

# Service Standards

## Improving turnaround times for provincial licences and permits



### Making it easier to do business

The Province of Nova Scotia has added a significant new target for the Better Regulation Initiative which will complement efforts to reduce paperwork. A commitment to ensure turnaround time for most licences and permits issued by the province within 10 business days will be a reality by 2010. Service standards longer than 10 days are recognized as appropriate for more complex applications. Together, these steps will make it easier to do business in Nova Scotia.

### Why a service standard

Until now, there has been limited predictability for businesses in how long they might have to wait to get responses to their applications. This uncertainty can make it difficult to plan business activities. We know service standards make the paperwork process more predictable, giving businesses the opportunity to align activities with the results of their applications. Services standards also support economic development, and are a catalyst to further improvement and modernization of government services.

With over 500 provincial licences, permits and approvals, registrations and certificates, representing about 2.5 million transactions per year, service standards can make an obvious impact on paperwork for business and individuals.

### The immediate goal

Nova Scotia's service standards will be counted in business days, and the measure of turnaround time will begin when an application is fully complete and received by the department.

While the service standard commitment is targeted to be met by 2010, an immediate goal is to process 50 per cent of licences and permits within the 10-day service standard by 2008. Preliminary analysis shows we'll exceed this target. These findings also show that many of the province's high-volume licences and permits, especially those for individuals, are often turned around very quickly. For example, drivers licences and vehicle registrations can be turned around within minutes, while birth certificates are turned around in a few days.

### When a 10-day service standard is not appropriate

There are licences and permits that are not appropriate for a 10-day service standard because of the need for complex analysis, approvals from other organizations, or public consultation. Approval of environmental assessments, mineral exploration licences, or aquaculture licences are good examples of where significant analysis, review, and other critical steps are included in the consideration process.



It is expected that about one in five licences or permits will be subject to an alternative to the 10-day service standard. In circumstances where an alternative service standard is the best option, the focus will remain on being responsive and predictable. In all cases where the 10-day service standard does not apply, an alternative service standard that is consistent and realistic will be set and made available for public information. Decisions on setting alternative service standards will be made formally by Cabinet.

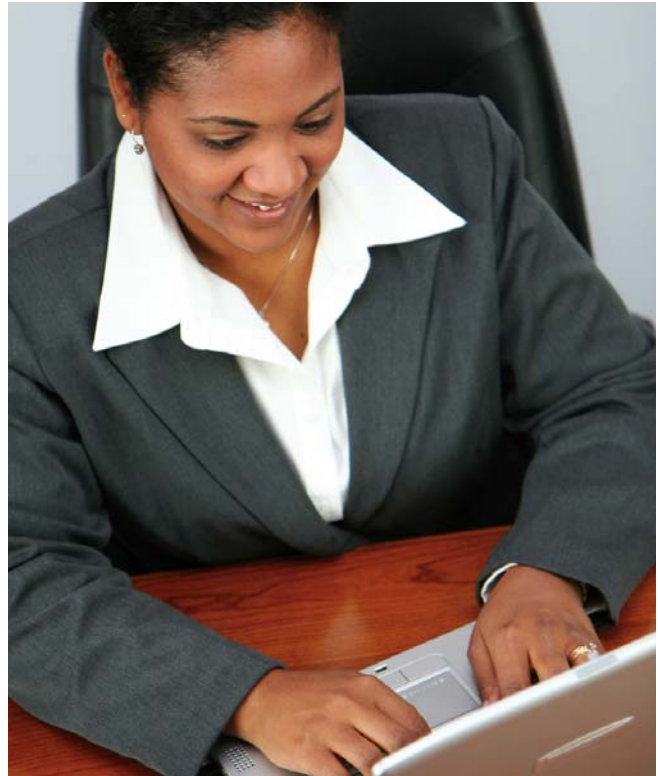
### Challenge for continuous improvement

Working across government to improve turnaround times creates some challenges. In some cases, tracking systems will need to be introduced; in other cases, existing processes will need to be reviewed and streamlined to make them more efficient. Departments will look at processes through a business lens. They will think strategically to determine the best possible outcomes for business and government.

Establishing a service standard is only part of the equation for improving business efficiency. Work is also underway to support the application process with plain language forms and a commitment to get back to applicants sooner when applications are not complete.

### Commitment to report

The Better Regulation Initiative is committed to reporting publicly and regularly on all its priorities, including the new service standard commitment. The annual report is published each fall and is available online at [www.gov.ns.ca/betterregulation](http://www.gov.ns.ca/betterregulation).



### Everyone's business

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Better Regulation Initiative