



Standing Committee on Community Services

Annual Report

2025

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Halifax

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Honourable Danielle Barkhouse
Speaker
House of Assembly
Province House
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Community Services, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Committee for the period from February to June 2025 of the Sixty-Fifth General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek, MLA for Lunenburg
Chair
Standing Committee on Community Services

Halifax, Nova Scotia
2025

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INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Community Services, an all-party Committee of the House of Assembly, was struck at the beginning of the First Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly.

Pursuant to Rule 60(2)(e) of the *Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly*:

(e) The Community Services Committee was established to consider matters related to community services, culture, heritage, human rights, municipal affairs, recreation, and sports.

MEMBERSHIP

There shall be no more than nine Members of the Legislative Assembly appointed to this committee. The current membership of the Standing Committee on Community Services is as follows:

Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek, MLA, Chair
Lunenburg

Suzy Hansen, MLA
Halifax Needham

Brad McGowan, MLA, Vice Chair
Cole Harbour-Dartmouth

Lina Hamid, MLA
Fairview-Clayton Park

Damian Stoilov, MLA
Bedford South

Hon. Iain Rankin MLA
Timberlea-Prospect

Dianne Timmins, MLA
Victoria-The Lakes

Hon. Derek Mombourquette, MLA
Sydney-Membertou

Kyle MacQuarrie, MLA
Inverness

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

All members of the Standing Committee on Community Services were replaced after the 2024 election to determine the makeup of the 65th Legislative Assembly. There were no membership changes during this reporting period.

PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Community Services Committee traditionally meets once a month. These meetings are usually held on the first Tuesday of the month in the Committee Room, Granville Level, One Government Place. Because of renovations in the Committee Room at One Government Place, the committee held its meetings in the Legislative Chamber at Province House for the May and June meetings.

NOTICES, TRANSCRIPTS, REQUESTED INFORMATION, PRESENTATIONS AND REPORTS

NOTICES

Notices of committee meetings are sent to all committee members, caucus office staff, legislative staff, and the House of Assembly Press Gallery. The notices are also posted in Province House and on the Nova Scotia Legislature website at the following address:

[NS Legislature - Calendar](#)

TRANSCRIPTS

Transcripts of all Community Services Committee meetings are available from the Legislative Library in Province House, the Legislative Committees Office, or on the Community Services Committee web page at the following address:

[NS Legislature - Hansard Transcripts CS](#)

REQUESTED INFORMATION

When the committee requests information that is not readily available during a meeting, the witness will be asked to provide the requested information as soon as possible following the meeting. Once the requested information is received and approved by the committee, it is placed on the Community Services Committee web page and can be viewed at the following address:

[NS Legislature - Correspondence](#)

PRESENTATIONS

Witness presentations are distributed to committee members in advance of the meeting date. Presentations are placed on the Community Services Committee web page after the meeting and can be viewed at the following address:

[NS Legislature - Submissions](#)

REPORTS

All Standing Committee on Community Services reports are compiled by the Legislative Committees Office and forwarded to committee members for consideration. Upon completion of the review and approval of the report, the Chair tables the report with the Speaker of the House of Assembly or with the Clerk of the House of Assembly.

The distribution of the report is as follows:

To the Speaker and the Clerk of the House of Assembly; committee members; all witnesses who appeared before the committee; the Nova Scotia Legislative Library; the caucus offices; and the media. This report is available to the general public upon request from the Legislative Committees Office and is available on the Community Services Committee web page at the following address:

[NS Legislature - Annual Reports](#)

RESEARCH MATERIAL

The Legislative Library compiles all research for the Community Services Committee in consultation with the committee clerk. Research material is compiled in an electronic format and is distributed by the committee clerk prior to the meeting to members, staff, and witnesses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The committee wishes to extend its gratitude to all witnesses for their time and co-operation. Special appreciation is extended to the Legislative Committees Office, Hansard Reporting Services, Legislative Television and Broadcast Services, and the Nova Scotia Legislative Library.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Agenda-Setting and Organizational Meeting

February 4th, 2025

WITNESSES

There were no witnesses present for this meeting.

