What about WELLNESS?

A Discussion Guide

Fall 2000
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Select Committee on Health Care
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Introduction

The Legislative Assembly’s Select Committee on Health Care is reviewing the issue of wellness to offer recommendations to the Assembly on the development of a Wellness Strategy to help New Brunswickers stay healthy longer.

Our challenge is to determine how we can put more emphasis on promoting wellness and preventing illness. To do this, we need to learn more about how healthy we are and the factors that influence health and wellness.

We need to hear your ideas about the roles and responsibilities of individuals, families, communities, governments, and the private sector, and how we can better work together to encourage individuals to maintain healthy lifestyles.

We also want to identify existing community and workplace wellness initiatives and programs in New Brunswick to hear what’s working well.

This discussion guide offers questions to encourage discussion, input and advice on wellness.

Wellness Is …

We think that having a healthy province is about more than a dependable health care system. In addition to treating illness, we need to explore ways to help New Brunswickers stay healthy.

The First Report of the Select Committee on Health Care: Wellness Strategy Progress Report proposed the following definition of wellness:

Wellness is a state of emotional, mental, physical, social and spiritual well-being, that enables people to reach and maintain their personal potential in their communities.

The five aspects of well-being in our definition are each important on their own, but even more so because they are interconnected. For example, we know that a child who is physically active, will not only be more likely to be physically healthy, but will also likely do better in school. Likewise we know that seniors who are socially active also tend to be more physically and mentally healthy.

Many factors such as having a job, being involved in your community, having a good education, eating properly, being safe from harm, being able to read, being a good parent, and being fit and active, have a great impact on how healthy we are. These factors, called the determinants of health, are the foundation on which a healthy society is built.

The determinants of health include: personal health practices and coping skills; healthy child development; education; employment and working conditions; health services; income and social status; social support networks; physical environments; biology and genetic endowment; gender; and culture.

Issues and Challenges

Wellness is not a new concept. Canada has been a leader in changing the thinking about health and the determinants of health, notably in four key documents: A New Perspective on the Health of Canadians (1974), the Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion (1986), Achieving Health for All: A Framework for Health Promotion (1986), and Strategies for Population Health: Investing in the Health of Canadians (1994). More recently, reports such as Towards a Healthy Future: Second Report on the Health of Canadians (1999) and Health Care in Canada:
A First Annual Report (2000) have taken a comprehensive look at how healthy we are.

Closer to home, the Health Services Review Report (1999) and Building Our Tomorrow: A Report on Social Policy Renewal (1999), emphasized the need to put more emphasis on health promotion and prevention and to address the determinants of health.

More recently, emphasis is being put on wellness through the Select Committee on Health Care’s work to develop a Wellness Strategy, as well as the creation of a new Department of Health and Wellness, signaling a commitment for greater emphasis on the wellness issue.

Some of the issues and challenges related to wellness that the Committee has heard about so far include:

- Health and wellness are more than the absence of disease.
- The determinants of health are the foundation of a healthy society.
- Opportunities to improve health and wellness exist in many sectors (not just the health sector).
- Multi-sectoral strategies are required to address health and wellness.
- Individuals, families, communities, the private sector, and governments all have roles and responsibilities with respect to wellness, and need to work together to address wellness.
- Investing in wellness will result in benefits to society. These benefits will not occur over night.
- Priority areas for action need to be determined.

- Government policy direction, roles, structure, processes and resources to support a commitment to wellness need to be determined.

Discussion Question:

1. What are the benefits of wellness?
Are We Healthy?

We need to know more about the health of New Brunswickers and the causes of illness and wellness to determine where action is needed.

In general, cardiovascular disease (including heart attack, cerebrovascular disease and stroke) is the major cause of death in Canada, and in New Brunswick. Mortality or death rates for cardiovascular disease are higher in Atlantic Canada than in the rest of Canada. The second leading cause of death in Canada and in New Brunswick is cancer. Appendix 2 provides the top ten causes of death in New Brunswick and a comparison of selected New Brunswick and Canada’s mortality rates.

