



Accountability Report

2023–24

Communications Nova Scotia



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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) for the year ended March 31, 2024, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines.

The reporting of CNS' outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by CNS management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of CNS 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 CNS 2023-24 Business Plan.

Original Signed by
Hon. Brian Comer
Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Original Signed by
Jennifer Church
Deputy Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Original Signed by
Tina Thibeau
Associate Deputy Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Measuring Performance

In 2023-24, Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) focused on work to support ongoing communication of government priorities and key initiatives, including healthcare, cost of living, the economy and the environment. CNS also led communications efforts for significant emergency responses during 2023-24.

CNS continues to help Nova Scotians understand what government is doing and why, sharing news and information in interesting and effective ways, focusing on integrated, marketing-communications approaches to all our work. CNS has delivered clear and open communications in ways accessible to Nova Scotia audiences.

Support for Government Priorities

Communications Nova Scotia 2023-24 Highlights:

Healthcare

- Action for Health
 - Aligned proactive and reactive communications strategies with overarching advertising and social media planning to ensure clear communications to citizens on how and where to access healthcare services. This includes the province-wide launch and promotion of the [Your Health NS mobile app](#).
 - Advertising included television, streaming TV, radio, digital audio, print, out-of-home, online display, social, and search engine marketing.
 - [YourHealthNS app video](#) ; [Action for Health 2023 video](#)
 - 48% of Nova Scotians say they are “familiar” with the YourHealthNS app (March 2024)
 - [41 news releases](#)

- Mental Health and Wellness Resources
 - Led a coordinated and strategic approach to marketing and communications to raise awareness of mental health services and supports available to Nova Scotians as part of government’s commitment to universal mental health and addictions care.
 - Advertising for mental health and wellness resources included radio, print, online display, digital audio and social.
 - [Men’s Suicide Prevention video](#)
 - [7 news releases](#)

Cost of Living and Economy

As of March 2024, about 7-in-10 people surveyed recall seeing or hearing information about the Government of Nova Scotia taking steps to improve housing in the past year. News about building/opening more shelters, plans to create more housing in general and action on affordable housing and rent caps top the list of recent news recalled by Nova Scotians.

- Nova Scotia Housing Plan
 - Launch event coordination including photography, videos for new public housing, residential tenancies information in multiple languages, design of the plan and fact sheets, briefings, media relations.
 - [Housing Plan news release](#)
 - Full plan and more information on [Action for Housing website](#)
- Seniors Care Grant
 - Advertising included radio, social, print and search engine marketing.
 - [News release](#)

Environment

- Coastal Protection Plan
 - Held a technical briefing and news conference, managed media relations, developed a paid advertising campaign and rack cards (call-to-action to resources and Navigator service), led the development of creative for action plan, resource materials and tools for coastal property owners, social media posts and web updates, messages and rack cards.
 - Advertising included radio, online display, digital audio, social and print.
 - [News Release](#)
 - [Coastal Hazard Map instructional video](#)

Emergency Response

CNS continued to lead communications for the emergency response to natural disasters and critical events during 2023-24.

The [Novascotia.ca/alerts](https://novascotia.ca/alerts) page was used during emergencies. During the year, there were 329,430 visits to the site. 65.7% of these visits occurred during the wildfires (May 29-June 13, 2023) and 2.4% occurred during the floods (July 22-24, 2023).

CNS' emergency response highlights:

- [61 news releases related to wildfires](#)
- [37 news releases related to floods](#)
- 15 Livestream events with the Premier and subject matter experts, with ASL and CART provided; example [here](#)
- Production of social media posts, fact sheets, photo and video
- [BurnSafe resources](#) including videos, radio, social, TV ads and promo stickers, returning home safely, information for evacuees, factsheets, translation to French, disaster financial assistance factsheets
- [2023 Wildfires in Nova Scotia video](#)
- Progress and action on the recommendations from [Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission \(MCC\)](#).
 - Support for multiple announcements was undertaken with a mix of traditional and digital communications activities (i.e. the appointment of a founding chair of the Progress Monitoring Committee and the launch of a province-wide policing review)
 - A new [website](#) was launched to show progress on the work of the final report recommendations.

Accessible and Inclusive Communications

CNS continued its efforts to remove barriers to government communications through internal capacity building and increasing public awareness.

- Accessibility Awareness
 - Worked closely with the Accessibility Directorate and supplier on strategy and execution of the public awareness campaign [Access Includes Everyone](#)
 - Advertising elements included TV, streaming TV, social, digital display and search engine marketing. During the campaign, there were 4,332,986 impressions across all platforms, and 58,617 clicks to [the website](#)
 - Worked with the Accessibility Directorate to develop advertising for the [Information and Communication](#) and [Transportation](#) Standard Development committees membership.
 - Released [ASL summary videos](#) on the Education Standard Phase 2 report.
- Building Capacity
 - Provided internal training in plain language to all staff.
 - Continued to work with the Public Service Commission and other partners in communities across Nova Scotia on attracting diverse talent, with the goal of better representing the province and its people.
 - Continued to update resources for suppliers with direction on using gender-neutral language for French translation.

Financial Results

	2023-2024 Estimate	2023-2024 Actuals	2023-2024 Variance
Program & Service Area	<i>(\$thousands)</i>		
Departmental Expenses:			
Office of the Associate Deputy Minister	1,055	737	(318)
Client Services	834	1,086	252
Communications Planning	2,209	1,550	(659)
Communications Services	876	1,132	256
Marketing	2,215	2,669	454
Total: Departmental Expenses	7,189	7,174	(15)
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)	87	84	(3)
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u>			
Actual expenses were \$15 thousand lower than Estimate primarily due to salary savings.			
<u>Revenue, Fees, and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u>			
N/A			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u>			
FTE variance due to staff vacancies.			

Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

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.

The following is a summary of disclosures received by CNS:

CNS: Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2023-2024
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