

2025 Budget Submission



NAPE

Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees

The Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Public and Private Employees represents over 30,000 workers in the public and private sectors in our province. From health care, government services, to education, and the private sector, our members are in every single community in this province. These workers need an economy that values the importance of a strong public sector, while recognizing the knock-on impact of those high-quality jobs to other sectors.

Budgets are a roadmap to a successful economy, and without workers, we know there is no economy. To better support the economic sustainability, social fabric, public sector, and the future of work in the province priorities must include:

- **Program and Service Delivery**
- **Social Measures, Affordability, and the Public Good**
- **Strengthening the Public Sector**

Our submission for consideration of the 2025 provincial budget focuses on how we can support our public sector with strong unionized jobs, how we must rebuild our healthcare, while prioritizing our social safety net and funding priorities that reflect our collective future. Our recommendations are in no way exhaustive but are higher level objectives for the policy considerations that must take precedence in any fiscal planning in the upcoming year.



Program and Service Delivery



Recruitment and Retention in Healthcare

Throughout the province NAPE members are delivering high quality public services, these jobs in turn support our economy with strong wages, benefits, and pensions. In the last few years one of the most prominent concerns from members in the public sector, especially in our healthcare professions, is the need for increased recruitment and retention.

Our members in healthcare are working longer hours and covering multiple workloads to offset the impact of vacancies. We are witnessing a major crisis as health care professionals work daily to try to overcome severe staffing shortages, without adequate supports and resources, all while there is an increase in the number of people presenting highly complex health conditions.

In healthcare, the vacancy rates are untenable with over 180 positions remaining vacant for more than two years. While there are over 500 positions that have been vacant since January of 2024. The following positions continue to have high vacancies:

- Licensed Practical Nurses: 254
- Personal Care Attendant: 145
- Primary Care and Advanced Care Paramedics: 119
- Domestic Workers: 87
- Combined LX Technologists and Medical Laboratory Technologists: 48

Of course, this list is not exhaustive and only a snapshot of some of the more pronounced vacancies. Additionally, the number of vacancies is only one factor to consider, the vacancy rate of these positions must also be closely monitored. For example, a classification may only have 10 vacancies, but a vacancy rate of 30% as there are only 33 available positions. It should be noted that both members in health services and health professionals have been vocal about the strain of vacancies on their professions.

Health care professionals are proud of the work they do, but conditions are making it extremely difficult to provide consistent quality care. They see that the current environment is being acutely felt by patients and their families, making difficult situations worse.

If we are to build a resilient, agile, and proactive system of care, we must address what is currently making health care professionals leave the workforce. We can't be asking new, young workers to join a toxic, chaotic system, and expect them to be there for the long haul.

While it's important to identify the obstacles that need to be overcome, our members are using their expertise, knowledge, and passion to find positive examples of what can work to rebuild our health care system to face the days ahead. We see this as an opportunity to provide the government and policymakers with front-line perspectives about solutions to existing problems.

We want to ensure our system can withstand the pressures of the future. To do so, we must focus primarily on retention of existing health care workers. While recruitment and training are also key issues, keeping the current health care workers is critical to avoid an endless cycle of recruitment and training, placing new workers into chaotic and untenable workplaces.

There are no simple or quick solutions to the retention and recruitment needed in the healthcare sector, however, nothing can be addressed without ensuring the funding resources are available to support healthcare. The recent Long Service Premiums, retention bonuses, and wage supplements in targeted areas were a welcome signal from the government about the importance of our healthcare system.

Recommendation

Budget 2024 saw a commitment of 4.1 billion dollars into healthcare, this commitment must continue with earmarked funding again this fiscal year of at **least 10 million dollars for recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals**. Particularly, given the long-standing challenges with retaining Emergency Medical Services, any funding must include direct efforts for these workers.

The impact of the previous funding commitment will not be sufficient to address the vacancies, this will need to be a year over year adjustment, until we see these rates drop with successful recruitment and retention.



