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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Nouvelle-Écosse | 59e  | 1re  | Discours sur la santé | 3 Novembre 2005 | Angus Macisaac | Minister of Health |  |

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to update my colleagues on the status of the new provincial program being developed to assist non-insured Nova Scotians with the cost of diabetes medications and supplies needed to help manage their condition. This was one of government's blueprint commitments, and I'm pleased to say that not only are we delivering on our pledge to cover the cost of diabetes supplies, we'll help cover diabetes medication as well.

This year the province allocated $2.5 million to develop and implement the Nova Scotia Diabetes Assistance Program, which will be phased in over time. This $2.5 million represents an initial investment in what will become an $8 million to $9 million program. In essence, the Diabetes Assistance Program will help cover the cost of insulin, oral hyperglycemic medications, glucose test strips, syringes, needles and lancets, which are approved under the Nova Scotia formulary, for those Nova Scotians who have diabetes but do not have drug coverage. We have also included an education component to help Nova Scotians understand the importance of managing their condition and the benefits of leading a healthy, active lifestyle.

Mr. Speaker, diabetes is a condition that, if left untreated, can lead to complications such as heart disease, kidney disease, and blindness. That's why chronic disease management, such as what will be offered through this program, is crucial to helping reduce the chances of getting complications from this disease. This program will also be evaluated in order to assess the financial and self-care-component benefits to Nova Scotians with diabetes.

Mr. Speaker, much time has gone into researching and identifying what Nova Scotia's Diabetes Assistance Program should look like. We have reviewed and analyzed what the diabetes assistance programs in other provinces and jurisdictions offer. We've looked at what worked and what didn't work. We've considered the unique needs of Nova Scotians and the fact that the number of people uninsured in Atlantic Canada is greater than in any other part of the country.

Mr. Speaker, we've worked closely with the Canadian Diabetes Association and the Nova Scotia Diabetes Care Centres to make sure any provincial program developed would meet the needs of Nova Scotians. I would like to take a moment to thank these groups for their dedication and ongoing commitment to the health of Nova Scotians with diabetes. We appreciate and value the continued work in this area.

We have worked hard to develop a program that will help Nova Scotians with diabetes today and in the years to come. However, we have learned from other provinces and from here at home that this can only be done with some sort of cost sharing. If not, we will not be able to afford to continue to offer a program over time no matter how beneficial the program.

To offer a substantial program, the cost must be shared by government and those requiring assistance. This is similar to the way the province's other Pharmacare Programs operate, and many other insurance programs. Mr. Speaker, similar to other Pharmacare Programs, all Nova Scotians who participate in this program will be required to pay a co-payment amount of 20 per cent for each prescription. In addition, there will also be a program deductible amount that will be determined by considering family income and size. For instance, a person with diabetes and a family of four with a total income of $25,000 would have an annual deductible of only $16 under this program. Once the annual deductible is reached, the province will fund 80 per cent of their eligible medications and testing supplies.

However, a person seeking help under the program from a family of six, with a total income of $36,000, would have a calculated annual deductible of $73.50. That means the government would fund over 77 per cent of all eligible medications and testing supplies. As you can see, given the annual deductable amount a family will pay is based on income and family size, many Nova Scotians in the program will see government fund at least 75 per cent of their eligible diabetes medications and testing supplies.

Mr. Speaker, this cost-sharing approach will help as many people as possible to optimize their care now and in the future. We will anticipate to be able to have the application process for this program in place by the end of 2005 and to roll out the program in early 2006. Instead of waiting until the electronic system is ready, we have opted to establish a manual system to use in the interim so we can offer this program to Nova Scotians as soon as possible. The manual system would be used to register clients, calculate and track deductibles, and pay families upon submission of receipts. An automated program is currently underdeveloped.

As already communicated in the Spring, Nova Scotians will be advised of the program's start date and the application process in the near future through public notices in newspapers, pharmacies and physician offices. This program is a testament that this government is investing where it counts, where it will make a real difference in the lives of Nova Scotians. Thank you.