



Accountability Report 2020–21

Environment



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Accountability Report 2020–2021

ISBN: 978-1-77448-233-9

2020-2021 Department of Environment Accountability Report

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¹ On February 23rd, 2021, the name of the Department was changed from Nova Scotia Department of Environment (NSE), to the Department of Environment and Climate Change (ECC).

Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Environment, for the year ended March 31, 2020, is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Environment Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department of outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by Department of management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Department of Environment 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 Department of Environment 2020-2021 Business Plan.

Original Signed by:

Scott Farmer
Deputy Minister

Message from the Minister

As Nova Scotia's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, I am pleased to present the Accountability Report for 2020-21 which highlights the department's work to advance the goals and objectives outlined in its 2021-21 business plan.

Our department's mandate is to protect the environment, human health and the welfare of farm animals. To advance our mandate, our vision is to be a leader in regulatory excellence, conservation, partnership, and position Nova Scotia to seize the opportunities – including jobs - offered by the green economy.

Nova Scotians care deeply about our environment and our changing climate. They expect bold and decisive action to address climate change and transition our province to a green economy. In collaboration with our partners, Indigenous communities, other levels of government, and my colleagues across our Government, we will lead work to address climate change, a role that is reflected in our new departmental name. This includes reducing emissions, and taking an innovative and collaborative approach to transitioning Nova Scotia to renewable electricity sources.

As Minister, I am impressed by the professionalism and dedication of Environment and Climate Change staff. They worked hard during an exceptional year to meet and advance the department's goals. I offer my sincere thanks and appreciation for their work over the past year, and look forward to working with them, and our partners, to build a cleaner, sustainable future for Nova Scotians today, and for future generations.

Original signed by

Honourable Tim Halman

Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Financial Results and Variance Explanation²

Department of Environment	2020-2021 Estimate	2020-2021 Actuals	2020-2021 Variance
Program & Service Area	<i>(\$thousands)</i>		
Departmental Expenses:			
Administration	806	836	30
Policy	5,978	5,752	(226)
Inspection, Compliance, and Enforcement	21,770	24,694	2,924
Sustainability and Applied Science	11,789	11,502	(287)
Climate Change	2,149	2,020	(129)
Total: Departmental Expenses	42,492	44,804	2,312
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	4,194	4,583	389
Fees and Other Charges	2,699	2,308	(391)
Ordinary Recoveries	3,846	3,849	3
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	10,739	10,740	1
TCA Purchase Requirements	453	1,499	1,046
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	356.3	355.1	1.2
Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:			
Department of Environment and Climate Change expenses were \$2.3 million or 5.4 percent higher than estimate primarily due to the cost of additional staffing at border, ferry and airport checkpoint in response to Covid-19, partially offset by other Covid-19 related operational savings, mainly related to out-of-province travel and meetings.			
Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:			
n/a			
TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:			
Land purchase of \$1.24 million through federal program called Challenge Fund-Target 1. Software upgrade (SNAP 2) due to the change in project scope, 197K carried over to the next fiscal year.			
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:			
n/a			

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Strategic Priorities and Approach

The vision of the Department of Environment³ is to be a leader in regulatory excellence, conservation, partnership, and promotion. We protect the environment, human health, and the welfare of farm animals.

The Department of Environment focuses its efforts and fulfills this vision by:

- Developing and updating legislation, regulations, policies, and programs based on sound scientific knowledge and expertise.
- Educating, inspecting, and enforcing compliance with legislation and regulations.
- Delivering programs and services to enhance the protection of the environment, human health and the welfare of farm animals.
- Proactively responding to environmental, animal, and human health risks.
- Processing notifications, applications, and approvals for regulated activities.

Measuring our Performance

Goal 1: Education, inspection, compliance, and enforcement

Continue working towards a best-in-class inspectorate that is defined by:

- A professional and competent workforce that applies the right level of response to each issue.
- Consistent and effective compliance with legislation and regulations.
- An integrated and responsive structure with the flexibility needed to ensure resources are deployed based upon risk.

Performance Measure:

Develop new training components and enhance existing training to support the role of compliance, inspection and enforcement in the Department.

Results:



NSE developed new training modules to support Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement staff, enabling effective compliance with NSE regulations across Nova Scotia.

