

Kevin McNamara

Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness

1st Annual Health Equity Forum

March 18, 2011

World Trade and Convention Center

It's a pleasure for me to be here with you to bring greetings on behalf of the Minister of Health and Wellness and the province.

This is an important inaugural event that will support a system-wide understanding of health equity. I'd like to thank the department's Diversity Committee for hosting this event. I'd also like to thank those from here and from far away who are sharing their expertise and lived experiences to increase our understanding of health inequities and factors that affect our health. I appreciate your willingness to share ideas about working together to address the needs.

This morning you have been talking about the impact of inequities on the mental health of two key populations -- immigrants and refugees and people in the Pride community. This afternoon, you will be learning more through Q and A's and a quiz and from presentations on Equity in the Workplace.

Nova Scotia's **Cultural Competence Guidelines** are the first in Canada and help ensure the delivery of better healthcare for **all** Nova Scotians and their families.

The guidelines prompt workers in all areas of health to consider and respond to the history and lived experience of all those we serve.

It also means that we identify the disparities and pay close attention to the **special needs in health care** delivery according to nation of origin, level of ability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status and religious affiliation.

Understanding and recognizing who we are and where we are on bridging the gaps in health equity is essential to delivering on the vision and mission of the Department of Health and Wellness – *generation of Nova Scotians living well*.

Diversity is who we are. **Together** is how we work.

Thank you for proving that by attending this first Health Equity Forum.