



# **Accountability Report**

2023–24

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Labour, Skills and Immigration



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Accountability Report 2023–2024

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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration 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 Labour, Skills and Immigration outcomes necessarily include estimates, judgments, and opinions by Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Department of Labour, Skills and 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 Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration 2023-24 Business Plan.

Original signed by:

Original signed by:

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Hon. Jill S. Balsler  
Minister

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Ava Czapalay  
Deputy Minister

## Measuring Our Performance

**LSI Vision:** *Everyone has an opportunity to thrive in Nova Scotia.*

**LSI Mission:** *We work as a trusted partner to help people live, learn and work to their highest potential in vibrant businesses and communities across Nova Scotia.*

- This incorporates a strong focus on advancing inclusion, learning and employability for all, enabling safe, fair, diverse, welcoming, and productive workplaces, and creating opportunities for sustainable population and economic growth.

**LSI Mandate:** *To achieve our vision and mission, our mandate includes:*

- Empowering Nova Scotians, including newcomers and immigrants, to successfully manage career transitions.
- Addressing skill needs and tackling systemic barriers to learning and work.
- Modernizing the apprenticeship system to meet current and future demand with a focus on attraction and retention.
- Fostering a culture of safety in Nova Scotia's workplaces and public spaces.
- Developing labour, employment and safety rules that reflect the changing nature of work and protect workers and citizens.
- Enabling Nova Scotia's employers to create more inclusive and productive workplaces and providing responsive dispute resolution.
- Promoting Nova Scotia as a location of choice and increasing net population levels.
- Advancing partnerships that build sustainable, welcoming, and growing communities.
- Supporting labour mobility and the attraction and retention of talent to meet employers' labour needs.

### **The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency**

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA/Agency), established July 2014, is responsible for stewarding and operating a relevant, accessible, and responsive industry-led trades training and certification system. It is an agent of the Crown and developed its own Business Plan for 2023-24. The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency publishes an Annual Report on its commitments and is available at [www.nsapprenticeship.ca](http://www.nsapprenticeship.ca).

The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration's 2023-24 Accountability Report also includes progress on outcomes relative to Agency priorities set out in Labour, Skills and Immigration's 2023-24 Business Plan.

## Key Initiatives for 2023-24

The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration (LSI) 2023-24 Accountability Report provides information on performance measures and reflects on the outcomes achieved by the Department in relation to the goals and priorities established in the 2023-24 Business Plan.

### Create opportunities for sustainable population and economic growth

- *Promoting Nova Scotia as a location of choice and increasing net population levels.*
- *Advancing partnerships that build sustainable, welcoming and growing communities.*
- *Supporting labour mobility and the attraction and retention of talent to meet employers' labour needs.*

### **Implement domestic and international recruitment strategies**

- In 2023, LSI hosted and participated in 35 recruitment events. Thirty-eight industry partners and employers participated in these events; all events focused on recruiting candidates to fill positions in priority sectors including healthcare and construction. Navigators across the province fielded inquiries, many of which were in response to contacts made during these events.
- Nominations and endorsements in the healthcare sector increased by 88.9%, while construction increased by 85.9% in 2023, compared to 2022.
- In 2023, the net population gain due to interprovincial migration was 6,169. This was down from 2022, when the net population gain from interprovincial migration was 10,612. The higher 2022 results may be attributed to the trend toward remote work that arose post-COVID, which made it possible for remote workers to choose their province of residence for reasons other than proximity to work. The 2022 easing of pandemic restrictions on mobility and travel was likely also a contributing factor. The net interprovincial migration numbers are below the Business Plan target of 10,000 per year, but this is made up for in the much higher immigration landing numbers.
- The number of immigrant landings in Nova Scotia in 2023 was 11,802, far exceeding the Business Plan target of 7,000 per year. This was down from 2022, which was a record-breaking year (12,650). Landing figures for 2023 were expected to be lower than for 2022; landings in 2022 were boosted by a post-COVID wave of federal processing, which followed the reduced processing activity through the pandemic.
- In 2023, Immigration and Population Growth (IPG) Nominated and Endorsed a total of 6,872 individuals. This included 4,350 Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP), which far exceeded the Business Plan target of 2,700 per year. Nominations and 2,522 AIP Endorsements. The total number of approvals for 2023 was the highest annual number of approvals to date and represents a 58% increase over 2022.

