



Accountability Report 2022–23

Public Service Commission



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1.0 Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Nova Scotia (N.S.) Public Service Commission (P.S.C.) for the year ended March 31, 2023, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the N.S. Public Service Commission outcomes necessarily include estimates, judgments, and opinions by N.S. Public Service Commission management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of N.S. Public Service Commission 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 N.S. Public Service Commission 2022-23 Business Plan.

(Original Signed By)

The Honourable Colton LeBlanc,
Minister of the Public Service Commission

(Original Signed By)

Laura Lee Langley,
Public Service Commissioner

2.0 Introduction

Each day, P.S.C. employees work to ensure that the province has the human resources (H.R.) required to manage, create, and deliver excellent, high-quality programs and services to Nova Scotians. The work of the P.S.C. supports welcoming and inclusive workplace cultures, employee mental health and well-being, and integral H.R. programs, policies, practices, and technological infrastructure. All these elements uphold the development of a provincial government workforce that is ready to take on our most pressing priorities as a Province. In 2022-23, the department continued to align its work with the priorities of the N.S. Government and the P.S.C.'s vision for a diverse and inspired workforce.

3.0 Measuring Performance

This section of the accountability report restates the priorities and performance measures outlined in P.S.C.'s *2022-23 Business Plan* ([business-plan-2022-23-public-service-commission-en.pdf](#)) and demonstrates our progress and achievements for this fiscal year.

3.1 Support employee well-being, resilience, and engagement.

Progress on Initiatives/Activities:

1. ***Prioritize the psychological well-being and mental health of employees through Office of Workplace Mental Health (O.W.M.H.) supports and programs.***

Offered O.W.M.H. resources, training, confidential consultations, and events. Delivered a *Peer Support Pilot Program* at the Central N.S. Correctional Facility, which is expanding to the Cape Breton Correctional Facility and the *African Canadian Women in the Public Service* network.

2. ***Support a workplace culture of health and safety through:***

- ***Effective management of Absence Management programs, including contract negotiations with the Workers' Compensation Board (W.C.B.) and maintaining strong, active relationships with external case management service providers (i.e., Lifeworks; W.C.B.; Manulife).***

Established clear partnership standards with external service providers to ensure client-centred services for employees and timely absence data collection.

- ***Continued adoption of an online Health and Safety Incident Management system.***

Continued to support the adoption of the *Environmental Health and Safety Management* system: explored system modernization; developed system supports; and created departmental summary reports.

3. ***Advance welcoming, healthy, and engaged workplace cultures by:***

- ***Understanding workforce issues through analysis of workforce data and surveys, including the 2022 How's Work Going? biennial workforce survey.***

Completed the *How's Work Going?* employee engagement survey in fall 2022 with a 68% response rate and supported departments in developing equity-related surveys.

- **Leading an annual Public Service Week corporate engagement campaign to support an informed and engaged workplace.**

Hosted the 2022 *Public Service Week*, with more than 30 events attended by more than 1,800 employees. Notable events included: a virtual *Premier's Award of Excellence*; a virtual *All Staff Kick Off* event; and 15 virtual and in-person Public Service Commissioner workplace visits across the province.

Outcomes from the Business Plan:

- **Mental health literacy and reduced mental health stigma within our workplaces.**

Evaluation respondents indicated that O.W.M.H. programs/services helped to increase their mental health literacy (78%) and reduce stigma (70%).

- **Greater awareness of the O.W.M.H. services and culturally responsive programs among public servants.**

O.W.M.H. had more than 100,000 visits (by over 8,800 employees) to its *SharePoint* site that includes 130 culturally relevant resources. It delivered 19 presentations on its programs/services (to more than 600 employees) and provided approximately 600 navigation appointments (with more than 180 employees).

- **Identification and monitoring of performance standards of external service providers to support Province of NS employees.**

Held periodic reviews of employee return-to-work outcomes, claims data, quarterly reports, and process improvements with external service providers.

- **Improved service delivery and internal communications for workforce surveys.**

Began development of a corporate survey strategy, implemented a new survey tool that can be used with mobile phones, added accessibility-related questions to the 2022 *How's Work Going?* survey, and created more rigorous survey accountabilities.

3.2 Support welcoming and inclusive workplace cultures.

Progress on Initiatives/Activities:

1. **Address systemic racism, barriers, and discrimination in H.R. processes by updating key employment policies and working with departments to address barriers (e.g., through the development and evaluation of equity, diversity, and inclusion action plans).**

Final stages of an update to the *Employment Equity Policy* and the *Fair Hiring Policy*. Supported departments with Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (E.D.I.A.) action plans and assessments. Partnered with two departments to implement Employment Systems Review (E.S.R.) pilots and used the results to develop resources and tools.

