

# Accountability Report

2016–2017

Department of Environment  
July 2017

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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Nova Scotia Environment for the year ended March 31, 2017 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Nova Scotia Environment Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Nova Scotia Environment outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Nova Scotia Environment management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Nova Scotia Environment 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 Nova Scotia Environment 2016-17 Business Plan.

Original signed by

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Honourable Iain Rankin  
Minister of Environment

Original signed by

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Frances Martin  
Deputy Minister

## Message from Minister

As Minister of Nova Scotia Environment, I am pleased to present our Accountability Report for 2016-17. This report provides a summary of results achieved in relation to the goals and objectives outlined in our Business Plan.

Nova Scotia Environment (NSE) has a vision of being a leader in regulatory excellence, conservation, partnership and promotion. Our expanded mandate in 2015, with compliance, inspection and enforcement responsibilities and staff transferred from several other departments, means that NSE has a unique responsibility to protect the broader environment, including natural resources, human health and animal health.

In 2016-17, several key achievements were made in support of our mandate:

- A new organizational structure and consolidation of compliance, inspection and enforcement responsibilities.
- Becoming a signatory to the PanCanadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, which includes a commitment to implement a carbon pricing system.
- Further reduction of GHG, NOx and SO2 emissions.
- Protection of 12.39 per cent of lands through the addition of 15 new wilderness areas and nature reserve sites.

A number of major initiatives were also launched in 2016-17:

- Continuous work on regulatory reform and improved service delivery.
- A new compliance model to support regulatory excellence.
- A review of the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*.

A sincere thank you to the staff of NSE for their dedication and efforts. I look forward to our continued efforts to achieve our mandate.

Original signed by

Iain Rankin  
Minister of Environment

## Financial Results

	2016-17 Estimate	2016-17 Actuals	2016-17 Variance
<b>Program &amp; Service Area</b>	<i>(\$ thousands)</i>		
<b>Departmental Expenses:</b>			
Administration	884	824	(60)
Policy	5,329	5,025	(304)
Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement	21,116	21,316	200
Sustainability & Applied Science	9,471	9,216	(256)
<b>Total: Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>36,800</b>	<b>36,381</b>	<b>(420)</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Ordinary Revenue	3,054	3,906	852
Fees and Other Charges	1,661	1,658	(3)
Ordinary Recoveries	0	169	169
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries</b>	<b>4,715</b>	<b>5,733</b>	<b>1,018</b>
TCA Purchase Requirements	835	625	(210)
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	355	332	(23)

## Measuring Our Performance

NSE's 2016-17 Business Plan outlined performance plans and measures relating to government priorities and core responsibilities and services. The following is an overview of our progress.

### Government Priorities

NSE identified actions and performance measures related to government's key priorities of "People, Innovation and Education." Our plans aligned with and supported these priority areas by focusing on two key objectives: protecting health (people) and regulatory excellence (innovation).

### Protecting Health (People)

In 2016-17, NSE continued to deliver its mandate to protect the health of Nova Scotians.

Achievements included:

- Reduction of greenhouse gases (GHG) and emissions.
- Continuous improvement of drinking water and food safety programs.
- Enforcement of the aquaculture regulations.

Planned Results	Actual Results
<p><u>Action</u> Work with departments to coordinate provincial efforts to ensure Nova Scotia meets its commitments to reduce GHGs and prepare for impacts of climate change.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> Continuous reduction in Nova Scotia's GHG output.</p> <p>Support and tools provided to prepare for impacts of climate change.</p>	<p>The April 2017 National Inventory Report on emissions states that Nova Scotia's total GHG emissions were 16.2 Mts in 2015, down from 16.6 Mts in 2014. The province continues to see a steady decline in GHG output since targets were set in the <i>Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act</i> (EGSPA).</p> <p>A significant reason for our continued success is a strong regulatory approach to reducing emissions from the electricity sector, including hard GHG caps, renewable energy targets, and energy efficiency programming.</p> <p>In December 2016, Nova Scotia became a signatory to the PanCanadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. This includes a commitment to implement a carbon pricing system.</p> <p>A discussion paper on the design of a Nova Scotia cap and trade program was released in March 2017, followed by a consultation and public comment period. Legislation to create the cap and trade program is forthcoming.</p>