### **Support engagement for physician and healthcare worker recruitment and labour mobility**

- In 2023, IPG approved applications of 763 healthcare workers in targeted occupations. These approvals comprised 11% of total approvals and represent an 88.9% increase over 2022. Contributing factors include: 1) Targeted attraction and recruitment activities within IPG; 2) The expedited licensure pathway for registered nurses; 3) The activities of

the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment; and 4) Various other sector-specific partnerships and recruitment initiatives.

- In 2023, LSI approved applications from 38 physicians – a 35% increase over 2022.
- LSI also supported the immigration applications of 539 Continuing Care Assistants, making this occupation the third most-supported occupation and comprising 7% of the province's total yearly allocations.
- In September 2023, the International Graduates in Demand stream of Nova Scotia's Provincial Nominee Program was expanded to include paramedics and pharmacy technicians.

### **Continue to provide supports across the province to build inclusive and welcoming communities and the retention of newcomers**

- LSI facilitated mandatory intercultural competency training for employers designated under the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP). The training promotes welcoming and culturally inclusive workplaces and recommends that employers foster a cross-cultural workplace, demonstrate leadership that influences company culture to welcome diverse backgrounds, and have up-to-date human resources policies that explicitly ensure respect and safety from discrimination and harassment.
- LSI expanded its support to service providers from 22 to 25 organizations across the province with \$3M in enhanced settlement funding. To expand the existing wide range services that support newcomers, the new funding provided additional services such as more language support, support for international healthcare professionals, community integration activities and expanded services for temporary foreign workers.

### **Support settlement service provider organizations**

- Through three-year funding agreements (2023-2026) with 22 Settlement Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) across the province, LSI continues to support the successful settlement, integration, and long-term residency of newcomers, their spouses and dependents through: language training, settlement planning, numerous job readiness and search supports; employer engagement and outreach, international qualification recognition; self-employment development; and cultural diversity and inclusion for both employers and newcomers.

### **Implement *Growing Nova's Scotia's Francophone Population, An Action Plan (FPGAP) for Success 2022-25***

- LSI and the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie (OAAF) met regularly with key partners in the senior level advisory group and the working group to operationalize the FPGAP. LSI and OAAF worked with partners to develop a terms of reference for the working group in 2023-24. The working group is developing a workplan to ensure the deliverables of the plan are fulfilled by government and Acadian and francophone partners.
- LSI and OAAF attended two international recruitment events to specifically support francophone population growth: Destination Canada (France and Morocco) an event to also support healthcare and construction as priority sectors.

- In Spring 2023, LSI and OAAF staff attended Destination Acadie and made more than 600 contacts at the event which led to over 2,000 follow-up emails from LSI Community Navigators.
- Under LSI's Settlement funding programs, LSI provides funding to three organizations, Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE), Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDÉNE) and Université Sainte-Anne. The funding for the three francophone organizations in the 2023-2026 agreements totals \$1,221,424.52. A portion of the \$3M in enhanced settlement funding this year increased support to Francophone organizations.

## Advance inclusion, learning and employability for all

- *Empowering Nova Scotians, including newcomers and immigrants, to successfully manage career transitions.*
- *Addressing skill needs and tackling systemic barriers to learning and work.*
- *Modernizing the apprenticeship system to meet current and future demand with a focus on attraction and retention.*

