

NOVA SCOTIA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Annual Accountability Report For the Fiscal Year 2016-2017



Contents

Accountability Statement 3

Message from the Director and CEO 4

Financial Results 5

Measuring Our Performance..... 5

 Government Priorities 5

 Commission’s link to Government’s Priority: People 5

 2016-2017 Priorities of the Commission 7

 #1 7

 #2 8

 #3 10

Appendix A..... 12

Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (Commission) for the year ended March 31, 2017 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Commission's Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Commission's outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by the Commission's management.

I acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Commission 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 Commission's 2016-2017 Business Plan.



Christine Hanson
Director and CEO
Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Message from the Director and CEO

I am pleased to present the Accountability Report of the Commission for fiscal year 2016-2017. Fiscal year 2016-2017 has been a year of modernization and innovation for the Commission.

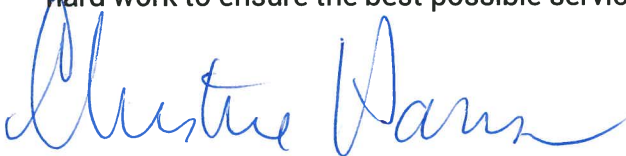
New initiatives to advance human rights in Nova Scotia have been put in place, including the purchase of an online learning platform and creation of a virtual classroom to enable the Commission to provide free human rights training to people and businesses in every corner of our province. Commission meetings have gone paperless allowing for more timely distribution of materials as well as the realization of significant cost savings. The launch of a new interactive website and modern telephone system have improved our communication with the public. A comprehensive social media strategy was also developed and implemented to further strengthen our engagement and dialogue with the communities we serve.

We have been working to ensure that dispute resolution processes are fair, effective, and accessible. In 2016-17, the average number of days from the time a complaint was filed until the matter was resolved was reduced to the lowest levels in well over a decade. We have continued to use restorative approaches to our human rights dispute resolution processes with great success and to share best practices and knowledge with stakeholders and human rights counterparts locally and nationally.

Stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and partnerships with various community members continued to improve the Commission's ability to address existing and emerging human rights issues. A high-profile education campaign to increase awareness and prevent consumer racial profiling was launched this past year in collaboration with the Nova Scotia retail industry and affected communities, resulting in commitment by over 600 Nova Scotia businesses representing 11,000 service staff, to train their employees using the Commission's free online course "Serving All Customers Better".

Fiscal year 2016-17 also saw the Commission turn 50. On March 27, 1967, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission was established by government with the explicit purpose of challenging long-standing patterns of discrimination on racial, religious and ethnic grounds. Planning has been underway for the Commission to celebrate its 50th anniversary throughout 2017 with a number of initiatives and events.

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.



Christine Hanson
Director and CEO

Financial Results

Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission			
Programs & Services	2016-2017 Estimate (\$ thousands)	2016-2017 Actual (\$ thousands)	2016-2017 Variance (\$ thousands)
Administration	889	786	(103)
Support Services	1,643	1,614	(29)
Total Expenses	2,532	2,400	(132)
Funded Staff (FTEs)	24.5	23	(1.5)

Measuring Our Performance

Government Priorities

In 2016-2017, the Government of Nova Scotia had three overarching goals: People, Innovation, and Education. The Commission, an independent agency of government, aligned its priorities with those of government, in particular the first priority: People.

Commission's link to Government's Priority: People

Throughout 2016-17, the Commission helped Nova Scotians resolve disputes involving discrimination and harassment, and provided education and training to community members, organizations, and employers throughout the province. The Commission remained committed to creating a just and inclusive Nova Scotia.

Outcome: Nova Scotia's population is growing, productive and thriving.

- Goals:**
1. Enhance workforce participation of youth, older workers and marginalized communities.
 2. Improve communities and social well-being.

Actions:

- The Commission continued its outreach with Nova Scotian communities that historically faced discrimination through its "Community Conversations" initiative. This initiative provided an opportunity to meet with Nova Scotians who experienced discrimination in their communities and engaged with them in conversations about the issues at the root of those experiences. This first "Community Conversation" took place in the Preston communities and identified opportunities to improve human rights and to mobilize efforts to bring about positive change.

- The 2016 Nova Scotian Human Rights Awards were presented on International Human Rights Day at the Halifax Central Library. Awards were presented to deserving individuals and organizations in recognition of their important contributions to the community in the field of human rights.
- The development of a database containing an annotated bibliography of research on human rights protected characteristics was deferred to 2017-18 as this initiative requires significant funding and staff resources to complete.
- Accessible education sessions on human rights and promoting a more just and inclusive Nova Scotia were held for members of the public throughout 2016-17.