This was the first meeting of the newly constituted committee. The Chair provided a brief overview of the committee mandate. The committee made several decisions regarding general meeting practices.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motions:

Organizational Matters

- To have the Committee implement questioning rounds as follows: 30 PC, 20 NDP, and 10 Liberals, with the remaining time (second round) being split into two: the government gets half, and both opposition parties get the second half.
 - MLA Brad MacGowan motioned to change this practice from 20/20/20 to 30/20/10.
 - MLA Suzy Hansen and MLA Derek Mombourquette did not appreciate this sudden change. And do not believe that being given only 10 minutes for the third party is fair.
 - MLA MacGowan said this is fair because it allows everyone to speak and ask questions.
 - MLA Iain Rankin suggested that this motion may be out of order, but it was not. Committees can modify any aspect of the procedures, except for their mandates.
 - MLAs Hansen, McGowan, and Mombourquette went back and forth a few times.
 - MLA Kyle MacQuarrie pointed out that the NDP's time remains the same.
 - MLA Mombourquette moved to defer this motion and asked for a recorded vote.
 - Recorded Vote: All PC members nay, all NDP members yay, all Liberal members yay.
 - Moved by MLA Hon. Mombourquette
 - Motion to defer failed
 - MLA MacGowan restated the motion to change from 20/20/20 to 30/20/10 and split the rest of the time into two, with half going to the Government and the other half split among the opposition parties.
 - MLA Mombourquette made an amendment to keep it the way it was beforehand.

- Recorded Vote: All PC members nay, all NDP members yay, all Liberal members yay.
 - Moved by MLA Hon. Mombourquette
 - Amendment failed
- MLA Hansen made an amendment that those with the highest percentage of votes ask the most questions.
 - Moved by MLA Hansen
 - Amendment failed
- Recorded Vote on original motion: All PC members yay, all NDP members nay, all Liberal members nay.
 - Moved by MLA MacGowan
 - Motion approved

Agenda-Setting

PC:

- Topic One: MLA Damian Stoilov moved that their first topic be: Reducing Financial Barriers for Children and Families
 - Rep. Department of Opportunities and Social Development;
 - Craig Beaton, Deputy Minister
 - Tracey Embrett, Executive Director of Child and Family Wellbeing
 - Frazer Egerton, Executive Lead, Strategic Initiatives
 - Nicole Hazlehurst, Project Director
 - Moved by MLA Stoilov
 - Motion approved
- Topic Two: MLA Dianne Timmins moved that their second topic be: Expanding Cellular Infrastructure
 - Rep. Department of Public Work;
 - Rep. Build Nova Scotia;
 - Rep. Rogers Communications Canada
 - Moved by MLA Timmins
 - Motion approved
- Topic Three: MLA Kyle MacQuarrie moved that their third topic be: Supporting Healthy Families
 - Rep. Department of Opportunities and Social Development;
 - Craig Beaton, Deputy Minister

- Shelley James, Associate Deputy Minister
- Suzanne Ley, Executive Director of Employment Support and Income Assistance Program
- Maggie's Place (Family Resource Centre)
 - Sarah MacMaster, Executive Director
- Moved by MLA MacQuarrie
- Motion approved

NDP:

- Topic One: MLA Lina Hamid moved that their first topic be: Moving Toward an Epidemic-Level Response to Intimate Partner Violence
 - Rep. Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women;
 - Rep. Transition House Association of Nova Scotia;
 - Rep. Adsum for Women and Children;
 - Rep. YWCA Halifax;
 - Rep. Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia;
 - Rep. from the Department of Justice
 - Lynn Gallant Blackburn, Author;
 - MLA Rankin made a friendly amendment to add author Lynn Gallant Blackburn to the witness list that was accepted by the NDP.
 - MLA Timmins made an amendment to include a rep. from the Department of Justice.
 - Moved by MLA Timmins
 - Amendment approved
 - Moved by MLA Hamid
 - Motion approved with both amendments
- Topic Two: MLA Suzy Hansen moved that their second topic be: Support and Protection for Tenants Under the Residential Tenancies Program
 - Deputy Minister of Service Nova Scotia;
 - Rep. Dalhousie Legal Aid;
 - Rep. Nova Scotia Legal Aid's Social Justice Office;
 - Rep. Nova Scotia ACORN;
 - Moved by MLA Hansen
 - Motion approved

