

Department of Justice
STRATEGIC
PLAN
2015–2018





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Deputy Minister	2	Strategic Planning Framework	7
Setting the Context	3	Mandate:	8
Why a Strategic Plan?	3	Mission:	8
Who We Heard From	4	Vision:	8
Table 1.0: Number of Employees by method of Consultation.....	4	Departmental Priorities.....	9
Justice Trends	5	Departmental Principles	10
		Linking the Strategic Plan to Departmental Reporting	11



MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY MINISTER

I'm very excited to launch our new Strategic Plan for 2015–2018. This plan outlines the department's vision and the priority areas where we will focus our efforts over the next several years to move us closer to achieving our vision. It was designed to provide an overall strategic framework for the department's work while remaining flexible and adaptable to changing realities. I strongly believe that this new plan will better equip us to continue providing excellent services for all Nova Scotians.

Over the past several months, we have consulted with hundreds of employees through meetings, dialogue sessions and an online survey. I want to extend a huge thank you to everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to voice their opinions. Each comment was carefully considered and played a huge role in shaping the plan.

I'm very excited to see this plan in action and to working with staff, all levels of government and our justice partners to integrate these goals and values into our day-to-day operations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith Ferguson".

Judith Ferguson
Deputy Minister,
Nova Scotia Department of Justice



SETTING THE CONTEXT

Why a Strategic Plan?

The Nova Scotia Department of Justice is a large, multi-faceted department. With approximately 1600 staff spanning the province, the Department is responsible for the effective management and operation of the justice system through a number of core business areas including Court Services, Legal Services, Correctional Services and Public Safety and Security. These core areas of business are supported by Policy and Information Management, Finance and Administration, Human Resources, and Communications.

To help focus the work of the Department, a strategic plan has been developed in consultation with staff. The plan is a road map that details where the Department is going over the next three years, and how it intends to achieve its goals and mandate.

The objectives of the strategic plan are as follows:

- to identify the outcomes that the Department wishes to achieve
- to select the priorities that will enable the organization to achieve those outcomes
- to establish a decision-making framework for resource allocation to achieve those outcomes
- to ensure that employees “see themselves” in the plan and contribute to its implementation.

Not all things can be certain or known when planning for the future. In addition to meeting the objectives mentioned above, this plan is meant to be flexible and adaptable so that the Department’s actions can be altered if need be. The plan must continue to meet the changing needs of Nova Scotians. We will ensure this by periodically reviewing and validating the document.



Who We Heard From

Employee consultation began very early in the development process of the strategic plan. The objective of engaging employees in the strategic planning process was twofold.

1. To collect feedback to validate the vision and priorities of the Department, and;
2. To understand how the strategic plan applies to employees' day to day work.

Feedback was sought from employees throughout the Department and across the province. The table below captures the different methods used to collect feedback as well as the number of employees participating in the consultations.

Table 1.0: Number of Employees by method of Consultation

Group	Count
Employee Engagement Leadership Team (EELT) and Divisional Action Teams (DAT) ¹	89
Justice Management Team	70
All employee web survey	157
Deputy Minister (DM) Dialogue Sessions	383

¹ The Employee Engagement Leadership Team (EELT) advises the Department of Justice's senior management team on employee engagement. EELT is responsible for the development and implementation of goals to increase employee satisfaction and organizational commitment across the Department of Justice. The Team consults with staff through Divisional Action Teams (DATs) about potential employee engagement activities and makes recommendations to the Senior Management Team. DATs work to meet the unique needs of their division and also support EELT department-wide activities.



Justice Trends²

The environment in which the Department of Justice operates was an important consideration when developing this strategic plan and identifying the areas that the Department will focus on in the coming years. This included looking at trends in crime rates, criminal court, correctional services and civil law, as well as the fiscal environment in which the Department operates.

Crime Rates

Provincially, the overall crime rate has been declining and has decreased 35 per cent over the past 10 years. The violent crime rate decreased 41 per cent, while property and other crime rates declined 36 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively. In addition to the declining volume of crime, the severity of crime has decreased 35 per cent in the past decade.

