

Setting the Stage

Background for Health PEI Strategic Planning Consultations.

Health PEI's current strategic plan has guided our efforts from 2021 to 2024. It is now time to develop a new strategic plan that will guide us through the next three years.

What is a strategic plan?

Our strategic plan is a three-year plan that:

- Affirms the organization's mission (our purpose), vision (our future direction), and values (our guiding principles).
- Identifies what goals and priorities we will focus on over the next three years; and
- Defines what success will look like in each area.

Why do we need a strategic plan?

To meet the health needs of Islanders for years to come, we must use our resources in a sustainable manner. This means we need to focus our investments in areas that will give Islanders the best health outcomes. To stay on track, Health PEI uses a strategic plan to ensure our efforts remain aligned with our mission and vision.

How is our strategic plan developed?

Our strategic plan is influenced by several factors that determine the context in which Health PEI operates. These include:

- General information about Health PEI including our mandate, current resources (financial and human), and the programs and services we deliver.
- Reported progress on priorities identified in our last strategic plan, highlighting key accomplishments and remaining challenges.
- Health system performance data to assess our current strengths, areas for improvement, and how we compare to the rest of Canada.
- PEI demographic data, including age trends and other factors that impact the health status and service needs of Islanders.
- Provincial government strategies, plans and frameworks to ensure alignment with broader health system priorities.
- Emerging issues and trends affecting health care organizations across the country.

The remainder of this section provides an overview of some of the information we will consider throughout the strategic planning process.

Our Health System

Developing a realistic and achievable strategic plan requires a thorough understanding of Health PEI's internal capabilities.

Health PEI is an arm's length crown corporation responsible for planning, organizing, and delivering health care services in Prince Edward Island¹. The organization receives policy and strategic direction from the Department of Health and Wellness and is governed by a board of directors who report to the Minister².

Health PEI employs 4,967 employees, is supported by 263 physicians and operates programs and services across the province at hospitals, cancer treatment center locations, primary care networks (each with multiple sites), public long term care facilities, a palliative care center and multiple community-based service sites.

Over the past three years, Health PEI has made progress in all goal areas. Highlights include:

People

- Implemented workplace safety and employee wellness initiatives, programs, and policies
- Engaged with staff through employee engagement and pulse surveys
- Expanded recruitment and retention efforts for healthcare staff, added new professions and roles to the health system and expanded scopes of practice
- Successfully negotiated collective agreements with employee unions, approved the five-year Physician Services Agreement, and established the Provincial Nurse Practitioner Council

Quality and Safety

- Achieved accredited status and continued enhancing patient safety policies, infection prevention and control initiatives, ethics education and tabletop exercises
- Integrated patient and family-centered care in multiple areas, expanded patient engagement and conducted patient experience surveys across the system
- Introduced Mi'kmaq Health System Navigators, an MHA Gender Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy, and expanded French language services in long-term care and home-based care

Access and Coordination

- Launched 17 Patient Medical Homes and multiple Primary Care Access Clinics (PCACs) across the province, improving access to team-based care
- Continued development and implementation of the Mental Health and Addictions Campus and Master Programming with the creation of new positions and facilities, Open Access across Community MHA clinics, and the Emergency Department Short Stay Unit at QEH
- Expanded and transformed the Provincial Home-Based Care Program with the implementation of virtual home care visits through AlayaCare, and programs for medication assistance and self-managed care
- Enhanced Long Term Care through Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) and models supporting NP-Physician collaboration
- Launched Midwifery services in 2024 and the first midwifery led births occurred

- Developed clinical pathways for Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) and education and assessment protocols for evolving patient needs
- Expanded provincial specialty programs including Nephrology, Obstetrics/Gynecology, and the Provincial Pain Clinic, and implemented Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBI) walk-in clinics
- Released the PEI Cancer Action Plan 2023-2028 and enhanced cancer screening by introducing HPV testing as the primary cervical cancer screening method and implementing patient navigation supports for colorectal screening
- Established the Provincial Dental Care Program and introduced an online prenatal education option with Public Health Nursing to provide greater access to prenatal education
- Initiated acute care planning and redevelopment work with the renovation of key sites and established the Health PEI Critical Care Task Force to oversee provincial critical care program planning and development

Innovation and Efficiency

- Collaborated with ITSS and the Department of Health and Wellness on the expansion of virtual care, approved the Health PEI Virtual Care Policy, and launched the Provincial Specialty and Virtual Care (PSVC) Clinic.
- Advanced digital health initiatives including the Provincial EMR (Collaborative Health Record) and Prescribe IT and launched innovative platforms like Virtual Hallway
- Implemented a Provincial Patient Flow Model, developed new overcapacity and diversion policies to optimize hospital resources, and expanded PEI's Out-of-Province Medical Support Program
- Implemented the full AlayaCare system in Home-Based Care with InterRAI assessments, case management and electronic client and staff scheduling

Despite this progress, challenges remain. The following are some of the most pressing challenges currently faced by the organization:

- Health human resource recruitment and retention
- Reduction of services due to staff shortages (e.g., Emergency Department [ED] closures, changes to critical care, primary care provider retirements and departures)
- Alignment of health system resources (i.e., workforce and programs/services) with population needs
- Acute care bed management (i.e., overcapacity, high Alternate Level of Care (ALC) rate or a high proportion of patients occupying acute care beds who no longer require inpatient services)
- Acute care wait times (e.g., ED, surgery, diagnostic imaging)
- Provincial critical care planning and development
- Access to primary care
- Access to community-based services (e.g., Home-based Care, LTC, children with complex needs)
- Stability of access to out-of-province (OOP) specialist physician services
- System navigation challenges for patients/families
- Preparation of health system for Medical School
- Communication to all staff (i.e., ease and timeliness of information sharing across the system)

To learn more about our accomplishments and performance, please see the relevant year's [annual report](#).