### **Modernize the apprenticeship system**

- The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) was provided the mandate and associated funding of \$100M over three years (2023–2026) on October 18, 2023, to implement government's plan to accelerate growth in the skilled trades to meet the demands of a growing province. Nineteen actions were announced as part of the Actions to Accelerate the Growth of Skilled Trades in Nova Scotia.
- Fifteen of the actions were implemented in 2023-24. They include:
  - The creation of more direct pathways to the skilled trades like the expansion of the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) program to rural regions of the province.
  - Additional supports for new apprentices including financial assistance such as the [Tools Grant program](#).
  - Accelerating training models to reduce time away from jobs and decrease waiting by having more remote training opportunities and increase the number of in-person sessions.
  - Building stronger connections with industry through the creation of Sector Industry Committees.
- As of March 2024, the number of new employers in the apprenticeship system continues to increase with 368 new employers participating in the apprenticeship system exceeding the target of 200. There are over 2,588 employers with registered apprentices in Nova Scotia.
- In 2023-24, 2,524 new apprentices were registered to the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, well above the target of 1,500, and an increase of 33% (1,898) over the previous year. The number of active apprentices continues to increase. On March 31, 2024, there were 8,960 active apprentices in the system – an increase of 15% (7,772) over the previous year.



## **Support the Minister's Panel on Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) Pre-Apprenticeship and Trades Training**

- Several of the Minister's Panel recommendations have been brought together with the Actions for Accelerating the Growth of Skilled Trades in Nova Scotia strategy for the Province to have a bigger and broader impact. This will be further supported by a website to communicate the progress on both Actions to Accelerate Growth in the Skilled Trades and the Minister's Panel on Pre-Apprenticeship.

## **Implement the Apprenticeship Management System**

- The Apprenticeship Management System (AMS) is an online apprenticeship system that will improve access to information and provide efficiencies for apprentices, journeypersons, employers, training providers and government apprenticeship management staff.
- AMS will improve the success and outcomes of apprenticeship clients by providing a modernized technology solution that empowers all apprenticeship stakeholders.
- AMS will improve engagement and communication, streamline processes, and provide access to reliable information for all stakeholders.
- The benefits are as follows:
  - AMS supports modern apprenticeship management processes and client self-serve tools.
  - Maximizes efficiencies for apprenticeship clients and improves service delivery.
  - Empowers apprentices/improves communication between apprentices and employers.
  - Improved ability to plan and view apprenticeship training opportunities.
- In 2023, a threat-risk assessment (TRA) and user acceptance testing (UAT) were completed for the apprenticeship management online system. Work will continue in 2024-25 on migrating data from apprenticeship legacy systems.

## **Promote the skilled trades to youth through awareness and experiential opportunities**

- NSAA reached over 30,000 youth through partnership with industry sector associations, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), and equity-deserving community associations to provide career exploration and experiential learning opportunities for youth in the skilled trades.
- In 2023-24, 6,693 students were engaged in activities in the skilled trades from NSAA WorkIt Grant Funding to each Regional Centre for Education and Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial.
- LSI's Summer Youth Apprenticeship Program partners engaged over 140 high school youth and employers to provide a five-week paid summer work experience in the skilled trades. Nearly 41% of youth participants in the summer programs were from communities under-represented in the skilled trades.

## **Continue to support work-integrated learning opportunities through youth employment programs**

- The Department supported more than 1,500 work experiences for Nova Scotia post-secondary students:
  - 394 summer Co-operative Education Incentive (CEI) placements with 210 employers,
  - 237 fall CEI placements with 163 employers,
  - 228 winter co-op placements,
  - 822 summer jobs with 428 not-for-profit employers with the Student Summer Skills Incentive (SKILL). This includes 50 positions earmarked for Mi'kmaq students and administered through the Mi'kmaq Economic Benefits Office.
- The Graduate to Opportunity Program (GTO) supported 198 graduates with 69 Nova Scotia employers.
- CEI, SKILL and GTO provide higher subsidy to employers who hire students and graduates who self-identify as Mi'kmaq or Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, a visible minority, a person with a disability, member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, a woman in an occupation where they are under-represented or an international student.
  - Around 55% of co-op students, 30% of SKILL students, and 39% of graduates supported in GTO self-identified in one of these groups.
- The Department also implemented a new GTO Innovation stream in January 2024 to support businesses looking to hire a recent masters or PhD grad for an innovation-focused job.