The homicide rate in Nova Scotia has fluctuated over the past ten years but decreased in each of the past two years. The rate of attempted murder has also fluctuated over the past decade. Following a decrease in 2012, it peaked in 2013 placing Nova Scotia's rate of attempted murder at more than three times the national average.

Nova Scotia's overall youth crime rate has declined 41 per cent since peaking in 2006. The severity of youth crime in the province has also been declining in recent years. Youth crime severity peaked in 2007 and has declined 39 per cent since that time.

²Data used in the analysis of justice trends has been sourced from the following Statistics Canada's surveys: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey; Integrated Criminal Court Survey; Integrated Correctional Services Survey; Corrections Key Indicator Report; Civil Court Survey; Survey of Maintenance Enforcement Programs. The exceptions are 2013–14 adult criminal court data, 2013–14 counts of persons in custody, youth court data and expenditure data for which the source is the Nova Scotia Department of Justice.

³As of 2012–13, the most recent year for which data is available for other jurisdictions.

Criminal Courts

Not surprisingly, given the overall decrease in the crime rate, case volumes in adult criminal court and youth court have been declining.

The time it takes to process cases in adult criminal court has increased. In 2013–14, it took on average about two weeks longer to process a case than it did a decade ago. Youth case processing times have been variable over time but have started to increase in recent years and are up 9 days since 2011–12.

Correctional Services

The average daily count of adults in custody in the province has increased 69 per cent since 2004–05. In particular, the number of adults in remand has nearly tripled over the past 10 years and they have outnumbered those in sentenced custody since 2007–08. Still, Nova Scotia's incarceration rate has been the lowest in the country for the past 23 years.³

In contrast to adults, the number of incarcerated youth in the province has decreased over the past decade and youth in sentenced custody continue to outnumber those in remand.

Community corrections caseloads have been declining in recent years for both adults and youth. This has been driven largely by decreases in probation orders.



Civil Law

The volume of cases in civil court has been decreasing. The number of active general civil cases decreased 15 per cent between 2005–06 and 2012–13⁴ while the number of active family cases decreased 13 per cent.

The number of cases enrolled in the province's Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) has also declined, with a 20 per cent decrease over that eight year time period.⁵ There has been an increase in collection rates for MEP recipients. In 2012–13, 85 per cent of the total amount owed was received, which is an increase of 9 per centage points from 2005–06. In addition, about two-thirds of cases were in full compliance with their total monthly payment in 2012–13, which is an increase of 8 per centage points over 2005–06.

⁴ Statistics Canada data for Civil Court and MEP is available only for the 2005–06 to 2012–13 time period.

⁵ Nova Scotia's Maintenance Enforcement Program undertook a full file review in 2008–09 which resulted in the closure of a number of files. This has contributed to the decrease in the number of cases enrolled and may have contributed to increased compliance.

Fiscal Environment

The current fiscal environment was also an important consideration in the development of this plan. The costs to administer the justice system continue to rise placing increasing pressure on the provincial budget. Provincial spending in the Justice sector has nearly doubled in the past decade. Combined with a decreasing and aging population, the ability to support continued cost increases will be a challenge. It is critical that the Department continue to explore more cost-effective and innovative ways to deliver services.



STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

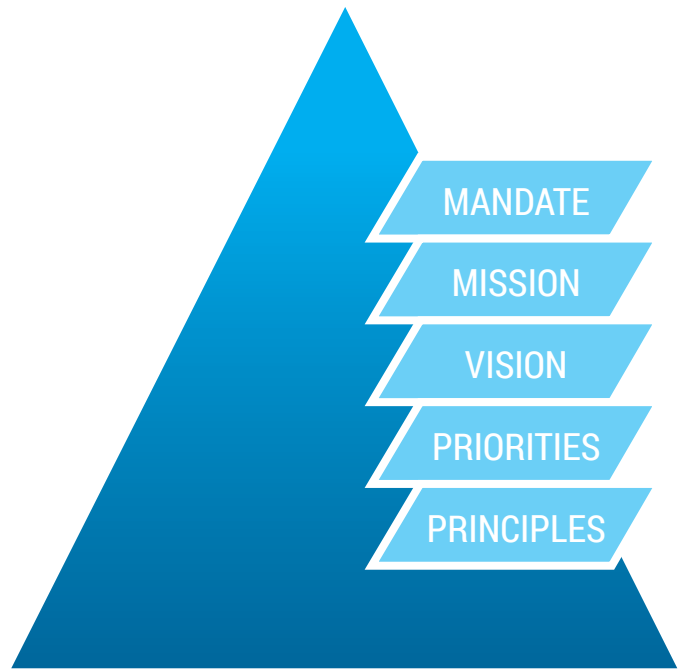
The strategic planning framework includes all of the elements that support the Department in achieving its vision and fulfilling its mandate. These elements include the mandate, mission, vision, priorities and departmental principles. Together these elements help to focus, enable and inform all of the work the Department undertakes.

