



Accountability Report 2021–22

Service Nova Scotia & Internal Services



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Accountability Report 2021–2022

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services for the year ended March 31, 2022, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services' outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services 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 Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services 2021-2022 Business Plan.

Original signed by

Hon. Colton LeBlanc
Minister

Original signed by

Joanne Munro
Deputy Minister

Message from Minister and Deputy Minister



It is our pleasure to present the Accountability Report for the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. This document reports on the activities outlined in our 2021-2022 Business Plan. It is important to us to provide you with an annual update on the work we are doing to make it fast and easy for you to access the services you want and need from government.

We want to thank you for taking the time to review our Accountability Report. It not only outlines the individual initiatives of the past year but explains what we did, the rationale and who benefits. It also explains the approach we take to our work which we believe is also important for you to know and understand.



The team at Service Nova Scotia and Internal Service is 1700 strong. They work hard on your behalf, and we are proud and grateful for all that they do. The team is client-centred. This means they consider your best interest in all that they do. They focus on service and operational excellence. This means they are innovative and transformative in their work.

We are proud of our accomplishments this past year and are pleased to have this opportunity to share them with you.

Thank you for your interest.

Original signed by

Honourable Colton LeBlanc
Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

Original signed by

Joanne Munro
Deputy Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

2021-22 Accountability Report - Financial Summary

Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services			
	2021-22	2021-22	2021-22
	Estimate	Actual	Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)
Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	440	441	1
Government Services	31,754	35,877	4,123
Internal Audit Centre	2,768	2,261	(507)
Financial Services	13,635	12,905	(730)
Citizen Services	32,213	37,355	5,142
Nova Scotia Digital Services	182,234	164,545	(17,689)
Procurement	9,873	8,455	(1,418)
Program Modernization	55,568	58,330	2,762
Total Departmental Expenses	328,485	320,169	(8,316)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	662,502	711,518	49,016
Fees and Other Charges	9,284	8,570	(714)
Ordinary Recoveries	17,155	16,457	(698)
Total: Revenue, Fees, and Recoveries	688,941	736,545	47,604
TCA Purchase Requirements	11,086	8,303	(2,783)
Provincial Funded Staff (Net FTE's)	1,655.2	1,572.1	(83.1)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

The Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services expenditures were \$8.3 million or 2.5 percent lower than estimate primarily due to \$5.1 million in net Covid-19 related underspends, which included reductions of \$6.0 million in COVID-19 related delays in the SAP Modernization project offset by increases of \$0.9 million for various operational expenses. Other decreases included \$6.2 million government and health IT support, \$4.6 million in operational and vacancy savings and \$2.6 million for further SAP Modernization project delays. These decreases were partially offset by increases of \$7.1 million in grants to support the heating programs and the Property Tax Rebate for Seniors, and \$4.3 million in insurance claims.

Revenue, Fees, and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

The Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services revenues were \$47.6 million or 6.9% higher than estimate primarily due to \$19.9 million increase in Motive Fuel Tax, \$14.1 million of Corporate Capital Tax, \$7.7 million Levy on Private Sales of Used Vehicles, and \$5.9 million other ordinary revenues and fees.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

The Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services Tangible Capital Asset purchases were \$2.8 million or 25.1% lower than estimate primarily due to multi-year project cashflow adjustments for Registry of Motor Vehicles Modernization Project.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

Departmental FTEs were 83.1 lower than estimate due to continued transition of the department and delays in filling vacancies.

Measuring Our Performance

The annual Accountability Report for Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNSIS) reports on the progress achieved in meeting the commitments and targets outlined in the 2021-2022 Business Plan. SNSIS measures its performance through a series of service standards, client feedback mechanisms and tracking the progress of key initiatives that support government priorities.

SNSIS Core Functions

SNSIS is focused on listening to the needs and expectations of citizens and businesses of Nova Scotia and aims to deliver inclusive, high-quality and accessible programs and services. Core functions include, but are not limited to:

- Maintain the Provincial Registries, including Registry of Joint Stock Companies, Vital Statistics, Land and Registry of Motor Vehicles (in partnership with the Department of Public Works)
- Provide government-wide services including financial services, internal audit and fraud reporting services, procurement services, continuous improvement and innovation, corporate security, insurance and risk management, business continuity management, and printing and mailing services
- Provide consumer protection services to help consumers make informed decisions and to regulate businesses, where necessary and appropriate
- Provide processing services for obtaining licences, permits, registrations, certificates, refunds and rebates
- Provide contact centre and access services to citizens and businesses; acting as a single point of contact (via telephone and email) for information related to all provincial government programs and services
- Provide tenants and landlords with efficient and cost-effective services to settle disputes through the Residential Tenancies program
- Recover debt owed to the province and some municipalities, universities, and health authorities
- Lead government-wide efforts to deliver more and better digital services through the Nova Scotia Digital Service (NSDS)
- Support and enable the Nova Scotia public service in applying internet-era ways of working with departments and agencies and provide leadership in designing, building and continuously improving government services with modern digital tools and platforms and minimize the risks of cyber threats across government
- Provide sustainable geographic solutions to support planning and informed decision making
- Provide licensing and compliance functions for a broad range of provincial commodity tax programs, while minimizing the sale of contraband products
- License and regulate alcohol and gaming activities, including all related compliance and enforcement activities

