

**Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

**Business Plan**

**2003/04**

**March 7, 2003**

## Table of Contents

Message from the Minister and the Director & CEO .....	1
Mission .....	2
Planning Context .....	2
Strategic Goals .....	3
Core Businesses .....	4
Priorities for 2003/04 .....	5
Schedule 1 - Budget Context .....	7
Schedule 2 - Outcomes & Measures .....	8

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## **Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

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### **Message from the Minister and the Director & CEO**

The business plan for the 2003/04 fiscal year is intended to provide the public with an overview of the major priorities and goals for the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission in the coming year.

Chief among the Commission's goals is responding to the recommendations contained in the consultant's report from the organizational review which was released to the public in December 2002. The review began in July 2000 to identify ways of providing more efficient, effective and transparent service to Nova Scotians. The recommendations set out in the consultant's report provide a blueprint to make this possible.

Progress in implementing the results of the review will be reported in the Commission's next Accountability Report. The guiding principle during implementation will continue to be providing the best service possible to Nova Scotians while making efficient use of resources.

Hon. Jamie Muir  
Minister Responsible for the N.S. Human Rights Act

Mayann Francis  
Director & CEO

**A. Mission**

To reduce individual and systemic discrimination in support of a society characterized by equality. We value:

*Respect and dignity*, through words and actions in relation to all members of the public;  
*Diversity*, recognizing everyone can contribute to our society;  
*Understanding*, through education as a focal point for change;  
*Credibility*, in being seen as independent and truly autonomous from government, and;  
*Integrity*, in practicing what we preach and in serving as a model for government, other agencies and the private sector.

**B. Planning Context**

The Commission currently employs 19 people and has four offices: a central office in Halifax and regional offices in Sydney, Digby and New Glasgow.

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (hereinafter referred to as “the Commission”) is an independent government agency charged with administering Nova Scotia’s Human Rights Act (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”), a provincial statute created in 1969. Under the authority of the Act, the Commission focuses on two core business functions:

- < resolving complaints of discrimination; and
- < public education and outreach.

In order to carry out these core businesses in the rapidly evolving field of human rights and within a tight fiscal environment, the Commission must invest resources in ongoing staff training and seek partners from the public, private and non-governmental sectors to deliver its public education and outreach programs. Since 1999, the Race Relations Division has implemented a cost-recovery program for its workshops and training services. And in July 2000, the Commission initiated a multi-phase organizational review to look for more efficient and effective ways to provide service to Nova Scotians.

While the Commission awaited the results of its organizational review, some key re-staffing decisions were delayed during the 2002/03 fiscal year in order to ensure that resources were properly deployed. In the 2003/04 fiscal year, the Commission will use the results from its organizational review to maximize the use of resources.

The results of the Commission’s organizational review were released to the public in December 2002. The review was conducted in two phases, with the first examining mandate issues and pursuing limited public consultation on a discussion paper which focused on key issues. The

second phase looked specifically at the roles, responsibilities and structures of the organization. During the 2003/04 fiscal year, the results of the organizational review will be implemented to improve the level of service the Commission is able to deliver to the public. It is anticipated that the results of the organizational review will be implemented within the existing fiscal resources of the Commission.

In January 2002, an agreement was reached settling a Board of Inquiry in the matter Archibald Kaiser and the Executive Council of Nova Scotia. As part of the settlement, the Commission committed to undertaking several specific activities, many of which were fulfilled during the 2002/03 fiscal year. Workshops to improve public understanding of political affiliation as a prohibited grounds under the Act and the awarding of the first of three \$30,000 grant to fund special projects for mental health consumers to examine their access to legal and other advocacy services were completed in the fall of 2002. In the spring of 2003, the Commission will deliver a presentation on trends and challenges in its annual report to caucuses in the provincial legislature. Later in 2003, the second \$30,000 grant will be awarded and then in 2004 the Commission will begin evaluating the success of the new appointments process for adjudicative provincial boards and commissions.

### **C. Strategic Goals**

Goals for the Commission in 2003/04 are:

1. To continue to promote the Commission as a credible and effective organization through better program delivery, improved service to the public and enhanced partnerships with other organizations.
2. To promote efficient and effective resolutions to complaints of discrimination.
3. To help foster the development of a more equitable society and fair workplaces by pro-actively addressing discrimination in all its forms.

While the Commission is independent of government, its goals for 2003/04 mirror Provincial Government goals by seeking to:

provide responsible, accountable service to the public;  
create conditions that help the economy grow ( N.B. - By enabling all Nova Scotians to participate in the economic and social life of the province.); and  
foster an environment that allows and encourages Nova Scotians to work, raise families and stay in Nova Scotia.

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## Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

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The Commission's strategic goals for the 2003/04 fiscal year also reflect the following priorities as set out by the Provincial Government:

achieving fiscal stability;  
growing the economy ( N.B. - In the case of the Commission, by enabling all Nova Scotians to participate in the economic and social life of the province.) ; and  
fostering a professional public service.

### **D. Core Businesses**

#### *Resolution of Complaints of Discrimination:*

- < Delivered collaboratively through the Investigation and Compliance and Race Relations and Affirmative Action divisions.
- < Attempts early interventions to resolve disputes before they become formal complaints of discrimination.
- < Investigates complaints of discrimination (approximately 250 active files in 2002/03) and recommends options for resolution to the Commissioners.
- < Identifies emerging issues and targets skill development for Commission staff in response.
- < Provides a range of dispute resolution services.

