



Accountability Report

2023–24

Agriculture



© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, July 2024

Accountability Report 2023–2024

ISBN 978-1-77448-663-4

Contents

Accountability Statement	1
Measuring Performance	2
Support Local Food.....	2
Improve Institutional Procurement	2
Monitor Local Food Spending	3
Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board.....	3
Meat and Farm Animal Welfare.....	3
Support for Nova Scotia Wine	3
Polar Vortex Industry Recovery Program	4
Deliver the Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership.....	4
Delivery of Business Risk Management.....	5
Enhance Environmental Sustainability and Prepare for Climate Change.....	5
Working with Industry on Climate Change	6
Agriculture Energy Partnership with EfficiencyOne	6
Energy Beneficial Management Program.....	6
Advancing Clean Technologies for Nova Scotia.....	6
Nova Scotia Farm Weather Station Network Expansion.....	6
Season Response.....	7
Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives	7
Agricultural Dykeland Improvement	8
Agriculture Industry Performance	8
Financial Results	10
Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act	11
Annual Report under Section 18 of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act.....	11

Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Agriculture for the year ended March 31, 2024, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the Department of Agriculture outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by Department of Agriculture management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture 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 Agriculture 2023-2024 Business Plan.

Original signed by:

Honourable Greg Morrow
Minister of Agriculture

Original signed by:

Loretta Robichaud
Deputy Minister

Measuring Performance

A strong and resilient agricultural sector is vital to ensure a reliable local source of food, especially as Nova Scotia continues to experience the impacts of climate change. The Department of Agriculture continues to support the agriculture and agri-food sectors by implementing local food initiatives, supporting recovery from weather related disasters, launching the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership policy framework, and enhancing environmental sustainability and preparation for climate change.

The Department of Agriculture has undertaken the following priority initiatives in 2023-2024:

Support Local Food

Government departments have been working collaboratively alongside industry and community partners to increase awareness, improve access, and enhance the production of healthy local food. A variety of programming has been implemented by the Department to support local food, including:



Field to Forks

In September and October 2023, the Department participated in Field to Forks, a multi-media promotional campaign with a television network to promote Nova Scotia beef, and where to buy it.

Promotional Events

The Department supported a total of 16 events across the province in 2023-24 including Saltscapes, Devour! Film Festival, Ciders and Sliders, and Tidal Bay Launch. We also hosted our own market symposium Digital Harvest in February 2024, providing insight on marketing strategy and ideas to over 100 attendees from industry, government and agri-food and beverage businesses.

Nova Scotia Loyal

Our Department collaborated with the Department of Economic Development to develop the Nova Scotia Loyal brand by supporting programming, event initiatives, and implementing tastings in retail stores to promote local food products.

Improve Institutional Procurement

The Department is guiding efforts to increase local food consumption by developing and implementing local food pilot projects that support increased access to local, healthy food in our public institutions. Over the past year, we have established several pilot projects across Nova Scotia reaching over 14,200 students, four long-term care homes, the IWK Health, and others. These pilot projects not only support Nova Scotians but also change and strengthen the buying patterns and culture within institutions to support Nova Scotia farmers and producers.

Monitor Local Food Spending

The Department, in partnership with Perennia and the Canadian Agri-food Foresight Institute, have developed a comprehensive survey model aimed at measuring local food consumption trends in Nova Scotia. This initiative is an important component of the Department's commitment to encourage and support the consumption of locally sourced food. The survey outcomes revealed that between 27 and 34 per cent of Nova Scotians' total food expenditures are currently directed toward local Nova Scotia products. Moving forward, the Department will continue to conduct this survey at least twice a year, reporting on the results annually.

Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board

The Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board continues to support agriculture and agri-food businesses through their start, expansion and diversification of their operations, in both local consumption and export products.