Planned Results	Actual Results
<p><u>Action</u> Work with emitters to reduce emissions that contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone and particulate matter, as well as to maintain the provincial ambient air monitoring network to measure and report on progress.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS) achieved for ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter in each of the four air zones: Central, Eastern, Northern and Western.</p>	<p>The Air Quality Regulations place caps on NSP emissions. In 2016, NSP emitted 15,634 tonnes of NO<sub>x</sub>, which was below the annual cap of 21,365 tonnes. The company emitted 61,897 tonnes of SO<sub>2</sub>, which was below the annual cap of 68,880 tonnes.</p> <p>As part of the province's implementation of the national Air Quality Management System, the second air zone report was released in 2016, covering the years 2013-15. Results show that the CAAQS were achieved for ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter in each of the four air zones.</p> <p>The Air Zone Report is available at: <a href="https://www.novascotia.ca/nse/air/docs/16-45114_NS_Air_Zone_Report_2015.pdf">https://www.novascotia.ca/nse/air/docs/16-45114_NS_Air_Zone_Report_2015.pdf</a>.</p> <p>In 2016, the province also opened a new air quality monitoring station in Kentville to increase monitoring in the Western region. Ambient air monitoring data is available at <a href="http://novascotia.ca/nse/airdata/">http://novascotia.ca/nse/airdata/</a>.</p>
<p><u>Action</u> Continuous improvement of public drinking water programs.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> Percentage of population served by municipal drinking water supplies that meet health-based criteria for microbiological quality.</p>	<p>As a requirement of their operating approvals, municipal drinking water facilities must now develop and implement source water protection plans.</p> <p>NSE continues to help develop, review and implement the Health Canada Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality.</p> <p>NSE is improving the boil advisory process outlined in the Guidelines for Monitoring Public Drinking Water Supplies.</p> <p>In 2016, 91.3 per cent of the population was served by municipal drinking water supplies that meet the health-based criteria for microbiological quality. The percentage is lower than the previous year due to boil water advisories in areas where the utilities serve large populations.</p>
<p><u>Action</u> Implementation of the Safe Body Art inspection program in support of the Act and Regulations.</p>	<p>NSE conducted an extensive review of the draft Safe Body Art regulations. They are currently being revised to incorporate amendments. NSE intends to implement the program in 2017-18.</p>

Planned Results	Actual Results
<p><u>Performance Measure</u> Number of body art facilities operating in the province inspected and permitted.</p>	
<p><u>Action</u> Focus on continuous improvement within the provincial food safety programs.</p>	<p>Preliminary analysis to incorporate a risk-based compliance inspection process into food safety programs was completed.</p> <p>The second phase has started and is focused on prioritizing food safety inspection resources to areas of greatest public health impact.</p>
<p><u>Action</u> Enforce the province's aquaculture regulations.</p>	<p>NSE conservation officers assumed responsibility for enforcement of the aquaculture regulations. In collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, they received extensive training on aquaculture and biosecurity, including in classroom and on the water.</p> <p>NSE's Aquaculture Compliance Guide was developed and a comprehensive compliance promotion and education outreach plan has been completed.</p>

**Regulatory Excellence (Innovation)**

Regulatory reform and service effectiveness is a key government priority. In 2016-17, NSE reviewed existing environmental regulations to ensure that:

- Programs are focused on areas of greatest impact to the environment and public health.
- Administrative burden is reduced for Nova Scotia businesses.
- Technology is used more to support improved program management and delivery.

Planned Results	Actual Results
<p><u>Action</u> Implement the System for Notification and Approval Processing (SNAP) to improve consistency, efficiency and transparency, as well as offer online services to clients for environment and public health functions.</p>	<p>Phase one of SNAP has been launched for use by NSE staff across the province. The new system brings consistency to processing applications and managing approvals.</p> <p>To ensure a high degree of consistency and quality, the original timeframe for developing the system was extended. Phase two will be launched in 2017-18 and will introduce online services for Nova Scotians.</p>



Planned Results	Actual Results
<p><i>Performance Measure</i> Percentage of clients using the new online system (SNAP).</p>	
<p><i>Action</i> Review year one implementation of the redeveloped Watercourse Alteration Program, including the notification tool.</p> <p><i>Performance Measure</i> Evaluation of the redeveloped Watercourse Alteration Program and the notification tool to ensure planned efficiencies were realized and supported further use of this tool.</p>	<p>The review was completed and the goals for implementation were met.</p> <p>The number of watercourse alteration approvals issued by the department has decreased. Many have been replaced by the notification process. This has reduced administrative burden for NSE as well as regulatory burden for Nova Scotians.</p> <p>Compliance rates showed little difference between activities requiring notification and those requiring an approval. This demonstrates that NSE continues to maintain its authority in protecting the environment. Fewer approvals also results in less processing time for inspectors, allowing them more time to conduct inspections and audits.</p>
<p><i>Action</i> For some low and medium risk activities, continue to move towards requirement for “notification” rather than “approval” as it can be less burdensome for both business and the department, while continuing to meet environmental outcomes.</p> <p><i>Performance Measure</i> Increase in the number of activities requiring notification versus approval.</p>	<p>In 2016-17, low-risk onsite sewage system installations in the province were also moved to notification. This means that the NSE now regulates two lower risk activities through notification.</p> <p>NSE continues to explore notifications as part of its efforts to modernize how activities are regulated and reduce regulatory burden.</p>
<p><i>Action</i> Develop and implement approaches to the Solid Waste Resource Management Program that helps Nova Scotia harmonize with other provinces, enhances stewardship, and</p>	<p>A group of provincial stewardship agencies and government officials was established to discuss opportunities to harmonize solid waste practices in the Atlantic region.</p>

