

# **Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

## **Accountability Report 2021-2022**



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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission for the year ended March 31, 2022, is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Commission outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by Commission management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission 2021-2022 Business Plan.

### **Original signed by**

Joseph Fraser  
Director & CEO

## Message from the Director and CEO

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission remains committed to creating inclusive communities and to promoting the advancement of human rights in Nova Scotia by fostering positive, productive, and respectful relationships.

In fiscal 2021-2022, the Commission continued to respond to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic by adapting service delivery and innovating to engage with the public. The Commission delivered education and training through virtual and hybrid approaches. These approaches increased accessibility and broadened participation geographically.

The Commission initiated new partnerships within African Nova Scotian communities to launch the Human Rights on the Road series of education and engagement sessions. The Commission also hosted virtual events in recognition of significant human rights dates including the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and International Human Rights Day. Initial meetings and discussion with Mi'kmaq community members initiated the development of a pathway to strengthening relationships toward reconciliation.

Amid high inquiry volume, staffing challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and emerging issues related to public health mandates, the Commission reduced its backlog of files awaiting investigation and continues to implement process improvements. Commission staff engaged in on-going learning and development to increase awareness of issues affecting equity-seeking communities and ensure service delivery is culturally responsive and trauma-informed.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to the staff, management, and Commissioners for their commitment, resilience, and work to serve the public during these challenging times.

### **Original signed by**

Joseph Fraser  
Director & CEO

## Financial Results

	2021-2022 Estimate	2021-2022 Actuals	2021-2022 Variance
<b>Human Rights Commission</b>	<i>(\$thousands)</i>		
<b>Departmental Expenses:</b>			
Administration	772	816	44
Support Services	2,085	1,943	(142)
<b>Total: Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>2,857</b>	<b>2,759</b>	<b>(98)</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Ordinary Revenue	0	0	0
Fees and Other Charges	0	0	0
Ordinary Recoveries	8	0	(8)
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries</b>			
TCA Purchase Requirements	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	<b>25.5</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>(4)</b>
<b><u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u></b>			
Variance due to vacancy savings.			
<b><u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u></b>			
Variance due to temporary vacancies			

## Measuring Our Performance

### Core Responsibilities and Services for 2021-22

#### #1

**Outcome:** Communities within Nova Scotia are more inclusive

**Goals:** Advance Priority Human Rights Issues

**Actions:**

1. The Commission will focus efforts on addressing longstanding issues of systemic racism related to people of African descent.
2. The Commission will develop a framework and capacity to contribute to reconciliation with First Nations communities.
3. The Commission will increase its visibility in correctional facilities and address human rights issues identified in the corrections system.
4. The Commission will continue to identify emerging human rights issues to guide it in its work.

**Performance Measures:**

- The Commission will organize up to 5 community meetings to engage the public on priority human rights issues, such as systemic racism and reconciliation.
  - The Commission engaged with the African Nova Scotian community and the public at large on priority human rights issues impacting the Black community by hosting the following events:
    - January 12, 2022 – Collaborated with the Delmore Buddy Daye Learning Institute to host a virtual Human Rights on the Road Session for the African Nova Scotian Community.
    - March 08, 2022 – Hosted a one-on-one conversation entitled *Human Rights Through Our Eyes: A Conversation with Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard* in celebration of African Heritage Month.
    - March 22, 2022 – Partnered with the Halifax Public Libraries to organize a panel discussion entitled *Through Our Eyes: Reimagining Human Rights in the Fight Against Anti-Black Racism* in recognition of United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

- Commission staff delivered several culturally relevant training sessions to Nova Scotia public sector employees on specific human rights related issues pertaining to the Black community.
- The Commission engaged with various Mi'kmaq-serving organizations under the umbrella of the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and provided an overview of the Commission's work and initiated a pathway to foster better relationships with the organizations and the community at large.
- Initial work has begun around knowledge mobilization to channel a pathway for the development a Truth and Reconciliation framework for the Commission.
- Commission staff engaged and collaborated with various equity seeking groups on priority human rights issues to gain an understanding of their concerns and work towards building community relations.
- Staff of the Commission will continue to visit provincial correctional facilities to meet with persons in custody and management to address human rights issues.
  - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and public health restrictions, Commission staff were not able to enter provincial correctional facilities. Staff continued to assess concerns from persons in custody through the intake process.