Approved more than
\$60 million in new loans



Modern record low of
arrears (1.14%)



Total portfolio grew
to over \$284 million

Meat and Farm Animal Welfare

The Agriculture Inspection Services Division was formed as part of the reintegration of meat, fur, and farm animal welfare inspections to our Department, which was transferred back from the Department of Environment and Climate Change in January 2023. This realignment harmonizes compliance and enforcement responsibilities with the Department's legislative oversight. A province-wide visit to all licensed abattoirs occurred in Fall 2023 to identify gaps in program delivery, opportunities for training and improvement, and to bolster collaboration with industry. Industry feedback during and following the visits was positive. Activities in 2023-24 included:



102,629 Farm Animal
Carcasses Inspected



20 Abattoirs
Inspected and Licensed



Responded to 200 Farm
Animal Welfare
Complaints

Support for Nova Scotia Wine

Nova Scotia's grape and wine sector was impacted by unique events over the last couple of years, including an extreme cold event that caused production loss. Our Department's focus in 2023-24 was supporting the recovery of the wine industry. We partnered with Horticulture Nova Scotia to deliver the Polar Vortex Industry Recovery program to help with costs of the recovery of grapes. We also implemented a Wine and Grape Industry Development program to help grape grower's and farm wineries prepare for the impacts of climate change. The establishment of a Nova Scotia Quality Wine Standards Certification program was paused while the industry worked toward recovery. We are committed to continue development of this program in 2024-25.

Polar Vortex Industry Recovery Program

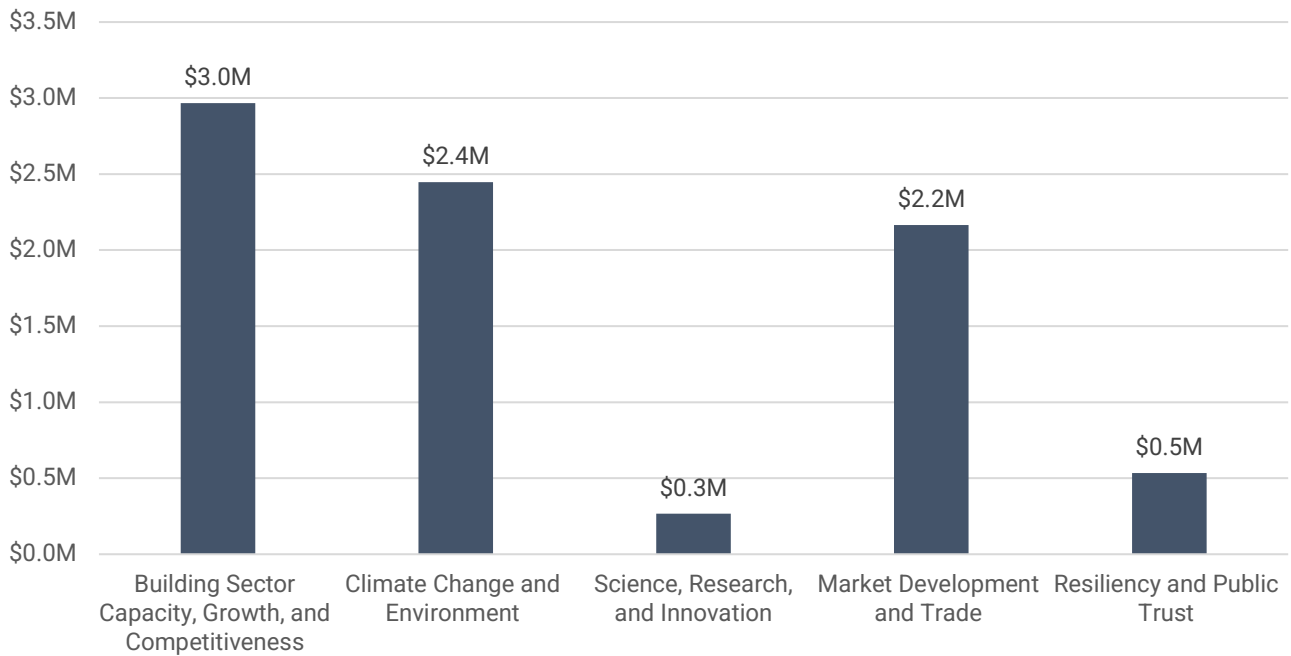
The objective of the Polar Vortex Industry Recovery program is to address the immediate needs of soft berry fruits, grapes, and fruit tree industries that were affected by the February 2023 Polar Vortex weather event. The Department is working with industry representatives and Horticulture Nova Scotia to meet growers' needs. The first round of funding helped with increased maintenance costs for recovery of grapes, stone fruit, cranberries, and other cold-sensitive crops. Phase 2 includes support for virus testing, plant materials and ongoing crop maintenance. The long-term impact of the extreme cold event and the sector's recovery needs continue to be assessed.