Mental Health Supports for Emergency Medical Services

There is considerable research on the health and well-being of paramedics as central to a successful ambulance service and critical care unit. However, all too often it is paramedics who are experiencing high rates of mental illness, death by suicide, and other long-term physical and mental issues because of their profession.

Ambulance services provide care 24 h a day, 7 days a week, and shift work is known to be a risk factor for poor health. Working unsociable hours has detrimental consequences on the health and well-being of healthcare workers and can ultimately result in compromised patient care. Ambulance use is high in our province, with paramedics working in unpredictable environments, and undertaking complex clinical and manual handling tasks whilst caring for critically unwell patients; thus, there are often compounding reasons for poor health in this professional group. These include mental health problems, sleep disturbances, poor nutrition, limited physical activity and high rates of musculoskeletal injury.

We know that the physical, emotional, and social cost of being a paramedic in our province puts these medical professionals at an increased risk of fatigue, burnout, and work-place injury. It is the responsibility of our government to ensure these workplace injuries are mitigated with proper mental health support.

Funding for additional mental health supports and programming that are tailored to our front-line medical teams who are at a higher likelihood of experiencing trauma due to their roles in healthcare. Increasing the support for the mental health of EMS workers must be considered an objective of the retention of these workers who too often are unable to continue this essential service due to complex mental health needs.



There are other provinces, including Ontario^[1] have a range of mental health services available for paramedics, including but not limited to: Wellness Committees, interactive websites for finding support, intervention projects, anonymous peer support, and mobile apps.

Recommendation

In consultation with representatives from the Union, Budget 2025 must include funding in the healthcare spending for the creation and implementation of a mental health programming model that is tailored to the needs of our Emergency Medical Services.



Home Care is Health Care

Home Care workers are a vital part of our overall health care system, and the Department of Health and Community Services is responsible for the funding of these positions. In the most recent negotiations with Home Care Agencies and our Union, the process was significantly cumbersome, as the Department was a part of the process but not directly involved in the bargaining.

Recently the integration of our provincial ambulance services into the public sector as employees under NLHS, has provided a roadmap for home care services. Similar to the private ambulance system, home care is spread throughout the province with dozens of private agencies, who are dependent upon the Department of Health for securing funding.



[1] Ontario Paramedic Association <https://www.ontarioparamedic.ca/paramedic-wellness/>

There is considerable value in the integration of the home care system under NLHS and HCS, which would streamline this currently fragmented system. The Health Accord has taken great measures to modernize our healthcare system in this province by offering community-based solutions to primary care. In 2021 ‘Health Accord NL- A Call to Action to Transform Health’ stated “Every person in Newfoundland and Labrador will have timely access to social and health services, and to continuous care centered in the community as a part of a well-connected network.”[2] Home care should be recognized as a part of this health care network and continuous care system.

Recommendation

Home care should be integrated into the healthcare system across the province as an essential part of primary care in the province, thereby strengthening and streamlining this service.



[2] https://www.healthaccordnl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Health-Accord-NL_Interim-Report_Website.pdf

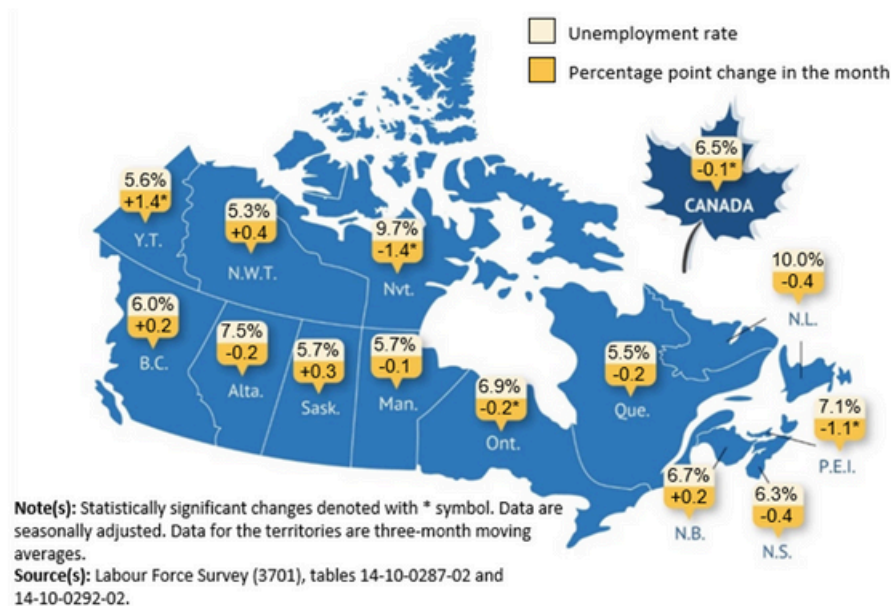
Social Measures, Affordability, and the Public Good



