



# Accountability Report 2020–21

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Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

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Accountability Report 2020–2021

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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services for the year ended March 31, 2021, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services' outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services 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 Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services 2020-2021 Business Plan.

*Original signed by*

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Hon. Colton LeBlanc  
Minister

*Original signed by*

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Joanne Munro  
Deputy Minister

## Message from Minister and Deputy Minister

It is our pleasure to present the Accountability Report for the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. This document reports on the activities outlined in our 2020-2021 Business Plan.

As challenging as the past year has been for our department, along with all Nova Scotians who are working and living through COVID-19, 2020-2021 has offered us an opportunity to show our strength, our resilience, and our determination to do the work we set out to do. Our staff working across the province continue to impress us. Their commitment to this province, to you and to one another is remarkable. They show up every day to do the very best they can for Nova Scotians.

Service excellence for our partners and the citizens we serve continues to underline everything we do. We are finding new and innovative ways to serve Nova Scotians to help keep them safe during the pandemic. With about five million client interactions each year, that range from issuing marriage licenses, drivers' licenses and vehicle permits to supporting businesses and consumer rights, there are plenty of opportunities. Examples include a new digital service for driver licenses and online booking for appointments at our Access Centres, developing and maintaining the Nova Scotia Safe Check-In system to support enforcement of COVID-19 restrictions on Nova Scotia's borders, and implementing legislative and regulatory changes to ease burden on Nova Scotians while protecting the public interest.

The Accountability Report is our opportunity to highlight for you some of our innovative and transformational accomplishments over the past year. We hope you will take the time to review what we have prepared for you and continue to be assured of our commitment to make it as easy as possible to access the services that you need.

### *Original signed by*

Honourable Colton LeBlanc  
Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

### *Original signed by*

Joanne Munro  
Deputy Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

## Financial Results

Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services			
	2020-21 Estimate	2020-21 Actual	2020-21 Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)
<b>Departmental Expenses:</b>			
Senior Management	424	367	(57)
Strategy and Corporate Services	11,651	10,844	(807)
Government Services	31,604	33,446	1,842
Internal Audit Centre	2,258	2,213	(45)
Financial Services	12,979	12,784	(195)
Citizen Services	30,313	36,286	5,973
Nova Scotia Digital Services	156,103	157,572	1,469
Procurement	9,754	8,858	(896)
Program Modernization	44,113	40,516	(3,597)
<b>Total Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>299,199</b>	<b>302,886</b>	<b>3,687</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Ordinary Revenue	708,969	665,343	(43,626)
Fees and Other Charges	9,370	7,858	(1,512)
Ordinary Recoveries	16,547	18,861	2,314
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees, and Recoveries</b>	<b>734,886</b>	<b>692,062</b>	<b>(42,824)</b>
<b>TCA Purchase Requirements</b>	<b>8,172</b>	<b>8,438</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>Provincial Funded Staff (Net FTE's)</b>	<b>1,614.9</b>	<b>1,530.5</b>	<b>(84.4)</b>

### Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

The Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services expenses were \$3.7 million or 1.2 percent higher than estimate primarily due to \$1.3 million net COVID-19 related expenses which includes increases of \$2.6 million for the SAP Health project and \$2.1 million in various operational expenses partially offset by reductions of (\$3.5) million in COVID-19 related delays in the SAP Modernization project. Other expenses include \$5.7 million for software licensing, \$5.3 million for Health Network and IT Support and \$1.1 million in Property Tax Rebate for Seniors grants. These increases were partially offset by reductions of (\$6.1) million due to further delays in the SAP Modernization project as well as (\$3.2) million in amortization costs.

### Revenue, Fees, and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services revenues were (\$42.8) million or (14.0%) lower than estimate primarily due to (\$58.4) million decrease in motive fuel tax partially offset by \$11 million increase in tobacco tax and \$3.7 million increase in commercial vehicle registrations.

### TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

Departmental TCA purchases were \$0.3 million or 3.3% higher than estimate primarily due to customized software for the Contact Centre approved through the fiscal year.

### Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

Departmental FTEs were (84.4) lower than estimate due to continued transition of the department and delays in filling vacancies.

## Measuring Our Performance

The annual Accountability Report for Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNSIS) reports on the progress achieved in meeting the outcomes, commitments and targets outlined in the 2020-2021 Business Plan. SNSIS measures its performance through a series of service standards, client feedback mechanisms, and tracking the progress of key initiatives that support government priorities.

### Priorities

SNSIS is focused on listening to the needs and expectations of Nova Scotians and aims to deliver inclusive, high-quality, accessible programs and services across multiple channels and lead the transition to a more digitally focused government. We utilize a citizen-centred approach to achieve operational and service excellence, while providing support to our teams and remaining fiscally responsible. SNSIS works to make it simpler, faster, safer, and more secure for our clients and our partners to do what they need to do.

### Responding to COVID-19

SNSIS played a pivotal role in assisting government in responding to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring citizens and businesses of Nova Scotia were supported. Through our role as first point of contact and supporting partner government departments in providing information and services, SNSIS assisted with maintaining necessary services and information channels for Nova Scotians while keeping the safety of the public and our teams as a highest priority.

