



# SEXUAL HEALTH TOP 10

*10 policies that Sexual Health Nova Scotia recommends to support positive sexual and reproductive health for all*

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## **1. Ensure access to health care for all Nova Scotians.**

Primary health care is the province's most pressing issue. Community groups, including sexual health centres, are overwhelmed by requests from people without family doctors who can't access basic services (like STI screening, Pap tests, or birth control). Nova Scotia should ensure universal, equitable access to health care.

## **2. Enhance drug coverage to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health medications.**

Too many people cannot afford the medications they need. Birth control pills, emergency contraception, Mifegymiso for medical abortions, and PReP/PeP to prevent HIV infection are just a few of the medications that should be fully or partially covered.

## **3. Support better access to STI testing.**

It's hard to encourage people to get tested for sexually transmitted infections if there's nowhere to send them for the test. Nova Scotia needs easier and more widespread access to STI testing, including anonymous and rapid (point-of-care) testing for HIV.

## **4. Improve services for victims and survivors of sexual violence.**

Preventing sexual violence is crucial, and so is providing services to people who have experienced it. Nova Scotia should continue to support the work of the Sexual Violence Strategy, and provide equitable funding to the diverse organizations that offer sexual assault services. The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program should continue to expand, along with programs that provide access to counseling and mental health services for victims and survivors.

## **5. Improve sexual health education in public schools.**

Many students in Nova Scotia are still dissatisfied with the sexual health education they receive. They need comprehensive sexual health education that's accurate and relevant to their real-life concerns. Teachers and schools should be given the support and resources they require to provide that education.

## **6. Support the sexual health and rights of seniors.**

Sex doesn't stop at 60, and neither does the right to positive sexual health. We should invest in caring for our aging population, provide sexual health information to seniors, train service providers to understand sexual health and aging, and ensure long-term care facilities are sex positive and LGBTQ+ inclusive.

## **7. Support the health and rights of transgender Nova Scotians.**

Transgender and non-binary Nova Scotians still face too many barriers and too much discrimination. Wait lists for medical appointments related to transition are painfully long. Health services aren't available across the province. Transphobia prevents people from finding secure jobs or housing. We must do more to support transgender Nova Scotians.

## **8. Advocate for better protections for sex workers.**

Health and personal safety go hand in hand. Yet Canada's current laws still compromise the safety of sex workers. Nova Scotia should ensure sex workers have safe access to health and harm reduction services, and advocate for better federal legislation that recognize the rights of sex workers and clearly distinguish between trafficking and voluntary sex work.

## **9. Consider sexual health a core competency for all health care workers and service providers, and support access to training.**

Sexual health is important – it shouldn't be considered trivial or taboo. Anyone working in health care or social services should receive mandatory training in how they can address sexual health concerns (including disclosure of sexual violence or abuse) and support positive sexual health for their clients or patients.

## **10. Develop a provincial sexual health strategy with a commitment to increased funding.**

To achieve positive sexual health for all Nova Scotians (including many populations we haven't mentioned above), the province should have a clear sexual health strategy. It should invest in the community groups that already provide key sexual health services for many Nova Scotians.