- Provide information access and privacy services, policies, and practices across government
- Provide reliable public safety communication services and plan for next generation services

SNSIS 2021-2022 Accomplishments

SNSIS delivers high-quality services every day and makes it simple and fast for Nova Scotians to interact with government. SNSIS is client-centered and focused on service and operational excellence across all channels. In 2021-2022, SNSIS:

Delivered More and Better Digital Services

- Continued the development and implementation of a Digital Government Strategy, advanced work to stabilize network infrastructure in healthcare and continued to deliver and enhance digital collaboration tools in government and healthcare
- Launched a new online application service for a Mortgage Broker Licence; completed digital service lifecycles with retirement of Nova Scotia Safe Check-in and Daily Public Health Check-in
- Enhanced digital platform offerings with continued work on digital identity
- Launched a new digital payment platform for government services and successfully transitioned 29 services

Improved Access to Government Services

- Implemented changes to the liquor licence application process, resulting in:
 - reduced obligations and travel time
 - fewer supporting documents
 - conducting credit checks in-house
- Implemented changes to the Atlantic Lottery Corporation (ALC) Regulations that will allow ALC to offer online casino (iCasino) games. iCasino is intended to repatriate players that use international for-profit gambling sites that are illegal to access from Canada
- Increased online client applications for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program (HARP). There were 22,153 online applications in fiscal year 2021-2022, a 10% increase over the previous year
- Expanded the electronic income verification process for the Property Tax Rebate for Seniors (PTRS) applicants to include 7 additional municipalities. SNSIS continues to explore ways to expand the verification process to as many municipalities as possible
- Introduced a new client flow management system (Qmatic) which enables clients to book online appointments for in-person services, obtain virtual tickets (contactless) and get notifications via text to be assisted by staff via mobile applications
- Resumed monthly mobile photo ID capture service for persons experiencing homelessness

- Made amendments to regulations under the Collection Agencies Act to support regulation of debt management services, enhance consumer protection against unfair debt management practices and reduce red tape for collection agencies

Maintained Provincial Registries

- Initiated a Vital Statistics Act modernization project and started exploring new approaches to register births where assisted human reproductive technology and surrogacy are used. This would enable more than two parents to be listed on the birth registration. Future amendments to the Act may include removal of gendered references, eliminate differential treatment of married and unmarried parents, as well as eliminate references and processes related to legitimacy

Delivered Government-wide Services

- Amended the Residential Tenancies Act to provide additional protections for tenants once the renoviction ban is lifted, after which landlords are required to give at least a three-months notice for renovictions and tenants will be entitled to compensation in certain circumstances
- Supported government departments in responding to over 2,700 access to information requests received under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* – a 47% increase over fiscal year 2020-2021
- Completed a new Trunked Mobile Radio (TMR) service tower site in Blue Mountain, Pictou County
- Completed a scope and user requirements project defining future field communications services to be supported by the province for first responders and public works organizations
- Initiated negotiations with Bell-Mobility to extend agreement for the Trunked Mobile Radio 2 System used by all levels of Government, including the volunteer public safety community
- SNSIS exceeded its red tape reduction target, reducing citizen time on administrative burden by more than 99,728 hours
- Developed an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) 3-year work plan, which will incorporate and build on the four goals identified in the Nova Scotia's Public Service Commission (PSC) "All Together" plan, as well as focus on building a culturally responsive work environment
- Supported government's plan to increase affordable housing in Nova Scotia
- Implemented an online residential tenancy application system which removed the requirement for applicants to visit an Access Centre to initiate application

SNSIS Support for Government Delivering Excellence

Through its ongoing role as a key enabler across government, SNSIS provides the services, tools and resources that support other government departments and public sector entities to provide quality services and deliver on their priorities. In 2021-2022, SNSIS:

Supported Government's Health Mandate

- Completed consultations with the Department of Health & Wellness on short and long-term strategic direction of secure telehealth and virtual care, and supported the implementation of VirtualCareNS
- In collaboration with the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care, SNSIS initiated work to support the planning and execution of a procurement process for the expansion and renovation of long-term care accommodations
- Completed a strategy for the renewal of the province's mission critical non-medical dispatch facility used by provincial enforcement agencies and others. The strategy focuses on the staffing model, key equipment, and the physical facility
- Implemented a civic address matching engine with Department of Health & Wellness to improve data quality and analytics for health programs