Homelessness and Food Accessibility

The cost of living remains in front of mind for most of our members and the population of our province. With the highest unemployment rate in the country of 10.0% (average for both regions), there are considerable labour market issues, especially for the region outside of the metro area. For those who may already be experiencing financial, social, or medial vulnerabilities, the situation is far more dire.

Therefore, in the wake of the recent Churchill Falls and Gull Island announcement and the years of direct and indirect jobs that are possible, but not guaranteed, the government must take a good-jobs-centered approach. More simply put, any additional infrastructure projects and spending should provide clear indicators on the value added to the region and the jobs that will be created, how long they will be maintained, and the additional tax revenue for the provincial coffers. Similar to environmental assessments, large multinational companies that will be extracting value from our resources should be required to produce the necessary information on the social impact.



In February 2024 alone, 368 in St. John's were known to be experiencing homelessness, with increasing rates of homelessness all over the province. These statistical representations of the housing, food, and child poverty crises are more than numbers, as each is a member of our community who is struggling. It should not come as a shock that each crisis fuels the other and to end these cycles of poverty, the government must justly increase funding to build an even stronger social security net.

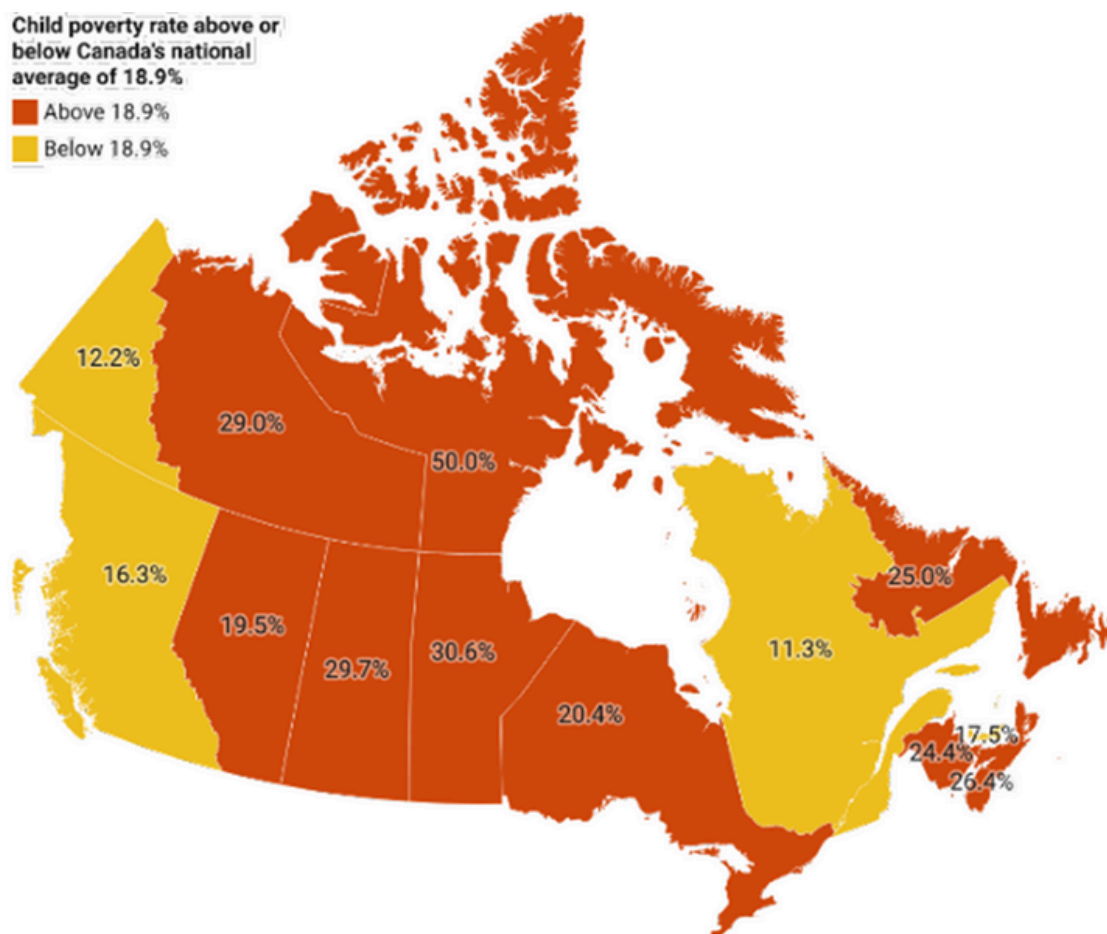
To seriously address the systemic social barriers in the province, direct funding must be given to social programming that is proven to elevate the impact of poverty, homelessness, food bank use, and economic hardships faced by so many.