With a wellness approach we also need to look at how we fare regarding the determinants of health, and to consider the risk factors and lifestyle behaviours that lead to illness. Appendix 3 looks at how New Brunswick fares with regard to selected determinants of health.

We want to hear what you think makes us sick and what keeps us well. We need to know which diseases and conditions can best be addressed with a health promotion or combating disease approach.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the major health and wellness issues for New Brunswickers?
2. Which diseases and conditions can be prevented?
3. What can we do to better prevent disease and promote health?
4. What are the best ways to help people maintain their health?
5. What should the priority areas for action be?
Responsibilities

Individuals, families, communities, organizations, groups, schools, workplaces and governments all have roles and responsibilities to help New Brunswickers stay healthy. More importantly, we need to work together to ensure that future generations of New Brunswickers enjoy the benefits of wellness.

We think that:

Wellness is everyone’s responsibility!

Discussion Questions:

1. What responsibilities do we have for our own health? And for our family’s health?
2. What responsibilities do communities, government and workplaces have to help New Brunswickers stay healthy?
3. How can wellness be promoted in a way that respects the rights of individuals to make choices?
4. How can individuals, families, communities, government and the private sector better work together to help New Brunswickers stay well?
Areas We Want to Explore Further

The Committee has identified four specific areas to explore further – children and youth, seniors, communities and workplaces. We know that the material in this section only scratches the surface of each of these areas. We need to hear from you to learn more about each of these areas.

1. **Children and Youth**

On the whole, our children and youth are growing up healthy. However, we can do better.

The influences of our childhood play a large part in the state of health we will enjoy in our later years. Adequate family income, effective parenting and supportive communities enhance healthy childhood development.

The Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain presented to the Select Committee on Health Care on her work with Dr. Fraser Mustard on the 1999 Ontario Early Years Study. Their work built on the growing evidence that the foundation for healthy growth and development in later years is established in the first five years of life.

The Committee also heard from Dr. Mark Tremblay of the University of New Brunswick about the negative effects our increasingly sedentary lifestyle is having on our own and especially our children’s health.

Families, communities, organizations, groups, schools, the private sector and governments all have a role to play in helping children and youth to grow up healthy.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What are the major health and wellness issues for New Brunswick children and youth?
2. What are the key influences on the health of children and youth?
3. What areas of prevention of disease and injury are most important?
4. What aspects of a healthy lifestyle are most important?
5. What do families need to raise healthy children?
6. What are successful models of community wellness initiatives or programs for children and youth?
7. What community wellness initiatives or programs for children and youth exist in New Brunswick?
8. What should the priority areas for action for children and youth wellness be?
9. How can we all work together to address children and youth wellness issues? What can governments do? What can the private sector do? What can communities do? What can schools do? What can families do?
2. Seniors

Our population is rapidly aging. The proportion of the New Brunswick population aged 65+ is expected to increase from approximately 13% in 1996 to 17% in 2011. Some sources estimate that by the middle of the 21st century seniors will outnumber children and youth in Canada.

Today’s seniors are generally living longer, are healthier, and are economically better off than seniors of previous generations. However, the oldest seniors are more likely to live alone, be women, have health-related problems, and be poor.

Currently, the largest portion of provincial health care budgets goes to provide services for seniors. Seniors, especially those over the age of 80, use more health services than any other age group.

Healthy aging has less to do with the formal health care system than with the other determinants of health. Active aging means that seniors are contributing to society for as long as possible.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the major health and wellness issues for New Brunswick seniors?
2. What are the key influences on the health of seniors?
3. What areas of prevention of disease are most important?
4. What aspects of active living and a healthy lifestyle are most important?
5. What are successful models of community wellness initiatives or programs for seniors?
6. What community wellness initiatives or programs for seniors exist in New Brunswick?
7. What should the priority areas for action on seniors’ wellness be?
8. How can we all work together to address seniors’ health issues? What can governments do? What can the private sector do? What can communities do? What can families do?
3. **Communities**

Communities are where we live our lives, where we raise our families, where we interact with our neighbours, and where we are most involved in volunteering and other community good works. Our communities are important to us.