During 2020-2021, through the commitment and dedication of our team, SNSIS was able to advance our priorities while going the extra mile to help our partners and clients across government;

- Redeployment of SNSIS staff, including liquor inspectors to support Public Health Order Inspections, as well as staff from across SNSIS to support with traveller check-ins and immunization sites.
- The Nova Scotia Digital Service (NSDS) was critical in the effort to help partners across government maintain key services, balancing quick responses to changing needs and requirements throughout the COVID-19 pandemic while maintaining core responsibilities and priorities. This work included, but was not limited to:
  - Continuously adjusting the Nova Scotia Safe Check-In system requirements to support ongoing restrictions on Nova Scotia's borders.
  - Continuously adjusting the Daily Public Health Check-In system requirements to support public health in monitoring positive COVID-19 cases.
  - Assisting the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) in establishing and expanding Primary Assessment Centers for COVID-19, maintaining and updating the technology required to manage increased volumes and assisting in rapid testing.

- Significantly increasing the capacity of the Contact Centre to serve surging COVID-19 related calls and service requests.
- Deferral of government fees to affected businesses.
- Swiftly shifting the operating model of Access Nova Scotia centres, introducing the option to book appointments and providing more services online. This was done to ensure the safety of staff and the public completing required transactions in our offices.
- Delivery of the public facing dashboard of COVID-19 case and vaccination data to support transparency in public health and to support a better client experience in vaccination bookings.
- Supported continuity of critical government programs and services throughout COVID-19 peaks and public health restrictions.

## Accomplishments

### *Registry Modernization*

- The Registry of Joint Stock Companies technology replacement system was launched in February 2021 allowing users enhanced 24/7 secure access to our services, ability to file or request documents, and manage their various requests. This will result in a significant reduction in time and paperwork required for businesses, non-profit organizations, and individuals.
- SNSIS continues to modernize the Vital Statistics Registry, which is expected to produce operational process improvements and significantly improve real time data verification and data sharing capabilities with Vital Statistics program partners at the provincial, inter-provincial and federal levels, and enable the development and delivery of a wide-range of government digital services to individuals.
- Work also continues on the Lobbyist Registry, the Land Registry and the Registry of Motor Vehicles, in partnership with the Department of Transportation and Active Transit.

### *Implementing Robust Cybersecurity and Privacy Programs*

- The cybersecurity team continued to enhance the corporate cybersecurity program, advancing a variety of cybersecurity improvement initiatives, investing in new security capabilities, establishing standard processes for all new IT solutions to assess cyber risks (including vulnerability assessments and penetration testing), and implementing a mandatory annual cybersecurity awareness and education program for NSDS staff.
- SNSIS continues to modernize and enhance privacy practices and awareness across government. Tools have been developed and implemented that guide the work of privacy services and influence the privacy culture in the civil service. In August 2020, a new Information Access and Privacy (IAP) case management system went live and a new IAP request application system was launched in January 2021. This new system has been built with robust security and privacy protocols in place and is supported by a leading provider of Freedom of Information (FOI) case management in North America. In connection with the launch of the online application system, a new and updated



disclosure site was launched to replace the temporary site that has been in place since 2018 and will give the public access to previously released information requests.

### *Delivering more and better digital services*

- SNSIS leads government-wide efforts to deliver more and better digital services through the Nova Scotia Digital Service (NSDS). In 2020-2021, NSDS continued its work with government and public sector partners to; lead the shift to delivering services with digital technologies to improve equity, inclusion, and access to government services; allow for our partners to concentrate on delivering consistent, high quality programs and services; and plan for a digital future. Examples include:
  - NSDS continued to simplify and standardize the digital environment to reduce support costs and increase stability, allowing clients to concentrate on delivering consistent, high quality programs and services.
  - Worked with Mental Health and Addictions to implement contact centre software in eight physical locations across the province to have a single toll-free number to allow Nova Scotians to self-refer for intake.
  - Modernized telecom infrastructure in three health locations where the technology was no longer supported and at risk of failure to ensure there were no impacts to patient care and safety.
  - Designed and selected a modern online payment platform that supports NSDS partners delivering online services to be launched in April 2021.
  - Reviewed digital solution designs from across Government, Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) and IWK to ensure alignment with standards and best practices and consider and identify re-use and sharing opportunities.

