

# Community Accounts puts vital information on the Web

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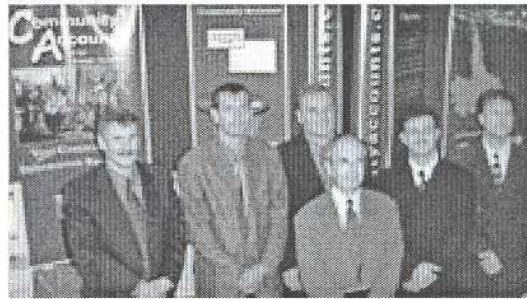
Health Minister Gerald Smith Monday launched Community Accounts, a web-based information system already earning high marks for its easy access and focus on social and economic well-being.

Community Accounts of the Strategic Social Plan (SSP) is a first for the country and has received praise from policy makers in other jurisdictions.

"This is one of the most exciting pieces of work to come out of the SSP," said Smith, the lead minister for the plan. "It was developed to measure social progress and is receiving attention from policy makers across this country and internationally and that's because it's one of a kind."

What makes the system unique is that it brings together information on a wide variety of topics, including income, education, employment and health. All this information gives a picture of the well-being, the quality of life in our communities, regions and the province as a whole, said Smith.

Community Accounts is also a great resource for government, according to Smith, as they move forward with their Strategic Health Plan, Healthier Together. He said the health accounts will be used to help track relevant health information about communities, and plan accordingly.



**Community Accounts of the Strategic Social Plan, a new Web-based information system providing easy access and a focus on social and economic well-being, was launched in Stephenville Monday. Involved in creating Community Accounts include (front) Dr. Doug May of Memorial University; (back) from left, Alton Hollett of the Newfoundland Statistics Agency and his staff, Peter Benoite, Robert Reid, Terry Quinlan and Greg Tucker.**

However, he said what's really exciting is that government will get a better picture of the relationship between indicators such as health, income, education and employment. They will be able to explore differences and similarities between communities and look at the factors that make a community successful.

Smith said Statistics Canada calls Community Accounts, "an exciting, well-designed tool for putting information into the hands of the general public".

He said that is really what it's all about and that as a government, they are committed to being open and accountable, which means giving everyone access to this resource, "whether you're a policy maker, a researcher, a student or a citizen interested in what's going on in your own area."

Education Minister Judy Foote said her department will benefit from Community Accounts as they further implement their education and literacy initiatives. She said continuing to collect data at the regional and community level will help identify where the need is greatest, and act accordingly.

While they've had access to pertinent information in the past which has helped them define policy, Foote said they haven't had this breadth of information and not at the regional and community level.

June Alteen, chair of the Cormack-Grenfell Regional Steering Committee of the SSP, said the information contained in Community Accounts enables their organization to establish a beginning data set for one or several communities as indicators, such as age and tobacco use. She said it also enables them to compare with the provincial figures and determine what is needed.

She acknowledged the invaluable contribution of Newfoundland Statistics in providing training and support to persons in the region, including the regional planner. She noted that the public is about to access the same information.

Bev Kirby, a member of the same steering committee and executive director of the Community Education Network, said she is looking forward to using the resource in the work they do, and what she likes most is that such a wide variety of data is now available to them.

Community Accounts has been in development for the past couple of years and is now accessible through the Internet at [www.communityaccounts.ca](http://www.communityaccounts.ca).