## #2

**Outcome:** Leader and innovator in the protection and promotion of human rights

**Goal:** Modernize the Human Rights Commission

**Actions:**

1. The Commission will expand its online training resources to provide free public education for the province on a wide range of human rights issues.
2. The Commission will enhance its communication strategy and continue to expand its use of digital media platforms to promote human rights.
3. The Commission will develop tools to enhance efficiency and transparency in human rights dispute resolution.
4. The Commission will provide extensive training and development opportunities to staff.
5. The Commission will fully incorporate restorative principles into all aspects of its work.

**Performance Measures:**

- The Commission will clear the backlog of complaints related to the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to ensure that investigations of complaints are approached restoratively.
  - The Commission reduced the backlog of complaints pending investigation and continues to work through process improvements to further reduce delays resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Commission will continue to lead CASHRA in the development of timely policies to address emerging human rights issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - The Commission actively participated in the CASHRA Roundtable on Human Rights Implications of COVID-19. The Commission provided insight into the impacts on Nova Scotians to the roundtable.

#3

**Outcome:** Capacity is strengthened on human rights issues

**Goals:** Advance Dialogue and Human Rights Practices

**Actions:**

1. The Commission will highlight and build upon advancements in human rights work by contributing to the national conversation surrounding human rights issues.
2. The Commission will continue to strengthen government and media relations.
3. The Commission will encourage the adoption of best human rights practices by:
  - a. strengthening connections with stakeholders such as professionals, volunteers, communities, businesses, and organizations involved in human rights work;
  - b. providing tools, resources, and training that promote human rights;
  - c. contributing to a stronger national partnership of human rights commissions.
4. The Commission will enhance mechanisms to give voice to affected communities, on human rights issues.
5. The Commission will provide support for efforts to increase diversity within public institutions in the province.

**Performance Measures:**

- The Commission will participate in a minimum of 5 workshops, presentations and/or information sessions on topics related to human rights in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

- The Commission hosted a film screening “Is the Crown at War with Us?” and panel discussion with Mi’kmaq community members in honor of Mi’kmaq History Month.
- The Commission is collaborating with the Michaelle Jean Foundation, Canadian Race Relations Foundation, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission to host a Human Rights focused breakout session during the 2022 National Black Canadian Summit being hosted in Halifax from July 29-31, 2022.
- In partnership with the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities, the Commission sat on the organizing committee for the 2021 International Day of Persons with Disabilities event and provided support towards making the event more accessible.
- Through the Mi’kmaq/Indigenous Liaison and Education Officer, the Commission worked with various community groups to discuss collaborative initiatives.
- The Commission supported the Accessibility Directorate’s Standards Development Committee on Employment to develop guidelines under the Accessibility Act.
- The Commission will lead CASHRA in the development and promotion of training tools for national use in both English and French to promote human rights across Canada.
  - On May 28, 2021, the Commission Chair made a written submission to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples Study on Bill C-25: An Act Respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
  - Commission representatives began collaborating with external organizations regarding the enhancement of information about the human rights complaint process available to the public. This partnership is an on-going commitment.
- The staff of the Commission will reflect the diversity of communities throughout Nova Scotia and its staff will provide support to public institutions, including the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in the development of a strategy to promote diversity and inclusion in the public service.

- The Commission continued to contribute to on-going partnerships, provide advice, facilitate human rights education sessions and support to government partners including: the Public Service Commission, Vital Statistics, Labour, Skills and Immigration, and Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.
- The Commission provided human rights education for staff with Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia and the West Hants Regional Municipality staff and council.
- The Commission worked in partnership with the Office of Equity & Anti-Racism Initiatives and the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate to promote diversity and inclusion within the public service.

## Appendix A

### Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A Wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
- b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
- d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2021-2022
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	n/a
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	n/a