#### *Public Education & Outreach:*

- < Raises awareness of human rights issues and encourages peace, harmony and respect for all Nova Scotians.
- < Involves the staff of the Race Relations and Affirmative Action and Investigation and Compliance divisions and the Office of the Director and CEO.
- < Develops and maintains effective links with government, business, the legal community, schools, agencies and community groups to raise awareness of human rights issues and compliance with the Act.
- < Fosters social research on human rights issues and topics.
- < Provides education and training programs in workplaces, schools and other settings.
- < Ensures cost-recovery in service delivery wherever possible.
- < Promotes opportunities for all Nova Scotians by working with employers to develop agreements that promote diversity in hiring and promotion.

### **E. Priorities for 2003/04**

Priorities identified by the Commission for 2003/04 are:

*Resolution of Complaints of Discrimination*

In cooperation with Mi'kmaq and other aboriginal communities, develop an aboriginal action plan to improve the services the Commission offers to these communities, particularly through the development of effective models of dispute resolution.

Implement a new dispute resolution policy to encourage the early settlement of complaints in keeping with the recommendations from the organizational review.

Continue development of best practices to address systemic discrimination.

Improve the complaint process by implementing the recommendations from the organizational review.

Pursue more effective methods of tracking case management.

Develop a Code of Ethics for Commission staff.

*Public Education & Outreach:*

Continue involvement with government, institutional and community partners to further develop linkages and forums for discussion and change; this includes oral presentations on trends and concerns to government and opposition caucuses in conjunction with the filing of the Commission's annual report.

Develop a comprehensive communications plan for 2003 events and activities.

Continue communication initiatives aimed at increasing the Commission's public profile and informing the public about changes resulting from the organizational review.

Continue policy research and development in partnership with external organizations in emerging areas of human rights, including undertaking special projects aimed at mental health consumers as specified in the settlement agreement for Archibald Kaiser v. Executive Council of Nova Scotia.

Promote the Commission as a source of information and resources on human rights and compliance issues under the Act for employers and employees in the public, private, educational and not-for-profit sectors.

## **F. Budget Context**

See attached Schedule 4.

**G. Outcomes and Measures**

See attached Schedule 5.



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**Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

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**Schedule 1 - Budget Context**

<b>N.S. Human Rights Commission - Estimated Budget Expenditures</b>		
	Forecast 2002/03 (Per 2003/04 Estimates Book)	Budget - 2003/04 (Per 2003/04 Estimates Book)
	\$ Millions	\$ Millions
Total - Gross Current	\$1.614	\$1.746
Total - Program Expenses	\$0.467	\$0.483
Funds From Kaiser Settlement*	\$0.045	\$0.030
Salaries & Benefits	\$1.147	\$1.263
Funded Staff (FTEs)	22	22

**\* Not included in core funds for HRC.**

**Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

**Schedule 2 - Outcomes & Measures**

<b>Core Business Area: Resolution of Complaints of Discrimination</b>					
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Base Year Measure (2001/02)</b>	<b>Target - 2003/04 (optional)</b>	<b>Target - 2004/05</b>	<b>Strategies to Achieve Target</b>
More efficient complaint handling process	Average time to process complaints	24 months	18 months	12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seek assistance of WCAT commissioner 1 afternoon per week.</li> <li>- Recruit Intake &amp; Assessment Analyst.</li> <li>- Recruit Project Manager to implement recommendations from org. review pertaining to resolution of complaints..</li> </ul>
	% of cases where intervention attempted	25 %	Nil	30 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assess all complaints for dispute resolution potential.</li> </ul>

**Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

<b>Core Business Area: Resolution of Complaints of Discrimination</b>					
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Base Year Measure (2001/02)</b>	<b>Target - 2003/04 (optional)</b>	<b>Target - 2004/05</b>	<b>Strategies to Achieve Target</b>
More efficient complaint handling process	% of files with dispute resolution attempts	19 %	25%	35%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote skill development of HROs to undertake dispute resolution techniques.</li> <li>- Assess all complaints for dispute resolution potential.</li> <li>- Inform parties to complaints about options for dispute resolution.</li> </ul>
	Number of files with checklist for systemic issues completed.	0 %	50 %	100 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design and implement a framework for investigating systemic discrimination issues.</li> <li>- Develop and implement checklist to ensure systemic discrimination issues have been considered at the start of the complaint handling process.</li> </ul>
Staff knowledgeable about emerging issues.	Response time to parties.	4 weeks	Nil	2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On-going staff training on emerging issues.</li> <li>- Create a Policy &amp; Legal Analyst to promote research on emerging issues.</li> <li>- On-going meetings with staff to review matters of jurisdiction and recent case law.</li> </ul>

**Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

<b>Core Business: Public Education &amp; Outreach</b>					
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Base Year Measure (2001/02)</b>	<b>Target - 2003/04 (optional)</b>	<b>Target - 2004/05</b>	<b>Strategies to Achieve Target</b>
Commission recognized as a leader in the human rights field.	The number of strategic partnerships for event planning.	5 strategic partnerships	Nil	10 strategic partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to expand membership of PAR (Partners Against Racism) committee).</li> <li>- Complete strategic planning process for CARR (Community Advocates For Rights With Responsibilities).</li> <li>- Promote volunteer committee development through regional offices.</li> <li>- Develop a communications plan/guide that will underlie the messaging and media activities for the year.</li> <li>- Create manual for organizing events.</li> </ul>

**Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission**

<b>Core Business: Public Education &amp; Outreach</b>					
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Base Year Measure (2001/02)</b>	<b>Target - 2003/04 (optional)</b>	<b>Target - 2004/05</b>	<b>Strategies to Achieve Target</b>
Employers committed to inclusive workplaces free of discrimination.	Number of requests for training.	18	Nil	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan special events targeting employers.</li> <li>- Develop key messages for employers.</li> <li>- Seek out networking opportunities.</li> </ul>