Deliver the Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership

The [Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership](#) is a five-year, \$3.5 billion investment by federal, provincial, and territorial governments that aims to support continued innovation, growth, and resiliency in the agriculture sector. The Department launched the first year in 2023-2024, providing over \$8.4 million in developmental funding in the following priority areas:

- ▶ Building Sector Capacity, Growth and Competitiveness
 - Enhance capacity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector by providing access to student bursaries, business advisory and certification services, and specialized value-add equipment and technology.
- ▶ Climate Change and Environment
 - Support producers to conserve and enhance the resiliency of agricultural landscapes, implement beneficial management practices, combat climate change, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption.
- ▶ Science, Research, and Innovation
 - Support research in primary and value-added agriculture to help producers address challenges and pursue opportunities, accelerate the adoption of new technology, and transfer and exchange knowledge.
- ▶ Market Development and Trade
 - Support local food activity by overcoming barriers such as market strategy and food safety requirements to create domestic and international market opportunities.
- ▶ Resiliency and Public Trust
 - Promote public trust by supporting industry partners focused on diversity, equity and inclusion and assisting producers with emergency preparedness through equipment purchase, infrastructure development, and emergency planning.

2023-24 SCAP Program Funding



Delivery of Business Risk Management

Through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, business risk management programs are available to provide agricultural producers with protection against income and production losses, helping them manage risks that threaten the viability of their farms.

In 2023-2024:

- ▶ AgrilInsurance program supported producers by implementing regulatory changes to the poultry and tree fruit plans to respond to industry changes and added wildfire as a covered peril for all insurance plans.
- ▶ In partnership with the federal government under the AgriRecovery framework, an initiative was launched to help the maple industry rebuild their infrastructure from the impacts of Hurricane Fiona.
- ▶ The Department hosted five information sessions around the province to inform producers on the available programs.
- ▶ A pilot program with the federal government continued offering Nova Scotia producers a local contact for the AgriStability program.

AgriStability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides support when producers experience large margin declines
AgriInvest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides cash flow to help producers manage income declines
AgriInsurance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers cost-shared insurance against natural hazards
AgriRecovery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster relief framework to help producers recover

Enhance Environmental Sustainability and Prepare for Climate Change

The Department continues to partner with the Department of Environment and Climate Change to work toward goals identified in the *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act* and *Climate Plan*.

Working with Industry on Climate Change

The Department has created a new Climate Change and Environment Sustainability Division with staff dedicated to supporting the Nova Scotia agriculture industry to prepare for the challenges and opportunities that climate change presents. The division, in partnership with Perennia, delivered the inaugural Nova Scotia Climate Smart Farming Forum on February 29, 2024, in Truro. More than 130 participants, including farmers and industry professionals, gained insight on regenerative practices, climate projections, and programs that support climate smart farming practices.

Agriculture Energy Partnership with EfficiencyOne

The Agriculture Energy Partnership with EfficiencyOne has been renewed from 2023 to 2028. This initiative has helped reduce agriculture's electricity and fossil fuel footprint through the creation of an Onsite Energy Manager position for agriculture at EfficiencyOne.

In 2023-24, the following has been achieved:



91 energy saving projects completed



1,195 tonnes/year of CO₂ reduced



\$278,000/year in energy savings



\$389,000 in incentives provided directly to farmers

Energy Beneficial Management Program

The Energy Beneficial Management Practices Program, delivered by EfficiencyOne, helps agricultural producers adopt new practices and energy saving equipment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, combat climate change, and reduce energy consumption within agricultural production systems.

