

Accountability Report 2021–22

Environment & Climate Change



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Accountability Report 2021–2022

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Environment and Climate Change for the year ended March 31, 2022, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Environment and Climate Change Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department of Environment and Climate Change outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Department of Environment and Climate Change management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Department of Environment and Climate Change 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 and Climate Change 2021-2022 Business Plan.

Original signed by:

Honourable Tim Halman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Original signed by:

Lora MacEachern, Q.C.
Deputy Minister

Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

We are pleased to present the Department of Environment and Climate Change's Accountability Report for 2021-22.

This report summarizes the Department's work in advancing goals and objectives outlined in the 2021-22 business plan – work carried out by a committed and caring team of professionals who are proud to serve Nova Scotians. We want to thank the Environment and Climate Change team, and recognize them for the role they play in protecting our environment, addressing climate change, and protecting human health and the welfare of farm animals.

Over the past two years, many of these staff were on duty at our provincial borders and entry points to help slow the spread of the coronavirus, and keep Nova Scotians safe. For that, they deserve our collective gratitude.

In 2021-22, the Department also:

- ▶ invested just under \$45 million in the people of communities of Nova Scotia, through the Green Fund, for projects that support renewable energy, energy efficiency, adapting to climate change, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and engagement, training and skills development in the clean economy, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- ▶ worked with various industry sectors and across government, through the Climate Adaptation Leadership Program, to assess the operational risks and opportunities from climate change and to develop and implement climate readiness plans
- ▶ consulted on proposed regulations for the *Coastal Protection Act*
- ▶ collaborated with the federal government and our neighbouring provinces to launch CLIMAtlantic which is building capacity and understanding of the importance of climate data in making informed, data-driven decisions about how we collectively adapt to climate change
- ▶ inspected restaurants, cafeterias, food trucks and abattoirs to ensure our food is safe
- ▶ investigated complaints of mistreated farm animals, air quality violations and illegal spills into waterways

Since joining the Department, we have been committed to building on this good work and creating a modern regulatory system that ensures ongoing sustainable development while protecting our environment and helping both our economy and our people to thrive.

A ground-breaking new piece of legislation – the ***Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act***, is our roadmap. Through it, for example, we:

- are modernizing the province’s environmental regulatory system with a goal to balance protection of our environment with economic opportunity and prosperity for the people of Nova Scotia
- have created new Business Relationship Manager positions within the Department whose role is to work closely with industries and companies to ensure sustainable development that benefits Nova Scotians economically and environmentally
- continue our work to reduce Nova Scotia’s greenhouse gas emissions and respond to the global climate change emergency
- are protecting more of the resources we all depend on – our land, air and water
- launched a public education campaign to help Nova Scotians become more aware of blue-green algae and how to protect themselves and their pets when enjoying the province’s lakes
- continue work to reduce solid waste and transition to a circular economy; for example, we are exploring the province’s extended producer responsibility program to include packaging, single-use plastics, and paper
- are taking action to transition from coal and other fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy such as wind, solar, tidal and hydrogen
- are modernizing the province’s Air Quality Regulations and the Guidelines for Noise Measurement and Assessment to help ensure the air Nova Scotians breathe is clean and healthy and that industrial noise does not impact people’s well-being
- began work to establish a panel on environmental racism
- and are taking other actions to ensure Nova Scotians benefit from a healthy, safe, and sustainable environment and are set up to benefit from the green economy.

Together with Nova Scotians, our partners, and the Minister’s Roundtable on Environment and Sustainable Prosperity, we are working to ensure Nova Scotia is a clean, healthy place to live, work and do business. Our vision is a future with more vibrant and healthier communities – where we welcome new people and new opportunities, and pass on a healthy, sustainable and prosperous province to future generations.

Original signed by:

Honourable Tim Halman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Original signed by:

Lora MacEachern, Q.C.
Deputy Minister

Financial Results

Financial Table and Variance Explanation

Environment and Climate Change	2021-2022 Estimate	2021-2022 Actuals	2021-2022 Variance
Program & Service Area	<i>(\$ thousands)</i>		
Departmental Expenses:			
Administration	1,039	991	(48)
Policy	6,145	5,855	(290)
Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement	23,418	24,496	1,078
Sustainability and Applied Science	11,605	11,920	315
Climate Change	2,172	2,010	(162)
Total: Departmental Expenses	44,379	45,272	893
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	3,776	4,343	567
Fees and Other Charges	2,292	2,259	(33)
Ordinary Recoveries	3,676	3,933	257
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	9,744	10,535	791
TCA Purchase Requirements	1,256	1,172	(84)
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	382.2	383.9	1.7
Explanation:			
Departmental Expenses Variance			
Department of Environment and Climate Change expenses were \$893,000 higher than estimate primarily due to the cost of additional staffing at border, ferry, and airport checkpoints in response to Covid-19.			
Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance			
Department of Environment and Climate Change Revenue, Fees and Recoveries were \$791,000 higher than estimate primarily due to increased Revenues from the Resource Recovery Fund Board and increased Recoveries under the Challenge Fund.			

