



Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Annual Report
2025-2026



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Recognizing Our Origins

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (“the Commission”) respectfully acknowledges that it operates in Mi’kma’ki, the ancestral territory of the L’nu’k (Mi’kmaq), the Indigenous people of Mi’kma’ki. This territory is covered by the treaties of peace and friendship signed by the Mi’kmaq and the British Crown between 1725 and 1779. L’nu’k have made this land their home from time immemorial and they are its past, present and future caretakers.

Despite this, the pursuit of colonialism resulted in encroachment on sacred territory, cultural genocide, and oppression that served to advance the lives of settlers at the expense of the Mi’kmaq.

It is in the context of this history that the Commission seeks to address persistent, systemic, and institutionalized discrimination resulting from the ideals of white supremacy.

The Commission’s origins are rooted in the work of African Nova Scotians who have been present in Mi’kma’ki for more than 400 years. From a history of slavery and legislated segregation, African Nova Scotians came together, coordinated, and fought against institutionalized racism, discrimination, and oppression, which led to the creation of the Commission. As we build upon their work together to address the harms of colonialism, we do so in the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation, drawing upon the resilience and commitment of our forebearers to guide us in our important work to protect and promote the human rights of Nova Scotians.

We recognize the intergenerational impacts of the historic and ongoing injustices against Mi’kmaq people and African Nova Scotians, and the resulting privileges of those who continue to benefit from these offences.

We honour and embrace Mi’kmaw wisdom, such as *Msit No’kmaq* – meaning “all my relations” - which values the inherent interconnectivity of all things, as we strive to foster relationships based on respect for one another’s inherent dignity.

We invite you to join in this work with humility and optimism for a better future.

Message from the CEO

Dear Minister Armstrong,

I am pleased to present the Commission's Annual Report for 2025-26. This year was one of continued change and progress. We remained focused on our core accountability to protect and promote human rights while strengthening how we deliver services to Nova Scotians.

A significant part of that work has been improving our human rights complaint process. Building on enhancements to our intake services, we extended our Business Process Improvement work into investigations and early resolution. We examined how cases move through the Commission, strengthened standard operating procedures, improved case management and introduced greater consistency and accountability across our processes.

This work is already producing a stronger foundation for the future. We have been addressing older cases and improving how we monitor and manage our caseload. These efforts are about more than efficiency. They are about ensuring that people who engage with the Commission encounter a process that is clear, fair, accessible and responsive.

Our work to promote human rights also remained strong. Nova Scotia Human Rights Week brought communities together for conversations on accessibility, racial equity, Indigenous rights, workplace inclusion, gender-based violence and other pressing human rights issues.

The human rights landscape continues to evolve, and the Commission is evolving with it. The improvements underway across the organization are helping us build the capacity, consistency and resilience required to meet that accountability.

I am grateful to our staff, Commissioners, community partners and the many Nova Scotians who contribute to this work. Together, we are building a stronger Commission and advancing our shared commitment to dignity, equality and human rights for everyone in Nova Scotia.

Joseph Fraser
Director and CEO

Commissioners and Commission Meetings

Under the *Human Rights Act* (the “Act”), the Commission is composed of at least three and no more than twelve Commissioners. During the 2025-26 fiscal year, five new Commissioners and a new chair were appointed. The following community members served as Commissioners during the fiscal year:

- ▶ Shawna Paris, ONS, KC (Chair, Oct – Mar)
- ▶ Cynthia Dorrington (Chair, Apr – Jul)
- ▶ Joseph Fraser (Director and CEO, non-voting member)
- ▶ Jenifer Tsang (Vice-Chair)
- ▶ Blair Eavis
- ▶ Diana Brothers
- ▶ Fola Adeleke
- ▶ Jasmine Ghosn
- ▶ John Boddie
- ▶ Julien Matte
- ▶ Lerato Chondoma
- ▶ Marie Adsett
- ▶ Monica Paris
- ▶ Dr. Muhammad Khan
- ▶ Natasha Pearl
- ▶ Quy Linh
- ▶ Robin Thompson
- ▶ Sharon Ross
- ▶ Theodore Morrison

Commissioners are selected from diverse backgrounds and communities across Nova Scotia and appointed by Executive Order of Executive Council.

Commissioner responsibilities are outlined in the Act. They provide strategic direction and make decisions on human rights matters, including referrals to Boards of Inquiry.

Commissioners typically meet six times per year, virtually, at the Halifax office, or in communities beyond HRM. Regular bi-monthly meetings focus on human rights cases, emerging issues, and public awareness.

Mandate and Vision

Mandate

The Commission serves a distinct function in Nova Scotia as an independent government agency responsible for administering the *Act* - a provincial statute established in 1969 and last amended in 2012. Under its legislative mandate, the Commission is dedicated to fostering inclusive communities and safeguarding human rights throughout Nova Scotia.

The *Act* outlines the duties of the Commission, which include administering and enforcing its provisions. The Commission is responsible for developing public information and education programs relating to human rights, with the aim of promoting the principle that every individual is entitled to equality and dignity. This applies regardless of factors such as 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, experiences of sexual harassment or other harassment, or retaliation.

The Commission is responsible for conducting and promoting research related to human rights through universities and other organizations. It provides guidance to government departments and agencies on human rights concerns and enhances awareness of human rights issues.

In accordance with the *Act*, the Commission submits reports on its activities to the Minister of Justice and undertakes consideration, investigation, or administration of matters referred to it by either the Minister or the Governor-in-Council.

The dual responsibilities entrusted to the Commission—administering the provisions of the *Act* to safeguard human rights, as well as promoting human rights through educational initiatives, community outreach, and engagement—naturally present a healthy tension between its protective and proactive functions.

The Commission strives to ensure everyone understands their rights and has access to a clear, fair, and effective complaint process.

The Commission does not advocate for any particular individual or group but rather represents and promotes the public interest in advancing its vision and mission.



Our Vision

A Nova Scotia where every individual is afforded an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life.



Our Mission

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.

