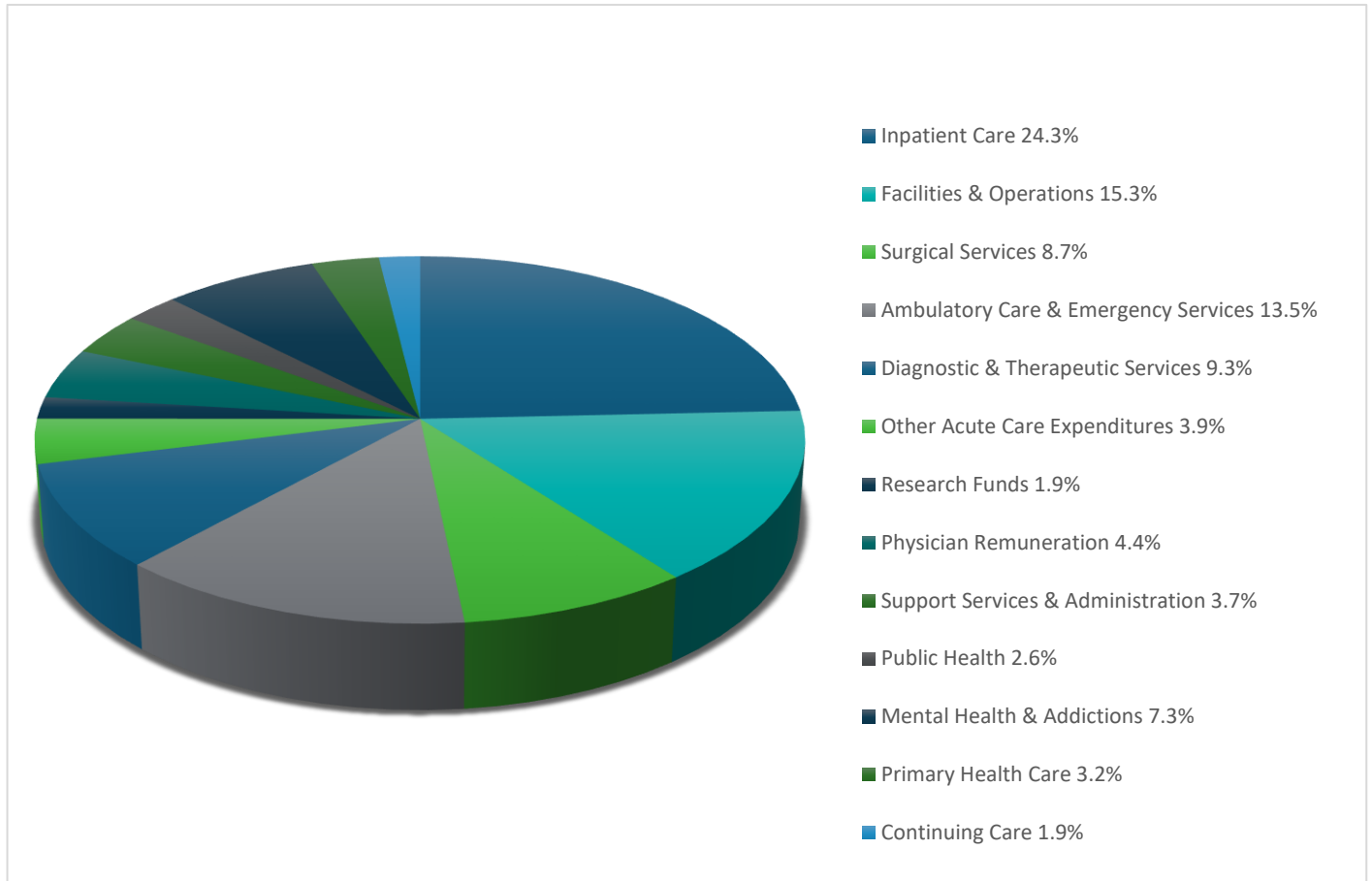
	2023-24
<b>REVENUE</b>	\$
Regular Operating Revenue	2,754,561,000
Funding for Utilization, Contractual and Statutory Increases	68,717,000
Funding for Strategic Priorities:	
Covid response	40,338,000
OPOR	31,910,000
Redevelopment	39,389,000
Action for Health	182,660,000
Other strategic initiatives	8,904,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	3,126,479,000
<b>EXPENSES</b>	\$
Wages and Benefits	2,144,871,000
Medical, Clinical and Surgical Supplies	208,566,000
Drugs	165,110,000
Buildings and Grounds	103,509,000
Equipment Leases and Maintenance	63,632,000
Food Services, Housekeeping, Laundry and Contracted Services	195,527,000
Other Expenses	245,264,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	3,126,479,000
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	-

## Nova Scotia Health's 2023-24 Operating Budget Allocation

	<b>2022-23 Actual Expenses</b>	<b>2023-24 Budget</b>
	\$	\$
<b>Inpatient Care</b>	733,041,000	741,590,000
<b>Facilities &amp; Operations</b>	424,283,000	467,797,000
<b>Surgical Services</b>	234,584,000	267,168,000
<b>Ambulatory Care &amp; Emergency Services</b>	373,164,000	411,093,000
<b>Diagnostic &amp; Therapeutic Services</b>	315,165,000	282,966,000
<b>Other Acute Care Expenditures</b>	88,239,000	120,197,000
<b>Research Funds</b>	70,596,000	58,522,000
<b>Physician Remuneration*</b>	138,387,000	135,594,000
<b>Support Services &amp; Administration</b>	101,105,000	113,190,000
<b>Public Health</b>	62,446,000	77,979,000
<b>Mental Health &amp; Addictions</b>	203,239,000	222,428,000
<b>Primary Health Care</b>	65,282,000	96,422,000
<b>Continuing Care</b>	77,984,000	58,785,000
<b>Retention Bonuses, Incentives for Nurses, Healthcare Workers</b>	132,617,000	72,748,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,020,132,000</b>	<b>3,126,479,000</b>

\*Excludes direct physician compensation which is not included in NSHA's budget allocation and is funded through a direct relationship between the Department of Health & Wellness and the province's physicians.

## 2023-24 Planned Spending by Program Area



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