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Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness

Childhood Obesity Prevention Strategy: Government Forum

Thursday, June 2, 2011

Atlantica Hotel

Our mission at the Department of Health and Wellness is **Generations** of Nova Scotians living well.

The sad truth is children and youth today are less likely to grow up healthy than the **generation** before them.

As parents and grandparents, as those who serve the public good, we're all concerned about the health of children -- rather, about their declining health.

It will affect their future wellbeing, happiness and success.

And it will have far-reaching consequences, affecting the sustainability of our health care system -- already under significant pressure, and the viability of the future workforce and economy.

The childhood obesity epidemic is a visible reminder that our children are not getting what they need to be healthy. Yet... the momentum is building to turn the tide – to collectively change our lives and environment to be healthier in Nova Scotia.

This is reflected in mainstream media.

CBC has been running a 6-month Live Right Now campaign, covering various aspects of healthy living in depth and using mainstream and social media to encourage people to join a movement.

As you may know, we're currently beginning the long process of negotiating a new health accord.

Laurent Le Pierres wrote recently in the *Chronicle Herald* ...

“If this province is serious in its quest to have the per capita funding formula modified for health transfers — it wants special compensation from Ottawa because the average Nova Scotian is older, sicker and more costly to care for — then it needs to take this to a whole new level of seriousness on the home front.”

He is talking about the need to “supersize” our efforts to encourage healthy eating, active living and building a province that supports this.

That’s what we’re here to talk about today.

For many, many years, people in this room, people in communities across the province and people working in government have been fighting to create the programs and supports to help Nova Scotians live healthier lives.

Now the 2010 and 2011 Speeches from the Throne have committed the province to develop a plan to help make Nova Scotia a place where children are supported to eat well, move more, and grow up healthy.

The Department of Health and Wellness is the lead department for this strategy, as I said, building on the longtime efforts of work such as Healthy Eating Nova Scotia and Active Kids, Healthy Kids.

The focus – as we’ll see today – is not on obesity but on a positive movement to create environment that support healthy active living.

We cannot do it alone.

We’ll see that this is not just an issue for the healthcare system. We may see the direct consequences, but they are consequences of broader, societal decisions.

Many programs, policies and initiatives across government have an impact on health. And working to improve health – particularly the health of future generations – will benefit many other government agendas.

For instance, yesterday, Ministers from many departments proclaimed Bill 93 – the one-metre bicycle rule – and the first-ever Provincial Active Transportation Month.

Promoting walking, cycling and public transit will improve health, help meet climate change goals, and encourage walkable, vibrant cities and towns that support tourism.

Helping children be healthier through healthy eating and physical activity is linked to enhanced school performance, better employment outcomes, and reduced crime.

Our work will need to link to the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Child and Youth Strategy, the Mental Health Strategy and other government plans to make life better for Nova Scotia families.

There are many win-wins all across government when we work together on shared agendas.

We're excited about this strategy, and we know we can't do it alone. We need your continued and renewed support and enthusiasm.

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