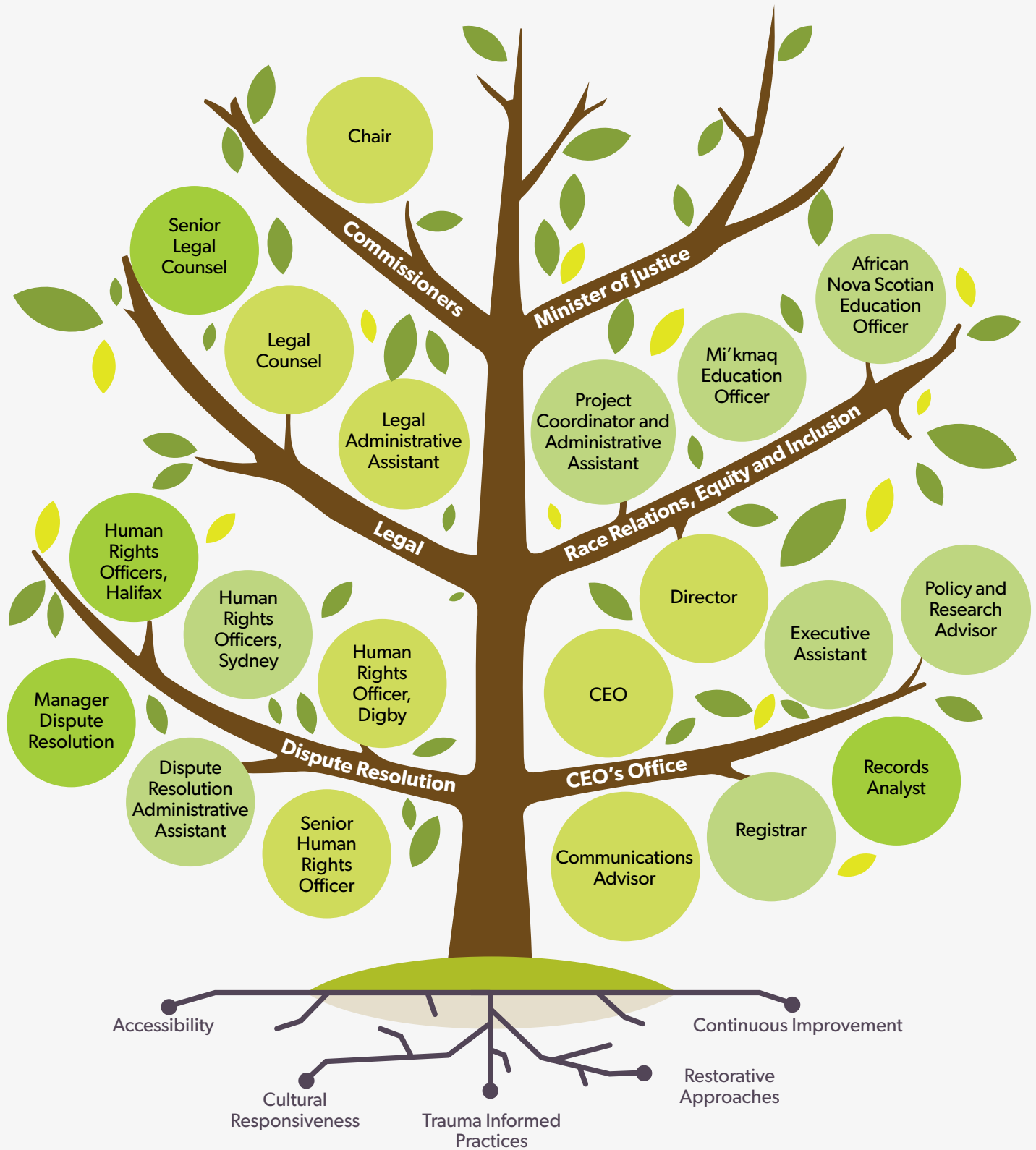


Our Values

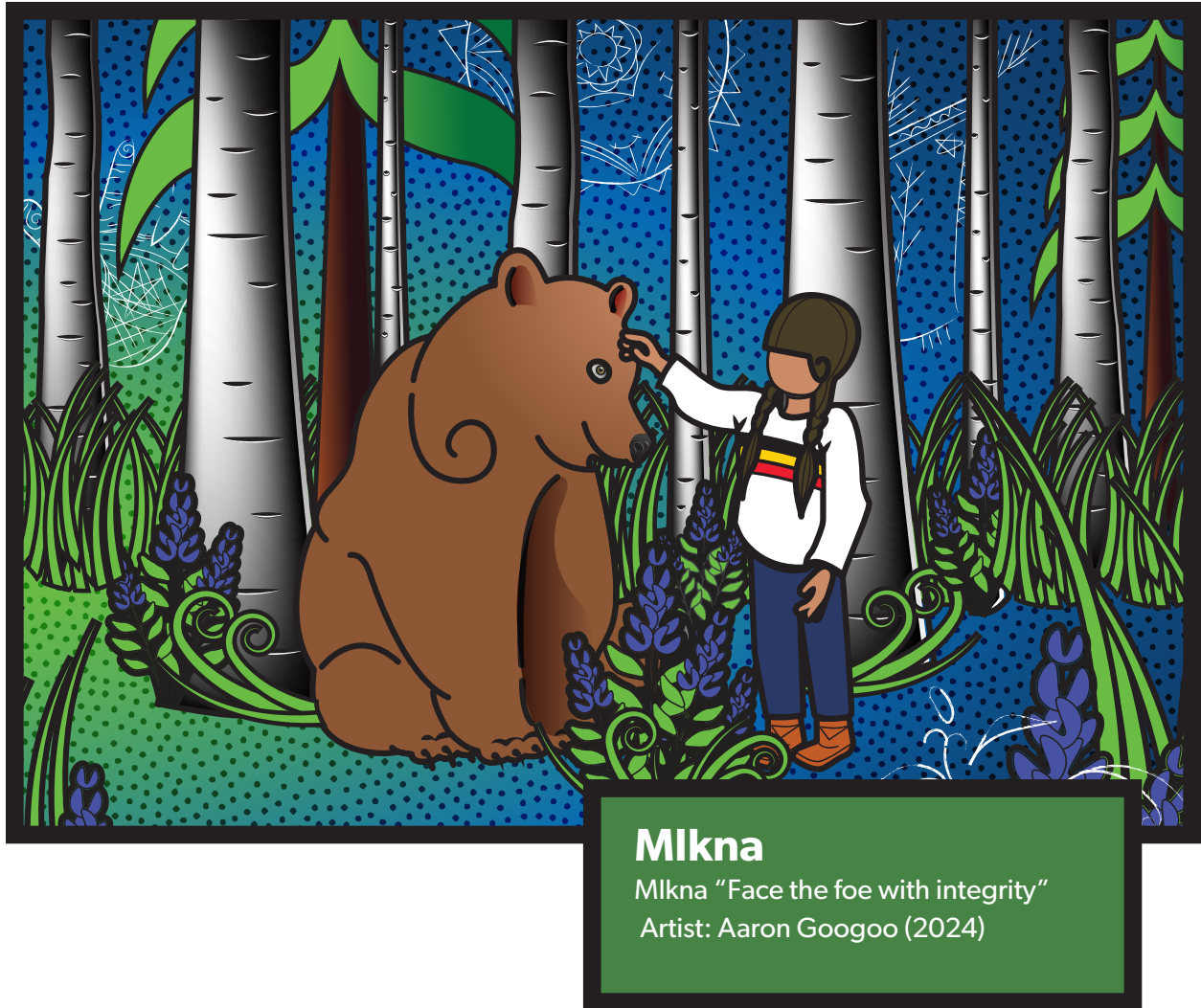
The Human Rights Commission is committed to Accessibility, Accountability, Cultural Competency, Diversity, Fairness, Integrity, Public Good, Respect, Restorative Approaches, and Trauma-informed Practices.