Planned Results	Actual Results
<p>fosters innovative approaches to diverting solid waste resources from landfills.</p> <p><i>Performance Measure</i> Number of actions taken that helps Nova Scotia harmonize with other provinces, enhances stewardship and fosters innovative approaches to diverting solid waste resources from landfill.</p>	<p>NSE funded projects, including one in Pictou County where kitty litter was allowed in compost, thereby diverting more waste from landfills.</p> <p>NSE supported two innovative summits – the Food Waste Summit and the Circular Economy Summit – held by Divert Nova Scotia with the goal of increasing waste diversion.</p> <p>Nova Scotia clarified waste-to-energy regulations, thereby easing regulatory burden.</p> <p>The newspaper stewardship agreement was renegotiated which significantly increased the in-kind value provided from publishers to municipalities for managing newsprint in the recycling stream.</p> <p>NSE facilitated more waste diversion by identifying opportunities and building partnerships between municipalities, diverters, recyclers, and those who generate waste.</p>

### Progress on Mandate and Core Responsibilities

In addition to supporting government priorities, NSE focused on three priorities for 2016-17 linked to our mandate and core responsibilities: EGSPA/green economy, consolidation, and protected areas.

#### EGSPA and Green Economy

In 2016-17, the legislated five-year review of the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA) began, led by the Round Table on Environment and Sustainable Prosperity. NSE continues to work toward achieving the goals and long-term objectives set out in EGSPA, and to support the integration of the green economy in Nova Scotia.

Planned Results	Actual Results
<p><u>Action</u> Lead preparation for the legislated 2017 review of EGSPA.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> Initiate the second review of the Act in 2016, to be completed by end of calendar year 2017.</p>	<p>The 2017 review of EGSPA was initiated to identify opportunities to help advance the green economy. The Round Table has been directed by the Minister to provide recommendations in 2017-18.</p> <p>NSE has been working closely with the Department of Business and the Round Table to meet with and gather information from key departments for the EGSPA Review. In the coming months, NSE will do the same with more departments.</p>
<p><u>Action</u> Continue to work towards the goals in the Act for which NSE is responsible.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> Goals are either achieved, maintained and/or substantive progress made towards achievement of intent and timelines outlined in the Act.</p>	<p>As of March 31, 2017, 13 of the 25 goals outlined in EGSPA were achieved. The remaining 12 goals are in progress. Nine of them have targets that extend to 2020.</p>
<p><u>Action</u> Support the integration of green economy objectives with shared economic goals.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> New initiatives that advance the green economy</p>	<p>As part of the EGSPA review, the Round Table has been directed by the Minister to provide recommendations on how the legislation and government can help integrate the green economy.</p> <p>The department is assessing the commercial benefits of Nova Scotia's wilderness areas and nature reserves. The aim is to identify opportunities to increase economic development without compromising biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>The department is supporting the Association for Textiles Recycling to increase awareness about reusing and recycling textiles, thereby increasing waste diversion.</p> <p>NSE supported the Food Waste Summit hosted by Divert Nova Scotia to increase awareness about food waste and profile initiatives that retailers, institutions and community groups are undertaking to reduce food waste in Nova Scotia and across Canada.</p>

### Consolidation

In 2015, NSE’s compliance, inspection and enforcement mandate was expanded with the transfer of responsibilities and staff from departments of Health and Wellness, Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Natural Resources. To support this consolidation, NSE was tasked with implementing a new organizational structure that effectively integrates all compliance activities, and developing a compliance model that aligns resources for efficient delivery of these services.

