



Accountability Report 2019–20

Environment



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Accountability Report 2019–2020

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Accountability Statement

Nova Scotia Environment's Accountability Report for the year ended March 31, 2020 is prepared pursuant to Section 60(1) of the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the department's Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. Reporting these outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by department 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 2019-20 Business Plan.

Original signed by:

Original signed by:

Honourable Gordon Wilson
Minister of Environment

Scott Farmer
Deputy Minister

Message from the Minister

As Minister of Nova Scotia Environment, I am pleased to present our Accountability Report for 2019-2020.

This report provides a summary of achievements related to the goals and objectives outlined in our Business Plan. Nova Scotia Environment's vision is to be a leader in regulatory excellence, conservation, partnership, and promotion; our unique mandate protects the environment, and both human health and the welfare of farm animals.

In 2019-20, there has been significant work to support the protection of our air, land, and waters, including:

- Continued progress to implement the cap-and-trade program with 26 companies currently registered.
- The addition of 17 protected areas, with the commitment to add additional sites bringing us closer to our 13% goal.
- The *Coastal Protection Act* was given Royal Assent in April 2019. This act will help protect our natural ecosystems and work is underway to develop regulations to set clear rules to ensure new construction is less vulnerable to sea level rise and coastal erosion.
- The *Sustainable Development Goals Act* was given Royal Assent in October 2019, and we have committed to developing a Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth and creating sustainable prosperity goals in regulations. The act sets ambitious new goals to fight climate change and will continue advancing Nova Scotia's economic, social, and environmental well being.

Several key achievements were also made to streamline processes and support our mandate, including:

- Improved response and compliance by incorporating the Contaminated Sites Program into the System for Notification and Approval Processing.
- Reduction in wait times for permit renewals for operators by eliminating seasonal fluxes and introducing e-mail communication to reduce processing time.

In March 2020, our public health officers, environment inspectors and conservation officers were able to make a significant impact through their efforts at ferries, airports and the land border, working to ensure everyone was aware of the Covid-19 public health order and the need to self-isolate when re-entering the province.

I offer my sincere gratitude to the staff of Nova Scotia Environment for their commitment and dedication to protecting and preserving Nova Scotia, in normal and unprecedented times. I look forward to our continued work to achieve our mandate.

Original signed by:

Honourable Gordon Wilson
Minister of Environment

Financial Results

Financial Table and Variance Explanation

Department of Environment	Estimate	Actuals	Variance
Programs and Service Areas:	(\$ thousands)		
Departmental Expenses			
Administration	795	813	18
Policy	5,891	5,876	(15)
Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement	21,190	21,972	782
Sustainability and Applied Science	8,369	9,995	1,626
Climate Change	2,279	2,363	84
Total: Departmental Expenses	38,524	41,019	2,495
Additional Information			
Ordinary Revenue	3,537	3,514	(23)
Fees and Other Charges	2,699	1,779	(920)
Ordinary Recoveries	354	2,520	2,166
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	6,590	7,813	1,223
TCA Purchase Requirements	814	414	(400)
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	355.3	331.8	(23.5)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Additional appropriation of \$2,495K funding to the following:

- \$2,075K Canada Target 1 – Challenge Fund expenses fully recoverable from the Government of Canada.
- \$420K – Bad debt expenses related to court charges against two defaulting companies: Aspotogan Ridge and Aspotogan Development Ltd.

Departmental Revenue Variance Explanation:

Recoveries increased due to Canada Target 1 – Challenge Fund, expenses fully recoverable from the Government of Canada.

Tangible Capital Assets (TCA) Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

Due to a change in project scope related to software upgrade – SNAP 2 (System for Notification and Approval Processing 2) led to carrying over unspent funds to the next fiscal year.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

Salary variance of Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) due to temporary staff turnover and miscellaneous vacancies throughout the year.

Strategic Priorities and Approach

The vision of Nova Scotia Environment (NSE) is to be a leader in regulatory excellence, conservation, partnership, and promotion. We protect the environment, human health, and the welfare of farm animals.

To help focus our efforts to achieve this vision, the following four priority areas guided the department's work in 2019-20:

A. Education, compliance, inspection, and enforcement

We strive to continue improving the department's enforcement capacity with a professional workforce that applies the right level of response to each issue. Our efforts to ensure consistent and effective compliance with legislation and regulations are supported by an integrated and responsive organizational structure with flexibility to deploy resources based on risk.

B. Program and risk management

Well-structured programs manage risks to an acceptable level and deliver benefits by aligning resources and efforts with need and meeting intended outcomes while focusing on continuous improvement.

C. Client-focused service delivery

We work to continually improve the quality of service delivery to clients through regulations that are clear and easy to understand and by supporting and empowering staff with information, resources, and training to serve Nova Scotians well.

D. Regulatory excellence

We work to modernize our legislation and regulations to ensure they are necessary, predictable, transparent, and meet outcomes that protect our health, safety, and environment. We do this by modernizing legislation and regulations to support innovation and sustainable prosperity, and to reduce undue regulatory burden.

Goals under each priority areas were established at the start of the fiscal year. The next section will highlight results for each goal.