Performance Measures:

- Increase in the number of human rights training sessions being requested and delivered to employers.
 - The number of human rights training sessions requested by and delivered to Nova Scotian employers have more than doubled from last fiscal year. In 2016-17, a total of 12 training sessions were requested by various employers, with a total of 172 employees participating. Last fiscal year saw four (4) training sessions requested by employers, with a total 65 employees attending.
- Increase in the number of human rights complaints that are resolved through dialogue and restorative approaches.
 - During the 2016-17 fiscal year, 25 complaints were resolved using dialogue and restorative approaches. Twenty-four (24) of these complaints were resolved by way of resolution conferences, with one (1) being resolved through a restorative board of inquiry. The number of resolved complaints using dialogue and restorative approaches was up slightly from last fiscal year.
- A Human Rights Commission that is more engaged, accessible and involved in the community.
 - The Commission participated in and sponsored more community events in 2016-17 than previous years. The Commission was not only a sponsor of 2016 Pride, but Commission staff marched in the Pride Parades in Halifax, Truro and Sydney. The Commission sponsored and participated in the Krio Descendants Union International Conference held in Halifax in September 2016. In addition, the Commission also provided human rights information at various community events throughout Nova Scotia and increased its outreach efforts to include more communities outside the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

2016-2017 Priorities of the Commission

#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. The Commission focused efforts on increasing its engagement with proactive, strategic stakeholders to strengthen current partnerships and create others. The Commission provided financial and policy support to the Bill 59 Alliance comprised of members of the disability community to help develop robust accessibility legislation for Nova Scotians. The Commission also worked in collaboration with the Police Board of Commissioners and affected communities to find a constructive way forward on the high-profile issue of police Street Checks.

Strategic partnerships and collaboration

2. The Commission continued to work with its ongoing human rights partners and identified new strategic partnership opportunities to advance its mandate. In March 2017, The Commission launched an education campaign in collaboration with the Nova Scotia business community to increase awareness and prevent consumer racial profiling. In addition, a human rights-themed Youth Art Competition was launched, with plans for it to carry over into the 2017-18 fiscal year to align with the Commission's 50th anniversary. All youth art received by the Commission was exhibited across the province.
3. The Commission continued its role as a key partner in the annual Symposium for Inclusive Education and Employment by providing financial and logistical support.
4. The Commission's CEO continued to co-chair the Partners for Human Rights committee, which is made up of individuals, organizations and community groups dedicated to advancing human rights.

Support for Commissioners

5. Commissioner engagement and participation was enhanced in 2016-17. Commissioners attended six (6) bi-monthly meetings, two (2) of which occurred outside HRM, in Antigonish and Truro. Community outreach events were incorporated into these meetings to enable Commissioners to meet with community members and stakeholders.

Community Conversations Initiative

6. The Community Conversations initiative focused on research, communications and engagement activities within Nova Scotian communities. This initiative was created out of a case brought to the Commission by the Halifax Association of Black Firefighters and

was subsequently expanded to include African Nova Scotians, the immigrant community, First Nations and Indigenous communities, the LGBTQI community, and people with disabilities. The inaugural Community Conversations was held in the community of North Preston and led to identifying opportunities to improve human rights and mobilizing efforts to bring about positive change within the community.

Performance Measures:

- The membership of NSHRC will reflect the diversity of communities throughout Nova Scotia.
 - In 2016-17, the Commission had a staff of 24, with over half of its members reflecting the diversity of Nova Scotia’s communities.
- Community Conversations events will be held in up to five distinct communities across Nova Scotia.
 - This performance measure was revised in early fiscal 2016-17, following the first “Community Conversations” project, to complete at least one event per fiscal year. This first event required significant resources and time to complete. It was determined that available funding and staffing resources would be better utilized for several smaller focused community conversations to run concurrently. The Commission will revisit the “Community Conversations” events in the next fiscal year.
 - The first “Community Conversations” project, as outlined in the original initiative, was completed and reported on in early 2016-17. The Commission also met with the UN Working Group of Experts of People of African Descent in October 2017, and engaged in follow-up discussions with community members and various levels of government on the issues of Street Checks and Land Titles Clarification. The Commission also met regularly with members of the disability community during consultations concerning the *Accessibility Act*.

#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. The Commission continued refining its dispute resolution processes, and identified and acted on efficiencies in its delivery of services.
2. The Commission continued to monitor processing times of complaints and board of inquiry hearings to ensure they were resolved in a timely manner. There were some

protracted matters during 2016-17 that were the exception rather than the norm. The Commission will continue tracking dispute resolution statistics on a bi-monthly basis.

Sharing best practices with partners and the local restorative learning community

3. The Commission shared its best practices and knowledge with its stakeholders and human rights counterparts locally and nationally. Several national conferences on restorative justice were held locally and enabled the Commission to actively participate.
4. The Commission continued its membership with the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Associations (CASHRA) in 2016-17. Several staff members participated in various working groups with their national human rights counterparts, and the CEO and Chair attended the 2016 AGM, annual conference and mid-year conference.