Planned Results	Actual Results
<p><u>Action</u> Continue to work with our partner departments in considering all aspects of the compliance integration that include agreements, structure and logistics to create a best-in-class inspection, compliance and enforcement division.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> Agreements are in place with partner departments to ensure seamless delivery of inspection, compliance and enforcement services.</p>	<p>Agreements with partner departments were operationalized in 2016-17. As a result, NSE has ongoing dialogue and interaction with partner departments to support compliance activities.</p>
<p><u>Action</u> Implement the new organizational structure.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> New structure is implemented and includes the alignment of resources for cost effectiveness and efficient service delivery.</p>	<p>Structural changes were made to align resources for cost effective, efficient service delivery.</p> <p>Fisheries and aquaculture inspector duties have been combined with conservation officer duties to meet the evolving regulatory demands associated with the province’s aquaculture industry and to increase consistency in these two similar areas. Combining these roles ensures that our staff resources are deployed appropriately across the province.</p> <p>Fur industry inspection has been incorporated into the responsibilities of our environment inspectors to help address demands associated with new regulatory requirements. This ensures that there are staff throughout the province who can respond to a variety of inspection, compliance and enforcement issues.</p>

Planned Results	Actual Results
	<p>District managers are now responsible for managing these new areas of compliance activities, which improves how resources are deployed and reduces duplication of efforts.</p> <p>The number of regions has been reduced from four to three to more efficiently manage the district office structure with three regional directors. It also allows for a more integrated and flexible inspector workforce that can work in changing environments and provide better geographic coverage.</p>
<p><u>Action</u> Develop a risk-based inspection schedule to focus inspection resources on those regulated entities that pose the greatest risks to environment, human and animal health.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> Increased proportion of inspections focused on high risk activities in tandem with decreased time spent on low-risk activities.</p>	<p>The risk-based inspection model has been developed and tested internally. Implementation and incorporation into the Activity Tracking System is not technologically feasible until 2017-18.</p> <p>We continue to implement the risk-based audit schedule.</p>
<p><u>Action</u> Develop and implement a new compliance model that reflects all areas of the department's business based upon consolidation of inspection, compliance and enforcement functions.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> Staff understand and consistently apply NSE's consolidated compliance model aimed at using a variety of tools to encourage compliance with the rules that protect the environment, human and animal health.</p>	<p>A compliance model was developed in 2016 that established the appropriate action to be taken by NSE based on the level of risk of the activities and the willingness of a person or entity to comply. The compliance model is supported by tools and training that ensure consistent implementation by staff across the province. This helps to create an effective, efficient, and consistent regulatory approach.</p>

Protected Areas

Building on progress made in the previous fiscal year, NSE continues to work with the Department of Natural Resources to increase the amount of legally protected land and implement a framework for protected areas management in Nova Scotia.

Planned Results	Actual Results
<p><u>Actions</u> NSE will work with the Department of Natural Resources to achieve a goal of 13 per cent protected land, primarily through the addition of parcels of land with no negative recreational or economic effects.</p> <p><u>Performance Measures</u> Progress made toward protecting 13 per cent of land in keeping with government's criteria listed in action one.</p>	<p>In 2016-17, the province designated three wilderness area (5,950ha) and 12 nature reserves sites (1,058 ha). Combined, they cover 7,008 hectares and increased our provincial wilderness areas and nature reserves to 520,163 hectares. Nova Scotia now has a total of about 12.39 per cent of its land legally protected, up from about 12.26 per cent.</p> <p>The selection of properties and boundaries was refined through feedback from interested residents, municipalities, the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, forestry, mining, and energy interests, and wilderness recreation, hunting, fishing, trapping, off highway vehicle, and environmental groups.</p>
<p><u>Action</u> Implement a framework for protected areas management.</p> <p><u>Performance Measure</u> Amount of land where management tools are in place.</p>	<p>NSE manages protected areas through the <i>Wilderness Areas Protection Act</i> and the <i>Special Places Protection Act</i>. Additional management tools include public and stakeholder consultation, management plans, management agreements, licenses, signs, formal and informal partnerships, and activity specific policies and procedures.</p> <p>The department refined assessments of ecological risk and recreational opportunities in protected areas.</p> <p>NSE advanced research to better understand the vulnerability of wilderness areas and nature reserves to climate change.</p>

### Summary of Progress on Mandate and Core Priorities

NSE made substantial progress in achieving its mandate and core priorities in 2016-17. The following are key highlights:

- The review of EGSPA will identify opportunities for improvements to the Act and the role of government in advancing and integrating the green economy in the province.
- The new organizational structure effectively integrates all compliance functions transferred to NSE. It maximizes available resources while delivering efficient and effective services to Nova Scotians.
- Fifteen new wilderness areas and nature reserve sites will help ensure that sensitive ecological sites continue to support rare and endangered species. Many of these areas enhance protection of drinking water supplies, and others provide opportunities for recreation, education and research.

NSE's 2017-18 Business Plan will build on these achievements as we work to fulfill our mandate and achieve our vision.

## Appendix A - Annual Report under Section 18 of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2016-17
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	0
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	0