Organizational Structure



Protection of Human Rights



Mikna

Mikna "Face the foe with integrity"

Artist: Aaron Googoo (2024)

Dispute Resolution

The Commission responds to a significant volume of public contact each year, including general questions about the Act, requests for information, and concerns about potential human rights violations, discrimination, or harassment involving protected characteristics. Inquiries within the Commission's jurisdiction may become complaints and proceed to Early Resolution or Investigation.

Once an inquiry is accepted as a complaint, Commission staff assess the matter to determine whether it should proceed through Early Resolution or Investigation. The Commission uses restorative approaches to support understanding, repair relationships, and help parties reach constructive resolutions.

Early Resolution is a voluntary alternative dispute resolution process that allows parties to resolve human rights complaints through facilitated dialogue and negotiated settlement before, or instead of, an investigation. It focuses on understanding the alleged discrimination, addressing its impacts, and exploring mutually acceptable solutions in a safe, trauma-informed setting. Depending on the circumstances, Early Resolution may include restorative approaches such as Sharing Circles or negotiation-based Settlement Conferencing. Resolutions of complaints are formalized through settlement agreements for Commission approval. If resolution is not reached, the complaint proceeds to investigation.

Based on the outcome of an investigation, the Director and CEO may dismiss a complaint under Section 29(4) of the Act. Other complaints and settlement agreements are referred to the Commissioners for decision.

More information about the Commission's dispute resolution process is available at humanrights.novascotia.ca/complaint-process.

The tables below summarize dispute resolution data for the 2025-26 fiscal year. Some cases are more complex and may require additional time to resolve.

Inquiries

April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026	
▶ General contacts (all incoming calls/emails/visits)	2,062
▶ Total inquiries received	466
▶ Inquiries not accepted as complaints	207
▶ Complaints accepted	259
▶ Average days from initial contact to complaint signed	278

Through Business Process Improvement (BPI) initiatives, the Commission undertook a comprehensive review of its intake process to better meet the needs of the public while improving operational efficiency. By mapping the intake journey, identifying process pain points, and implementing targeted improvements, the Commission streamlined workflows and reduced administrative complexity. The work focused on creating a more consistent and client-centred experience, ensuring that inquiries are assessed more efficiently and that individuals receive clearer guidance on available options.

The improvements have resulted in clearer intake pathways, standardized assessment practices, defined service standards for responding to and assessing inquiries, and enhanced use of the case tracking system. Intake staff now work within more structured timelines, decisions are documented

more consistently, and file progression can be monitored more effectively. These changes have reduced duplication of effort, improved accountability, enabled earlier identification of appropriate resolution pathways, and provided better visibility into workload and performance. Together, these efficiencies help move cases through the system more effectively, support timely service delivery, and strengthen the Commission's ability to provide accessible, responsive, and high-quality human rights services to the public.

Since completion of the BPI Intake Project, the resulting process improvements have been sustained through ongoing operational practice. While overall general contact volumes have remained relatively stable at approximately 2,000 inquiries annually, the number of accepted complaints has increased significantly, rising from 148 in 2023-24 to 217 in 2024-25 (47%) and to 259 in 2025-26 (19%). These results demonstrate the Commission's ability to manage growing complaint volumes without a corresponding increase in general contact, reflecting a more efficient, consistent, and scalable intake process.

Complaints

April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026

▶	Complaints closed by s.29(4)(a) - best interests not served	8
▶	Complaints closed by s.29(4)(b) - complaint is without merit	0
▶	Complaints closed by s.29(4)(c) - no significant issues of discrimination	18
▶	Complaints closed by s.29(4)(d) – appropriately dealt with pursuant to another Act or proceeding	7
▶	Complaints closed by s.29(4)(e) – complaint is made in bad faith or for improper motives or is frivolous or vexatious	0
▶	Complaints closed by s.29(4)(f) - no reasonable likelihood that an investigation will reveal evidence of a contravention of this Act	1
▶	Complaints closed by s.29(4)(g) – circumstances for which an exemption order has been made pursuant to Section 9	0
▶	Complaints closed by settlement reached	15
▶	Complaints referred to Board of Inquiry	17
▶	Total no. of complaints closed	66
▶	Average days from initial contact to complaint signed	278
▶	Average days from initial contact to conclusion	1276

Following the successful modernization of the intake process, the Commission's Business Process Improvement (BPI) efforts shifted to the investigations stage of the complaint lifecycle. Through a comprehensive review of investigation workflows, the project identified opportunities to improve consistency, strengthen case management, reduce delays, and create clearer pathways for moving complaints through the system.

