



# Accountability Report 2019–20

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Human Rights Commission



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ISBN: 978-1-77448-056-4

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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (Commission) for the year ended March 31, 2020 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Commission's Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Commission's outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by the Commission's management.

I acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Commission's 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 Commission's 2019-2020 Business Plan.

*'Original signed by Christine Hanson'*

Christine Hanson  
Director and CEO

## Message from the Director and CEO



The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission is fully committed to the creation of inclusive communities and the protection of human rights in Nova Scotia by fostering positive, productive and respectful relationships.

This year the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission took over leadership of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA). The CASHRA virtual classroom was expanded with the launch of a national online training course “Safer Spaces Make Great Workplaces” to prevent and address sexual harassment in workplaces. The Commission’s virtual classroom with three online courses has continued to provide free human rights training to thousands of Nova Scotians across the province this year.

The Commission has continued to modernize and innovate in fiscal year 2019-20. The Commission developed and launched online tools to further improve the efficiency and transparency of the dispute resolution process.

Stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and partnerships with various community members continued to improve the Commission’s ability to address the issue of systemic racism. The Commission continued follow-up work on the street checks report released last fiscal year by hosting several Commission led community sessions. The Commission also released an independent legal opinion of the issue of the legality of the practice of police street checks on October 18, 2019, leading to the government’s announcement later that day of a permanent ban on the practice.

My sincere thanks go to the staff, management, and Commissioners for their commitment and hard work to ensure the best possible service to the public throughout this period.

*‘Original signed by Christine Hanson’*

Christine Hanson  
Director and CEO

## Financial Results

	2019-2020 Estimate	2019-2020 Actuals	2019-2020 Variance
Human Rights Commission	<i>(\$thousands)</i>		
<b>Departmental Expenses:</b>			
Administration	854	767	(87)
Support Services	1,761	1,847	86
<b>Total: Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>2,615</b>	<b>2,614</b>	<b>(1)</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Ordinary Revenue	0	0	0
Fees and Other Charges	0	0	0
Ordinary Recoveries	0	28	28
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	24.5	23.4	(1.1)
<b><u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u></b> Variance not material			
<b><u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u></b> Variance due to increased recoveries from education training			
<b><u>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</u></b> N/A			
<b><u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u></b> Variance due to vacancy savings			

# Measuring Our Performance

## 2019-2020 Core Responsibilities and Services

### #1

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

**Goals:** Advance Priority Human Rights Issues

**Actions:**

1. The Commission focused efforts on addressing longstanding issues of systemic racism related to people of African descent.
2. The Commission increased its visibility in correctional facilities and addressed human rights issues identified in the corrections system.
3. The Commission continued to identify emerging human rights issues to guide the Commission in its work.

**Inputs:**

The Commission continued to work within its existing budget to identify the necessary resources to achieve this priority and complete the required actions. It engaged and continued to work with community partners, stakeholders and other government departments and agencies to achieve this outcome.

**Performance Measures:**

- The Commission will organize up to five community meetings to engage the public on priority human rights issues, such as systemic racism and reconciliation.
  - The Commission hosted 3 community meetings (May 21-23, 2019) with Dr. Scot Wortley on the issue of police street checks.
  - The Commission co-hosted a panel discussion with the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs on March 11, 2020, in advanced recognition of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, under the theme, "Understanding Anti-Black Racism: Trauma and Resilience".
- Staff of the Commission will begin regular visits to provincial correctional facilities.
  - The Commission commenced regular visits to the Central Nova Scotia Correctional facility (in Burnside, Dartmouth) on January 22, 2020.

## #2

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

**Goal:** Modernize the Human Rights Commission

**Actions:**

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

**Input:**

The Commission continued working toward an improved and more effective implementation of the restorative approach to human rights dispute resolution. As the benefits of this model continued to be realized, the Commission was able to better direct its human resources to focus on the education and training needs component of its mandate.

**Performance Measures:**

- The Commission will expand its virtual classroom by developing and launching a new online course "Human Rights 101".
  - Preliminary work on the Human Rights 101 online course commenced in FY 2019-20, but the Commission does not expect to launch the course until FY 2020-21.
  - The Commission launched the CASHRA online national training "Safer Spaces Make Great Workplaces" on June 26, 2019, to prevent and address sexual harassment in workplaces.
- The Commission will develop a Frequently Asked Questions section on our website and implement an online Intake Form to clarify dispute resolution processes and improve efficiency.
  - The Commission approved new a policy and procedures for human rights dispute resolution on May 16, 2019 and placed them on the Commission's website.



- The Commission developed and launched a new information section for the website in September of 2019, to address the issue of discrimination in housing.
- The FAQ section was developed and launched in January of 2020 and has been visited 845 times.
- The Commission will continue to ensure that investigations of complaints are approached restoratively and are completed within one year of receipt.
  - Investigations of complaints were approached restoratively and on average were completed in less than one year.

### #3

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

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

**Actions:**

1. The Commission highlighted and built upon advancements in human rights work by contributing to the national conversation surrounding human rights issues.
2. The Commission continued to strengthen government and media relations.
3. The Commission encouraged 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; and
  - c. contributing to a stronger national partnership of human rights commissions.
4. The Commission enhanced mechanisms to give voice to affected communities on human rights issues.
5. The Commission provided support for efforts to increase diversity within public institutions in the province.
6. The Commission worked with stakeholders and police to advance the recommendations of Dr. Scott Wortley's Street Checks Report.

**Inputs:**

The Commission worked within its existing budget and staffing complement to achieve this priority and complete the required actions.

## Performance Measures:

- The Commission will present on its experience with the use of restorative approaches to dispute resolution at a national human rights conference.
  - The Commission organized and presented at a panel on restorative approaches to human rights dispute resolution at 2019 CASHRA Annual Conference in PEI.
- The Commission will participate in a minimum of ten workshops, presentations and/or information sessions on topics related to human rights in the 2019-20 fiscal year.
  - During fiscal 2019-20, 11 free human rights education sessions were offered throughout the province.
  - A total of 36 workshops, presentations and/or information sessions were held during the 2019-20 fiscal year. A total of 1835 individuals attended these sessions. The increase in the number of sessions was due to higher demand from the public, which also resulted in an increase in the number of attendees.
- The Commission will continue to serve as co-chair of Partners for Human Rights, and to organize a day long consultation session on human rights with individuals, organizations and community groups dedicated to advancing human rights in the province.
  - The Commission continued to serve as co-chair of Partners for Human Rights and co-organized the Human Rights Awards event with Partners on December 10, 2020.
  - The Commission postponed the organization of the consultation session in advance of the Federal Provincial Territorial meeting as the COVID-19 pandemic forced the organizers to reschedule the meeting to a future date in FY 2020-21.
- The staff of the Commission will reflect the diversity of communities throughout Nova Scotia and Commission staff will provide support to the Public Service Commission in the development of a strategy to promote diversity and inclusion in the public service.
  - In 2019-20, the Commission had a staffing complement of 23, with a significant number of its members reflecting the diversity of Nova Scotia's communities.
  - The Commission created the designated position "African Nova Scotian Liaison Officer" in August of 2019 to help improve our service to African Nova Scotians.

## 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

Please use the following format to satisfy the disclosure obligation:

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 2019-2020
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	NA
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	NA
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	NA