

Business Plan

2017–2018

Human Rights Commission



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Message from the Director and CEO

I am pleased to share the details of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission's (NSHRC) Annual Business Plan for the 2017-18 fiscal year. As the agency responsible for enforcing and promoting human rights in Nova Scotia, we have a considerable responsibility to all Nova Scotians. This business plan will help Nova Scotians understand our priorities and will also help track our progress towards meeting those priorities.

The NSHRC maintains a commitment to service excellence and the application of best practices in the protection and promotion of human rights in Nova Scotia. During 2017-18, I will continue to work with staff, Commissioners, our strategic partners and members of the public on a plan for NSHRC to guide us in the years to come. This is the Commission's 50th anniversary year, and we are excited to launch a series of initiatives to mark this important milestone. Our aim is to increase engagement with Nova Scotians on human rights issues through public events, a youth art competition with exhibits to be held across the province, and a digital media engagement strategy.

The Commission has invested in new technology, including an online learning platform and will launch a full suite of online training courses to bring human rights education to all Nova Scotians in an easily accessible format. The Commission will also continue to work in partnership with the business community to successfully launch the "Serving All Customers Better" education campaign expected to educate thousands of service, security and retail staff. This initiative will assist in combating consumer racial profiling in the province. Our partnerships with community and business leaders represent important relationships that help to give the *Human Rights Act* meaning in the daily lives of Nova Scotians.

Working with the Department of Justice, NSHRC will propose amendments to the *Human Rights Act* to reflect advancements in human rights law, as well as amendments to allow for improvements to the dispute resolution process. NSHRC will continue to demonstrate leadership in the protection of human rights through innovation and the use of best practices, including use of restorative approaches to dispute resolution.

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.

Mandate

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

The specific duties of NSHRC are set out in the Act. NSHRC has the responsibility of 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 race, religion, creed, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. Furthermore, it is mandated to both conduct and encourage research by universities and other bodies in the general field of human rights.

NSHRC also works with government by advising and assisting its departments and agencies involving human rights. It reports, as required, to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice on the business and activities of the NSHRC. It also considers, investigates or administers any matter or activity referred by the Governor in Council or the Minister of Justice.

Core Responsibilities and Services for 2017-18

#1

Outcome: Communities within Nova Scotia are more inclusive

Goals: Meaningfully engage, educate and support people and communities to raise awareness and address issues of systemic discrimination

Actions:

Proactive, strategic stakeholder engagement

1. NSHRC will focus efforts to increase strategic stakeholder engagement with Nova Scotians on human rights through partnerships, public events and social media.

Strategic partnerships and collaboration

2. NSHRC will work with ongoing partners in the area of human rights and identify new strategic partnership opportunities to advance its mandate.
3. NSHRC will launch a full suite of free online human rights training courses to make human rights education and promotion accessible to the public across the province.
4. NSHRC will continue as co-chair and seek to further expand the Partners for Human Rights committee made up of individuals, organizations and community groups dedicated to advancing human rights.

Support for Commissioners

5. NSHRC will continue to develop a plan to enhance engagement and participation of its Commissioners.

Community Conversations Initiative

6. NSHRC will build upon the work of the Community Conversations initiative, focusing on research, communications and engagement activities within our communities.

Inputs:

NSHRC will work within its existing budget and staffing compliment to achieve this priority and complete the required actions. It will engage and continue to work with community partners, stakeholders and other government departments and agencies to achieve this outcome.

Performance Measures:

- The staff of NSHRC will reflect the diversity of communities throughout Nova Scotia.
- The launch of key initiatives to celebrate NSHRC's 50th anniversary year, including a signature event on International Human Rights Day, a youth art competition with exhibits across the province and a digital media engagement strategy.

#2

Outcome: NSHRC will be known provincially as a leader and innovator in the protection and promotion of human rights

Goal: NSHRC will demonstrate leadership in the protection of human rights through innovation and the use of best practices.

Actions:

Review and improve internal processes

1. NSHRC will continue to refine its dispute resolution processes and identify and act on efficiencies in its delivery of services.
2. NSHRC will continue to monitor processing times for complaints and board of inquiry hearings to ensure a timely resolution of all matters.

Sharing best practices with its partners and the local restorative learning community

3. NSHRC will maintain efforts to protect human rights by the sharing of best practices and knowledge of restorative approaches to human rights dispute resolution.
4. NSHRC will continue to participate on relevant Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Associations (CASHRA) working groups with colleagues across the country.

Reducing consumer racial profiling

5. NSHRC will continue efforts to prevent consumer racial profiling, in partnership with the business community, through the "Serving All Customers Better" education campaign.

Evaluation of Dispute Resolution Practices

6. NSHRC will implement an evaluation framework for dispute resolution and apply a restorative lens when using the framework.

Review the *Human Rights Act*

7. Working with the Department of Justice, NSHRC will propose amendments to the *Human Rights Act* to reflect advancements in human rights law, as well as amendments to allow for improvements to the dispute resolution process.

Input:

NSHRC is continuing to work toward an improved and more effective implementation of the restorative approach to human rights complaint resolution. As the benefits of this model continue to be realized, NSHRC will be able to better direct its human resources to focus on the education and training needs component of its mandate.

Performance Measures:

- NSHRC will continue to ensure that investigations of complaints are completed within one year of referral.
- NSHRC will offer up to four free human rights education sessions throughout the province in the 2017-18 fiscal year.
- NSHRC will participate in a minimum of ten workshops, presentations and/or information sessions in the 2017-18 fiscal year.

#3

Outcome: NSHRC is a preferred place of employment within the network of provincial departments and agencies.

Goals: NSHRC is a respectful workplace that is dynamic, embraces differences and fosters continuous learning.

Actions:

Create and sustain a workplace of excellence

1. NSHRC will continue to focus on activities that will enhance its overall organizational development.

Support for staff

2. NSHRC will continue to invest in technological enhancements to improve internal communications.
3. NSHRC will operationalize its staff orientation manual.
4. NSHRC staff will participate in regular learning opportunities and information sharing sessions.
5. NSHRC will continue to support workplace wellness initiatives for staff throughout the year.

Learning organization

6. NSHRC will create and implement a plan to become an organization that demonstrates a commitment to continuous learning.

Inputs:

NSHRC will work within its existing budget and staffing complement to achieve this priority and complete the required actions. NSHRC will work with the Public Service Commission to capitalize on existing training and learning opportunities, and support for a healthy workplace.

Performance Measures:

- All managers and staff will have learning plans completed and will have the opportunity to attend at least one professional development course or conference by March 31, 2018.
- Increased understanding by all staff of the various roles and responsibilities within NSHRC.
- NSHRC will hold at least six training sessions for staff on issues including human rights education, complaints adjudication and healthy workplace practices.

Budgetary Context

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2016-2017 Estimate</u>	<u>2016-2017 Forecast</u>	<u>2017-2018 Estimate</u>
Gross Program Expenses	2,532	2,532	2,664
Ordinary Recoveries	---	---	---
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	24.5	24.5	25.2