Strong communities are a vital component of a healthy society. New Brunswickers are involved in their communities through schools, churches, workplaces or other community groups and organizations. In strong communities, people are connected, they rely on and help each other … neighbours help neighbours.

Central to our everyday lives, our communities both influence our health and allow us to influence the health of others. Communities are in the best position to identify problems and take action on them. Communities show us that people working together can achieve more as a group than they could as individuals.

The Health Services Review Report (1999) reported that the "Healthy Community" movement, a mechanism for encouraging community support of "wellness", is growing across Canada.

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**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is a healthy community? How can we build healthy communities?
2. How can communities promote healthy behaviours and lifestyle choices to help individuals and families make informed choices and decisions about their health?
3. What kinds of community models exist to help communities to address health and wellness issues? What can we learn from them?
4. What are community organizations in New Brunswick doing to improve the health of their citizens? What successful community wellness initiatives exist?
5. How can government better work with individuals, families, communities and the private sector to promote individual and community health?
4. Workplaces

Employment has a significant effect on our physical, mental and social health. Paid work not only provides us with income, but also gives us a sense of identity and purpose, social contacts and opportunities for personal growth.

A healthy work environment is one in which respect, support, security, safety, opportunities for learning, and skill development are prominent.

The workplace can be a key place for promoting health. Workplace health promotion programs can be health and cost effective. Building healthier workplaces may involve improving employee lifestyles and improving the work environment.

Health Canada’s Workplace Health System: Overview Booklet says, "from management’s perspective, having healthy employees is a definite plus. Healthy employees are sick less often and recover from illness faster. They are more efficient, energetic, alert, less prone to accidents and more able to manage stress. Studies in a number of countries, including Canada, point to the same conclusion: that health programs reduce medical costs, sick leave absenteeism, employee turnover and lower job accident rates."

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the major health and wellness issues in the workplace?
2. What are the key influences on employee wellness?
3. What are examples of successful workplace wellness programs?
4. What workplace wellness programs exist in New Brunswick workplaces?
5. What are the benefits for employees and employers of workplace wellness programs?
6. What can employees, employers, communities and governments do to promote workplace wellness?
The Committee’s Work to Date

The First Report of the Select Committee on Health Care: Wellness Strategy Progress Report, was tabled in the House on June 16, 2000. The report included an update on the Committee’s workplan, a definition of wellness, background on why wellness is important, the benefits we can achieve through investing in wellness, and an inventory of government health and wellness related programs, policies and initiatives. You may find it helpful to review the First Report of the Select Committee on Health Care in preparing your submission. The report is available on the Legislative Assembly Website at http://www.gnb.ca/legis/ or you may request a copy from the Office of the Clerk of the Legislature.

Getting Involved – How Can You Participate?

The consultation process will include public hearings to be held around the province beginning in late October 2000, and a call for written briefs.

If you would like to participate in a public hearing, please notify the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly by October 13, 2000. You will be contacted regarding the date and location of a hearing in your region.

If you do not wish to participate in a public hearing, you may submit a written brief to the Select Committee on Health Care, c/o the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly by November 10, 2000.

Participants are asked to consider the questions identified in this discussion guide to develop their submissions and presentations.

For More Information

We look forward to hearing from you! For more information or to express your interest in participating in a public hearing, please contact the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly at the address below. Written submissions should also be sent to the postal address, fax number or e-mail address below.

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E-mail: wwwleg@gnb.ca
Website: http://www.gnb.ca/legis/
Appendix 1 – Summary of Discussion Questions

Issues and Challenges

1. What are the benefits of wellness?

Are We Healthy?

