



Accountability Report 2020–21

Human Rights Commission



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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (Commission) for the year ended March 31, 2021 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Commission's Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Commission's outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by the Commission's management.

I acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Commission's 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 Commission's 2020-2021 Business Plan.

E. Joseph Fraser
Director and CEO

Message from the Director and CEO

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission is committed to the creation of inclusive communities and to the protection and advancement of human rights in Nova Scotia by fostering positive, productive, and respectful relationships.

Throughout the fiscal year 2020-21, the Commission continued to put systems in place to serve the people of Nova Scotia through the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns, with the safety and well-being of the Commission's staff in mind. The Commission has utilized various virtual meeting platforms to continue its regularly scheduled Commission Meetings and education and training sessions.

Stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and partnerships with various communities, organizations, and individuals continued to improve the Commission's ability to address human rights issues including systemic racism. The Commission continued follow-up work on the Wortley report on street checks released in March 2019 by participating in community-led working groups and speaking engagements.

This year the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission continued to play a role in the promotion of human rights nationally through its leadership role as Chair of the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA). The COVID-19 pandemic has hindered implementing initiatives to advance human rights in Nova Scotia and across Canada including the launch of a national education campaign to prevent and address workplace sexual harassment which will be revisited in 2021-22.

I offer sincere gratitude to the staff, management, and Commissioners for their hard work and dedication to the protection and advancement of human rights throughout this period.

E. Joseph Fraser
Director and CEO

Financial Results

	2020-2021 Estimate	2020-2021 Actuals	2020-2120 Variance
Human Rights Commission	<i>(\$ thousands)</i>		
Commission Expenses:			
Administration	792	637	(155)
Support Services	1,868	1,983	115
Total: Commission Expenses	2,660	2,620	(40)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	0	0	0
Fees and Other Charges	0	0	0
Ordinary Recoveries	0	22	22
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	0	22	22
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	25.5	22.5	(3.0)
<u>Commission Expenses Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to operating savings			
<u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to increased recoveries from education training			
<u>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</u> N/A			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u> Variance due to temporary vacancies			

Managing the Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown began March 13, 2020. The Commission's response to the implications of the pandemic on its operations throughout 2020-21 included:

- Completing a risk assessment and developing a COVID-19 safety plan to mitigate risks identified in the assessment
- Amending service-delivery model to replace walk-in client services with online/telephone/virtual formats
- Equipping and supporting staff to work remotely
- Changing all in-person meetings to virtual formats
- Modifying education and training sessions to accommodate a virtual training environment
- Presenting Human Rights awards without in-person celebration
- Honoring events such as International Human Rights Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with virtual events.
- Holding wellness check-ins with the African Nova Scotian community, coordinated with African Nova Scotian Affairs

The Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to longer than usual response times for inquiries, as well as delays in investigating and resolving complaints.

Measuring Our Performance

2020-2021 Core Responsibilities and Services

#1 Desired Outcome: Communities within Nova Scotia are more inclusive

Goal: Advance Priority Human Rights Issues

Committed Actions:

1. The Commission focused efforts on addressing longstanding issues of systemic racism related to people of African descent.
2. The Commission increased its visibility in correctional facilities and addressed human rights issues identified in the corrections system.
3. The Commission continued to identify emerging human rights issues to guide the Commission in its work.

Inputs:

The Commission continued to work within its existing budget to identify the necessary resources to achieve this priority and complete the required actions. It engaged and continued to work with community partners, stakeholders and government departments and agencies to achieve this outcome.

Performance Measures:

- The Commission will organize up to five community meetings to engage the public on priority human rights issues, such as systemic racism and reconciliation.

Results:

- The Commission organized five community meetings to engage the public on priority human rights issues.
 - The Commission, in collaboration with African Nova Scotia Affairs, held three virtual wellness check-ins with the African Nova Scotian community.
 - The Commission hosted two virtual presentations/discussions on March 25, 2021 in recognition of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- Staff of the Commission will begin regular visits to provincial correctional facilities.

Results:

- COVID-19 impacted the Commission's ability to continue its planned regular visits to the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility. Virtual meetings were held with facility management to discuss COVID-19 health protocols. The Commission did have an opportunity to visit the facility post-lockdown on September 10, 2020.