Measuring Our Performance

A. Education, compliance, inspection, and enforcement


Goal:

- ▶ **Incorporate Contaminated Sites Program into the System for Notification and Approval Processing (SNAP)**, the department's system for processing notifications, approvals, licenses, and registrations. By incorporating the Contaminated Sites Program into SNAP, contaminated sites will be prioritized by level of risk. This will ensure appropriate resources are deployed for the level of risk and allow more accurate reporting.

Performance Measure:

Contaminated Sites Program included in SNAP.

Results: Completed



The Contaminated Sites Program was successfully incorporated into SNAP. With this integration into SNAP, our inspectors are able to apply the right level of response in this program based on risk and provide appropriate compliance follow-up.

B. Program and risk management


Goal:

- ▶ **Add programs to SNAP to help ensure that resources and efforts are continuously aligned with program needs based on risk.**

Performance Measure:

Inspectors are able to record all their inspection, compliance and enforcement activities using SNAP and report a more accurate representation of the work they complete on a daily basis.

Results: Completed



In addition to successfully integrating the Contaminated Sites Program into SNAP, the Department completed the design and development of the SNAP system for the Food Safety Program, both of which include a Risk Based Analysis (RBA) model. All necessary project development and training have been completed to support the effective implementation of SNAP for the Food Safety Program. Integrating NSE's programs into SNAP ensures that our Inspectors can accurately record their inspection, compliance, and enforcement activities.

The inclusion of SNAP's RBA model for these programs will continue to help NSE ensure our inspection resources are focused on those facilities which pose the greatest risk to human health and the environment.

C. Client-focused service delivery

Goal:

- ▶ **Switch from renewing all food permits on April 1 each year to renewing each permit on its anniversary date, with no increase in fees.** This will improve service delivery by reducing administrative delays sometimes caused by processing the high volume of food safety permits processed all on the same day.

Performance Measure:

Food safety permit renewals are staggered so that each one is renewed on its 12-month anniversary rather than April 1.

Results: **Completed**

In January 2020, the food establishment permit renewal process was adjusted to renew permits on their anniversary date, rather than annually every April 1st. This means NSE is now able to process a relatively even number of renewals each month, which eliminates the seasonal administrative burden associated with renewals. For operators, this means a reduction in wait times for permit renewals. Operators also now have the option to receive communications via email, further decreasing processing time. Enhanced service delivery for the food service sector was achieved through this program change.

D. Regulatory excellence goals

Goal #1:

- ▶ **Introduce coastal protection legislation.**

Performance Measure:

Introduction of legislation to protect our coasts.

Results: **Completed**

The *Coastal Protection Act* was given Royal Assent in April 2019. Work is underway to develop the regulations to provide further specifics on the requirements of the legislation.

Goal #2:

- ▶ **Continue implementing Nova Scotia's Cap-and-Trade Program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**

Performance Measure:

Companies are registered in the online system to receive, trade, and remit greenhouse gas emission allowances. Companies to submit greenhouse gas reports for 2018 by June 1, 2019 and verification statements by September 1, 2019.

Results: **On-going**

Nova Scotia has continued to make progress implementing its cap-and-trade program. There are 26 companies registered in the program. All expected greenhouse gas reports were received. All expected verification statements were also received. A summary of this information was compiled into an annual greenhouse gas emissions report that was publicly released in 2020:

https://climatechange.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/QRV_Document_-_2018.pdf

Goal #3:

▶ **Support sustainable prosperity in Nova Scotia.**

Performance Measure:

Track actions and ideas for continued renewal of our approach to supporting sustainable prosperity.

Results: On-going

Following public consultation, the *Sustainable Development Goals Act* was given Royal Assent in October 2019. The Act committed to establishing further goals to help achieve sustainable prosperity and to the development of a Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth. Work on the goals and the plan is underway, including planning for further consultation, which was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Goal #4:

▶ **Work with the Department of Lands and Forestry to move towards 13 percent protected land across the province while ensuring a balance so there are no negative recreational or economic effects.**

Performance Measure:

An increase in the percentage of the province's land that is legally protected.

Results: On-going

We continued collaborating with the Department of Lands and Forestry to prioritize lands for protection towards achieving the 13% goal. Field work, research, survey work, and consultation required to support legal designation of select sites for consideration for protection was completed, and work for additional sites is ongoing.

17 areas, totaling about 7,400 hectares, were designated in September 2019. They include four (4) new or expanded wilderness areas, ten (10) new or expanded nature reserves, and three (3) new or expanded provincial parks. Together with lands protected by conservation partners these bring the current land protection total in Nova Scotia to about 12.67%, a 0.17% increase from last fiscal year.

In 2019, we also announced additional sites that are moving through the necessary consultation and legal steps to advance them for legal protection consideration.

In collaboration with NS Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotia Nature Trust, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and several municipalities, we have secured \$14.3 million of federal funding under the Canada Nature Fund. This 4-year funding will help enhance stewardship and knowledge sharing and support project partners in increasing land protection through private land securement, indigenous protected and conserved areas, and Crown land protection.

Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

The *Public Interest of Wrongdoing Act* (PIDWA) 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. Section 18 of the Act states:

Each deputy head shall prepare an annual report of disclosures, including any findings of wrongdoing, recommendations and actions taken and shall make this report available to the public.

The following is a summary of wrongdoing disclosures received by Nova Scotia Environment:

Information Required under Section 18 of the PIDWA	Fiscal Year 2019-2020
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A