1. What are the major health and wellness issues for New Brunswickers?
2. Which diseases and conditions can be prevented?
3. What can we do to better prevent disease and promote health?
4. What are the best ways to help people maintain their health?
5. What should the priority areas for action be?

Responsibilities

1. What responsibilities do we have for our own health? And for our family’s health?
2. What responsibilities do communities, government and workplaces have to help New Brunswickers stay healthy?
3. How can wellness be promoted in a way that respects the rights of individuals to make choices?
4. How can individuals, families, communities, government and the private sector better work together to help New Brunswickers stay well?

Children and Youth

1. What are the major health and wellness issues for New Brunswick children and youth?
2. What are the key influences on the health of children and youth?
3. What areas of prevention of disease and injury are most important?
4. What aspects of a healthy lifestyle are most important?
5. What do families need to raise healthy children?
6. What are successful models of community wellness initiatives or programs for children and youth?
7. What community wellness initiatives or programs for children and youth exist in New Brunswick?
8. What should the priority areas for action for children and youth wellness be?
9. How can we all work together to address children and youth wellness issues? What can governments do? What can schools do? What can families do?

Seniors

1. What are the major health and wellness issues for New Brunswick seniors?
2. What are the key influences on the health of seniors?
3. What areas of prevention of disease are most important?
4. What aspects of active living and a healthy lifestyle are most important?
5. What are successful models of community wellness initiatives or programs for seniors?
6. What community wellness initiatives or programs for seniors exist in New Brunswick?
7. What should the priority areas for action on seniors’ wellness be?
8. How can we all work together to address seniors’ health issues? What can governments do? What can the private sector do? What can schools do? What can communities do? What can families do?

Communities

1. What is a healthy community? How can we build healthy communities?
2. How can communities promote healthy behaviours and lifestyle choices to help individuals and families make informed choices and decisions about their health?
3. What kinds of community models exist to help communities to address health and wellness issues? What can we learn from them?
4. What are community organizations in New Brunswick doing to improve the health of their citizens? What successful community wellness initiatives exist?
5. How can government better work with individuals, families, communities and the private sector to promote individual and community health?

Workplaces

1. What are the major health and wellness issues in the workplace?
2. What are the key influences on employee wellness?
3. What are examples of successful workplace wellness programs?
4. What workplace wellness programs exist in New Brunswick workplaces?
5. What are the benefits for employees and employers of workplace wellness programs?
6. What can employees, employers, communities and governments do to promote workplace wellness?
Appendix 2

Top Ten, Deaths from Selected Causes, with Percent Distribution and Rates per 100,000 Population, New Brunswick, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause of Death</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Rate/100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malignant Neoplasms (Cancer)</td>
<td>1,758</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>238.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases of Heart</td>
<td>1,706</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>231.123</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respiratory Disease</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>80.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebrovascular Disease</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>61.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases of the Digestive System</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>31.566</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>27.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents (excluding motor vehicle)</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>22.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases of Arteries</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>22.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>14.496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Vehicle Accidents</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>13.141</td>
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Mortality, Standardized Rates Per 100,000 Population, 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Circulatory Deaths</th>
<th>Cancer Deaths</th>
<th>Respiratory Deaths</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>IHD*</td>
<td>Stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>251.4</td>
<td>126.7</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN</td>
<td>238.8</td>
<td>131.3</td>
<td>47.8</td>
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</table>


* Ischemic Heart Disease
## Appendix 3

### Non-Medical Determinants of Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Smoking Prevalence</th>
<th>Regular Heavy Drinking</th>
<th>Physically Active</th>
<th>High School Graduation</th>
<th>Post-Secondary Graduation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 12+</td>
<td>Age 12+</td>
<td>Age 12+</td>
<td>Age 25-29</td>
<td>Age 25-54</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>45.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAN</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>51.5</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Youth Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Low Income Rate</th>
<th>Children in Low Income Families</th>
<th>Housing Affordability</th>
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<tr>
<td>%</td>
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<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 15+</td>
<td>Age 15-24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAN</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>19.7</td>
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