Reducing consumer racial profiling

5. The Commission continued its work on consumer equity, and advanced its efforts to prevent consumer racial profiling through education by operationalizing the recommendations contained in *Working Together to Better Serve All Nova Scotians* (the consumer racial profiling research report). The Commission developed an online course and education campaign to educate Nova Scotians on consumer racial profiling.

Evaluation of Dispute Resolution Practices

6. The evaluation of the Commission's dispute resolution process was deferred to 2017-18. A proposal to develop an academic partnership with Dalhousie University to carry out an in-depth evaluation of the restorative approaches to human rights dispute resolution has been developed and will be implemented in the next fiscal year.

Review the *Human Rights Act*

7. The Commission completed a review of the *Human Rights Act* in late 2016-17. Proposed amendments to improve the process of dispute resolution and adjudication of complaints were drafted and will be presented to the Minister of Justice in 2017-18.

Performance Measures:

- NSHRC will continue to ensure that investigations of complaints are completed within one year of referral.
 - The Commission continued its monitoring of investigations of complaints. During 2016-17, investigations were completed in 229 days from the time of referral. This is number is down from 2015-16 where it took 249 days to complete an investigation of a complaint from the time of referral. The statistics are reviewed on a bi-monthly basis.
- NSHRC will offer up to four free human rights education sessions throughout the province in the 2016-17 fiscal year.

- During 2016-17, six (6) free human rights education sessions were offered throughout the province. This is a decrease from the nine (9) free human rights education sessions that were offered in 2015-16. The reduction in free human rights education sessions was a result of an increase in the number of requested and mandated human rights education sessions that the Commission accommodated.
- NSHRC will participate in a minimum of ten (10) workshops, presentations and/or information sessions in the 2016-17 fiscal year.
 - A total of 22 workshops, presentations and information sessions, with 297 attendees, were held during the 2016-17 fiscal year. This represents a significant increase compared to the number of sessions offered in 2015-16, which resulted from the increased number of requested and mandated human rights education sessions.

#3

Outcome: NSHRC is a preferred place of employment within the network of provincial department 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. The Commission continued to focus on activities that enhanced overall organizational development. All staff had learning plans and training budgets implemented to accommodate more training opportunities and to allow staff to attend more conferences.

Support for staff

2. The Commission invested in technology enhancements and improvements to internal communications. Eight (8) outdated computers were upgraded, five (5) Investigating HROs received Blackberries, and all staff members were provided remote access capabilities. The intranet website was not developed during this fiscal year, and will be reviewed in 2017-18.
3. The Commission reviewed its staff orientation manual during 2016-17, but did not operationalize it as there have been significant changes to or removal of practices since initially drafted. Operationalization of this initiative was deferred to 2017-18.
4. Commission staff participated in regular learning opportunities and information sharing sessions during 2016-17. Staff members were encouraged to enroll in courses offered by the Public Service Commission, as well as 3rd party training providers. Two

Commission staff members took part in the Public Service Commission's Leadership Development Program.

5. The Commission created a workplace wellness committee in 2016-17. Chaired by the CEO, with several staff members making up the committee, the committee organized several events to promote healthy living, such as FitBit challenges, healthy lunch challenges, and a team build day with Habitat for Humanity.

Learning organization

6. The Commission implemented an organizational plan that demonstrated its commitment to continuous learning. Learning plans for all staff were developed in 2016-17, and included mental health first aid training, in-house lunch & learn sessions, and attendance at human rights related conferences.

Performance Measures:

- All management staff will complete "Working Mind" training program and all staff will be offered opportunity to attend session by March 31, 2017.
 - Senior management completed "The Working Mind" training program and three (3) staff members registered for the program but will not complete the course until early in the next fiscal year.
- Increased employee engagement and satisfaction in 2017-18 "How's Work Going" Survey.
 - This performance measure should refer the 2017 "How's Work Going" Survey. This survey was offered by the Public Service Commission to all government employees and was open for completion from May 11 to June 16, 2017. The results for this survey are not yet available.
- Increased understanding by all staff of the various roles and responsibilities within NSHRC.
 - The Commission held several in-house lunch & learn sessions and quarterly staff meetings throughout 2016-17 to achieve this measure.
- NSHRC will hold at least eight (8) monthly training sessions for staff on issues including human rights education, complaints adjudication, and healthy workplace practices.
 - This performance measure is incorrect as it should read "NSHRC will hold at least eight (8) training sessions during the 2016-17 fiscal year for staff on issues including human rights education, complaints adjudication, and healthy workplace practices". Five (5) sessions were completed during the fiscal year and three (3) were rescheduled to 2017-18 due to scheduling conflicts.

Appendix A

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 Labor 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

Please use the following format to satisfy the disclosure obligation:

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2016-2017
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	NA
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	NA
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	NA