



Accountability Report 2020–21

Immigration



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Accountability Report 2020–2021

ISBN: 978-1-77448-233-9

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Accountability Statement

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

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Nova Scotia Office of Immigration 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 Nova Scotia Office of Immigration 2020-21 Business Plan.

Original signed by:

Hon. Jill S. Balsler
Minister

Original signed by:

Ava Czapalay
Deputy Minister

Message from the Minister

We are pleased to present the 2020-21 Annual Accountability Report for the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (NSOI). This will be the final report under the name Nova Scotia Office of Immigration. Following the 2021 provincial election, the new government restructured a number of government departments and offices. This included creating the new Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration. Immigration had already begun working to develop priorities that will support the goal of bringing the provincial population to 2 million people by 2060, with a focus on increasing our immigration allocation numbers and attracting more newcomers from across Canada each year. The newly created Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration will work to ensure that Nova Scotia has the skilled workforce needed to meet its labour market demands.

As of April 1, 2021, Nova Scotia's population reached an all-time high of 982,326 people, largely due to increased immigration and in migration to the province. It is predicted that the province will reach the 1 million population mark by 2024 on its way to the goal of 2 million by 2060.

Although COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions and border closures impacted immigration to Canada and Nova Scotia and reduced processing capacity at the federal level, our work to meet the immigration needs of the province did not slow down in 2020-21. Throughout the pandemic, NSOI continued to promote all migration pathways to the province, shifting operations to continue international recruitment using a virtual approach and engaging with employers to understand their labour needs. This will help ensure that we are ready to support Nova Scotia's economic recovery as pandemic restrictions are lifted.

In total, NSOI approved 3,517 applications in 2020, focussing on skilled workers in essential services, such as health care, transportation, as well as helping those already living in Canada transition to permanent residency. These applicants and their families are expected to arrive over the next few years when travel and border restrictions ease and as the federal government processes their applications for permanent residence.

Attracting immigrants to Nova Scotia is essential, but just as important is retaining them in Nova Scotia. Our six-year retention rate is 71 per cent. This is the highest retention rate in Atlantic Canada. Over the past year, NSOI continued to work with provincial settlement partners to ensure that newcomers are supported and set up for success. To ensure immigrants receive the support they need to remain here, NSOI invested \$6.4 million in settlement programming and services including language training and employment supports.

Original signed by:

Hon. Jill S. Balsler
Minister

Original signed by:

Ava Czapalay
Deputy Minister

Financial Results

	2020-2021 Estimate	2020-2021 Actuals	2020- 2021 Variance
Program & Service Area	<i>(\$ thousands)</i>		
Departmental Expenses:			
Office of Immigration	10,217	8,953	(1,174)
Total: Departmental Expenses	10,217	8,953	(1,174)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	0	0	0
Fees and Other Charges	0	0	0
Ordinary Recoveries	0	0	0
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	0	0	0
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	39	37.3	(1.7)
<p><u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to temporary vacancies and operating savings which were primarily due to Covid-19.</p> <p><u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u> N/A</p> <p><u>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</u> N/A</p> <p><u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u> Provincial funded staff were 1.7 FTEs lower than budget due to temporary staff vacancies.</p>			

Measuring Our Performance

Attraction and Recruitment

Outcome	Measure	Base Year	Annual Target: 2020	Results
Immigration activities address Nova Scotia's economic and labour market gaps.	Number of new immigrant landings* per calendar year.*	2003: 1,474	7000	3,510 NSOI missed its target due to travel restrictions and federal processing delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationally, landings fell from 341,175 in 2019 to 184,590 in 2020.

Landings Breakdown: NSOI Principal Applicants and Dependents vs Strictly Federal Pathways *											
Category/year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Nominee Program	630	780	955	1,205	1,400	1,395	2,590	2,735	3,470	3,515	1,590
Atlantic Immigration Pilot	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	375	1,570	740
NSOI Total	630	780	955	1,205	1,400	1,395	2,590	2,750	3,845	5,085	2,330
NSOI % of Landings	26%	36%	41%	48%	52%	41%	47%	61%	64%	67%	66%
All Other	1,765	1,360	1,385	1,320	1,270	2,010	2,895	1,765	2,120	2,495	1,180
% Other Landings	74%	64%	59%	52%	48%	59%	53%	39%	36%	33%	34%
GRAND TOTAL	2,395	2,140	2,340	2,525	2,670	3,405	5,485	4,515	5,965	7,580	3,510

*Landings measure all immigrants who arrive in Nova Scotia, including provincial and federal candidates, and their families.

Notes:

- Landing numbers in 2016 were higher than usual as 1,425 refugees arrived in Nova Scotia as part of our response to the Syrian refugee crisis.
- The introduction of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot in 2017 has led to an increase of Nova Scotia landings year over year.
- COVID-19 measures impacted immigration across the country. Nationally, landings fell from 341,175 in 2019 to 184,590 in 2020.

Integration and Retention

Outcome	Measure	Base Year	Annual Target: 2020	Results
Nova Scotia's immigration policies and settlement activities support immigrants and their families to successfully settle and integrate in their new community.	Percentage of all tax-filing immigrants arriving in Nova Scotia in a six-year period remaining in the sixth year.	2008 IMBD: 69%	70% or better retention rate (2017) *.	71% NSOI has re-committed to maintaining a 70% or higher retention rate.