NSE also played a key role in the COVID-19 response in 2020-2021. NSE staff operated check points at the land border, airports and ferries and educated travelers on public health requirements. They also responded to public health questions related to COVID-19, developed documents to answer the public's questions, and conducted inspections to ensure compliance with public health rules at facilities that NSE regulates.

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Goal 2: Program and risk management

Programs that manage risks to an acceptable level and deliver desired benefits through:

- Resources and efforts that are continuously aligned with program needs on a risk basis.
- Ensuring programs are well-structured and meet intended outcomes, while focusing on continuous improvement.

Performance Measure:

Review programs to determine if there are potential improvements that could be made.

Results:

NSE staff looked at possibilities for modernizing air quality regulations and policies. This will enhance our ability to protect the health of Nova Scotians.

NSE updated food safety regulations to reduce red tape for food permit holders while ensuring our regulations are consistent and help ensure food safety.

NSE signed a memorandum of understanding with the federal government and the other Atlantic Canada provinces to establish a new regional climate centre called CLIMAtlantic Inc. The centre will provide local climate data, information, training and other services to help Nova Scotians understand and consider the impacts of climate change.

In their work related to the COVID-19 response, NSE staff provided technical guidance to emergency management, Medical Officers of Health, and cross-departmental committees that were responding to the pandemic. NSE staff monitored risk and adapted resources accordingly. This work continues.

Goal 3: Client-focused service delivery

Improve the quality of service delivery to department clients through:

- Regulations that are clear and easy to understand.
- Supporting and empowering staff with information and training to best position them for success in their roles and interactions with Nova Scotians.

Performance Measure:

Continue work to **move regulatory programs into the System for Notification and Approval Processing (SNAP)**, the department's system for processing notifications, approvals, licenses and registrations. Incorporating more programs into SNAP ensures resources are deployed appropriately based on levels of risk and supports more accurate reporting. For example, when an inspector completes an inspection, site visit or audit, the system tracks it, which helps improve accuracy and continuity.

**Results:**

Staff continued to enhance the System for Notification and Approval Processing (SNAP) to include Meat Inspection and Farm Animal Welfare programs. The system is almost complete.

Goal 4: Regulatory excellence

Ensure necessary **regulations are predictable, transparent, and protect our health, safety and environment** by:

- Modernizing legislation, creating the foundation to support innovation, sustainable prosperity and regulatory excellence
- Modernizing regulations and reducing regulatory burden where appropriate to eliminate barriers to private sector growth and productivity.
- Measuring results to ensure outcomes are met.

Performance Measures:

- Legal framework for protection for our coasts is implemented
- Continued implementation of Cap and Trade Program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Develop environmental goals to support a healthy economy and long-term prosperity
- Develop a Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth to respond to the climate crisis
- Advance land protection in Nova Scotia
- Reduce unnecessary NSE regulatory burden to Nova Scotian businesses.

**Results:**

The department met with key stakeholder groups to help in the development of regulations for the Coastal Protection Act.

The cap-and-trade auctions in June and December 2020 raised \$28.747 million for use, through the Green Fund, in the 2020-21 fiscal year. The Green Fund fully allocated 2020 auction revenue towards the following:

- Solar Homes (\$5.5 M for two years)
- Affordable Multi-Family Housing (\$11.45 M for 5 years)
- Small Business and Not-for-profit Energy Solutions program (\$3.5 M for 3 years)
- HomeWarming (\$4.75 M for 1 year)
- Clean Leadership Program - Climate Cohort (\$2 M for 5 years)
- Western Climate Initiative (\$956 K), Adaptation Leadership Program (\$275 K)
- Climate Change Risk Assessment (\$194 K), Green Fund Manager (\$135 K)

NSE worked with government departments to discuss the Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth and possible environmental goals for regulations under the Sustainable Development Goals Act. Development of both the regulations and the Climate Change Plan

for Clean Growth continued, despite stakeholder outreach and public engagement being delayed due to COVID-19.

Government announced in February 2021 that it would be advancing 20 new sites for legal designation, pending the outcome of consultations, surveying, and other technical work. Work to bring these sites forward for designation is contributing to the Province's land protection goals.

NSE reduced burden to business by \$6.2 M from January 2019 to the end of December 2020.

Annual Report under 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 (*Department/Public Service Offices/ Governmental Unit including Crown Corporations and Agencies*)

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 (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A