

Funding to home support agencies increased

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FREDERICTON (CNB) – The provincial government will invest an additional \$4.4 million to increase funding to home support agencies to \$16.00 per hour. With this increase, agencies will be required to pay their workers a minimum hourly wage of \$11.00. Both come into effect October 1.

Social Development Minister Sue Stultz, who is also minister responsible for seniors, housing and community non-profit organizations, made the announcement today.

"Our government is continuing to make major investments in programs and services for seniors," said Stultz. "Senior care is a priority. We are committed to improving the long-term care system and to meeting the challenges that will arise with an increase in the older population and the subsequent increased demand for services."

Home support agencies currently receive \$15.00 per hour for services rendered under the Long Term Care and Disability Support Programs.

A new request for proposals will be issued requiring agencies to implement the pay increase to a minimum of \$11.00 per hour to their workers. It will include a requirement for agencies to provide enhanced financial reporting to the department each year.

The Department of Social Development will also conduct an annual audit to ensure agencies are following the conditions of their contract.

"We know the importance of seniors remaining in their homes for as long as possible," said Stultz. "That is why we made a commitment to improve wages and benefits for home support workers and to increase funding for home care agencies. Home support workers are instrumental in supporting clients to live independently and safely in their homes."

There are 57 home support agencies approved in the province which employ 3,300 workers. Currently, 4,560 seniors and 3,665 adults with disabilities use the province's home support program.