The mandate outlines the Department’s official and fundamental responsibility. The mission states the Department’s purpose or why the Department should be doing what it does.⁵

The vision states what is the intended outcome of accomplishing the mission. It answers the question, “What would success look like?”.

Priorities are the business areas where the Department will focus in order to achieve its vision.

Principles are fundamental truths that will guide the work of the Department towards achieving their vision.



⁵Bryson, John. *Strategic Planning for Nonprofits and Public Organizations* (1995)



MANDATE

The Department of Justice is responsible for the administration of justice and for promoting the safety and security of Nova Scotians through justice-related programs, services and initiatives.

MISSION

The Department of Justice is committed to protecting and promoting the rights and safety of all people in Nova Scotia with efficient and responsive justice programs and services.

VISION

Nova Scotia has a people-centred justice system and the safest communities in the country.



Departmental Priorities

Departmental priorities are areas where the Department will focus its efforts over the next three years to achieve its vision and meet its mandate. The first priority is internal and focusses on workplace culture and relationships.

The second and third priorities are external. They target the people who interface with or use the justice system as well as the partners and communities that have a role in providing services.

FOCUSING ON WORKPLACE CULTURE AND WELLBEING

- Engaging and contributing to a safe and rewarding place to work
- Creating and fostering a positive and respectful work environment
- Promoting a sense of appreciation and value for every employee

IMPROVING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- Facilitating informed decision making by providing accurate and timely information and support to government and the public
- Enabling timeliness of service

WORKING TOGETHER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- Working with partners and communities to ensure efficient and effective service
- Working with partners and communities to support innovative initiatives to prevent and reduce crime and victimization



Departmental Principles



Principles are fundamental truths that serve as the foundation for everything the Department does. They guide the work of the department in achieving its vision. Where the strategic plan will focus and direct the decision making process of the Department, the principles listed above will help to guide the work of the Department in achieving its strategic goals.

These principles can and should be interpreted as they relate to the diverse and varied roles that the Department of Justice assumes under its mandate. For example, the principle of safety may mean keeping the public safe, but it may also mean maintaining an individual level of safety while on the job. Similarly, the principle of innovation may mean introducing an improvement to an existing process or it may mean introducing a completely different approach to how the work has been traditionally done. All of these interpretations are accurate and relevant depending on an individual's role or perspective within the Department.

The principles that will help guide the work of the Department include:

- People centred
- Pro-active
- Integrity and fairness
- Responsive services
- Shared Responsibility
- Innovative
- Safety
- Evidence-informed
- Educate and prevent



Linking the Strategic Plan to Departmental Reporting

The strategic plan will act as a foundation for the Department and the work that it will undertake in the coming years. The plan is designed to be adaptable to meet the changing needs of Nova Scotians through periodic reviews. Every year the Department will review its priorities, and develop a new statement of mandate. A business plan will also be developed to support the implementation of both the statement of mandate and strategic plan.

Look for the statement of mandate on our website the day the budget is released at novascotia.ca/just/publications/.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN				
2015/16	Treasury Board Reporting	Annual Business Plan and Tracking	Special Reports	Change Management
2016/17	Treasury Board Reporting	Annual Business Plan and Tracking	Special Reports	Change Management
2017/18	Treasury Board Reporting	Annual Business Plan and Tracking	Special Reports	Transition/ Next Strategic Plan