Much of the Commission's focus during the year was dedicated to analyzing existing practices, redesigning processes, and implementing improvements that will support long-term efficiency and service quality. The resulting recommendations provided a roadmap for operational improvements and established a stronger foundation for timely, effective, and client-centred service delivery.

Building on the findings of the BPI project, the Commission refined its Standard Operating Procedures for Early Resolution, standardized Response and Rebuttal processes, and enhanced the tools and practices used to manage complaint cases. **These targeted improvements have increased consistency across complaint handling, reduced process variation, clarified expectations for staff and parties, and strengthened oversight of case progression.** While many of these changes were implemented during the reporting year, their full impact on case-processing statistics will emerge over time as the new practices become embedded and cases progress through the system. Together, these improvements support more efficient movement of complaints, stronger accountability, and a fairer, more accessible, and responsive experience for individuals engaging with the Commission's complaint process.

While average days to closure increased during the year, this reflects the Commission's targeted efforts to address older cases as part of its broader case management improvement strategy. Resolving these legacy cases temporarily elevates the average age of closed cases but contributes to a healthier and more sustainable file inventory moving forward.

Complaints by Area

The table below shows that employment remained the most common area of complaint in 2025-26, followed by access to services or facilities. Together, these two areas accounted for the majority of complaints accepted by the Commission. This pattern is consistent with the previous year and reflects the continued importance of workplace and service-related human rights protections.

Employment complaints increased from 147 to 175, while access to services complaints rose from 59 to 71. Accommodation complaints also increased modestly, from 5 to 7. Other areas remained low in volume, with membership unchanged at 3, publication increasing from 1 to 2, and volunteer-related complaints decreasing from 2 to 1. Overall, the data indicates that complaint activity continues to be concentrated in employment and access contexts, with smaller fluctuations across the remaining areas.

	April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026	April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025
▶ The provision of or access to services or facilities	71	59
▶ Accommodation	7	5
▶ Employment	175	147
▶ Membership in a professional association, business or trade association, employers' organization or employee's organization	3	3
▶ Volunteer public service	1	2
▶ Publication, broadcast or advertisement	2	1

Complaints by Characteristic

The table below shows that complaints involving mental and physical disability, race, colour, ethnic origin, and sex continued to represent a substantial share of accepted complaints in 2025-26. Mental disability was the most frequently identified characteristic, increasing from 75 to 103 complaints. Physical disability remained high at 71 complaints, while race increased from 54 to 66 complaints. Colour also remained prominent, with 45 complaints identified in 2025-26. Complaints based on ethnic origin increased by nearly 120% from the previous year, up from 21 to 46.

The data also shows notable increases in other protected characteristics, including family status, retaliation, source of income, and national origin.

Characteristics	April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026	April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025
▶ Aboriginal Origin	11	6
▶ Age	18	14
▶ Association	4	2
▶ Ethnic Origin	46	21
▶ Family Status	16	7
▶ Gender Identity	7	5
▶ Gender Expression	4	5
▶ Irrational Fear	1	0
▶ Marital Status	6	5
▶ Mental Disability	103	75
▶ National Origin	20	12
▶ Physical Disability	71	77
▶ Political belief, affiliation, or activity	4	0
▶ Race	66	54
▶ Colour	45	54
▶ Religion	8	6
▶ Creed	5	6
▶ Retaliation	12	2
▶ Sex	42	38
▶ Sexual Harassment	15	16
▶ Sexual Orientation	5	6
▶ Source of Income	8	1

Complaints having Multiple Characteristics

The following table highlights the importance of intersectionality in the Commission's complaint work. Intersectionality recognizes that people are not defined by a single protected characteristic and that discrimination may arise from the combined effects of race, colour, disability, sex, gender, family status, source of income, and other protected grounds. These overlapping experiences can shape how discrimination occurs, how it is experienced, and what resolution may require.

While complaints involving one protected characteristic remained the largest category, decreasing slightly from 120 to 117, the table shows notable growth in complaints involving multiple characteristics. Complaints identifying two characteristics increased from 71 to 75, while those identifying three characteristics doubled from 19 to 38 and four characteristics rose from 7 to 22.

This shift suggests that more complainants are identifying discrimination as layered and connected across multiple aspects of identity or circumstance. Intersectional complaints often require more detailed assessment, careful analysis, and flexible dispute resolution approaches because the harm may not be fully understood by examining each characteristic in isolation. The increase underscores the continued need for trauma-informed approaches and public education that reflect the complexity of individuals' lived experiences.

Number of Characteristics	April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026	April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025
▶ 1	117	120
▶ 2	75	71
▶ 3	38	19
▶ 4	22	7
▶ 5	1	0
▶ 6	4	0
▶ 11	1	0

Legal Proceedings

If a complaint cannot be resolved between the parties, an investigation may be initiated, culminating in the presentation of an investigation report to the Commissioners of the Commission for their review and decision. The Commissioners have the authority to dismiss the complaint or refer it to a Board of Inquiry (BOI). The BOI functions as an independent administrative tribunal, chaired by an individual appointed by the Chief Judge of the Nova Scotia Provincial Court.

Following the appointment of a BOI, there remains an opportunity for the matter to be resolved through settlement before or during the hearing process. During this reporting period, nine cases before a BOI were settled between the parties.

The following table summarizes the status of legal proceedings considered during this reporting period.

