



Accountability Report

2018–2019

Communications Nova Scotia



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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of Communications Nova Scotia for the year ended March 31, 2019 is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against Communications Nova Scotia's Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of Communications Nova Scotia outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Communications Nova Scotia management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Communications Nova Scotia 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 Communications Nova Scotia 2018-19 Business Plan.

Hon. Patricia Arab
Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Donna MacDonald
Associate Deputy Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Message from Minister

From graphic designers and photographers to research expertise and communications planning, Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) staff provide a range of communications services to help Nova Scotians understand what their government is doing and why.

Nova Scotians rely on government programs and services to support their health, education and economic well-being. It's CNS' job – working with departments, agencies and community partners – to help make information about how to access and use these programs and services accessible to everyone.

The communications landscape has changed, and CNS is changing to help Nova Scotians get the information they need. The way people get and give information is changing almost daily. We live in a 24-hour news cycle where information flow is expected to be almost instant and people are more likely to get their information from a screen, most likely a mobile device.

In 2018-19 CNS continued to evolve to help ensure Nova Scotians not only received information but had more opportunities to ask questions and give feedback. Using digital tools and working with traditional media partners across the province, CNS supported department efforts to consult and provide information about important issues like highway improvements, cannabis legalization, health care advancements, and supports in the classroom.

CNS will continue to help departments and partners adapt to the challenges and opportunities facing our province and will look for new and useful ways to engage with Nova Scotians.

Hon. Patricia Arab
Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Financial Results

Budget Context Chart

	2018-19 Estimate	2018-19 Actuals	Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister	875	621	(254)
Client Services	962	793	(169)
Communications Planning	1,085	1,245	160
Communication Services	709	692	(17)
Marketing	3,714	3,034	(680)
Total Gross Departmental Expenses	7,345	6,385	(960)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Recoveries	403	36	(367)
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	97.0	101.7	4.7

Notes:

The variance in budget actuals to estimate is the result of a lower than anticipated project volume.

The change in ordinary recoveries is an update to reflect that some other public service entities previously supported by CNS, such as the health authority, now manage their own communications projects and procurements. The change more accurately reflects what is occurring at the operational level.

Measuring our Performance

As government's full-service communications agency, Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) works strategically to support government to ensure Nova Scotians are aware of government's priorities, programs and services, and how they can access them.

Goals

- Strategic communications planning and marketing will ensure Nova Scotians have access to the information they want and need
- All communications and marketing activities are guided by the principles of accessibility, timeliness, accuracy, effectiveness, non-partisanship and fiscal responsibility
- Proactively identify and implement new and emerging approaches and tools to effectively reach audiences

The following priority actions guided the Agency's work in 2018-19:

- Priority Action 1 – Strategic Communications and Marketing
- Priority Action 2 - Evidenced-based Strategy
- Priority Action 3 – Leveraging digital media platforms to engage and inform citizens
- Priority Action 4 – Implementation of a citizen-centric government website
- Priority Action 5 – Efficient and coordinated resources

Priority Action 1 – Strategic Communications and Marketing

Departmental and corporate initiatives are supported by strategic communications and marketing plans that are developed, implemented and evaluated to ensure support of government's priorities and effective access to information for all Nova Scotians.

2018-19 highlights:

Cannabis Legalization

The federal government legalized recreational cannabis in October 2018. Throughout 2018-19 CNS supported the Department of Justice through a widespread public education and awareness campaign, as part of their efforts to support a well-regulated, legal market for recreational cannabis that prioritizes the health and safety of Nova Scotians, especially children and youth.

Action

Government's campaigns started in-market since July 2018, and focused on two areas:

- General information campaign that encourages Nova Scotians to become equipped with knowledge related to legalization, including provincial laws and health risks of cannabis.
- Adult focused cannabis-impaired driving campaign that acts on social norms and encourages people to put themselves in a potential situation with legalized cannabis and evaluate their choices.

Campaigns included ads on television, radio, cinemas, buses, online, and on social media. Ads sent people to government's website (novascotia.ca/cannabis), which has information about the laws, health risks, dangers of impaired driving, and information about responsible use.

Results

- The campaign generated over 13 million digital impressions; 44,261 site visits; 13,156 social engagements; and 878,267 completed video views.
- 25% of visits to the main Cannabis page came from users clicking on digital ads.
- On the website, users were most interested in the Laws, Health Effects, and Impaired Driving subpages.
- The videos proved very successful on all channels, in terms of video completions and ability to drive users to the website.