In 2023-24, the following has been achieved:



15 energy saving projects completed



280 tonnes/year of CO₂ reduced



\$103,000/year in energy savings



\$89,100 in incentives provided directly to farmers

Advancing Clean Technologies for Nova Scotia

A new \$5 million Advancing Clean Technologies for Nova Scotia program launched with Nova Scotia's Climate Plan funding from 2023-2027. This program supports the adoption of clean technologies that enable climate change adaptation and contribute to greenhouse gas reduction. In 2023-2024, \$1.26 million of this funding was used to support 18 initiatives.

Nova Scotia Farm Weather Station Network Expansion

We partnered with the Department of Environment and Climate Change and Perennia to start expanding the existing Weather Station Network. Having accurate weather data has been identified

as a key climate adaptation strategy for all farms, as it aims to better enable farmers to adapt to changing weather conditions. This program will take place over the next two years, with 24 new weather stations that integrate with the existing network of over 100 producer-owned stations anticipated. The stations are expected to be installed by 2025.

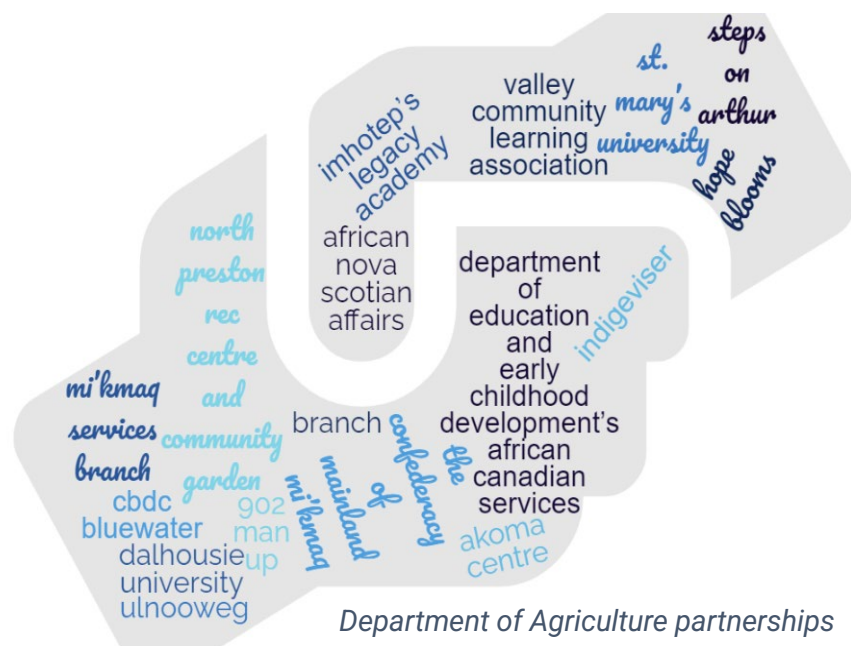
Season Response

The 2023 Season Response Program expands on previous programs that were offered last year, intended to help farmers that are still recovering or who were not covered by other support programs for losses caused by severe weather events. This program has contributed \$9.2 million in funding to support 195 Nova Scotia farmers to recover from crop damage and loss, and other damages such as farm infrastructure caused by extreme weather conditions that occurred during the 2023 production season. The Department is exploring opportunities with the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to further support the industry.

Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

The Department continues to work to forge partnerships across government, industry, and community organizations to identify and address barriers to participation in the agriculture industry from underrepresented and underserved communities. Through these collaborations, the Department has worked with multiple organizations to provide and support learning initiatives and access to financing, including:

- ▶ Continued a summer student initiative to introduce local African Nova Scotian youth to careers in Agriculture and the Public Service. *Black Youth Planting Their Future* employed 16 youth across seven departments in the Colchester area in 2023.
- ▶ Organized the second 'Grow Where You're Planted' event at the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus in May where African Nova Scotian high school students spent 24 hours on campus and learned about agricultural careers, research and technology, and post-secondary options.
- ▶ Held the first 'Harvesting the Future: A Black Youth Conference' event in March in partnership with Imhotep's Legacy Academy Culture of Growing Program. African Nova Scotian middle and junior high school students participated in an interactive gathering that encouraged students to connect with influential Black leaders from Nova Scotia and cultivate a sense of curiosity in agriculture and leadership opportunities.



- ▶ Partnered on the second 'Bridge to Agriculture' program offering a 22-week training program for African Nova Scotians to introduce horticulture food production.
- ▶ Supporting the *Engaging African Nova Scotian Youth in Agriculture and Community Food Security*, an initiative that provides agriculture-themed after-school programs in four Nova Scotia communities.
- ▶ Offered two scholarship programs and summer internships:
 - *Grow Where You're Planted*: A scholarship for an African Nova Scotian student pursuing university education in agriculture.
 - *Honouring Mi'kmaw Roots*: An entrance scholarship and summer internship for a Mi'kmaw student pursuing a career in agriculture.