Collaboration Across Government

- In collaboration with the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration and the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, SNSIS initiated work to ensure that a component of the tender application will consider, where applicable, whether bidders employ and participate in apprenticeships
- In collaboration with Seniors and Long -Term Care, SNSIS supported the launch of the Senior Care Grant program to help low-income senior households with the ongoing costs of household maintenance items, such as snow removal, home repairs, lawn care, grocery delivery, and other services
- Completed the 2018-2021 Accessibility Directorate commitments
- Developed four new commitments for the 2022-2025 Accessibility Plan:
 - Collaborate with Department of Public Works and landlords to review accessibility of buildings and spaces
 - Create plans aligned with the Public Service Commission's work to remove departmental-level barriers to employment for persons with disabilities
 - Work together across government to initiate the development of a provincial accessibility standard for the development of goods and services
 - Create new ways to engage and measure the progress of SNSIS teams in improving the accessibility and inclusion of their products and services using digital standards
- SNSIS and Department of Public Works implemented a new digital service; "Take a Driver Knowledge Test Online", which allows citizens to purchase and take a Class 7 Learner's (Beginners) written knowledge test from their home instead of having to go to a Nova Scotia Access Centre. Work also began on online knowledge tests for more licence classes
- Launched a renewal service for short-term rental accommodations in the "Register Your Accommodation" service to support Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage
- Continued work on Nova Scotia's Data Strategy to help departments use disaggregated, equitable and ethical data and advance racial equity and

understanding of different impacts on various marginalized groups and racialized communities

- Implemented a new streamlined storm office closure decision process

Impact of Covid-19

In addition to our commitment to provide excellent service to Nova Scotians, SNSIS accomplished the following during the 2021-2022 fiscal year, as a response to Covid-19:

- Increased utilization of NSDS services:
 - Delivered an Enhanced Proof of Vaccination Receipt that aligns with the Federal Government's specifications, including the addition of a tamper-proof and trusted QR-code for scanning
 - Developed a Verification App (VaxCheckNS) to support businesses and event hosts in determining a person's vaccination status by scanning the QR-code, thereby minimizing the sharing of personal health information
 - Developed an Out-of-Province Vaccine Entry Service to add out-of-province vaccinations to our registry, so new residents can have access to their Nova Scotia enhanced Proof of Vaccination (POV) receipt
 - Developed a public facing dashboard website to share daily pandemic updates with citizens
 - Launched new digital services to support ongoing COVID recovery efforts like "Request a COVID-19 Recovery Letter"
- Made amendments to the liquor licensing regulations and changes under the Emergency Management Act in response to discussions with the bar and restaurant industry to help them address challenges brought about by COVID-19, including:
 - authorizing third-party delivery of alcohol with food from licensed establishments
 - enabling the takeout and delivery of mixed drinks (i.e., cocktails)
 - capping fees charged by third party delivery services (e.g., UberEats, Skip The Dishes)
- Extended a temporary two percent rent cap that will expire on December 31, 2023
- Announced a directive that allows tenants the opportunity to refuse in-person showings of the residential property they are renting and gives landlords parameters for a safe option to help them rent or sell a property
- Coordinated with the Department of Community Services and Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care to offer their facilities communicable disease insurance coverage to offset exclusions set in place by the insurance industry throughout the pandemic
- Announced a directive that allowed provincially regulated companies, co-operatives, societies, and condominium corporations the option to meet virtually or with a mix of in-person and virtual participants. This was made permanent via a legislative change in Spring 2022

- Enacted legislation to allow collectors and debt management agents conducting collection activity to work remotely from home, a temporary measure put into place during the pandemic
- Processed increased volume of frontline transactions (via Access Centres, Contact Centres and Processing units)

2021-22 Key Facts and Figures

- SNSIS employs over 1,700 employees. That is almost one in eight provincial staff
- We are responsible for over 50 Acts and associated regulations
- 586,000 calls answered by the Provincial Contact Centre
- 2M Registry of Motor Vehicle transactions processed
- 39,530 RMV knowledge tests conducted
- 59,715 Online Driver Licence Renewal transactions completed
- 286,058 Online Vehicle Permits Renewal transactions completed
- 502,000 license, permits, applications and certificate transactions completed by the Business Registration Unit
- 154,201 land documents & plans processes and/or registered
- Responded to 308 consumer complaints
- 54,000 client records verified for the *Need a Family Practice Registry* for NSHA
- 125,000+ contacts made in support of Public Health Covid-19 Initiatives
- Trunked Mobile Radio 2 (TMR 2): 14,500 Radios, 20,000 Users, 99.98% system reliability
- 61 telecommunications towers owned / maintained by the Province of Nova Scotia
- \$10.6B in payments issued to businesses in Nova Scotia
- \$961M in government purchases, 77% with NS Suppliers
- 45,000+ low-income households helped with heating costs
- 17,000+ low-income seniors assisted with property taxes
- 15M printed impressions and 2,850 projects at Queen's Printer
- 28 insurance policies managed with premiums of \$1.6M
- 2000 insurance claims a year processed on average
- 868 new contracts established for goods/services/construction
- 2,767 requests for information under the FOIPOP Act completed
- Over 310,000 pages of documents reviewed for release under FOIPOP
- Responded to 15 significant weather events
- 196,000+ calls for service handled by Shubenacadie Radio Communications Centre
- \$13.1M in debt recovered
- \$500M collected through fuel, tobacco, vaping products, and vehicle/boat sales tax
- \$80M collected through the digital payment platform
- Oversight of the Province's Fraud Reporting Services, which is a key method where employees can safely report fraudulent activities

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 Labour 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 Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2021-2022
The number of disclosures received	None
The number of findings of wrongdoing	None
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A