



Business Plan

2023-24

Human Rights Commission



NOVA SCOTIA

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Message from the Director and CEO

The protection and advancement of human rights in Nova Scotia is critical to supporting diverse, vibrant, and inclusive communities. Amidst ongoing polarization, division and strife, human rights remain a beacon for dignity. At the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission (the Commission), we are driven by our mandate to effect meaningful and lasting change to improve the lives of all Nova Scotians.

Three years into a global pandemic, it has become clear how stark the disparities among us really are. The disproportionate impacts on equity seeking communities of a skyrocketing cost of living, an overburdened healthcare system, and an impenetrable housing market are glaring.

It is in this context that the Commission strives to earn the trust and confidence of the people we serve. We are working hard to be a credible source of timely, relevant information, a valued partner on human rights initiatives, and a trusted institution mandated with the protection and promotion of human rights through the administration of the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* (the Act).

Recognizing that human beings and their relationships with each other are at the centre of human rights, the Commission will continue to build and strengthen relationships with community organizations and government partners in fiscal 2023-2024 to advance work to address anti-Black racism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination creating barriers to employment, education, and access to services for people from African Nova Scotian, Black and L'nu communities, and persons with disabilities.

Recognizing the urgency of human rights issues, the Commission will continue to prioritize building capacity to ensure our services are barrier-free, timely, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and restorative. We will implement process improvements to all aspects of our work and invest in the capacity of our team to meet Nova Scotians where they are and provide the level of service they require.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

**Joseph Fraser
Director & CEO**

Mandate

The Commission has a unique role within Nova Scotia. It is an independent government agency charged with administering the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*, a provincial statute created in 1969, with the most recent amendments in December 2012. The Commission is mandated by the *Human Rights Act* to help build inclusive communities and protect human rights in Nova Scotia.

The specific duties of the Commission are set out in the Act. The Commission has the responsibility of administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act. In addition, it develops public information and education programs in the field of human rights to advance the principle that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights without regard to age, race, colour, religion, creed, ethnic, national or Aboriginal origin, sex (including pregnancy and pay equity), sexual orientation, physical disability, mental disability, family status, marital status, source of income, harassment (including sexual harassment), irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease, association with protected groups or individuals, political belief, affiliation or activity, gender identity or gender expression.

The Commission is further mandated to conduct and encourage research by universities and other bodies in the general field of human rights, and also works with government by advising and assisting its departments and agencies in regard to human rights.

The Commission reports, as required, to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice on its business and activities, and also considers, investigates, or administers any matter or activity referred by the Governor in Council or the Minister of Justice.

Core Responsibilities and Services for 2023-2024

#1 **Goal:** **Build inclusivity in Nova Scotia**

Outcome: **Community and partner relations are strengthened**

Actions:

1. The Commission will build relationships within L'nu communities based on the recognition of rights, respect, and partnership.

Input: The Commission will work towards the restoration and repair of relations with L'nu communities in alignment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

Performance Measure: L'nu communities will be better represented in the work of the Commission, including having meaningful access to the complaint process.

2. The Commission will work to rebuild trust with African Nova Scotians through recognition, addressing barriers to human rights justice, and community partnerships.

Input: The Commission will work toward ensuring culturally responsive, trauma-informed, anti-oppressive service delivery while increasing its presence in African Nova Scotian communities.

Performance Measure: Access to justice through the Commission's complaint process is increased.

3. The Commission will contribute to advancing human rights by collaborating with equity seeking communities and service providers.

Input: The Commission will establish new partnerships and build upon existing partnerships to advance human rights, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging in Nova Scotia.

Performance Measure: The Commission will actively engage, support, and collaborate with a range of human rights partners and communities.

#2 Goal: Strengthen Commission operations

Outcome: Public confidence in the Commission is increased

Actions:

1. The Commission will increase its operational capacity using process improvement methodologies.

Input: The Commission will review and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its inquiry and complaint processes.

Performance Measure: Timeliness of responding to inquiries, conducting investigations, and resolving complaints will be improved.

2. The Commission will be more accessible and responsive to the needs of Nova Scotians.

Input: The Commission will ensure processes for responding to inquiries, conducting investigations, and resolving complaints are anti-oppressive, culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and accessible.

Performance Measure: The Commission will be more responsive to the experiences of individuals within the complaint process.

3. The Commission will increase its capacity to resolve disputes, restore relationships, and facilitate the repair of harms within its delivery of services.

Input: The Commission will increase use of restorative conferencing and early resolution throughout its inquiry and complaint processes.

Performance Measure: Increased trust, participation, and satisfaction for individuals engaged with the Commission.

#3 Goal: Facilitate human rights education, dialogue, and action throughout Nova Scotia

Outcome: Nova Scotians better understand their human rights

Actions:

1. The Commission will continue to provide educational experiences and materials that are accessible and relevant to all Nova Scotians.

Input: The Commission will expand resources and supports to increase ease of access to information on human rights topics.

Performance Measure: Educational materials will be accessible and relevant in the context of an evolving understanding of human rights.

2. The Commission will proactively engage L'nu, African Nova Scotian, and other equity seeking communities on human rights topics and issues.

Input: The Commission will collaboratively host and support community events to provide education on human rights topics and Commission processes.

Performance Measure: Communities will better understand the Commission's mandate, services, and processes.

3. The Commission will advance awareness of accessibility as a human rights issue through government and community partnerships.

Input: The Commission will centre first voice perspectives to raise awareness of issues related to disability and accessibility.

Performance Measure: Nova Scotians will better understand their rights and encounter fewer barriers to inclusion.

Budgetary Context

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2022-23</u> <u>Estimate</u>	<u>2022-23</u> <u>Forecast</u>	<u>2023-24</u> <u>Estimate</u>
Gross Program Expenses	2,880	2,880	2,997
Ordinary Recoveries	8	17	8
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u> Department Funded Staff	25.5	22.1	25.5

