



Accountability Report 2021–22

Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives



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Message from Minister and Deputy Minister

We are pleased to present the 2021-22 Accountability Report for the Nova Scotia Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives (OEA). This report highlights last year's progress in meeting our Business Plan objectives and outlines our priorities for the year ahead.

OEA was created in 2021 to work with partners and communities to help lead and support government's anti-racism initiatives and promote equity. We work to identify and address systemic racism and inequity in government policy, legislation, programs, and services.

In the past fiscal year, we worked with an all-party committee and engaged with thousands of Nova Scotians to draft the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act, the first anti-racism legislation in Nova Scotia and one of the first of its kind in Canada. Through this work, we built valuable relationships with community partners and organizations that will continue as we develop an equity and anti-racism strategy by July 2023.

We supported the work of addressing systemic barriers and inequities within government as we launched an equity audit and evaluation of Individual Program Plans within the education system and co-led the Health Race-Based Data project with the Department of Health and Wellness to support collection of race-based data in the healthcare system. We also advanced the Land Titles Initiative, helping more residents in historic African Nova Scotian communities gain clear title to their land.

In fiscal year 2022-23 we will continue to support these projects and advance the work of developing data and evaluation tools to assess existing programs and services, identify gaps, and monitor progress as we support government's mandate to make Nova Scotia a place where everyone has opportunities to succeed.

Original signed by:

Hon. Pat Dunn
Minister responsible for the
Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives

Original signed by:

Catherine Berliner
CEO and Deputy Minister
Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives

Mandate and Office overview

The mandate of the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism (OEA) is, in collaboration with partners and communities, to create a whole of government approach to addressing systemic racism, hate and inequity and achieving equitable and anti-racist outcomes that improve the economic and social wellbeing of all Nova Scotians. All Ministers in the Nova Scotia government are responsible for contributing efforts to support this work.

The Minister of OEA is responsible for the following items in his mandate letter:

- Continuing to work with partners and communities to help lead and support government's anti-racism initiatives and promote equity,
- Working to identify and address systemic racism and inequity in government policy, legislation, programs and services,
- Helping government and communities improve social and economic well-being for all people within the province and creating greater access to opportunities and resources,
- Building relationships with marginalized communities to help inform government,
- Creating equity impact assessment tools to guide decision-making processes that support anti-racism, accessibility, gender equity, social equity and inclusion in government budgets, policies and programs,
- Overseeing the Land Titles Initiative (LTI) and providing faster results for residents who need clear title to their land, and
- Working with partners and communities to develop processes to collect, measure and report data that helps inform and support equity.

Managing the Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had inequitable impacts on equity, racialized and marginalized communities in Nova Scotia and it has required OEA to modify the way it engages community to ensure their voices are heard and included in our work.

In the winter of 2022, the Dismantling Hate and Racism Act was created with community through 6 weeks of engagement with over 1,200 Nova Scotians from marginalized and racialized communities through 71 virtual engagement sessions. OEA also received over 750 survey responses through our website www.oeaengagement.ca This virtual approach allowed OEA to effectively engage with communities while ensuring the safety of community members and staff.

Priorities and Actions

OEA is committed to proactively, where possible, addressing systemic racism, inequity and hate and achieving equitable and anti-racist outcomes. In 2021/22, OEA engaged with communities in defining its mandate and in planning the actions it would undertake. Engagement confirmed the focus on systemic racism, inequity and hate and highlighted key issues that communities want addressed.

In 2021/22, OEA identified three outcomes to strive towards to honour this community feedback.

Outcomes

- **Communities are engaged with OEA**—to ensure all of OEA’s work is grounded in and informed by communities
- **There is an increase in the number of land titles successfully cleared**—to address historical wrongs against African Nova Scotians in the province who’s social and economic wellbeing has been impacted by not having legal title to their land
- **An evaluation framework is in place** to measure progress towards equitable and anti-racist outcomes—to ensure that OEA is taking meaningful action in response to concerns raised by communities

Actions and Initiatives

In 2021/22 the Office took a number of actions led by community engagement including:

- Government passed the *Dismantling Hate and Racism Act*, the first legislation of its kind in Canada to guide efforts to address systemic racism, inequity and hate. The Act was drafted by an All Party Committee and it was informed by equity, marginalized and racialized communities across the province. It commits

government to taking action to address systemic racism, inequity and hate in government policies and programs. It also requires public bodies, such as municipalities and villages, universities and colleges and Crown Corporations to take action in this area. In 2022/23, OEA will produce an equity and anti-racism strategy as required by the legislation.

