



# Accountability Report 2023–24

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Human Rights Commission



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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Human Rights Commission for the year ended March 31, 2024, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Human Rights Commission Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Human Rights Commission outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by Human Rights Commission management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Human Rights Commission 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 Human Rights Commission 2023-2024 Business Plan.

### **Original signed by**

Joseph Fraser  
Director & CEO

## Message from the Director and CEO

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission remains committed to creating inclusive communities and to promoting the advancement of human rights in Nova Scotia by providing services that are trauma informed, culturally responsive, and restorative. In fiscal year 2023-24, we built greater inclusivity, strengthened our processes, and facilitated human rights education, dialogue, and action throughout Nova Scotia.

We removed barriers to justice through process improvements and by fostering meaningful connections within L'nu and African Nova Scotian communities, wherein we centered the historic connections of these communities to the establishment of the Commission and its mandate. We finalized a Truth and Reconciliation Framework that will guide our service delivery and engagement with Mi'kmaq and Indigenous communities and hosted a public panel envisioning the future of human rights through two-eyed seeing.

We conducted a comprehensive overhaul of our intake processes increasing efficiencies, improving timelines, and eliminating a backlog of inquiries. For the first time in many years Commission staff began taking live calls from the public. We introduced an early resolution process to facilitate timely and meaningful dialogue to repair harms between parties in conflict.

To raise awareness of the role of human rights as a foundation for inclusive and supportive communities, we worked with partners in government and community to have December 3 – 10 proclaimed Nova Scotia Human Rights Week by the Premier. We shone a light on our province's human rights champions through our annual Human Rights Awards. We partnered with the Black Cultural Centre, the Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute, and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to empower 130 Black and African Nova Scotian youth to plan and host the Nia Summit.

Commission staff participated in panels, conferences, and events to bring human rights education into conversations around housing, access to education, employment, and inclusion for persons with disabilities. We launched a partnership with the Atlantic International Film Festival to showcase human rights on screen as a catalyst for public dialogue on stories centering diverse experiences.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to the staff, management, and Commissioners for their contributions, creativity, and continued commitment to our shared work.

Joseph Fraser  
Director & CEO

## Measuring Our Performance

### #1 Goal: Build inclusivity in Nova Scotia

**Outcome:** Community and partner relations are strengthened

**Actions:**

1. The Commission will build relationships within L'nu communities based on the recognition of rights, respect, and partnership.
2. The Commission will work to rebuild trust with African Nova Scotians through recognition, addressing barriers to human rights justice, and community partnerships.
3. The Commission will contribute to advancing human rights by collaborating with equity seeking communities and service providers.

**Performance Measures:**

- L'nu communities are better represented in the work of the Commission, including having meaningful access to the complaint process.
  - The Commission finalized a Truth and Reconciliation Framework to guide its service delivery to Mi'kmaq and Indigenous Communities.
  - The Commission continued working in partnership with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq to explore community engagement opportunities.
  - The Commission hosted a virtual panel discussion entitled "Imagining the Future of Human Rights Through Two-Eyed Seeing" during our inaugural Nova Scotia Human Rights Week in which we sought to parse colonial, legalistic understandings of human rights with traditional Indigenous knowledge and consider how a two-eyed seeing approach could aid us in providing culturally relevant service to all communities.
- Access to justice through the Commission's complaint process increased.
  - The Nia ("purpose") Summit, organized by the Commission in collaboration with the Black Cultural Centre, Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute, and Regional Centers for Education, empowered Black high school

students across Nova Scotia. Backed by the Anti-Racism fund administered by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, this youth-led event brought together 130 students from Black communities. The theme, “Equal in Dignity and Rights: Anti-Black Racism from a Youth Perspective,” fostered discussions on the impact of anti-Black racism and inspiring action within the community.

- The Commission participated as part of the organizing committee for the 2023 Halifax Regional Municipality Emancipation Day event and presented during the Department of Justice virtual Emancipation Day event.
- The Commission facilitated training with the leadership of Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (a subsidiary of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind) around culturally appropriate engagement strategies with racialized communities with a special focus on communities of African descent.
- The Commission continued to pursue partnerships across diverse equity seeking communities.
  - The Commission continued to partner on and support community events and initiatives with equity seeking communities and organizations. Initiatives included an educational session with the Sudanese Seniors Group focusing on elder rights, a multi-departmental government collaboration for a unified inclusive language document, and a partnership with Hope Blooms on youth engagement. Additionally, collaborations with the Public Service Commission, Accessibility Directorate, and Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives aim to improve accessibility and inclusion for employees with disabilities, while a partnership with Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) seeks to enhance human rights education. A visit to the Ummah Mosque provided Commission staff greater insight into Islam and the Muslim community.
  - The Commission collaborated with government partners to have December 3-10 declared Nova Scotia Human Rights Week. This week aligns with key human rights dates, including the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3), the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (December 6), and International Human Rights Day (December 10). These dates are among many opportunities throughout the year for all to reflect on significant human rights issues and commit to action to ensure the inherent dignity of all people is preserved and protected.