Organ and Tissue Donation Legislation

CNS worked closely with the Department of Health and Wellness to ensure stakeholders were involved and informed leading up to the introduction in April 2019 of legislation to increase organ and tissue donation. When the legislation takes effect every Nova Scotian will be considered a potential organ and tissue donor unless they opt out.

Action

All units within CNS were involved, providing strategic communications advice, media relations, marketing, stakeholder engagement, a webpage and digital media plan to share information. The key objective was to ensure Nova Scotians understood what presumed consent meant and that they would continue to have a choice of whether to be a donor.

Before introduction, a briefing was held for stakeholders, influencers and partners to build awareness and support. The legislation was scheduled for introduction during Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Month. Premier McNeil led the stakeholder and bill briefing, alongside key spokespeople from the medical and donation community, including an organ recipient. CNS proactively reached out to media to schedule television, radio, and print interviews with key spokespeople. A digital plan was executed in collaboration with key partners like the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Stakeholders were also kept informed as the Bill moved through the legislative process.

Results

Reaction to the legislation's introduction was overwhelmingly positive, reflected in traditional and social media coverage -- local, provincial and national -- as well as correspondence received by the Premier's Office and the Department of Health and Wellness. The legislation was passed in the House of Assembly with unanimous, all-party support.

Early Childhood Education Workforce Recruitment and Development

A marketing campaign was launched to raise awareness of the early childhood education profession and to ensure people knew of the career opportunities available. Through the ads, individuals were directed to the Early Years' Branch website that featured job search engines linking directly to job postings, information on the profession, and where to obtain training and financial supports.

Action

The campaign ran from July 5 to August 20, 2018. To reach the target audience (recent graduates, current and former early childhood educators, under-represented groups) a mix of print and digital ads along with various social media tools were used. This included:

- Print ads in both French and English publications
- Digital ads on Kijiji, CBC, Bell Media, Rogers and Spotify
- Social ads on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

Results

Traffic to the Early Years Branch website increased significantly, including an additional 5,400 visitors to the website and an increase in the amount of time visitors stayed on the site. The online and social campaign also had strong results. Over 2.8 million impressions were served resulting in 7,010 clicks to the website.

Apprenticeship Awareness Campaign

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) worked with CNS to develop digital content to support their efforts to increase both the number of apprentices entering and completing training, as well as the number of employers offering required on-the-job training.

Action

A campaign was developed to improve the public perception of apprenticeship as a post-secondary learning model, and to better inform employers of the benefits of apprenticeship to the growth and continued operation of their businesses.

Campaign elements included a media buy on television, transit, digital ads, print ads and social media. The start of the campaign was aligned with several important events taking place including:

- Announcement that Nova Scotia will host the 2019 Canadian Skills competition
- Women in Trades Annual General Meeting
- NSAA annual industry meeting

Results

During the campaign over 16,000 users visited the nsapprenticeship.ca site, and almost 90% of those users were new. The top channels for entering the site were organic search (47%), directly typing in the URL (30%), referrals from other sites (19%), and social media (4%). Facebook provided the majority of entries. Facebook and Instagram ads resulted in a total of 1,054 link clicks to the site.

Priority Action 2 - Evidenced-based Strategy

Communications Nova Scotia relies on evidence to inform planning and evaluation to measure results to ensure communications efforts are strategic, effective and support government priorities.

2018-19 highlights:

Immigration

The Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (NSOI) was interested in understanding current opinions, perceptions and understanding of immigration by the business community and comparing results to early insights.

Action

Quantitative opinion research was conducted with small, medium and large Nova Scotian businesses between October 26 and December 16, 2018.

Results

Results indicated that businesses were experiencing difficulties in filling vacant positions. Businesses were open to hiring immigrants to fill these positions and to boost Nova Scotia's economy and workforce. Perceptions of immigrants coming to work in Nova Scotia were largely positive, with most businesses (77%) agreeing that immigrants help to increase jobs in the province and expand the overall economy (up from 66% in 2015). Awareness of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot increased, with 35% of businesses aware of the program compared to 27% in March 2018.

Domestic Violence and Gender Equality

To better understand public awareness, attitudes and perceptions regarding domestic violence and gender equality in Nova Scotia, quantitative telephone research was conducted, with the goal of using the insights to inform strategy development and update measures.

Action

A telephone survey was conducted with Nova Scotians between March 8 to 24, 2019.

Results

Nova Scotians considered domestic violence, sexual violence and violence against women as being a moderately serious problem (6.8 to 6.9 on a 10-point scale), like previous findings. Nova Scotians believed domestic violence is a crime (95% agree) and that they have a responsibility to report it (94% agree). The majority of Nova Scotians (73%) reported they know where to get help, with police (74%), family/friends (27%) and transition houses (27%) being the top three mentions.