April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026	
▶ BOI Referrals	17
▶ Ongoing BOIs	34
▶ Settled BOIs	9
▶ BOI Decisions	1
▶ Judicial Reviews Ongoing	6
▶ Judicial Reviews Decisions	0
▶ Appeals Ongoing	0
▶ Appeals Decisions	1

Legal Decisions

The full text of Board of Inquiry decisions can be found online at humanrights.novascotia.ca and through the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLii) website at canlii.org.

Dorrington v. J.A. Acheson Sales Ltd. o/a Canadian Tire (2025)

In *Dorrington v. J.A. Acheson Sales Ltd. o/a Canadian Tire (2025)*, a Nova Scotia Human Rights Board of Inquiry found that a customer of mixed Black and Indigenous ancestry was subjected to racial profiling while shopping at a Dartmouth Crossing Canadian Tire store. The Board concluded that the complainant was singled out for a receipt check while other nearby customers were not stopped, and that race was a factor in the differential treatment. The Respondent did not meaningfully participate in the human rights process or the hearing, and the Board accepted the Complainant's evidence as a credible account of the incident.

The Board determined that the conduct constituted discrimination in the provision of services contrary to the Act. In considering remedy, the Board noted the humiliation and emotional impact experienced by the Complainant, as well as the Respondent's failure to engage in the complaint process. A monetary remedy was awarded, with the Board ordering the Respondent to pay \$20,000 in general damages to compensate the Complainant for the discriminatory treatment.

Evely v. Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, Minister of Justice and Attorney General (2025)

In *Evely v. Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, Minister of Justice and Attorney General (2025)*, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal upheld earlier decisions dismissing a human rights complaint filed by Jeffrey Evely after several businesses refused him service during the COVID-19 pandemic because he would not wear a mask as required by provincial public health orders. Mr. Evely alleged discrimination based on political belief and creed; however, the Commission determined that his complaint lacked merit and dismissed it at the intake stage.

The Court of Appeal found that the businesses denied service because they were legally required to comply with binding public health orders, not because of Mr. Evely's political views or beliefs. The Court agreed that there was no connection between a protected characteristic and the denial of service, concluded that the Commission's decision was reasonable, and confirmed that the complaint was properly dismissed under the Act.

Promotion of Human Rights



Wuforo Dua Pa A

Wuforo Dua Pa A "When you climb a good tree"

Artist: Charlie Marvin (2024)

Human Rights Education

The Commission serves Nova Scotians through its dual mandate to protect and promote human rights. This commitment is reflected across its work, with the Race Relations, Equity and Inclusion (RREI) unit playing a dedicated role in proactively advancing human rights education, equity, and inclusion.

Established in 1991 following recommendations from the Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall Jr. prosecution, RREI works with community organizations, government agencies, and the private sector to promote racial harmony, equity, and inclusion. Its work supports the prevention and reduction of systemic discrimination and contributes to a more inclusive Nova Scotia, consistent with the responsibilities set out in Section 26A of the Act.

During the year, the Commission delivered 70 education and outreach sessions to 3,589 participants across Nova Scotia. Delivered in partnership with government departments, community organizations, community centres, post-secondary institutions, and L'nu and African Nova Scotian communities, these sessions strengthened awareness of human rights principles, responsibilities, and protections under the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*.

Through these collaborative learning opportunities, the Commission advanced equity, inclusion, and respect for human rights while deepening relationships with diverse communities. The initiatives helped participants better understand their rights and responsibilities and supported more inclusive workplaces, services, and communities.

External Trainers

The Commission maintains a roster of educators with a variety of lived experiences and dynamic offerings, including training on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion, anti-racism and anti-Black racism, antisemitism, cultural competence, diversity and inclusion, inclusive leadership, mental health, neurodivergence, preventing sexual harassment, microaggressions, unconscious bias, anti-oppression, equitable policies and practices, and related workplace and community inclusion topics.

For more information on our External Trainer Roster, please visit: <https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/education/external-human-rights-trainers>.

Free Online Training

The Commission offers a suite of free, self-directed online training modules, providing valuable learning resources for individuals and organizations seeking to enhance their understanding of important human rights topics.



[Safe Spaces Make Great Workplaces • Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission](#)

Safe Spaces Make Great Workplaces is a free online course designed to address and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. The course aims to help employers understand the importance of having a clear sexual harassment policy, educating staff, and enforcing the policy.

1,112
Courses
completed

[Serving All Customers Better • Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission](#)

Serving All Customers Better is a free online course designed to help frontline service staff address and prevent consumer racial profiling. The course helps businesses create inclusive and welcoming environments for all customers.

795
Courses
completed

[Working With Abilities • Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission](#)

Working With Abilities is a free online course designed to provide practical information and advice to help employers support individuals with disabilities, fostering inclusion and respect in workplaces across Nova Scotia.

999
Courses
completed

Total online training courses completed: 2,906

December 3–10, 2025



Recognizing that accessibility extends beyond the events themselves, every Commission-hosted session was recorded and made available online, creating a growing library of free educational resources for Nova Scotians.

2025 Program Highlights

DECEMBER 1

► **Built Environment Accessibility Standard Information Session**

An overview of Nova Scotia's proposed Built Environment Accessibility Standard and its role in removing barriers and creating more inclusive public spaces.

DECEMBER 3-10

► **Human Rights on Screen: True North**

In partnership with the Atlantic International Film Festival, Nova Scotians were invited to view the featured documentary True North free of charge, encouraging reflection and discussion through film as a powerful medium for advancing human rights awareness.



DECEMBER 3

► **Ability to Rise: Celebrating Leaders in Disability Inclusion**

Coinciding with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, this event celebrated leadership, innovation and lived experience while exploring opportunities to strengthen disability inclusion throughout Nova Scotia.

► **Youth Roundtable: Voices for a Safer Halifax**

Young people shared their experiences and ideas for creating safer, more inclusive communities through dialogue with community leaders and decision makers.

DECEMBER 4

► **Understanding Ableism**

An exploration of ableism, its impacts on individuals and communities, and practical ways to identify and address barriers to inclusion.