### **Expand the online employment services offered through Nova Scotia Works**

- The Nova Scotia Works online employer experience was released in November 2023. Career Profiles were updated to incorporate the NOC2021 classification structure and online employer registration was launched in April 2023 to correspond with [Labour Market Programs Support System](#) (LaMPSS) employer solution.
- The Labour Market Programs Support System (LaMPSS) is a common system and set of business processes developed to focus on the administration of labour market programs and services for four provincial partners.
- With a target of 18,000 for new clients receiving employment services, training and training support, 13,049 new employment interventions, such as employment services, training, support, coaching and advising, were provided through the Nova Scotia Works system, including 4,926 via Nova Scotia Works Online: [Home | Nova Scotia Works | novascotiaworks.ca](#)
- Over 189,000 unique webpage visitors to Nova Scotia Works Online; 8,502 new registered job seeker accounts; 127 new registered employer accounts, and 2,304 jobs posted.

### **Enable safe, fair, diverse, welcoming and productive workplaces**

- *Fostering a culture of safety in Nova Scotia's workplaces and public spaces.*
- *Developing labour, employment and safety rules that reflect the changing nature of work and protect workers and citizens.*
- *Enabling Nova Scotia's employers to create more inclusive and productive workplaces and providing responsive dispute resolution.*

### **Improve the Worker's Compensation system**

- Amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* to include gradual onset stress as a compensable injury and to update funeral costs received Royal Assent in November 2023. The amendments will come into effect September 1, 2024.
- LSI established a Workers' Compensation Review Committee to validate issues with the existing workers' compensation system in Nova Scotia and provide recommendations. The Review Committee membership was comprised of a Chair, four employee representatives, and four employer representatives from across the province.
- To improve the workers' compensation insurance system, engagements took place from November to December 2023, to gather insights from industry/sector groups, employers, employees, and other Nova Scotians interested in providing feedback to help inform government's decision-making. In total, over 1,000 Nova Scotians participated in the engagements through in-person meetings, virtual sessions and an online survey.
- The Review Committee is expected to present its report to the Minister in July 2024.

### **Prevent Harassment in the Workplace**

- Preventing Harassment in the Workplace public consultations were conducted in November and December 2023 with a goal to identify policy options for government to consider. Over 500 people participated through in-person and virtual sessions, as well as a survey. A "What We Heard" report is currently being developed for publication.

### **Advance the use of data and reporting to better inform occupational health and technical safety work**

- The Department completed a new activity tracking and reporting platform for Technical Safety Division's Boilers and Pressure Equipment section using the AMANDA Case Management and Compliance System. A new appointment booking system for the Elevators and Lifts section went live on January 31, 2024. These new systems will support greater efficiency and consistency in the Division's operations.
- Nova SAFE, a new Department resource that offers a modern and convenient way for Nova Scotian employers, supervisors, and workers to access important safety information on regulatory requirements for a variety of Occupational Health and Safety and Technical Safety topics, launched in May 2023. NovaSAFE.ca content continues to expand, with information recently added on harassment and violence in the workplace and plans in place for an additional 14 safety topics by October 2024.
- Tableau software has been employed within the Safety Branch as a tool for analyzing data related to Occupational Health and Safety, Workers' Compensation claims, and Technical Safety. The predictive analytics features of Tableau are leveraged to enhance strategic planning and promote regulatory compliance.
- Work continued through 2023-24 to advance Safety Branch's overall digital strategy, including exploration of opportunities to expand online services to support regulated industries and members of the public.

### **Continue to assess translation of all key safety resources**

- In 2023-24, Nova SAFE was [released in French](#).
- Safety factsheets, posters and cards were translated into nine languages: French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Hindi, Arabic, Russian, Ukrainian, and Mi'kmaq. This work is ongoing. See: <https://novascotia.ca/workplace-and-technical-safety/>. Closed captioning was provided in the same languages for YouTube [videos](#) introducing the Internal Responsibility System.