Liberal:

- Topic One: MLA Iain Rankin moved that their topic be: Guaranteed Basic Income (Originally: Assessing the Implementation of Guaranteed Basic Income)
 - Deputy Minister for the Department of Opportunities and Social

Development;

- Rep. Basic Income Nova Scotia Society;
 - McGowan made a friendly amendment to the title because Guaranteed Basic Income has yet to be rolled out.
 - Rankin agreed that the title should only be “Guaranteed Basic Income.”
 - Hansen and MacQuarrie made comments.
 - Moved by MLA Rankin
 - Motion approved with friendly amendment

Additional Motions

- (MLA Suzy Hansen moved) To have the committee write a letter to the Premier’s Office and members of the Executive Council to urge this government to address this emergency by taking immediate action to safely house all Nova Scotians facing homelessness by opening as many shelters and supportive housing beds as there are people sleeping outdoors. The letter should additionally urge this government to stop the flow of individuals entering into homelessness by banning winter evictions to prevent this crisis from worsening.
 - MLA MacQuarrie made a comment about motions coming in advance.
 - MLA Timmins thought she could make it a topic.
 - MLA Hansen asked for a recorded vote on the deferral of this motion.
 - Recorded Vote: All PC members yay, all NDP members nay, all Liberal members nay.
 - Moved by MLA MacQuarrie
 - Motion to defer approved

Discussion:

- The Legislative Library would like to appear before the Committee to discuss its role in Committee meeting preparation at a future meeting. A pamphlet containing an overview of its work has been distributed to members.

DOCUMENTATION

There were no requests for information.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[NS Legislature - Hansard Transcript](#)

VIDEO

[Feb. 4, 2025 - Community Services Committee Proceedings](#)

Reducing Financial Barriers for Children and Families

April 1st, 2025

WITNESSES

Department of Opportunities and Social Development

- Craig Beaton, Deputy Minister
- Frazer Egerton, Executive Lead, Strategic Initiatives
- Tracy Embrett, Executive Director, Child and Family Wellbeing
- Nicole Hazlehurst, Project Director

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Motions:

- To have the committee write a letter to the Premier's Office and members of the Executive Council to urge this government to address this emergency by taking immediate action to safely house all Nova Scotians facing homelessness by opening as many shelters and supportive housing beds as there are people sleeping outdoors. The letter should additionally urge this government to stop the flow of individuals entering into homelessness by banning winter evictions to prevent this crisis from worsening.
 - Moved by MLA Suzy Hansen
 - Motion defeated

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and received from the Department of Opportunities and Social Development:

- MLA Lina Hamid asked how many applications were received last year for childcare and how much was spent on it (Pp 7-8)
- Hon. MLA Iain Rankin asked how Nova Scotia compares to other provinces in the country regarding income assistance (Pp 8-9)
- MLA Suzy Hansen asked for the number of families considered 'homeless' that the department works with (Pp 21-23)

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[NS Legislature - Hansard Transcript](#)

VIDEO

[Apr. 1, 2025 - Community Services Committee Proceedings](#)

WITNESSES

Dalhousie Legal Aid

- Mark Culligan, Community Legal Worker

Department of Service Nova Scotia

- Gary O'Toole, Associate Deputy Minister
- Rodger Gregg, Executive Director, Business and Consumer Services
- Melissa Mosher, Director, Consumer Programs

Nova Scotia ACORN

- Heather Clark, Chair

Nova Scotia Legal Aid

- Nora MacIntosh, Staff Lawyer

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Discussion:

- The Department of Opportunities and Social Development, on behalf of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, has requested that the topic “Moving Toward an Epidemic-Level Response to Intimate Partner Violence” be scheduled for later in the year for further preparation; likely to take place in the Fall. To which the Committee agreed.

DOCUMENTATION

There were no requests for information.