Measuring Our Performance

Addressing COVID-19 - Impacts and Initiatives

Department of Environment and Climate Change ('department' or 'ECC') staff operated COVID-19 checkpoints at the land border, airports, and ferries until border checkpoints ended on February 14, 2022.



ECC staff participated on cross government committees, helped develop and implement the proof of vaccination policy, led the development of inspection guidance documents, trained inspection staff at multiple departments, contributed content to the Health Protection Act Order, and ensured the Chief Medical Officer of Health was aware of emerging issues on the ground.

ECC's Public Health Officers responded to public health inquiries and conducted inspections to ensure compliance with the public health order, including at the request of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act

Public engagement took place from May 27 to July 26, 2021, to ask Nova Scotians what should be considered as new environmental goals and what should be included in a new climate plan. Facilitated by the Clean Foundation, the engagement included online submissions, an interactive website, virtual workshops, a Do-It-Yourself workshop kit, and traditional mail, email, and phone submissions. Clean Foundation received over 1,300 submissions, and 5,600 unique ideas were submitted. See: [What We Heart Report](#)



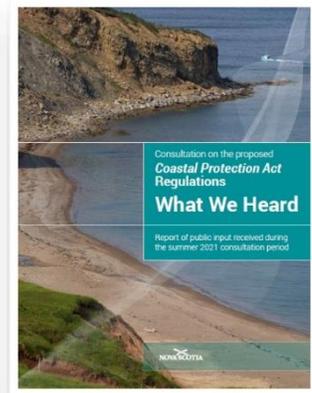
As part of the public engagement, the department also provided micro-grants of up to \$2,000 to support discussions centered on the voices of equity-seeking groups and communities that have been previously underrepresented in government engagement. Twelve organizations and individuals received funding, which facilitated the direct contributions of over 200 community members from across Nova Scotia. See: [Feedback from Community Engagements](#)

During the fall sitting of the legislature, the *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act* (EGCCRA) became law. This new legislation establishes a set of principles as well as 28 goals which aim to guide Nova Scotia towards sustainable prosperity for the next decade and beyond. See: [Bill 57: An Act Respecting Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction](#)

Coastal Protection Act Regulations

ECC conducted public consultations on the proposed general content of the regulations under the *Coastal Protection Act* and undertook consultation with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. The results of the public consultation were posted on-line in a [What We Heard Report](#).

Development of the regulations and program management supports for implementation continues, including work to refine the rules for setting and displaying the boundaries for the coastal protection zone.



Climate Change Programs and Service Delivery

Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth

ECC is finalizing the climate change plan for release in 2022, as required under EGCCRA. The climate change plan is being drafted in response to feedback from public consultations held in 2021, input from departments across government, results of the provincial risk assessment, and climate-related commitments defined under EGCCRA.



Work on Climate Change Risk Assessment

Started in 2020, the primary research phase for the provincial climate change risk assessment was completed this year. Work is underway to synthesize results and prepare materials to share with Nova Scotians in 2022.

Climate Leadership Adaptation Plans

ECC has been working with several government departments, business and community participants in a structured process to assess climate risks and opportunities to department and sector operations and objectives, develop and implement organizational and sector-wide adaptation strategies, and monitor and sustain efforts. The work has been cost-shared between Natural Resources Canada and the Government of Nova Scotia. Government departments include: ECC, Agriculture, Natural Resources and

Renewables, and Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. External sector partners include the cattle/sheep industry, Christmas tree and greenery industry, horticulture industry, electricity sector, coastal parks sector, and freshwater resources sector. All current partners will have developed department and sector-wide adaptation strategies by fall 2022.



Update on Building an Atlantic Data Hub

CLIMAtlantic, a new non-profit organization, was launched in May 2021 in collaboration with Environment and Climate Change Canada and the other Atlantic provinces. CLIMAtlantic's role is to provide Atlantic Canadians with advice and training on how to access and use existing locally relevant climate data and tools. They work with a range of partners, including governments, Indigenous groups, communities, academic institutions, and industries. Their services help groups develop data-informed decisions that are effective to achieve adaptation outcomes. See: <https://climatlantic.ca/>

Nature Conservation and Land Protection

In April 2021, the province announced the intention to protect 61 more wilderness areas, nature reserves and provincial parks across the province. In June 2021, public consultation was announced for 8 of these areas as well as additional proposed conservation lands in the Ingram River area near St. Margarets Bay. Work is ongoing to review public inputs from this consultation, finalize land surveys, and prepare documentation to support the legal protection of these sites.