► **Towards Transformation: An Intersectional Look at Anti-Trans Rhetoric Across the Country**

Speakers examined the growing impact of anti-trans rhetoric in Canada and explored strategies for protecting inclusion, dignity and human rights.

► **Accommodations at Work**

Practical guidance for employers, employees and organizations on creating inclusive workplaces through effective accommodation practices.

DECEMBER 5

- ▶ **Accessibility Project Funding for Nova Scotia Businesses and Community Groups**
Information on funding opportunities supporting accessibility improvements and barrier removal throughout the province.
- ▶ **Human Rights in Action: Living Equity, Dignity and Justice in Halifax**
Community leaders highlighted practical examples of advancing human rights through collaboration, public policy and community engagement.
- ▶ **Human Rights Week Collective Craft**
A community-based creative event at Halifax Central Library that encouraged participants to reflect on human rights through collaborative artistic expression.

DECEMBER 8

- ▶ **Under Construction: Accessible Navigation Assistance for Halifax and Beyond**
A discussion of emerging technologies and innovative approaches to improving accessible navigation and wayfinding for persons with disabilities.
- ▶ **Gender-based Violence: Education and Preventative Responses**
Panelists examined prevention, education and community responses to gender-based violence while highlighting collaborative initiatives taking place across Nova Scotia.
- ▶ **Dignity, Respect and Safety: The Heart of a Healthy Workplace**
Workplace leaders discussed creating psychologically safe, respectful and inclusive work environments grounded in human rights principles.

DECEMBER 9

- ▶ **Black Food Sovereignty in Mi'kma'ki**
A conversation exploring food sovereignty, land, culture and community resilience within African Nova Scotian communities.
- ▶ **The BLAC Report: 30 Years Later**
Thirty years after the landmark Black Learners Advisory Committee Report, panelists reflected on its enduring legacy, progress achieved, and the work that remains.
- ▶ **Advancing Equity and Inclusion in Nova Scotia**
The Office of Equity and Anti-Racism shared updates on provincial initiatives supporting equity, inclusion and anti-racism efforts.

DECEMBER 10

► **2025 Nova Scotia Human Rights Awards**

The week concluded by recognizing outstanding Nova Scotians whose leadership, advocacy and commitment have advanced human rights throughout the province.

DECEMBER 11

► **Accessibility Foundations**

A post-week educational session introducing the principles of accessibility and inclusive design to support organizations beginning their accessibility journey.

Lasting Impact

Although Nova Scotia Human Rights Week spans just one week each year, its impact extends well beyond the scheduled events. By recording every Commission-hosted session and making them freely available online, the Commission continues to build a permanent digital library of accessible human rights education. These resources allow educators, employers, community organizations, public servants and individual Nova Scotians to revisit important conversations and share them widely throughout the year, extending the reach of Human Rights Week far beyond those able to attend live.

2025 Human Rights Awards



On December 10, 2025, four individual Nova Scotians and one organization were recognized in Halifax with Nova Scotia Human Rights Awards for their contributions to building a more equitable, inclusive, and respectful province.

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission presents these awards each year on or around International Human Rights Day to honour Nova Scotians whose courage, leadership, and service advance human rights across the province.

All photos by Jordan Banyan

Dr. Sherry Pictou – Wel-lukwen Award

Dr. Sherry Pictou's work reflects a lifelong commitment to justice, Mi'kmaq resurgence, Indigenous governance, and knowledge. Through community leadership, international advocacy, scholarship, and mentorship, she has advanced understanding of Indigenous rights as human rights. Her work has also deepened awareness of Mi'kmaq governance, colonialism, and the leadership of Mi'kmaq women, including through her historic role as the first woman District Chief for the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq.

Dr. Pictou is also a respected voice in fisheries justice, connecting human rights, treaty rights, sustainability, and gender justice. As a Canada Research Chair at Dalhousie University, her research on Indigenous-led governance, food security, decolonial methods, and sovereignty has shaped public dialogue and mentored emerging leaders. Through her leadership, teaching, and advocacy, she continues to strengthen Mi'kmaq communities and advance a more just understanding of rights and responsibilities in Nova Scotia.



Andre Anderson Dr. Burnley Allan “Rocky” Jones Award

Andre Anderson reflects the legacy of Dr. Burnley Allan “Rocky” Jones through truth-telling, community commitment, and the power of storytelling to advance justice. Through Anderson Films Inc., he has amplified the stories, histories, and contributions of African Nova Scotians, using documentaries such as *Standing Tall*, *Under Pressure*, and *A Governor’s Journey* to celebrate Black excellence, resilience, and leadership while inspiring future generations.

Andre’s leadership also includes mentorship, civic engagement, and community development. Through work with youth, provincial conferences, workshops, and community boards, he creates opportunities for learning, dialogue, self-determination, and systemic change rooted in heritage, pride, and possibility.



Evan Treffler Youth Award

At twenty, **Evan Treffler** has become a strong young advocate for mental health, inclusion, and human rights in Nova Scotia. A Medical Sciences student at Dalhousie University and Co-President of its Jack.org chapter, he uses lived experience, compassion, and peer-led education to reach students with messages of belonging, accessibility, and support, helping reduce stigma and build a more inclusive campus culture.

Evan’s leadership extends across Dalhousie and beyond, including his role as the university’s first Wellness Champion across all Halifax campuses. Through student wellness, harm reduction, prevention, and early-intervention initiatives, he works with partners to ensure supports meet students where they are and demonstrates purposeful youth leadership rooted in care, dignity, and community.



Kevin Hooper Individual Award

Kevin Hooper demonstrates human rights leadership through his commitment to equity, accountability, and community-centred action. In his work with United Way Maritimes and across community spaces, he leads with humility, listens to those with lived experience, and supports shared decision-making rooted in inclusion, accessibility, and meaningful reconciliation.