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[NS Legislature - Hansard Transcript](#)

VIDEO

[May 6, 2025 - Community Services Committee Proceedings](#)

WITNESSES

Build Nova Scotia

- David Benoit, President and CEO
- Jonathan Veale, Vice President, Strategic Infrastructure and Development

Department of Emergency Management

- Matthew Boyle, Acting Executive Director, Regional Operations and Infrastructure

Department of Public Works

- Paul LaFleche, Executive Deputy Minister

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Discussion:

- A letter from Mr. Dan Harvey outlining poverty issues was provided to the Committee for its review.
- A letter from Mr. Kevin Russell, Executive Director for Rental Housing Providers Nova Scotia, expressing concern with the May 6th meeting in which the Committee discussed “Support and Protection for Tenants Under the Residential Tenancies Act” was provided for review.
- The Deputy Minister for the Department of Opportunities and Social Development, Mr. Craig Beaton, has responded to the Committee’s requests for information for its review.

All items were accepted without comment.

DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested from the Department of Emergency Management:

- MLA Lina Hamid requested information regarding the number of cell towers with backup systems, such as backup generators for more extended power outages and battery-based systems for shorter outages. (Pg. 9)

The following information was requested and received from Build Nova Scotia:

- MLA Damian Stoilov asked about the positive economic outcomes of having stable rural services. Mr. Benoit offered to provide information about the investments being made and how much they would generate for telecommunications companies. (Pg. 22)

TRANSCRIPT

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[NS Legislature - Hansard Transcript](#)

VIDEO

[June 3, 2025 - Community Services Committee Proceedings](#)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – MOTIONS

The following motions were made by the Standing Committee on Community Services in 2025:

February 4th, 2025

Organizational Matters

- To have the Committee implement questioning rounds as follows: 30 PC, 20 NDP, and 10 Liberals, with the remaining time (second round) being split into two: the government gets half, and both opposition parties get the second half.
 - MLA Brad MacGowan motioned to change this practice from 20/20/20 to 30/20/10.
 - MLA Suzy Hansen and MLA Derek Mombourquette did not appreciate this sudden change. And do not believe that being given only 10 minutes for the third party is fair.
 - MLA MacGowan said this is fair because it allows everyone to speak and ask questions.
 - MLA Iain Rankin suggested that this motion may be out of order, but it was not. Committees can modify any aspect of the procedures, except for their mandates.
 - MLAs Hansen, McGowan, and Mombourquette went back and forth a few times.
 - MLA Kyle MacQuarrie pointed out that the NDP's time remains the same.
 - MLA Mombourquette moved to defer this motion and asked for a recorded vote.
 - Recorded Vote: All PC members nay, all NDP members yay, all Liberal members yay.
 - Moved by MLA Hon. Mombourquette
 - Motion to defer failed
 - MLA MacGowan restated the motion to change from 20/20/20 to 30/20/10 and split the rest of the time into two, with half going to the Government and the other half split among the opposition parties.
 - MLA Mombourquette made an amendment to keep it the way it was beforehand.
 - Recorded Vote: All PC members nay, all NDP members yay, all Liberal members yay.
 - Moved by MLA Hon. Mombourquette
 - Amendment failed
- MLA Hansen made an amendment that those with the highest percentage of votes ask the most questions.
 - Moved by MLA Hansen

- Amendment failed
- Recorded Vote on original motion: All PC members yay, all NDP members nay, all Liberal members nay.
 - Moved by MLA MacGowan
 - Motion approved

Agenda-Setting

PC:

- Topic One: MLA Damian Stoilov moved that their first topic be: Reducing Financial Barriers for Children and Families
 - Rep. Department of Opportunities and Social Development;
 - Craig Beaton, Deputy Minister
 - Tracey Embrett, Executive Director of Child and Family Wellbeing
 - Frazer Egerton, Executive Lead, Strategic Initiatives
 - Nicole Hazlehurst, Project Director
 - Moved by MLA Stoilov
 - Motion approved
- Topic Two: MLA Dianne Timmins moved that their second topic be: Expanding Cellular Infrastructure
 - Rep. Department of Public Works;
 - Rep. Build Nova Scotia;
 - Rep. Rogers Communications Canada
 - Moved by MLA Timmins
 - Motion approved
- Topic Three: MLA Kyle MacQuarrie moved that their third topic be: Supporting Healthy Families
 - Rep. Department of Opportunities and Social Development;
 - Craig Beaton, Deputy Minister
 - Shelley James, Associate Deputy Minister
 - Suzanne Ley, Executive Director of Employment Support and Income Assistance Program
 - Maggie's Place (Family Resource Centre)
 - Sarah MacMaster, Executive Director
 - Moved by MLA MacQuarrie
 - Motion approved