Results suggested gender equality is important to Nova Scotians, across various dimensions like equal say in a relationship, workplace and education, and there was recognition that it has not yet been achieved. Women (79%) were more likely than men (62%) to assign a top rating to the issue.

Priority Action 3 – Leveraging digital and traditional media platforms

CNS continues to identify effective ways to reach Nova Scotians, including using analytics to improve government's social media presence and to inform innovative approaches to communicate with Nova Scotians. CNS also continues to identify more effective ways to reach our traditional media partners including proactively pitching stories of interest to regional media and considering new ways to share government news.

2018-19 highlights:

Digital Channels

Nova Scotians are on social media and expect government to be there too. CNS continues to support departments in developing engaging and informative content to share information about programs, services and key government priorities.

Action

CNS worked closely with departments to integrated digital content into planning tools and processes to engage directly with Nova Scotians. Using social channels to share information allows departments to listen and engage while analyzing responses in real time. Providing engaging content supports the growth and effectiveness of these information tools.

Results

In 2018-2019 government reached people over 1.8 million times through its social channels, including YouTube views.

- Facebook: 34,195 page likes (15% growth)
- Twitter: 51,137 followers (5% growth)
- Instagram: 3,124 followers (35% growth)
- YouTube: 175,000 video views

Strategic Channel Selection

CNS helped departments select the best social media channels to share information with key audiences, providing citizens with better access to government programs and services and more choice about how, when and where to access those services.

Action

Communications Nova Scotia uses analytics and learnings to improve government's social media presence and take innovative approaches, including using new channels to reach specific audiences. In 2018-19 CNS increased use of the LinkedIn platform to expand the global reach to a professional audience.

Results

In 2018-19 CNS increased the number of LinkedIn followers to 18,177. Content included information on immigration programs, Graduate to Opportunity student hiring initiatives, and recruitment for Agencies, Boards and Commissions.

Budget Briefing Improvements

Media play an important role in sharing information about the provincial budget with Nova Scotians. Media are given the opportunity to preview budget documents on an embargoed basis in a secure setting prior to budget details being provided by the Minister of Finance in the legislature. In previous years, media attending this 'budget lockup' did not have access to the internet and were required to surrender all technology until after the Minister stood in the House of Assembly to deliver the budget address.

Action

Based on feedback from traditional media and the press gallery, CNS revised the budget lock up process for the Spring 2019 session. For the first time, media were provided their phones to record and take pictures at the press conference and WIFI access was turned on 15 minutes before the lock-up ended allowing reporters to file their stories with their editors and outlets in advance of the embargo being lifted.

Results

These changes were positively received by reporters and CNS will continue to collaborate with media to improve and modernize its processes.

Priority Action 4 – Implementation of a citizen-centric government website

CNS is delivering a user-centric website that makes information about government programs and services more accessible to all Nova Scotians.

Beta.novascotia.ca

CNS is working with departments to transform 150 domains, 1.5 million web pages, 75,000 PDFs and 70,000 images into one cohesive website that will allow Nova Scotians to easily find the program and service information that they are looking for.

Action

Phase 1 implementation includes content which is delivered to a user without having to be generated, modified or processed. The new website was populated with content throughout 2018-19. As content moves to the new website, old websites will be archived. Phase 2 will include forms, documents, web applications and other web assets.

Results

In 2018-19 CNS held a series of content development workshops where content experts and contributors learned how to locate and redevelop content and received tools and writing supports. To date 10 departments have reviewed, updated and moved their content to the new government website.

Priority Action 5 – Efficient and coordinated resources

Communications Nova Scotia continued to align resources and implement process improvements for ongoing effective and efficient service delivery, maximizing staff expertise and centralizing services to create flexibility to shift resources to respond to emergency events, or meet unexpected or unanticipated demands for information and support.

Standing Offer process

In collaboration with procurement services, CNS worked to identify opportunities, solutions, and efficiencies for the application, evaluation, and contract management processes for communications-related standing offers.

Action

CNS and procurement services worked together to review data over a one-year period, analyzing the value and number of call-ups within all sub-categories of standing offer services, and factoring in procurement thresholds.

Results

Through this analysis solutions were identified to better support the efficient work of CNS and were received positively by the supplier community. Updates ensure continued compliance with procurement rules, policies and procedures. The solutions also allow CNS to maintain ready access to suppliers while simplifying the process for vendors and for CNS to add new suppliers when they enter the market.

Appendix A - 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 Communications Nova Scotia:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2018-19
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