



NOVA SCOTIA
PUBLIC
PROSECUTION
SERVICE

Business Plan

2024/25

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Mandate

In Nova Scotia all prosecutions for criminal and provincial offences are brought in the name of the Crown, because the Crown is responsible for bringing before the courts those accused of prohibited conduct that adversely affects the safety and well-being of the community.

The mandate of this prosecution service is to ensure fair and equal treatment in the prosecution of offences.

All prosecutions within the jurisdiction of the Attorney General of Nova Scotia are the responsibility of the Director of Public Prosecutions and are conducted by the Crown attorneys of the Public Prosecution Service independently of the Attorney General. The only limitation on the operational independence of the Director of Public Prosecutions arises when the Attorney General issues written instructions to the Director of Public Prosecutions. These instructions are binding and must be made public. This procedure preserves the ultimate prosecutorial authority of the Attorney General. It is a means of ensuring accountability to the electorate for the manner in which public prosecutions are conducted.

Core Business Functions

The Public Prosecution Service's core business functions are:

- to represent the Crown in the conduct of criminal matters and quasi-criminal matters before all levels of court
- to represent the Crown in the conduct of criminal and quasi-criminal appeals before all levels of court
- to provide legal advice and assistance to the police and provincial law enforcement officers at their request
- to participate in the development of criminal law policy and criminal prosecutions policy

Priorities/Activities/Initiatives for 2024-25

Responding to the Jordan Decision

- In July 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered a judgement in the appeal of *R. v. Jordan* which set new rules for an accused's right to be tried within a reasonable time period.
- The Intake teams in the Dartmouth and Halifax offices of the PPS have been made permanent and are an integral part of the PPS' strategy to reduce delay and backlogs by:
 - ✓ Increasing early resolution of files.
 - ✓ Identifying and addressing files with realistic prospect of conviction issues.
 - ✓ Improving the quality of files being set for trial.
 - ✓ Lowering the number of court appearances on the routine criminal files.
 - ✓ Referring cases to restorative justice.

- ✓ Formulating and passing onto defence counsel early resolutions to avoid wasting trial time.
- ✓ The PPS tracks the number of cases that go through the Intake Teams and will continue to do so.
- For the 2024-25 Fiscal Year, 11 new Crown Attorneys have been added to the PPS compliment. These positions will enable quicker review and assessment of cases. Further, it will free up Crown Attorneys to take earlier dates on cases that are in Jordan trouble.
- Members of the PPS continue to serve on various stakeholder committees working collaboratively to create justice efficiencies.

Digital Transformation

- On April 1, 2024, the PPS will roll out a new Digital Case Management System (DCMS) that will dramatically change how the PPS does business.
- The PPS worked with the Department of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions (CSDS) to develop the DCMS and will continue to work with CSDS over the coming 2024-25 fiscal year to expand the capabilities of this system.
- The DCMS was needed to transform the PPS into a modern service that addresses the exponential increase in:
 - ✓ Enable prosecutors to access, store and retrieve files digitally replacing the massive amount of paper files;
 - ✓ The system will enable digital storage reducing the need for space and the costs associated with storage;
 - ✓ Digital evidence provided by enforcement agencies (e.g., body worn cameras, 911 calls, cell phone data and video, video surveillance);
 - ✓ Will adapt to emerging technology sources and to meeting new user and stakeholder needs.
- This system will enable digital evidence received from enforcement agencies to be shared with or “disclosed” to the defence.
- Efficiencies in the transfer of files from the police to the PPS and from the PPS to defence counsel will improve access to justice and reduce needless and inefficient court appearances.
- Providing disclosure more efficiently and reducing court appearances will enhance the ability of the PPS to bring an accused to trial within a reasonable time as is required by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
- The DCMS will also provide more efficiencies with our current and new bail courts. Digitizing warrant files and bail files will give the Courts and Crown Attorneys the access to important information quickly and reliably.

Fair Treatment of African Nova Scotians and People of African Descent in Criminal Prosecutions

- In 2018, the PPS released a policy on the Fair Treatment of Indigenous Persons in Criminal Prosecutions.
- In 2023-24, the PPS finalized the policy for the Fair Treatment of African Nova Scotians and People of African Descent in Criminal Prosecutions and the policy will be launched on February 28, 2024.
- The aim of the policy is to assist Crown Attorneys with step-by-step guidance in performing culturally competent prosecutions.
- Staff training on this policy will be on-going and will be included in the Fall Conference training which will be held in Membertou in November 2024.
- In 2023-24 the PPS has hired a Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. This Director will help the PPS with training, initiatives, support and outreach.
- In 2024-25, four (4) of the new Crown Attorney positions will be designated as diversity positions.
- The PPS will continue to support access to training and opportunities in management for racialized employees.
- Work has begun and will continue into 2024/25 on new Sharepoint site for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility.

Specialized Prosecutions

- The PPS has a number of Specialized Crown Attorneys who focus primarily on complex, technical and traumatic prosecutions in areas such as:
 - ♦ Human Trafficking
 - ♦ Sexual Assault
 - ♦ Internet Child Exploitation (ICE)
 - ♦ Domestic Violence
 - ♦ Wellness Court
 - ♦ Cyber Crime
 - ♦ Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S)
 - ♦ Environment
- Specialized Crown Attorneys not only carry a full caseload but also provide advice and training to other Crown Attorneys and policing agencies.
- In 2024-25, two (2) of the new Crown Attorney positions will be specialized Crown Attorneys. One will focus on Sexual Assault prosecutions and the other will focus on Human Trafficking prosecutions. Both positions will be located in rural regions of Nova Scotia.
- The PPS will also be looking to start a Guns and Gangs Prosecution Team to deal with the increase in gun crime in Nova Scotia.
- The PPS will continue to support these specialized Crown Attorneys and identify further resources required to continue prosecuting these types of offences.

Financial Summary

**Departmental Expenses Summary
(\$ thousands)**

<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2023-2024 Estimate</u>	<u>2023-2024 Forecast</u>	<u>2024-2025 Estimate</u>
Head Office	3,913	4,214	4,410
Cape Breton Region	4,151	4,152	4,511
Central Region	3,712	3,673	4,157
Halifax Region	9,886	9,902	10,621
Western Region	3,552	3,578	4,136
Appeals Division	1,227	1,159	1,318
Special Prosecution Division	2,852	2,941	2,922
Total - Departmental Expenses	29,293	29,619	32,075
Ordinary Recoveries	560	387	403
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	189.8	172.0	208.8

Note:

For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2
For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book,
Chapter 1