NDP:

- Topic One: MLA Lina Hamid moved that their first topic be: Moving Toward an Epidemic-Level Response to Intimate Partner Violence
 - Rep. Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women;
 - Rep. Transition House Association of Nova Scotia;
 - Rep. Adsum for Women and Children;
 - Rep. YWCA Halifax;
 - Rep. Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia;
 - Rep. from the Department of Justice
 - Lynn Gallant Blackburn, Author;
 - MLA Rankin made a friendly amendment to add author Lynn Gallant Blackburn to the witness list that was accepted by the NDP
 - MLA Timmins made an amendment to include a rep. from the Department of Justice.
 - Moved by MLA Timmins
 - Amendment approved
 - Moved by MLA Hamid
 - Motion approved with both amendments
- Topic Two: MLA Suzy Hansen moved that their second topic be: Support and Protection for Tenants Under the Residential Tenancies Act
 - Deputy Minister of Service Nova Scotia;
 - Rep. Dalhousie Legal Aid;
 - Rep. Nova Scotia Legal Aid's Social Justice Office;
 - Rep. Nova Scotia ACORN;
 - Moved by MLA Hansen
 - Motion approved

Liberal:

- Topic One: MLA Iain Rankin moved that their topic be: Guaranteed Basic Income (Originally: Assessing the Implementation of Guaranteed Basic Income)
 - Deputy Minister for the Department of Opportunities and Social Development;
 - Rep. Basic Income Nova Scotia Society;
 - McGowan made a friendly amendment to the title because Guaranteed Basic Income has yet to be rolled out.
 - Rankin agreed that the title should only be "Guaranteed Basic Income."
 - Hansen and MacQuarrie made comments.
 - Moved by MLA Rankin
 - Motion approved with

friendly amendment

Additional Motions

- (MLA Suzy Hansen moved) To have the committee write a letter to the Premier's Office and members of the Executive Council to urge this government to address this emergency by taking immediate action to safely house all Nova Scotians facing homelessness by opening as many shelters and supportive housing beds as there are people sleeping outdoors. The letter should additionally urge this government to stop the flow of individuals entering into homelessness by banning winter evictions to prevent this crisis from worsening.
 - MLA MacQuarrie made a comment about motions coming in advance.
 - MLA Timmins thought she could make it a topic.
 - MLA Hansen asked for a recorded vote on the deferral of this motion.
 - Recorded Vote: All PC members yay, all NDP members nay, all Liberal members nay.
 - Moved by MLA MacQuarrie
 - Motion to defer approved

April 1st, 2025

Motions

- To have the committee write a letter to the Premier's Office and members of the Executive Council to urge this government to address this emergency by taking immediate action to safely house all Nova Scotians facing homelessness by opening as many shelters and supportive housing beds as there are people sleeping outdoors. The letter should additionally urge this government to stop the flow of individuals entering into homelessness by banning winter evictions to prevent this crisis from worsening.
 - Moved by MLA Suzy Hansen
 - Motion defeated

APPENDIX B – DOCUMENTATION

The following is a list of documents and information requested and received by the Standing Committee on Community Services throughout 2025:

April 1st, 2025

The following information was requested and received from the Department of Opportunities and Social Development:

- MLA Lina Hamid asked how many applications were received last year for childcare and how much was spent on it (Pp 7-8)
- Hon. MLA Iain Rankin asked how Nova Scotia compares to other provinces in the country regarding income assistance (Pp 8-9)
- MLA Suzy Hansen asked for the number of families considered 'homeless' that the department works with (Pp 21-23)

June 3rd, 2025

The following information was requested from the Department of Emergency Management:

- MLA Lina Hamid requested information regarding the number of cell towers with backup systems, such as backup generators for more extended power outages and battery-based systems for shorter outages. (Pg. 9)

The following information was requested and received from Build Nova Scotia:

- MLA Damian Stoilov asked about the positive economic outcomes of having stable rural services. Mr. Benoit offered to provide information about the investments being made and how much they would generate for telecommunications companies. (Pg. 22)

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