PEI at a Glance

To design a strategic plan that meets the needs of the Island community, we need to determine what those needs are by learning about the population we serve.

Prince Edward Island is Canada's smallest province in terms of both land area and population. According to the latest estimate, 173,787 people live in PEI, an increase of 3.9 percent over the past year³. With international immigration as one of the main factors in this population growth, the diversity of the population has also increased³. Not unlike other Canadian provinces, our population is aging. This is demonstrated by a rise in median age from 24.8 years in 1971, to 41.9 years in 2023³.

The information below provides a snapshot of the health Islanders and includes risk factors and disease prevalence of residents aged 18 and older^{3,4,5,6}:

| INDICATORS | PEI (%) | | Canada (%) | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|------------|---------|
| | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| Life expectancy at birth (2015 to 2017) | 79.9 | 83.8 | 80.0 | 84.1 |
| Overweight (2022) | 33.4 | 28.4 | 39.8 | 29.5 |
| Obese (2022) | 31.6 | 41.1 | 30.0 | 30.1 |
| Ischemic heart disease (age 20 and up) | 7.1 | 3.7 | 8.8 | 5.3 |
| Diabetes (2022) | 12.4 | 6.6 | 9.4 | 7.4 |
| Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (2022-2023) | 9.6 | 9.2 | 9.0 | 8.5 |
| Hypertension (2022) | 24.2 | 22.0 | 23.7 | 20.1 |
| Mood disorders (2022) | 6.9 | 12.8 | 8.9 | 14.4 |
| Anxiety disorders (2022) | 10.1 | 16.7 | 10.3 | 19.2 |
| Incident rate per 100,000 population of all cancers (2017) | 617 | 463 | 582 | 493 |
| Daily smoking (2022) | 20.7 | 8.5 | 10.9 | 8.6 |
| Ever used e-cigarette or vaping device | 33.4 | 9.8 | 22.3 | 15.8 |
| Physically active (2022) | 57.5 | 45.4 | 56.9 | 51.0 |
| Fruit and vegetable consumption (2022, 12 years and older) | 13.5 | 19.5 | 18.0 | 25.5 |
| Heavy drinking (2022) | 30.3 | 20.6 | 24.5 | 17.6 |
| Cannabis use in past 12 months | 41.4 | 24.8 | 27.2 | 20.1 |

For a more extensive summary on the health of islanders please see the [2021 Chief Public Health Officer's Report](#).

Current Trends in Health Care

To ensure our strategic plan is adaptable to evolving conditions, we need to understand emerging trends.

The same challenges experienced by Prince Edward Island's health system are also experienced across the country. Emerging trends include:

- Focus on improving access, quality, and equity in healthcare services across the continuum (e.g., primary care, mental health, home care, palliative care, long term care, sexual/ reproductive health services, oral healthcare, surgical services).
- Emphasis on workforce recruitment and retention.
- Adoption of team-based care models.
- Health promotion and health literacy.
- Expansion of publicly funded, privately delivered healthcare and intersectoral collaboration.
- Policy changes supporting pharmacare and dental care.
- Persistent challenges from COVID-19, including mental health and long-term care.
- Rising costs of living, inflation and health care spending.
- Funding needs for modernization, virtual care adoption, and interoperable data systems.
- Addressing inequities in healthcare for vulnerable populations (e.g., rural, Indigenous, seniors)
- Public health concerns like obesity and the aging population.
- Increased immigration and the need for culturally responsive care.
- Advancements in digital health, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and personalized health information access.
- Increased reliance on technology by healthcare providers.
- Climate change adaptation and emission reduction in healthcare.
- Legislative updates for system interoperability to address toxic drug supplies and ensure safe long-term care.

What is your role?

At Health PEI, we recognize the value and the need for continual connection and engagement with the many people who provide and receive our services. For that reason, apart from the factors considered above, our strategic plan is also influenced by the information generated through engagement activities. The next step in the strategic planning process will gather input from staff, physicians, leadership, members of the public, patients and the community. Ideas will be gathered from those interested through facilitated sessions (e.g. focus groups), written submissions and online surveys. This engagement will help us translate your needs into the organizational goals we will strive toward in the coming years.

What happens next?

At the end of this process, analysis of the information gathered will guide the development of a draft strategic plan. Health PEI's Executive Leadership Team and Board of Directors will work collaboratively to review and revise this draft. Once finalized, the strategic plan will be presented to the Department of Health and Wellness for approval in the spring of 2025.

References

¹ Health Services Act, R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. H-1.6.

² PEI Department of Health and Wellness (2023). *Provincial Health Plan: Building a Healthier Tomorrow, 2023-2028*. Retrieved from: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/pei-provincial-health-plan-2023-2028>

³ PEI Department of Finance (2024). Prince Edward Island 50th Annual Statistical Review 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/annual-statistical-review>

⁴ Statistics Canada (2025). *Table 13-10-0096-01: Health characteristics, annual estimates, inactive*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310009601>

⁵ Canadian Institute for Health Information (2024). *Your Health System*. Retrieved from [https://yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca/hsp/inbrief#!/indicators/011/life-expectancy-at-birth;/mapC1;mapLevel2;sex\(A\);trend\(C1,C9001\);/](https://yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca/hsp/inbrief#!/indicators/011/life-expectancy-at-birth;/mapC1;mapLevel2;sex(A);trend(C1,C9001);/)

⁶ Statistics Canada (2024). *Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System 2024*. Retrieved from <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/ccdss/data-tool/>