- The Commission will recruit a new Mi'kmaq/Indigenous Education Officer to conduct outreach and build capacity to identify and address human rights issues with Mi'kmaq communities.

Results:

- The Commission recruited a new Mi'kmaq/Indigenous Education Officer in December 2020. The new Mi'kmaq/Indigenous Education Officer began conducting outreach with Mi'kmaq communities and establishing partnerships with Mi'kmaq organizations.

#2 Desired Outcome: The Commission will be a leader and innovator in the protection and promotion of human rights

Goal: Modernize the Human Rights Commission

Committed Actions:

1. The Commission expanded its online training resources to provide free public education for the province on human rights issues.
2. The Commission enhanced its communication strategy and continued to expand its use of digital media platforms to promote human rights.
3. The Commission continued developing tools to enhance efficiency and transparency in human rights dispute resolution.
4. The Commission provided relevant training and development opportunities to staff.
5. The Commission continued working to incorporate restorative principles into all aspects of its work.

Input:

The Commission continued working toward an improved and more effective implementation of restorative approaches to human rights dispute resolution. As the benefits of this model continued to be realized, the Commission was able to better direct its human resources to focus on the education and training needs component of its mandate.

Performance Measures:

- The Commission will expand its virtual classroom by developing and launching a new online course "Human Rights 101".

Results:

- The launch of the "Human Rights 101" online course was planned for 2020-21. However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the launch being postponed.

- The Commission will continue to ensure that investigations of complaints are approached restoratively and are completed within one year of receipt.

Results:

- The Commission continued its efforts to approach Investigations of complaints restoratively. Times to complete complaint investigations fluctuated throughout 2020-21 from a low of 280 days to a high of 407. An increase in COVID-19 related inquiries and staffing pressures contributed to extended delays in completing investigations.
- The Commission will lead CASHRA in the development of a model to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of human rights dispute resolution across Canada through the use of restorative approaches.

Results:

- COVID-19 forced CASHRA to cancel its in-person annual CASHRA conference where advancements in human rights approaches would have been shared over the 2-day conference.

#3 Desired Outcome: Capacity is strengthened on human rights issues

Goal: Advance Dialogue and Human Rights Practices

Committed Actions:

1. The Commission will highlight advancements in human rights work by contributing to the national conversation surrounding human rights issues.
2. The Commission will continue to strengthen government and media relations.
3. The Commission will encourage the adoption of best human rights practices by:
 - a. strengthening connections with stakeholders such as professionals, volunteers, communities, businesses and organizations involved in human rights work;
 - b. providing tools, resources, and training that promote human rights; and
 - c. contributing to a stronger national partnership of human rights commissions.
4. The Commission will enhance mechanisms to give voice to affected communities on human rights issues.
5. The Commission will provide support for efforts to increase diversity within public institutions in the province.

Inputs:

The Commission worked within its existing budget and staffing complement to achieve this priority and complete the required actions.

Performance Measures:

- The Commission will participate in a minimum of ten workshops, presentations and/or information sessions on topics related to human rights in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Results:

- During fiscal 2020-21, 14 free human rights education sessions were offered throughout the province.
 - A total of 29 workshops, presentations and/or information sessions were held during the 2020-21 fiscal year. A total of 1,453 individuals attended these sessions which is a slight decrease from the previous fiscal year and can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic in that modifications were made to the structure of in-person training sessions to make them more conducive to a virtual environment.
- The Commission will lead CASHRA in the development and promotion of training tools for national use in both English and French to promote human rights across Canada.

Results:

- COVID-19 impacted the Commission's promotion strategy for the national Safer Places online course as the target audiences for this course have been dealing with the immediate need for business continuity strategies rather than training.
- The staff of the Commission will reflect the diversity of communities throughout Nova Scotia and its staff will provide support to public institutions, including the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in the development of a strategy to promote diversity and inclusion in the public service.

Results:

- For the 2020-21 fiscal year, the Commission had a staffing complement of 25 made up of a diverse group representing the four Employment Equity groups as well as the broader diversity of Nova Scotian communities. The Commission benefits from diversity of race, gender, age, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, national origin and other personal characteristics in its various job categories.

Appendix A

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 the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2020-2021
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	NA
Details of each wrongdoing	NA
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	NA