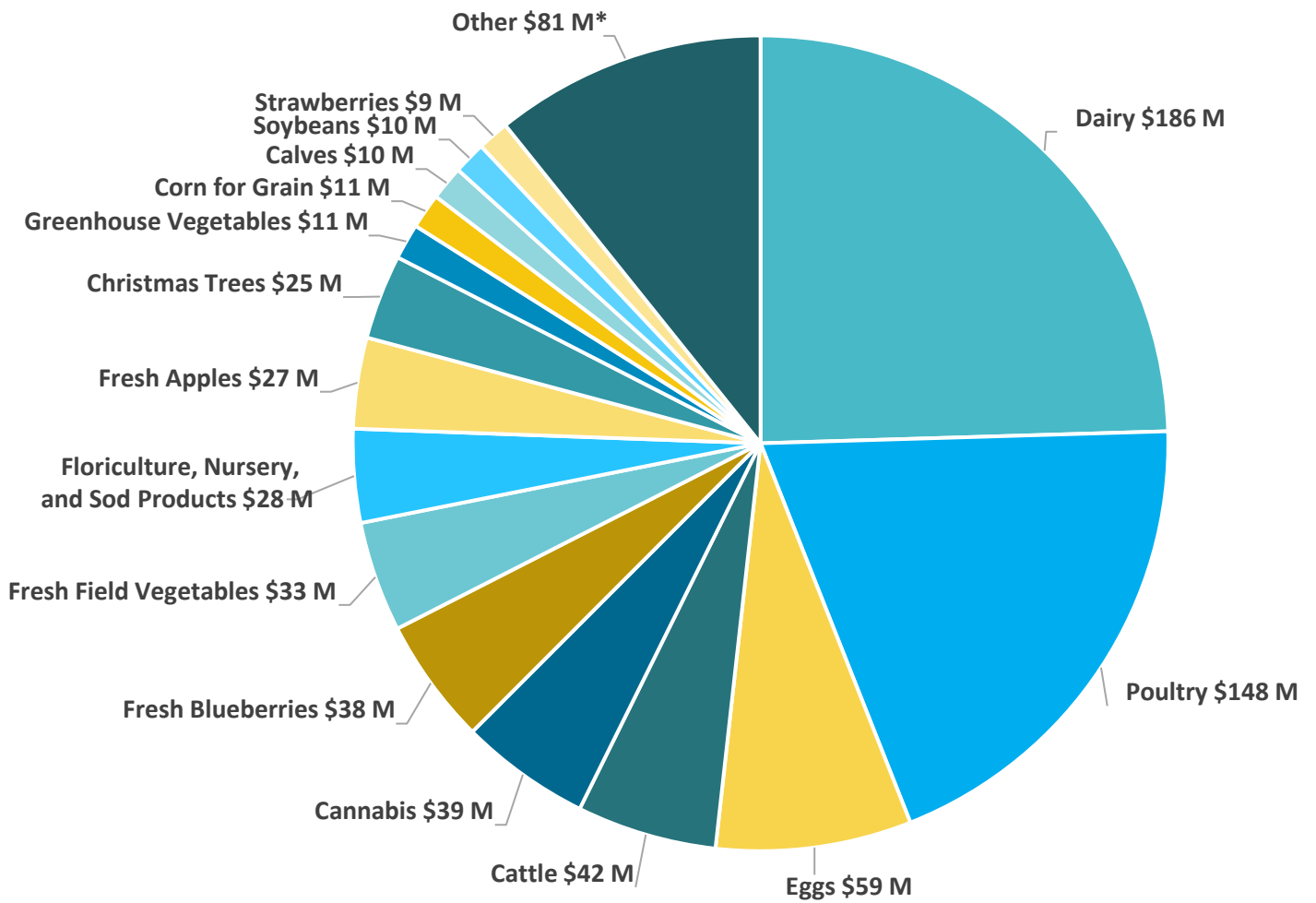
Agricultural Dykeland Improvement

The Dykeland System Upgrades is a nine-year, almost \$50 million project, that began in 2019 to upgrade some of the most vulnerable dyke systems in the province, many of which protect agricultural land, public infrastructure, cultural assets, and commercial and residential properties throughout the province. As of January 2024, the Department of Public Works has assumed administration of the project as it moves to design and construction phases. Public Works has significant expertise in managing large capital and construction projects. The Department of Agriculture and Public Works continued to collaborate in 2023-24 to support the project.

Agriculture Industry Performance

Farm cash receipts represent the cash income received from the sale of agricultural commodities as well as direct program payments made to support the agricultural sector. Nova Scotia farm cash receipts increased by 0.7% in 2023 to \$757 million. Dairy continues to be the top revenue-generating sector at \$186 million, and total receipts for the supply-managed industries, such as dairy, poultry, and eggs, account for approximately half of all farm cash receipts in the province. Major contributors to Farm Cash receipts include:

2023 Farm Cash Receipts (\$Millions)



*The "Other" category consists of commodities that make up less than 1% of total farm cash receipts as well as direct program payments as defined by Statistics Canada.

Financial Results

Departmental Expenses Summary			
(\$ thousands)			
	2023-2024	2023-2024	2023-2024
	Estimate	Actuals	Variance
<u>Program & Service Area</u>			
Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	647	658	11
Policy and Corporate Services	4,544	4,108	(436)
Agriculture Risk Management and Lending	13,233	25,686	12,453
Agriculture and Food Operations	12,674	13,686	1,012
Industry Development	14,252	13,323	(929)
Total Departmental Expenses	45,350	57,461	12,111
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenues	3,838	510	(3,328)
Fees and Other Charges	1,522	1,183	(339)
Ordinary Recoveries	6,455	6,766	311
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	11,815	8,459	(3,356)
TCA Purchase Requirements	8,397	5,229	(2,868)
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	184.9	170.9	(14)
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanations:</u>			
The Department of Agriculture expenses were \$12.1 million or 26.7 per cent higher than estimate primarily due to \$9.2 million for Season Response support for producers impacted by extreme weather in 2023, \$1.1 million for recoverable Federal portion of AgriRecovery expense related to Hurricane Fiona, \$900 thousand to support the SPCA enforcement of the Animal Protection Act, \$700 thousand in funding for farm wineries for improvements to reduce production costs, and \$200 thousand operating mainly related to Farm Animal Welfare.			
<u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u>			
Net variance consists of a decrease in the federal portion of Disaster Mitigation and Adaption Fund (DMAF) revenues due to underspending in TCA.			
<u>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</u>			
The DMAF Dykeland Upgrade project spans from 2019-2020 to 2027-2028. In the fifth year of the project there continued to be underspending as engineering and planning work continues to be completed.			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u>			
Miscellaneous vacancies across the department.			

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 the Department of Agriculture:

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	0
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	0