Kevin has advanced housing as a human right by supporting Nova Scotia's first tiny home community for people experiencing homelessness, a community land trust model in Halifax, and a shared equity housing model. He has also contributed to the Housing and Homelessness Partnership, helped grow its annual symposium, and co-created the East Coast Public Policy Training Institute through an equity-informed lens, sharing knowledge widely to support practical, lasting change.



L'Arche Cape Breton Group or Organization Award

For more than forty years, L'Arche Cape Breton has promoted inclusion and belonging for people with intellectual disabilities in Unama'ki. Since 1983, the organization has grown into a network of homes, programs, and relationships centred on dignity, autonomy, and community, supporting more than ninety people, including twenty-six Core Members in six homes and many others through day programs across Inverness, Victoria, and Richmond counties.

L'Arche Cape Breton also advances public education, advocacy, and community building, including awareness of Nova Scotia's Human Rights Remedy and the systemic discrimination it addresses. By welcoming and employing people from around the world and fostering inclusive relationships, the organization continues to show what human rights look like in everyday community life.



Timeline of Statements

Honouring Asian Heritage

May 01, 2025

Asian Heritage Month was highlighted as an opportunity to honour the cultures, histories, and contributions of Asian Canadians, while recognizing the discrimination and systemic barriers Asian communities have faced. The Commission affirmed the importance of education, solidarity, and respect in advancing inclusion and dignity for all, and acknowledged the lives lost in the violence at Vancouver's Lapu Lapu festival.

Red Dress Day

May 04, 2025

Red Dress Day was highlighted as a day of remembrance and action honouring missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people across Turtle Island. The Commission recognized the red dress as a powerful symbol of loss, resilience, and the urgent need for justice, while reaffirming the importance of listening to survivors, families, and Indigenous leaders. Marking this day supports ongoing calls for accountability, safety, and meaningful action to address systemic racism, colonialism, and gender-based violence.

Fostering Safety for All

May 16, 2025

The Commission highlighted the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia as an opportunity to recognize progress in protecting 2SLGBTQIA+ rights while reaffirming the ongoing need to address discrimination, harassment and violence. The statement emphasized the importance of education, advocacy and strong legal protections so that all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, can live safely, openly and free from discrimination.

Celebrating Jewish Heritage

May 20, 2025

Canadian Jewish Heritage Month was highlighted as an opportunity to recognize the history, resilience, and contributions of Jewish communities in Nova Scotia and across Canada. The Commission acknowledged the importance of confronting antisemitism and protecting the right of all people to live with dignity, safety, and freedom of expression, while reaffirming the need for education, solidarity, and action to build communities free from hate and discrimination.

Celebrating Access Awareness Week

May 26, 2025

Access Awareness Week was highlighted as an opportunity to recognize the leadership of persons with disabilities and the continued importance of removing barriers to inclusion across Nova Scotia. Under the theme “Our Voices, Our Votes: Disability Rights in Action,” the Commission acknowledged the advocates and community leaders whose efforts have advanced accessibility, strengthened disability rights, and contributed to lasting change through the *Accessibility Act*, the *Human Rights Act*, and the ongoing transformation of disability supports.

Pride: A Call to Action

May 31, 2025

Pride Month was highlighted as both a celebration of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and a call to continue advancing equality, dignity, and inclusion. The Commission reaffirmed that everyone has the right to live free from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, and encouraged Nova Scotians to support safer, more respectful, and affirming communities.

Celebrating Indigenous History

June 05, 2025

National Indigenous History Month was highlighted as an opportunity to honour the histories, cultures, resilience, and contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. The Commission reaffirmed the importance of reconciliation grounded in action, respect, and human rights, including support for self-determination, cultural preservation, and equitable access to education, healthcare, housing, and justice.

Defending Against Hatred

June 16, 2025

The Commission highlighted growing hostility and discrimination faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, nearly 56 years after the Stonewall uprising helped galvanize the queer rights movement. The statement encouraged Nova Scotians to speak out against hate, recognize the intersecting experiences of discrimination faced by many 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and support stronger accountability, mental health supports, and safer communities where everyone can live with dignity and respect.

National Indigenous Peoples Day

June 20, 2025

National Indigenous Peoples Day was highlighted as an opportunity to honour the histories, cultures, and contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, with particular recognition of Mi'kma'ki and the Treaties of Peace and Friendship. The Commission reaffirmed that Indigenous rights are human rights and emphasized the shared responsibility to advance truth, reconciliation, Treaty education, and equitable access to justice, health, education, housing, and self-determination.

Canadian Multiculturalism Day

June 26, 2025

Canadian Multiculturalism Day was highlighted as an opportunity to celebrate Canada's cultural diversity and reaffirm the importance of inclusion, equity, and human rights. The Commission emphasized that multiculturalism must be matched by action to confront racism, discrimination, and exclusion, while supporting communities where all people feel valued, respected, and able to belong.

Emancipation Day

July 31, 2025

Emancipation Day was highlighted as an opportunity to honour the strength, resilience, and leadership of African Nova Scotian and Black communities while reflecting on the lasting legacy of slavery and anti-Black racism. The Commission recognized the importance of truth-telling, education, and action in advancing equity, accountability, and the human rights of all people in Nova Scotia.

National Acadian Day

August 14, 2025

National Acadian Day was highlighted as an opportunity to celebrate the culture, resilience, and contributions of Acadian communities in Nova Scotia and across Canada. The Commission reflected on the Grand Dérangement as a historic injustice and reaffirmed the importance of protecting language, culture, identity, and belonging as essential parts of human rights and inclusion.

Human Rights on Screen: What We Dreamed of Then

September 04, 2025

Human Rights on Screen highlighted What We Dreamed of Then, a 2025 film exploring invisible homelessness through the story of a swim coach and father navigating housing precarity. Presented in partnership with the Atlantic International Film Festival, the

Commission made the film available for free online viewing from September 17 to 21, using storytelling to deepen public understanding of housing insecurity, stigma, and the human right to safe and sustainable housing.

