

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Business Plan 2021-2022



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Message from the Director and CEO

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (Commission) is fully committed to the creation of inclusive communities and the protection of human rights in Nova Scotia by fostering positive, productive and respectful relationships.

Nova Scotia will continue to play a national leadership role in the promotion of human rights as Chair of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA). New initiatives to advance human rights in Nova Scotia and across Canada continue to be put in place. CASHRA members will work together closely to develop timely policies and web-based resources to address emerging human rights issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The national education campaign in collaboration with the federal Department of Justice that provides free resources to prevent and address sexual harassment in workplaces will also continue.

Stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and partnerships with various community members will continue to improve the Commission's ability to address existing human rights issues, such as systemic anti-black racism, accommodation of mental and physical disability in workplaces, and reconciliation for Indigenous people.

Innovation and modernization at the Commission will further improve the efficiency and transparency of our dispute resolution process in fiscal year 2021-22. The Commission expects to clear the backlog of COVID-19 related human rights complaints early in 2022.

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.

Sincerely,

KyMBERLY Franklin
Acting Director & CEO (Acting)

Mandate

The Commission 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 Commission is mandated by the *Human Rights Act* to help build inclusive communities and protect human rights in Nova Scotia.

The specific duties of the Commission are set out in the Act. The Commission 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 age, race, colour, religion, creed, ethnic, national or Aboriginal origin, sex (including pregnancy and pay equity), sexual orientation, physical disability, mental disability, family status, marital status, source of income, harassment (including sexual harassment), irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease, association with protected groups or individuals, political belief, affiliation or activity, gender identity or gender expression.

The Commission is further mandated to conduct and encourage research by universities and other bodies in the general field of human rights, and also works with government by advising and assisting its departments and agencies in regard to human rights.

The Commission reports, as required, to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice on its business and activities, and 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 2021-22

#1

Outcome: Communities within Nova Scotia are more inclusive

Goals: Advance Priority Human Rights Issues

Actions:

1. The Commission will focus efforts on addressing longstanding issues of systemic racism related to people of African descent.
2. The Commission will develop a framework and capacity to contribute to reconciliation with our First Nations communities.
3. The Commission will increase its visibility in correctional facilities and address human rights issues identified in the corrections system.
4. The Commission will continue to identify emerging human rights issues to guide it in its work.

Inputs:

The Commission will work within its existing budget to identify the necessary resources 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 Commission will organize up to 5 community meetings to engage the public on priority human rights issues, such as systemic racism and reconciliation.
- Staff of the Commission will continue to visit provincial correctional facilities to meet with inmates and management to address human rights issues.

#2

Outcome: Leader and innovator in the protection and promotion of human rights

Goal: Modernize the Human Rights Commission

Actions:

1. The Commission will expand its online training resources to provide free public education for the province on a wide range of human rights issues.
2. The Commission will enhance its communication strategy and continue to expand its use of digital media platforms to promote human rights.
3. The Commission will develop tools to enhance efficiency and transparency in human rights dispute resolution.
4. The Commission will provide extensive training and development opportunities to staff.
5. The Commission will fully incorporate restorative principles into all aspects of its work.

Input:

The Commission will continue to work toward an improved and more effective implementation of the restorative approach to human rights dispute 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:

- The Commission will clear the backlog of complaints related to the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to ensure that investigations of complaints are approached restoratively.
- The Commission will continue to lead CASHRA in the development of timely policies to address emerging human rights issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#3

Outcome: Capacity is strengthened on human rights issues

Goals: Advance Dialogue and Human Rights Practices

Actions:

1. The Commission will highlight and build upon advancements in human rights work by contributing to the national conversation surrounding human rights issues.
2. The Commission will continue to strengthen government and media relations.
3. The Commission will encourage the adoption of best human rights practices by:
 - a. strengthening connections with stakeholders such as professionals, volunteers, communities, businesses, and organizations involved in human rights work;
 - b. providing tools, resources, and training that promote human rights;
 - c. contributing to a stronger national partnership of human rights commissions.
4. The Commission will enhance mechanisms to give voice to affected communities, on human rights issues.
5. The Commission will provide support for efforts to increase diversity within public institutions in the province.

Inputs:

The Commission will work within its existing budget and staffing complement to achieve this priority and complete the required actions.

Performance Measures:

- The Commission will participate in a minimum of 5 workshops, presentations and/or information sessions on topics related to human rights in the 2021-22 fiscal year.
- The Commission will lead CASHRA in the development and promotion of training tools for national use in both English and French to promote human rights across Canada.
- The staff of the Commission will reflect the diversity of communities throughout Nova Scotia and its staff will provide support to public institutions, including the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in the development of a strategy to promote diversity and inclusion in the public service.

Budgetary Context

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2020-2021 Estimate</u>	<u>2020-2021 Forecast</u>	<u>2021-2022 Estimate</u>
Gross Program Expenses	2,660	2,660	2,857
Ordinary Recoveries	---	15	8
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	25.5	22.5	25.5