## #2 Goal: Strengthen Commission operations

**Outcome:** Public confidence in the Commission is increased

**Actions:**

1. The Commission will increase its operational capacity using process improvement methodologies.
2. The Commission will be more accessible and responsive to the needs of Nova Scotians.
3. The Commission will increase its capacity to resolve disputes, restore relationships, and facilitate the repair of harms within its delivery of services.

**Performance Measures:**

- The timeliness of responding to inquiries, conducting investigations, and resolving complaints improved.
  - The Commission overhauled its intake process using Lean Six Sigma methodologies. As a result, waiting times decreased, efficiency improved, and a backlog of 1,000 initial inquiries was eliminated. Live call responses were enabled, and the Commission accepted a higher volume of complaints compared to the previous year.
- The Commission is more responsive to the experiences of individuals within the complaint process.
  - The Commission increased its restorative functioning through the creation of an Early Resolution process. Complaints can now be resolved more quickly through a process that is focused on repairing harm caused to the relationships at the center of the dispute.
- Increased trust, participation, and satisfaction for individuals engaged with the Commission.
  - The Commission enhanced internal operations to improve service delivery standards. This involved staff training, including sessions on unconscious bias, restorative practices, and change management. Additionally, the Commission collaborated with key partners, such as the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, to enhance its French Language Service Strategy. The Commission also engaged in on-going discussions with other



human rights commissions, and established relationships with the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute and the East Coast Prison Justice Society.

### #3 Goal: Facilitate human rights education, dialogue, and action throughout Nova Scotia

**Outcome:** Nova Scotians better understand their human rights

**Actions:**

1. The Commission will continue to provide educational experiences and materials that are accessible and relevant to all Nova Scotians.
2. The Commission will proactively engage L'nu, African Nova Scotian, and other equity seeking communities on human rights topics and issues.
3. The Commission will advance awareness of accessibility as a human rights issue through government and community partnerships.

**Performance Measures:**

- Educational materials are accessible and relevant in the context of an evolving understanding of human rights.
  - The Commission established a partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College faculty and students in disciplines related to multimedia production, equity, diversity, and inclusion. The students were able to create original, engaging, and accessible educational tools such as videos for the Commission to expand its educational materials.
  - The Commission hosted an online panel discussion entitled "Housing as a Human Right" during the inaugural Nova Scotia Human Rights Week wherein community leaders and those working to address the ongoing housing crisis delved into the associated human rights implications.
  - The Commission and the Youth Project co-hosted an online panel discussion during Human Rights Week to launch the first in a series of Human Rights on Screen film screenings entitled "Trans Representation in Film" wherein filmmakers and panelists discussed the pros, cons, and educational benefit of films featuring transgender characters.

- Communities better understand the Commission’s mandate, services, and processes.
  - Through the sponsorship of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, the Commission hosted an event commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in New Glasgow to support members of the New Glasgow Black Community. The event also involved the creation of a legacy video.
  - The Commission worked with the Chinese Society of Nova Scotia for the centenary of the Chinese Exclusion Act, participated in the Circles of Support and Change Conference organized by the Antigonish Women Resource Centre, attended employment fairs by the Native Council of Nova Scotia, and hosted a film screening with panel discussion for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Additionally, the Commission contributed to the Muiwاتمnej Etuaptmumk conference, the “My Home, My Rights” disability rights exhibit, and supported events with the Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities (NSLEO) and Partnership for Access Awareness Nova Scotia (PAANS) for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and Access Awareness Week.
- Nova Scotians better understand their rights and encounter fewer barriers to inclusion.
  - The Commission’s educational efforts included the 2023 Afrocentric Conference organized by the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute, Commission CEO’s participation in the Halifax Wanderers’ coin toss and promotional video supporting inclusivity in sport, a public education session at the Black Cultural Centre, engagement with ISANS’ youth employability program, and information booths at the North American Indigenous Games, Africville Reunion, and Journey Back to Birchtown. Additionally, sponsorship of the Mi’kmaw Friendship Centre led 2023 MAWITA’JIK “Competition Powwow”, a public talk titled ‘Imagine a World with No Equity Gap’ hosted by the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute, the Nova Scotia Decade for People of African Descent Coalition, and a public talk sponsored by the US Consulate, featuring Marc Morial, President of the National Urban League, and a Tripartite Justice Committee meeting in Millbrook were examples of the initiatives to enhance human rights education.

## Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

	2023-2024 Estimate	2023-2024 Actuals	2023-2024 Variance
<b>Human Rights Commission</b>	<i>(\$thousands)</i>		
<b>Departmental Expenses:</b>			
Administration	852	948	96
Support Services	2,145	2,038	(107)
<b>Total: Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>2,997</b>	<b>2,986</b>	<b>(11)</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Ordinary Revenue	-	-	-
Fees and Other Charges	-	-	-
Ordinary Recoveries	8	13	5
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>
TCA Purchase Requirements	-	-	-
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	<b>25.5</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>(2.5)</b>
<b><u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u></b> Actual expenses were \$11 thousand lower than Estimate primarily due to salary savings.			
<b><u>Revenues, Fees, and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u></b> Actual recoveries were \$5 thousand higher than Estimate primarily due to higher than anticipated demand for HRC workshops by external clients.			
<b><u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u></b> 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 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 Human Rights Commission

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 (Insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	n/a
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing. (Insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	n/a