Commission Condemns Antisemitism

September 15, 2025

The Commission condemned acts of antisemitism targeting synagogues in Halifax and called on Nova Scotians to defend one another's human rights and dignity. The statement reaffirmed that discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or violence based on religion, creed, race, ethnicity, or national origin has no place in Nova Scotia, and emphasized the importance of education, accountability, and collective action in building communities free from hate.

Remembering Donald Oliver

September 17, 2025

Remembering Donald Oliver was highlighted as a moment to honour Donald H. Oliver, CM, ONS, KC, a pioneering human rights champion, lawyer, community leader, and former Canadian Senator. The Commission recognized his central role in advancing the creation of the *Human Rights Act*, his lifelong support for the arts, and his enduring legacy in challenging anti-Black systemic racism and promoting a more equitable Canada.

Truth and Reconciliation

September 26, 2025

The Commission highlighted the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a solemn opportunity to honour residential school survivors, the children who never returned home, and the families and communities who continue to carry this history. The statement reaffirmed that reconciliation requires truth, education, Treaty respect, and concrete action to address systemic racism and advance the human rights, dignity, and equality of Indigenous Peoples in Nova Scotia.

Honouring Mi'kmaq History

October 01, 2025

Mi'kmaq History Month was highlighted as an opportunity to celebrate Mi'kmaq culture, knowledge, and traditions while recognizing the 300th anniversary of the Treaties of Peace and Friendship. The Commission reaffirmed that the Treaties remain living agreements grounded in mutual respect and shared responsibility and emphasized that advancing reconciliation and human rights in Nova Scotia requires learning, listening, Treaty respect, and meaningful action.

Transgender Day of Remembrance

November 19, 2025

Transgender Day of Remembrance was highlighted as a solemn opportunity to honour transgender and gender-diverse people whose lives have been lost to violence, hatred, neglect, and indifference. The Commission reaffirmed that transgender people are protected under the *Human Rights Act* and emphasized the need for continued action to challenge transphobia, respect identity, strengthen inclusion, and ensure everyone can live safely, openly, and with dignity.

International Day for Persons with Disabilities

December 02, 2025

The International Day for Persons with Disabilities was highlighted as an opportunity to recognize the leadership, knowledge, and advocacy of persons with disabilities in advancing accessibility and inclusion across Nova Scotia. The Commission reaffirmed that disability rights are human rights and emphasized the continued need to remove barriers, address ableism, and build communities where every person can participate fully and with dignity.

Holocaust Remembrance Day

January 27, 2026

Holocaust Remembrance Day was highlighted as a solemn opportunity to remember the six million Jewish people murdered by the Nazi regime, along with millions of others targeted through hate, persecution, and dehumanization. The Commission reaffirmed that remembrance requires action: confronting antisemitism, racism, denial, and all forms of hate while upholding the human rights, dignity, and safety of every person.

Celebrating African Heritage

February 02, 2026

African Heritage Month was highlighted as an opportunity to honour the history, resilience, leadership, and contributions of African Nova Scotians, whose advocacy helped shape Nova Scotia's human rights framework. Under the theme "Strength in Unity: Moving Forward with Purpose, Prosperity, Power, and Progress," the Commission celebrated African Nova Scotian culture and achievement while reaffirming the ongoing responsibility to confront anti-Black racism and advance equity, dignity, and justice for all Nova Scotians.

Justice in Action: Honouring African Heritage in Nova Scotia

February 09, 2026

Justice in Action was highlighted during African Heritage Month as a call to move beyond symbolic recognition and advance meaningful change grounded in fairness, accountability, and shared responsibility. Under the theme “Strength in Unity: Moving Forward with Purpose, Prosperity, Power, and Progress,” the Commission emphasized that confronting anti-Black racism and advancing human rights requires concrete action to remove barriers, share power, and ensure equity, dignity, and progress are reflected in people’s lives.

International Women’s Day

March 06, 2026

International Women’s Day was highlighted as an opportunity to recognize the leadership, resilience, and contributions of women and girls while reaffirming gender equality as essential to dignity, inclusion, and human rights. The Commission acknowledged ongoing barriers, including discrimination, harassment, violence, and unequal access to opportunity, and emphasized the need for continued action, accountability, education, and policy change to build safer, fairer, and more inclusive communities.

Eliminating Racial Discrimination

March 20, 2026

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was highlighted as a reminder of the ongoing impacts of racism and the shared responsibility to advance equality, dignity, and justice. The Commission recognized the experiences of Black/African Nova Scotian, L’nu, newcomer, immigrant, and other racialized communities, and reaffirmed the need for sustained action, education, and accountability to build a more inclusive Nova Scotia.

Transgender Visibility

March 30, 2026

The International Day of Transgender Visibility was highlighted as an opportunity to celebrate transgender and gender-diverse people while reaffirming their right to live safely, openly, and with dignity. The Commission noted that gender identity and gender expression are protected under the Human Rights Act and emphasized the need for continued action to address discrimination, strengthen inclusion, and ensure legal protections are reflected in everyday life.



Website Statistics

PAGE	April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026	April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025
▶ Home	20,797	19,284
▶ Complaint Self-Assessment	7,317	6,848
▶ Contact Us	7,283	7,560
▶ Know Your Rights – For Individuals	6,598	6,717
▶ Inquiry Form	5,934	5,347
▶ Remedy in Disability Rights Coalition v. Province of Nova Scotia	5,340	6,526
▶ Search	4,303	4,323
▶ Frequently Asked Questions	3,088	3,168
▶ Duty to Accommodate	3,025	3,167
▶ How to File a Complaint	2,437	2,482

Overall, traffic to key pages on the Commission’s website remained relatively stable in 2025-26, with increases across several important service-related pages. Visits to the Home page increased by 8%, while the Complaint Self-Assessment grew by 7%. The Inquiry Form saw an increase of 11%, and Know Your Rights increased by 5%. Other frequently visited pages remained largely consistent with the previous year, while visits to the Remedy in Disability Rights Coalition v. Province of Nova Scotia page declined by 18%.

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