Recommendation

Budget 2025 should include increased funding for provincial food banks to ensure the shelves remain stocked as the usage continues to rise. Funding for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation should be increased to reflect the needs of the province. As well, funding allotments for organizations that are working to support the un-housed in our province should be increased, including but not limited to End Homelessness NL, YWCA, Status of Women's Councils, and the NL Housing and Homelessness Network.



In a recent nation report by Campaign 2000[3], a non-partisan, pan-Canadian network of 120 national, provincial, and community partner organizations, our record of ending child poverty can only be described as abysmal. In Newfoundland and Labrador, child poverty rates for children under 6 years of age have seen the highest increase in the country.



Source: Statistics Canada. (2024). T1 Family File, Custom Tabulation.

Additionally, there is a food bank crisis in our province, with Food Bank visits increasing a startling 44% from 2019-2023 with projected increases again this year[4]. With the housing crisis, the waitlists for social housing increased 60% between 2021 and 2023 with 2,352 on the waitlist in 2023.

[3] 2024 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada. Ending Child Poverty: The Time is Now, Campaign 2000, <https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Ending-Child-Poverty-The-Time-is-Now-2023-Report-Card-on-Child-and-Family-Poverty-in-Canada-Nov-18-2024.pdf>

[4] Newfoundland and Labrador: Vital Signs 2024 www.mun.ca/harriscentre/media/production/memorial/administrative/the-harris-centre/media-library/Vital%20Signs%202024.pdf



Cost of Living and Childcare

As the cost-of-living crisis grows, we must make sure that the poverty reduction measures in the province also expand. This means minimizing access barriers and rolling out changes and programs in a way that benefits as many people as possible. Whatever the income-based policy, it must also work with policies around housing and affordability, and childcare.

The Provincial Government, in partnership with the Federal Government, has announced commitments to \$10 a day childcare in the province. The move to more accessible childcare is not only beneficial to our society at large but nationally, over 50,000 net new jobs have been created in the ELCC sector since 2019, making it the sixth-largest source of new employment in Canada over this time.

In Jim Stanford's latest work on the economic benefits of accessible and universal childcare explained that the earnings and hours of work for ELCC workers are also improving thanks to improved funding[5]. This means that the aggregate earnings for ELCC workers will total over \$8 billion this year, boosting consumer spending throughout the economy. As well, the dramatic reduction in ELCC fees under the program reduced Canada's national inflation rate in 2022 and 2023, and likely contributed to the Bank of Canada's interest rate cut starting in June.

