

Press Release

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Nova Scotia's Health Programs Are Real Cliff Hangers

Halifax:...In spite of all the pre-election discussion heard on Health Care and the need for funding into health, Nova Scotia has a long way to progress before becoming a truly healthy province.

"We need a government that is visionary and sees value in investing in strong preventative health promotion programs. Nova Scotians want a government that invests in proactive health measures that service populations before they become seriously ill," says Dawn Stegen, executive director for Recreation Nova Scotia (RNS).

Stegen refers to Nova Scotia's health care system as a cliff hanger system. This analogy is one used frequently among health promotion professionals. It conveys the need to become better as a society at recognizing the signposts that keep people healthy - rather than investing in health services necessary to support people after they become ill. "To make any long-term changes to health, we need to see an injection of funds into community health programs that teach people to make healthy lifestyle choices and to make choices that hopefully will keep them out of hospitals - and off cliffs," says Stegen.

Recreation Nova Scotia is a not for profit organization committed to building healthy communities through the advocacy and promotion of recreation and leisure programs and services. "RNS and other health promotion groups want to see improved access to programs that prevent illness and improve Nova Scotians quality of life," says Stegen. "We recognize the importance of the healthcare agenda and want to hear the Leaders speak about their plans for the preventative area of this portfolio," she adds.

Studies show that the health of communities depends on enabling people to increase control over their health and over the conditions that determine their health. While there is no single factor responsible for the health of populations, the conditions where people live, work and play - our homes, schools, workplaces and communities often play a more important role in determining people's health than do the health care services offered in a community.

The World Health Association and the Community Health Promotion Network Atlantic state that "most of the factors that determine health lie outside the control of the traditional health sector. This means there must be cooperation and partnership with others. The health sector must be willing to play an influencing role with other sectors. Health's task is to work with other sectors like community services, recreation and environment to better understand how their policies, decisions and actions affect health."

"Together health care providers, policy-makers and communities have a challenge" says Stegen. "They need to find practical ways of taking action on the concepts that are the basis of the determinants of health. This definitely includes enhancing Nova Scotians with opportunities to participate in, and have access to, preventative health programs that promote recreation and contribute to our well being."