### *Transforming Client Experience, Service, and Operational Efficiency*

- SNSIS is committed to continuously improving existing services and introducing safer, clearer, faster services. In 2020-2021, SNSIS has:
  - Moved more client applications online for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program (HARP). There were 20,152 online applications in fiscal 2020-2021, a 9% increase over the previous year.
  - Introduced a new online service to make it easier and faster to renew regular driver, motorcycle, and farm tractor licences. The new online driver licence renewal service became faster, easier, and more convenient.
  - Continued to improve citizen- and business-facing online services such as renewing a licence plate sticker, paying fines, and the Online Dealer Service.
  - Initiated the digital service delivery environment allowing government to launch digital services faster and with less investment by re-using common components.
  - Initiated key advancements to digital platform offerings for all of government, including a digital identity service, which will continue to evolve through the year.
  - Launched the E-Courts service that allows family court hearings to take place online and improve access to justice.
  - Continued to modernize and improve the Property Tax Rebate for Seniors (PTRS) including implementation of a direct deposit option with an uptake of over 82% for

2020-2021 and engaging in a pilot project with Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) that allows property taxes to be confirmed automatically. Currently, the PTRS program requires seniors to connect with their municipality to get physical proof that property taxes were paid in full, which they then submit with their PTRS application. The pilot project developed an automated process whereby the proof of property tax payment is confirmed electronically between the province and HRM.

### ***Maintain and Enhance the Open Data Portal***

- The Open Data portal currently contains more than 1000 datasets, maps, filtered views, visualizations, and stories that cover business and the economy, communities and social services, nature and environment, and government administration.
- SNSIS works to continually improve the service by releasing new datasets each quarter and releasing new stories through the Perspectives storytelling feature that helps add context to the data and improves data literacy.
- SNSIS has employed new strategies to identify and release new data, through:
  - Broadening the scope of identifying potential data sets by engaging directly with departmental business areas, expanding open data beyond departments to Crown Corporations and Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABCs), and streamlining processes.
  - Transitioning legacy visualizations (i.e., charts and maps) to a new, simplified look and feel.
  - Ongoing interjurisdictional collaboration with Pan-Canadian groups on identified priorities.

### ***Regulatory Burden Reduction***

- Continued to work closely with the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness (ORASE) to better serve the citizens and businesses of Nova Scotia, through service enhancements and process improvements across the department's programs and services and introducing legislative and regulatory changes to ease burden while protecting the public interest. These include:
  - Supported ORASE to exceed the initial target to save citizens 50,000 hours of administrative burden by December 31, 2020, with the reduction of citizen time on administrative burden being more than 185,000 hours.
  - SNSIS implemented changes to simplify and shorten the liquor licence application process. The application has been reduced to three pages and requires fewer supporting documents. Additionally, as part of this initiative, credit checks are now being done in-house with consent to the check as part of the application. Impacted businesses will see savings due to the reduced obligations and travel time.
- SNSIS' collaboration with ORASE has resulted in a reduced regulatory burden for Nova Scotia businesses by \$3,853,000 as of the end of 2020.

### ***Making Use of Innovation in Procurement***

- SNSIS has continued to explore innovation opportunities through procurement, by collaborating with DivertNS and others, working to identify Nova Scotia products made

from waste resources and/or products related to a more circular economy. Work is currently underway to develop a list of local, innovative, and/or sustainable products for use in construction.

- A large, multi-year infrastructure development is being utilized to pilot diversity supplier and community engagement approaches, and community benefit requirements in RFX<sup>1</sup>.

## Core Responsibilities

In addition to our commitment to provide excellent service to Nova Scotians, SNSIS accomplished the following during the 2020-2021 fiscal year:

- Provided processing services for licences, permits, registrations, certificates, refund, rebates, and contact centre services to clients across Government.
- In partnership with Nova Scotia Health and with the support of the Department of Health and Wellness, SNSIS created a fully automated and secure in-house notification system to reach out to those who tested negative for COVID-19. This initiative was awarded the prestigious *Recognition of Achievement Award* from UNIVANTS of Healthcare Excellence at a virtual global event in November 2020.
- Continued to provide key services to our government and public sector partners, including financial services, procurement services, lean and continuous improvement, corporate security, insurance and risk management, business continuity, and public safety and field communications. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - The redesign and deployment of Operational and Service Excellence suite of training (lean six sigma).
  - Modernizing practices, tools and networks to enable a transparent and coordinated response and communication related to severe weather events to ensure business continuity throughout government.
- Work undertaken to date by the Corporate Innovation Unit (CIU) has contributed to the public service finding new and better ways of doing valued things to improve the lives of Nova Scotians by providing innovation expertise, guidance and advice, supporting departments through the co-creation of projects using new approaches, and building capacity in innovation skills and mindsets. Initiatives accomplished in 2020/21 include, but are not limited to:
  - The redesign and deployment of Operational and Service Excellence suite of training (lean six sigma).
  - Partnering with program areas to resolve operational and capacity challenges by implementing process improvement projects.
  - Supporting the Department of Lands and Forestry in addressing challenges regarding how Nova Scotia puts biodiversity first,

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<sup>1</sup> RFX is a catch-all term that captures all references to Request for Information (RFI), Request for Proposal (RFP), Request for Qualification (RFQ) and Request for Bid (RFB).

- Supporting the Skills and Digital Inclusion Action Group to identify ideas that connect vulnerable Nova Scotians to employment and opportunity through technology and skills.
- Supporting the Accessibility Directorate to integrate wellbeing measures into Access by Design.

## 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 Labour 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

The following is a summary of disclosures received by Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2020-2021
The number of disclosures received	None
The number of findings of wrongdoing	None
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A