However, in our province we still face the realities of childcare 'deserts' in many of our rural communities and excessive waitlists for regulated daycare spaces. The result is thousands of families who are not able to fully participate in the economy and considerable pressure on parents who may already be struggling financially.

Recommendation

Budget 2025 must not only reaffirm funding for the retention and recruitment of Early Childhood Educators but include provisions for the expansion of the health care benefits and creation of a pension plan.

Furthermore, funding must be directed for the continued creation of additional spaces throughout the province, with particular emphasis on inclusion spaces. This will require additional funding for inclusion workers to ensure children with exceptionalities are fully supported in all childcare spaces.

[5] Powering Growth: Economic benefits from Canada's \$10-per-day early learning and child care program. Stanford, Jim. <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/24/11/released-today-powering-growth-economic-benefits-canada%E2%80%99s-10-day>



Restore Funding to Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic

Our Union, among others at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador have been raising the alarm for years about the decade of successive funding cuts. The devastating consequences of continual cuts to funding combined with increased tuition fees are threatening our province's only public university. We take no solace in having predicted this outcome because it is our members and the people of this province who will now bear the brunt of the "difficult decisions" that are to come.

Memorial University plays an integral role in our province - academically, socially, culturally, and economically. These contributions cannot be overlooked.

A recent report revealed that Memorial University supports over 9000 jobs across the province. There are over 66,000 Memorial graduates in Newfoundland and Labrador, collectively earning an additional \$1.37 billion each year thanks to their degrees from Memorial. The ripple effect of this additional income generates \$2.06 billion for the provincial economy annually.

As Newfoundland and Labrador's only public university, Memorial carries a unique and special obligation to the people of this province. The plaque in the Arts & Administration building on our St. John's Campus reminds us of this legacy:

"This University was raised by the People of Newfoundland as a Memorial to the fallen in the Great Wars...that in freedom of learning their cause and sacrifice may not be forgotten."

Yet, the ability of Memorial University to honor this special obligation has been and is still being critically undermined by years of relentless funding cuts. These cuts have inflicted deeply damaging consequences on our university community and the province at large, at a time when we our workforces are experiencing recruitment challenges.

Our campuses are crumbling. Tuition fees are soaring - forcing students into higher debt or to abandon their studies altogether. Enrollment is declining, research and teaching are being compromised, and the quality of education is suffering. Workers are stretched to the breaking point, burning out, and leaving. Labour relations are strained, morale is plummeting, and the overall situation for faculty, students, and staff continues to decline.

The provincial government must go beyond finger pointing and hollow statements about the university's autonomy and take decisive steps to address this crisis.

Allowing the continued degradation of Memorial University is not only a disservice to its community - it is a betrayal of the people of this province and the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Recommendation

Restore funding to Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador and the College of the North Atlantic to pre-2021 levels as a starting point. It is important to note that these most recent cuts of a cumulative \$68.4 million, are in addition to the large Budget 2015 cut of \$20 million, followed by a \$9 million cut in 2017.

These public institutions are our direct line to the future of the economy and society in this province. To fulfill its vital obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic must be adequately funded and remain a comprehensive public institution for all.





Funding for the HMP and Corrections Officers

Built in the Victorian Era, the Penitentiary is a decaying marker of a much different time for incarceration. Now, the institution does not meet the current needs of those who live and work in this facility. It is a reminder of broken promises when it should be a place for rehabilitation, addictions programming, safe daily routines, outdoor yard access, and a workplace that is free for the more obvious occupational hazards.

To say that the penitentiary is no longer a sustainable location for workers and inmates, would be a gross understatement to the conditions in the facility. There is no shortage of stories coming from both inmates and workers about the lack of air conditioning, the rodents, the capacity, the lack of space, and so much more.

There is no disagreement among our members or the public at large about the need to construct a proper facility. In 2019 it was first announced that a replacement of this crumbling prison would be undertaken with an estimated cost of \$200 million, with completion in 2022. That day has come and gone. We are no closer to boots on the ground for this facility.

The most recent announcement in February of this year was that only one company had placed a bid for construction and that the scope of the facility has been limited due to increasing costs. Furthermore, the indication has been that construction will start in 2025.

