

# **Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

## **Business Plan 2025-2026**



## Message from the Director and CEO

On behalf of the staff and Commissioners of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (“the Commission”), I am pleased to present the Commission’s 2025-2026 Business Plan. Drawing upon its origins, the Commission is committed to strengthening accountability, credibility, and the responsiveness of its services by reconnecting with its roots and grounding its work in L’nu and Afrocentric principles. This reflective approach informs the Commission’s path forward. The urgency of this work is underscored by the recognition that human rights are central to protecting dignity and equality amidst the critical issues affecting the lives of Nova Scotians today.

The Commission believes that social justice should be accessible to all, regardless of background or circumstances. Its goal is to establish a practice centered on the needs of individuals and communities, ensuring equal access to services and a dispute resolution system that is trauma-informed, restorative, and culturally responsive.

The Commission envisions a path forward in which education is not just a means of acquiring knowledge but a tool for driving transformational change. The goal is to catalyze this change by empowering communities to combat discrimination through education that is accessible, inclusive, and equitable.

Through its mandate to protect and promote a common standard of human rights for all Nova Scotians based on the inherent dignity, equality, and inalienable rights of every individual, the Commission advances a vision of a Nova Scotia where everyone has an equal opportunity to lead a full and productive life.

We welcome government’s announcement of reforms to strengthen the Commission. My team and I look forward to working closely with government to build a stronger, more responsive commission, ensuring we uphold the principles of justice, equity, and inclusion for everyone in our province.

Original signed by

Joseph Fraser  
Director and CEO

## Mandate

The Human Rights Commission has a unique role within Nova Scotia. It is an independent government agency tasked with administering the *Human Rights Act*, a provincial statute created in 1969 and most recently amended in 2012. The Commission is mandated by the Act to help build inclusive communities and protect human rights in Nova Scotia.

The Act also sets out the specific duties of the Commission, primarily administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act. In addition, it develops public information and education programs in the field of human rights to advance the principle that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights without regard to age, race, colour, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease, ethnic, national or Aboriginal origin, family status, marital status, source of income, political belief, affiliation or activity, association with protected groups or individuals, sexual harassment, harassment of protected groups or individuals, or retaliation.

The Commission is also mandated to conduct and encourage research by universities and other bodies in the general field of human rights, provide advice to government departments and agencies regarding human rights issues, and assist individuals and private organizations concerned with human rights matters, offering recommendations on increasing awareness both within and outside the province.

Pursuant to the Act, the Commission reports to the Minister of Justice on its activities, and considers, investigates, or administers any matter or activity referred to it by the Minister or the Governor-in-Council.

## Pillars & Priorities

### Goal 1: Provide Human-Centered Service Delivery Through Restorative Practices

The Commission's human-centered service delivery leverages restorative practices to support individuals who have experienced or caused harm. This approach is guided by the Mi'kmaw teaching *Msit No'kmaq*, which emphasizes our interconnectedness and shared responsibility to care for one another. By recognizing the value and potential of every individual, the Commission fosters positive change and growth within communities.

The Commission will enhance awareness and utilization of its early resolution process to efficiently resolve disputes through restorative practices. It will also implement a triage process to ensure services are responsive to individual needs. Additionally, the Commission will continue integrating trauma-informed and restorative principles into its intake and investigation processes.

### Goal 2: Galvanize Transformative Change Through Education and Empowerment

Education and empowerment are essential to transformative social change, including the prevention of and response to discrimination. The third principle of Nguzo Saba, *Ujima*, emphasizes solidarity, cooperation, and active participation in improving lives. By equipping individuals with the support to overcome challenges, the Commission enables them to contribute to collective well-being and shared responsibility, embodying the essence of *Ujima*.

The Commission will enhance educational programs and support organizations in addressing various human rights topics by empowering communities to combat discrimination through accessible, inclusive, and equitable education. Additionally, it will foster equity and trust with L'nu and African Nova Scotian communities through intentional actions and strategic partnerships.

### Goal 3: Increase Access and Remove Barriers to Justice

To ensure that everyone in Nova Scotia has access to justice, especially those from underserved communities, the Commission embraces the Mi'kmaw teaching of *Mikna*,

which translates to "face the foe with integrity." This teaching emphasizes courage, honesty, and righteousness in confronting challenges and upholding the principles of justice, fairness, and human rights, even when achieving favorable outcomes is difficult.

While maintaining its position of neutrality, the Commission will continue to educate and empower community partners who assist and advocate for individuals engaged with the Commission's processes. It will also improve data collection to support informed decision-making on human rights issues, ensure timely and fair access to its processes, and enhance the sharing of information and resources.

#### Goal 4: Lead and Participate in Deliberate Human Rights Research

*Nea Onnim No Sua A Ohu* - "The one who does not know can know through learning" - is a proverb from the Akan people of Ghana that highlights the importance of lifelong learning and acquiring knowledge from diverse sources. It emphasizes that learning is a collaborative and participatory process.

The Commission will strengthen its research capabilities by learning from Nova Scotia's human rights history and applying those lessons to the current context, integrating historical narratives into public education. The Commission aims to share knowledge and drive behavioral change through evidence-based research, while leading and collaborating with partners on transformative human rights research.

#### Goal 5: Build Internal Capacity to Achieve Long-Term Success

To enhance its internal capacity, the Commission embraces the Akan principle embodied in the proverb "*Woforo Dua Pa A*", which translates to "When you climb a good tree, you are given a push." This signifies that efforts toward a noble cause attract support and reflects the Commission's commitment to fostering a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

The Commission will ensure clear, consistent, and timely service delivery by providing relevant training and development for its staff; improve process efficiency by identifying and implementing enhancements to elevate service delivery standards; and strengthen planning and reporting to enhance external accountability and transparency.

# Financial Summary

<b>Departmental Expenses Summary</b> (\$ thousands)			
<b><u>Programs and Services</u></b>	<b><u>2024-25 Estimate</u></b>	<b><u>2024-25 Forecast</u></b>	<b><u>2025-26 Estimate</u></b>
<b>Total Departmental Expenses</b>	3,044	3,044	3,080
<b>Ordinary Recoveries</b>	16	16	16
<b><u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u></b> <b>Department Funded Staff</b>	26.5	22.8	26.5
<b><u>Note:</u></b> For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2 For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1			