*NSOI uses tax filer data from the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) to calculate retention rates. There is a two-year lag in the availability of data from IMBD; the latest available data is for the 2017 tax year.

Policy Development and Advocacy

Outcome	Measure	Base Year	Annual Target: 2020	Results
Increase the number of annual provincial nominations	Number of NS Nominee Program certificates issued per calendar year.	2003: 23	1,350 NSNP Nominations	1,900 NS exceeded its annual target of 1,350 NSNP nominations.

Outcome	Measure	Base Year	Annual Target: 2020	Results
Increase Nova Scotia's use of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program.	Number of designations* in the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program.	2017: 277***	Increased designations from previous year	1,387 designated employers, up from 1,140 the prior year.
	Number of endorsements** in the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program per calendar year.	2017: 201***	1,173 AIP Endorsements	1,617 Nova Scotia exceeded its target of 1,173 AIP endorsements.

*The number of designations through the AIP is the number of employers taking part in the AIP, unlike nominations and endorsements, it is cumulative. The current year includes all previous years' designations less any employers who are no longer participating in the program.

** The number of endorsements through the AIP is the number of job offers that were approved by NSOI each year.

*** 2017 measures are partial year figures as the AIP was launched in March 2017

Strategic Initiatives and Additional Results

In 2020-21, NSOI accomplished several key strategic initiatives in support of strong immigration programs, continued immigration growth, and the wellbeing of newcomers and their families.

International Attraction and Recruitment

In 2020-21, international events moved online or were postponed due to Covid-19. NSOI worked to identify digital technology options to assist with international recruitment efforts. This included virtual international attraction and recruitment activities through webinars and on-line platforms. International attraction efforts were also complemented by digital marketing that promoted Nova Scotia's work and lifestyle opportunities. The Nova Scotia *Room* brand highlighted the province's work and lifestyle opportunities, as the "Room to Live" message and images became more relevant during the pandemic.

In-province engagement activities also changed in response to the global pandemic, but NSOI continued to help employers to navigate the immigration system. We also continued engagement with post-secondary institutions to provide immigration information to international students who want to stay in the province after graduation.

Nova Scotia's Francophone Immigration Action Plan was launched in March 2019 and is a joint initiative with NSOI and Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie. In 2020-2021, NSOI continued to advance the action plan with targeted engagement with francophone partners, recruitment through both the PNP and AIP and international attraction events. Since implementation of the Action Plan, the proportion of French speaking applications supported by NSOI for immigration to the province has increased from below 1% to 11% in 2020.

Immigration Programs

In 2020, NSOI approved 3,517 applications for skilled workers and their families to be endorsed or nominated for Permanent Residency through the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP) and the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP). This is an increase of 25 per cent over 2019.

A focus for 2020-21 was our work with the Atlantic provinces and the federal government on the design and development of the permanent AIP program.

In 2020-21, NSOI programs continued to address provincial labour needs in key sectors. Specifically, programs like the Labour Market Priorities stream, the Physician Stream and the AIP supported immigration applications for family physicians and specialists, continuing care assistants, early childhood educators, registered nurses, Francophone candidates, and workers in the construction sector.

Supporting Settlement and Integration

Settlement services play a vital role in helping newcomers adapt to their new life in Nova Scotia and integrate within their communities. In 2020-21, NSOI provided \$6.375 million funding under two-year agreements with 15 Settlement Service Providers across the province to ensure newcomers have access to settlement support wherever they live. This funding supports immigrant settlement services including integration and retention, language training, employment bridging programs and support for welcoming communities. These programs will help immigrants and their families to settle successfully in communities in Nova Scotia. Together with our settlement partners, employers and communities, we are growing the population and strengthening the economy through immigration.

Policy and Advocacy

In 2020-21, NSOI worked closely with community partners, federal counterparts, provincial and territorial colleagues, and other provincial departments to lead policy and planning supporting innovative programming, recruitment and retention. This year, NSOI's strong relationships with the federal and other provincial/territorial governments proved important as everyone navigated the impact of COVID-19 measures on immigration to the province and the country.

Labour market information is crucial to effective immigration programming and recruitment. This year, using recent research findings and collaboration with other government departments, agencies, employers and sector stakeholders, NSOI developed an internal approach to obtaining and analyzing current LMI.

In November 2020, Dr Ather Akbari from Saint Mary's University released his report *Who Comes to Nova Scotia, Who Stays, Who Leaves and Why*, prepared for NSOI. This research provided NSOI with important information on the factors that influence retention of immigrants in the province and the findings are helping to inform programming and shape decision making within NSOI.

NSOI regularly tracks public opinion on immigration to allow for an evidence-based approach to informing on and promoting immigration. Even with pandemic restrictions and job losses, public opinion research continued to show that Nova Scotians see the benefits of immigration and are welcoming newcomers with strong support. Polling conducted in February 2021 reported that 94% per cent of Nova Scotians are in favour of immigrants coming to the province, and 90% agree that immigration is important for the economy. This public support contributes to welcoming communities and encourages people to live, contribute, and stay in Nova Scotia.

Program Integrity

Maintaining integrity and public confidence in immigration programs is a priority for Nova Scotia, and across Canada. In 2020-21, NSOI invested in its commitment to program

integrity by introducing a dedicated Investigations and Compliance Unit to expand capacity and expertise in this area.

Public Interest and 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 the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2020-2021
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A