- **Land Titles Initiative (LTI) - Accelerated the clearing of land titles** by clearing 68 titles between April 1, 2021-Mar 31, 2022. This acceleration was enabled in part by the transferring of authority for all parts of the process for certain land claims to OEA.
 - **Formally appointed the Honourable retired Judge Corrine Sparks and Douglas Ruck, Q.C. as commissioners under the Land Titles Clarification Act (LTCA)** on February 14, 2022.
 - Continued work to enhance **legal services capacity**. By the end of 2022, legal services for the LTI will be transferred from Nova Scotia Legal Aid to three private law firms which should further accelerate the LTI.
- Continued work on the development of an **Equity Impact Assessment (EIA)** tool to ensure Government's commitment to gender equality, social equity and inclusion of marginalized communities is reflected in our budgets, policies and programs. The tool will be informed by community feedback and will highlight the importance of intersectionality and social equity. The tool is expected to be completed by Fall 2022.
- **Continued to develop a Data Strategy and implementation plan**. The Data Strategy includes increasing data collection around race, age, accessibility, sex and gender across the province and providing guidance around each data category being collected. This data will help government address current inequities and assist in creating policies and programs that better serve equity, marginalized and racialized communities as we move forward.
- Continued work on the development of an **Equity Audit and Evaluation Process** to assess the impacts of existing programs and services on equity, marginalized and racialized individuals and communities. OEA is currently conducting its first equity audit and evaluation and revising the process to best fit the needs of community. Once the current equity evaluation is complete, OEA will have a process that can be applied to other existing programs and services. The process will have the flexibility to be changed and applied in ways that best fit the needs of community in each equity audit and evaluation assessment.

- Continued the **equity audit and evaluation of Individual Program Plans (IPPs)** within the public education system and will be making recommendations on ways to address systemic inequities and racist outcomes. The IPP Equity Evaluation will be delivered to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development by the end of summer 2022.
- **Continued to co-lead the Health Race-Based Data (HRBD) project** with the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), to support the collection of race-based data in the healthcare system. Once launched, the HRBD will mean that Nova Scotian residents will be able to voluntarily identify their race via the DHW website, the toll-free MSI telephone number, or when they apply for a health card (new cards and renewals). This HRBD collection tool was created with extensive input from racialized communities across Nova Scotia, to ensure that the racial categories being suggested accurately reflect how these groups see themselves. It will help Government address inequities in healthcare and create policies and programs that better serve racialized people in Nova Scotia.
- **Developed a plan to support the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2022-2025** by committing to specific actions to support persons with disabilities. OEA's plan includes ensuring our workplace is inclusive, welcoming and barrier-free. The plan ensures all team members at all levels have engaged in appropriate and required training. And the plan commits OEA to consider how it best supports all employees who live with disabilities.

Performance Measures

As a new office, OEA is in the process of developing performance measures to be included in its 2023-24 accountability report.

Financial Results

<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2021-2022 Estimate</u>	<u>2021-2022 Actuals</u>	<u>2021-2022 Variance</u>
Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives	2,014	2,245	231
Total - Departmental Expenses	<u>2,014</u>	<u>2,245</u>	<u>231</u>
Ordinary Recoveries	---	---	---
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	6.0	13.9	7.9

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:
Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives expenses were \$231 thousand or 11.5 per cent greater than the estimate primarily due to \$537 thousand in salaries and benefits for new positions; \$124 thousand in grants; and partially offset by decreases of \$430 thousand less operating costs.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:
New positions approved during the fiscal year as well as transfers from other government departments account for the higher than expected 7.9 FTE's.

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

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	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