### **Develop and provide access to cultural intelligence and inclusive business practices resources**

- In 2023-24, two programs were piloted in Nova Scotia to increase their cultural intelligence and inclusive business practices. IDEA Fundamentals is a 40-hour training program delivered through the Workplace Education Initiative (WEI) aimed to help small and medium sized employers develop the skills required to become more inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible. WEI promotes and supports business skills development by increasing knowledge and enhancing critical workplace skills. In 2023-24, 72 employers completed IDEA Fundamentals through WEI.
- The Certificate in Inclusive Leadership (CIL) is a program developed by the Toronto Regional Immigrant Employment Council and has been brought to Nova Scotia by the Association of Industry Sector Councils (AISC) to support industry leaders and employers to acquire practical tools to grow inclusive leadership capabilities and lead change.
- In 2023-24, seven industry trainers have completed training to deliver CIL in Nova Scotia while 46 employers and industry leaders completed certification through the AISC.
- 72 employers accessed cultural intelligence and inclusive business practices resources through the Workplace Education Initiative which is below the target of 150 due to the need for increased instructor capacity. We did provide additional training to employers through the Certificate of Inclusive Leadership program through the AISC bringing our total to 118. We anticipate increased reach in 2024-25.

### **Advance the LSI commitments under the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan 2022-25**

- LSI continues to advance the department-specific and government-wide commitments under the Government of Nova Scotia (GNS) Accessibility Plan 2022-25, through the planning, implementation and reporting to the Accessibility Directorate.
- LSI completed accessibility audits on client-facing forms and guides and embedded accessibility into department equity, diversity and inclusion plans and committees.
- LSI has been working in collaboration with the Accessibility Directorate to support the Employment Standard Development Committee and the Departments of Justice, Advanced Education, and Education and Early Childhood Development, to support the Minister of Justice in reviewing the Accessibility Advisory Board's recommendations for developing and implementing an accessibility standard in education under the *Accessibility Act*.

## Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

### Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)

<u>Program &amp; Services</u>	<u>2023-2024 Estimate</u>	<u>2023-2024 Actual</u>	<u>2023-2024 Variance</u>
Administration	890	768	(122)
Engagement, Equity and Belonging	547	414	(133)
Corporate Policy & Services	8,341	8,522	181
Safety	18,938	18,877	(61)
Labour Services	8,580	7,571	(1,009)
Skills and Learning	125,943	148,312	22,369
Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency	29,623	28,920	(703)
NS Immigration & Population Growth	13,374	17,431	4,057
<b>Total: Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>\$206,236</b>	<b>\$230,815</b>	<b>\$24,579</b>

### Additional Information:

Ordinary Revenue	(2,235)	(1,792)	443
Fees and Other Charges	(841)	(978)	(137)
Ordinary Recoveries	(129,873)	(147,909)	(18,036)

**Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries**      **(\$132,949)**      **(\$150,679)**      **(\$17,730)**

TCA Purchase Requirements      \$0      \$0      \$0

### Funded Staff (# of FTEs)

**Departmental Funded Staff**      **266.6**      **246.1**      **(20.5)**

### Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration expenses were \$24.6 million or 11.9 per cent higher than the estimate primarily due to \$19.9 million for the fully recoverable Labour Market Transfer Agreements, \$4.5 million in additional immigration supports, and \$1.6 million to accelerate growth in the skilled trades.

### Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration recoveries were \$17.7 million or 13.3% higher than estimate primarily due to \$19.9 million for the fully recoverable Labour Market Transfer Agreements, and a \$1.0 million increase for the fully recoverable Foreign Credential Recognition Program. These increases are partially offset by a decrease of \$2.9 million in the fully recoverable Canadian Apprenticeship Service Program.

### Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration FTEs were 20.5 lower than the estimate primarily due to the natural vacancy experience realized throughout the year.

# 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 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 Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2023-2024
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	N/A
Details of each wrongdoing (Insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing. (Insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A