In 2024 the Department of Justice announced 24 million in funding for justice and public safety, which included 25 additional Corrections Officer Positions, 14 Sheriffs, and other investments. This was certainly welcome news for our members in corrections, as these positions have faced chronic vacancies. In the coming year, this commitment must continue to address the challenges that our workers in justice across the province are facing.

Recommendation

In recognition of the announcements made in 2019, 2022, and 2024, and the need that has been articulated for decades by our Union and advocates in the province, replacing His Majesty's Penitentiary must be a top priority of this Government in 2025. Furthermore, the funding must be responsive to the current market costing of this project, not used as a mechanism to further delay or downsize the construction.



A Just Transition

It's essential that workers have a voice—not only because we are impacted by the transition to a low-carbon economy but also because we have vital knowledge and expertise to contribute to developing the way forward. Workers know what's needed in their workplaces, sectors, and communities.

More explicitly, this includes workers delivering public services, who are affected by a major economic transition in any community and are responding to the impacts of climate change every day. Public service workers are helping communities respond to disasters or providing health care in the face of rising pollution and extreme conditions. Public sector workers, including NAPE members, are a valuable part of supporting the transition and must be part of the Sustainable Jobs Action Plans that will be developed.

Recommendation

Creation of a Sustainable Jobs Act The funding commitments to addressing environmental and climate change must be explicit in creating a just transition for workers. There should be specific funding in this budget for the creation and implementation of a Newfoundland and Labrador Sustainable Jobs Act that mirrors the national Act because it will further ensure that workers will have a seat at the table in developing the strategies, policies, and programs we need to help workers and communities thrive in the transition to a low-carbon economy.



Strengthening the Public Sector

Time and time and time again when a government privatizes public services, it is the public that pay the inflated price tag. From the United Kingdom to Canada, the decades of research and experience have almost one singular outcome, higher costs to taxpayers as the private sector prioritizes shareholder profit not the public good.

For example, Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec have privatized 80% or more of their highway snow clearing. In each province, government promised privatization would deliver cost savings and higher quality of service. The evidence suggests that almost without exception, the opposite has been true. Cost only goes down when contractors are allowed to take longer to clear highways and use less salt and other materials – resulting in significant safety concerns.

The Big Reset contained a flurry of suggestions for increased privatization, and among the most troubling that continues to simmer in some manner was the discussion surrounding the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation. In other provinces where liquor distribution has been privatized, the consumer prices tend to be higher, meanwhile the high revenue that the province could get from these services, arguably one of the most reliable profits, is lost. The Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation must remain a government enterprise.

NAPE has been steadfast in our calls on the government to ensure our public services are not hollowed out by third-party contractors or agencies that prioritize profits over care. Beyond the social implications, using private agencies for filling gaps in our system only widens those gaps by creating inequality in the profession. Furthermore, these agencies are taking value funds away from creating a more robust public system [6]

Recommendation

Instead of allowing the private sector to take over our public services and infrastructure, the government must commit to investing in the public sector. It is the strength of our public sector and services that nourish our economy and social fabric.

[6] <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/travel-nurses-central-health-1.6694847>

Budget 2025

The province is facing considerable challenges but there is equal potential if people remain at the forefront of all decision making.

The economy has rebounded in the last year and the recent announcements are a sign of hope, however, the uncertainty with recent US tariff and possible embargo announcements raises concerns. To safeguard against volatility and the uncertainty of resource extraction, the government must invest in the people of this province through strengthening the public sector, support those who are most vulnerable, increasing our health care capacity, and ensuring our collective future is bright.

The Government of NL must be steadfast in supporting workers and their families with an economy built with the protection and creation of good jobs in all communities. Funding and investments that do not center on the workers of the province will fall short, instead, the opportunity must be taken to not only curb the creep of privatization but also recognize the power of our public sector.

We look forward to working with this Government as we strengthen our most valuable resources, the people of this province.

Jerry Earle
President, NAPE



Trevor King
Secretary Treasurer

