

# NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITIES & COVID-19

## CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCE

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### ***Recommendations and Future Planning***

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The report *Nova Scotian Communities & COVID-19: Challenges and Resilience* describes many positive responses of Nova Scotian communities to the pandemic, of Nova Scotian communities coming together to help each other during a time of need. How can we build on this, to move effectively into the future? The following are some ideas that have evolved out of the results of this study.

#### **Key Messages**

- The study reinforces what we already know about our communities, that they are resilient and can find community-based solutions to many problems. Some of the themes noted in pandemic responses include access to services, financial aid, social connections, food security and volunteerism. In many cases, these responses were recognized as already an inherent part of the way of life in their community.
- Nova Scotia has a diversity of communities (rural, urban, coastal, inland, small, large, cultural, etc.) and within these, a range of experiences. While we have all been affected by a global pandemic, when it comes to responses, 'one size does not fit all'. Those in a particular community are better equipped than anyone to know what they need and to identify solutions that will fit their settings.
- Some of those solutions can be initiated within the community, and community-based groups are especially important to facilitate local solutions and responses. But for other solutions, our communities may need outside assistance. A key role for governments is to listen, and then to provide supportive policy, funding for community initiatives, and assistance with practical measures.
- It has been noted that Atlantic Canada has a high rate of volunteerism. While that is to be lauded, it is important for government to take responsibility, and not rely too much on volunteer effort – to avoid the risk of 'burn out' among volunteers.
- Nova Scotians must address the inequities that we know are present across the province – many of which have been amplified by the pandemic. There are inequities between communities, and within communities. Since not all communities have the same capacity, governments must target extra support where it is most needed. Further, it is important to hear a diversity of voices in communities, to properly identify needs, gaps, and appropriate solutions.

## **Improvements Needed**

Challenges in dealing with the pandemic also point the way to improvements needed in Nova Scotia. Three of these are described here.

- Many communities noted the need for support to address access to technology and, specifically, the internet. Much of what is being done now regarding education, recreation, arts, and even food services require robust and consistent internet access, which is a challenge in many communities. Reliable connectivity is needed for everyone – and with strong awareness of the need to support those without means to afford this.
- Health care will remain an enduring issue in Nova Scotia. Communities highlighted the challenges with seeking medical attention without having access to a family doctor. This challenge was made more difficult during the pandemic.
- Public transportation is another long-term issue in Nova Scotia. Getting around can be challenging when such transportation is lacking. One community noted that their local transportation option had been cancelled, making it even more difficult, or impossible, for some to be able to access necessities.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, supporting Nova Scotia's communities, to meet the challenges they face moving into future, may usefully focus on four themes:

LISTEN to community voices, and actively create opportunities for this

LEARN from the communities, where people know what solutions will work in their settings

SUPPORT community-level responses with policy and funding, to enable feasible and innovative approaches

ASSIST with solutions that require resources that are beyond the community's capacity.