Fiscal year 2021-22 also marked the third year of a four-year collaboration with Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, land trusts, and other conservation partners supported by \$14.3 million in federal funding under the Canada Nature Fund. Major accomplishments for this year include: building awareness and advancing discussions related to Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, acquiring 1,496 ha of private lands important for wildlife and biodiversity, supporting research and planning to improve ecological

connectivity, consolidating scientific and Indigenous knowledge to support prioritizing lands for conservation, working with municipalities to identify means for recognizing and enhancing the protection of ecologically important municipal lands, decommissioning about 40km of abandoned roads and structures in existing protected areas to improve ecological integrity, and enhancing land stewardship tools and approaches.

Fostering Diversity and Inclusion

The department's Diversity and Inclusion Committee worked with the senior leadership team to identify departmental goals for equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). The main deliverable will be an internal departmental EDI Action Plan that reflects the importance of diversity and inclusion to the department

ECC's EDI Action Plan outlines a series of 10 goals that together aim to create a workplace culture that is welcoming, empowering and representative of the public that it serves. While there are 10 goals, their outcomes are intertwined. Common themes across the goals are awareness and education, representation, and allyship. The department intends to start implementing the Action Plan in fiscal year 2022-23.

Excellence in Compliance and Enforcement

ECC completed and implemented Phase 1 of Compliance and Enforcement Foundations training this fiscal year. This professional development training covers all introductory aspects of working as an officer or inspector in a provincial regulatory department. To ensure excellence as a regulator, the department supported its inspectors and ensured consistent compliance with regulations by providing basic foundational training to inspectors.

Modernizing Systems for the Primary Product and Farm Animal Welfare Program



ECC completed the incorporation of the Farm Animal Welfare and Primary Products Inspection program into the System for Notification and Approval Processing (SNAP) in March 2022. SNAP is the foundational technical application used by ECC that facilitates the issuance of approvals and permits and other regulatory and enforcement functions. This ensures we deliver on our mandate, which includes the protection of farm animal welfare and human health.

All other major approval programs within the department are already using SNAP.

Interesting Facts about the Department

- ▶ We are responsible for over 20 acts and associated regulations.
- ▶ We are responsible for protecting more than half a million hectares of lands and water in a network of 170 wilderness areas and nature reserves.
- ▶ We provide publicly available environmental data and information:
 - We have 61 data sets, 67 charts, and 5 maps available through the NS Open Data Portal (<https://data.novascotia.ca/>).
 - We provide informative and easy to use online mapping highlighting our provincial protected area system.
 - We provide our province's water well information in our online well log database.
 - We provide information online about boil water advisories for drinking water supplies.
 - We provide online data, maps, tools and publications for lake mapping, water resources, protected water areas, and water quality assessments.
 - We provide license and certification listings online for individuals who are qualified to do work under our various regulations.
 - We provide a listing of industrial approvals via an online database.
 - We have a province wide water monitoring network.
 - We have 7 air quality monitoring network stations.
 - We provide 24/7 environmental emergency standby coverage.

Other statistical information for 2021-2022:

- ▶ approximately 14,500 permits/authorizations issued to businesses and individuals.
- ▶ approximately 7000 inspections and compliance checks completed.
- ▶ approximately 1600 inspections conducted at provincially regulated meat slaughter facilities.
- ▶ approximately 23600 active approvals that we are responsible for oversight.
- ▶ approximately 2200 public complaints that we responded to, in addition to public inquiries.
- ▶ approximately 800 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy requests processed.
- ▶ approximately 5700 Environmental Registry requests processed.
- ▶ 9 Class I environmental assessment projects registered.
- ▶ 1 Class II environmental assessment project registered.
- ▶ 3 joint federal-provincial environmental assessment projects ongoing.

Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

The *Public Interest of Wrongdoing Act* (PIDWA) 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. Section 18 of the Act states:

Each deputy head shall prepare an annual report of disclosures, including any findings of wrongdoing, recommendations and actions taken and shall make this report available to the public.

The following is a summary of wrongdoing disclosures received by the Department of Environment and Climate Change:

Information Required under Section 18 of the PIDWA	Fiscal Year 2021-2022
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

N/A - not applicable