2. **Collaborate within the P.S.C. and across the public service to create a safe and culturally responsive workplace for all employees including:**

- **Developing and updating employee training in collaboration with the Learning Centre [e.g., equity, diversity, and inclusion courses in all Leadership Development Programs (L.D.P.s) and online training to increase accessibility for all employees].**

Partnered with government Employee Networks, the Accessibility Directorate, L'nu Affairs, and Office of Equity and Anti-Racism (O.E.A.) to update corporate training materials and develop new education modules. Also added an anti-racism, cultural competence, and inclusive leadership module to the L.D.P.s.

- **Supporting the development of a government-wide Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy by partnering with the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism (the project lead).**

Meet regularly with O.E.A. to support the *Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy*.

- **Partnering with the Accessibility Directorate (the project lead) on the development of accessibility standards related to P.S.C. training, policies, and practices.**

Served as an *Accessibility Standards Committee* member and provided information as required.

3. **Support recruitment of employment equity groups:**

- **Work in collaboration with P.S.C. teams and other partners, such as the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism, to implement a Community Engagement Project plan, to establish culturally responsive and equitable recruiting, hiring, engagement, and career planning practices for equity seeking employees.**

Joined government's *Public Engagement Community of Practice*, partnered with O.E.A. to get community input, and completed a corporate E.S.R. to inform policy reviews, processes, and equity data projects.

Outcomes from the Business Plan:

- **Updated and revised human resource policies that foster safe and culturally responsive workplaces for all employees (e.g., the *Employment Equity Policy*).**

Conducted an update of the *Employment Equity Policy* and a review of the *Fair Hiring Policy* that are being finalized before formal adoption.

- **Greater collaboration with departments and offices across the public service to address systemic racism, barriers, and discrimination within the public service.**

Continued to collaborate with E.D.I.A. partners: O.E.A.; L'nu Affairs; Accessibility Directorate; NS Government and General Employees Union; Employee Networks; and E.D.I.A. leads from across departments.

Public service employees completed 12,499 E.D.I.A. (30% increase) e-learning modules, covering topics like microaggressions, privilege, unconscious bias, and disabilities. Forty additional in-person sessions were held with 869 employees (24% increase) and an e-learning module on *Cultural Competence* was completed by 316 L.D.P. graduates.

3.3 Advance the capacity of the Province of Nova Scotia to meet the current and future needs of Nova Scotians through a diverse workforce with the necessary talents, experience, and skills.

Progress on Initiatives/Activities:

1. **Partner with identified departments to address H.R. trends through H.R. planning support, research, strategy, engagement, and communications.**

Created standardized processes, communication tools, and shared data to support departments in their H.R. planning.

2. **Develop and/or launch new talent frameworks, policies, and practices, including:**

- **Developing a new policy to modernize and replace the Fair Hiring Policy.**

Conducted a review of the *Fair Hiring Policy* and a revised policy is being finalized before formal adoption.

- **Continuing to work on incorporating the LEADS framework into leadership hiring practices.**

Successfully incorporated the [LEADS framework](#) into hiring practices such as job competitions, information for applicants on the assessments used, and interview questions.

- **Delivering training and development opportunities for public service employees.**

Offered 164 instructor-led training sessions through the Corporate Learning Centre (3,357 participants). An additional 373 participants completed L.D.P.s and the *Administrative Professional Program*, *Manager Fundamentals Program*, and *What's Next in Your Career Program*. Offered new courses this year on: talent acquisition; service design and delivery; delegation; conflict; resilience; and time management.

- **Continuing to offer a suite of virtual/online and e-learning options for the province's employees.**

Made virtual courses a permanent part of the Corporate Learning Centre's delivery model. Most *Corporate Calendar* courses now have both virtual (instructor-led or self-directed) and in-person options. Over 8,400 participants completed the self-directed, online courses this year.

Outcomes from the Business Plan:

• **Continued hiring and retention of younger workers.**

Hired or re-hired 1,271 younger workers for full-time, part-time, casual, and seasonal employment. At year-end, younger workers made up almost 22% of provincial employees, an increase of 1% over the previous fiscal year.

• **Improved participation and selection of employment equity groups in our applicant pool.**

3,087 job competitions with 115,390 applicants were held this year. 39% of applicants self-identified as employment equity group candidates. Of the 3,556 job offers accepted, 32% were accepted by individuals who self-identified as equity group candidates.

A database of employment equity community job postings channels was created this year, the www.jobs.novascotia.ca website was made more accessible, and almost 100 new designated group employees joined the diverse hiring panel pool.

- **More inclusive and accessible outreach for filling open positions within the public service.**

Conducted outreach activities with post-secondary institutions and international students, and regularly communicated with marginalized communities and professional bodies to help increase government job visibility.

3.4 Develop client-focused, person-centred approaches to H.R. service delivery.

Progress on Initiatives/Activities:

1. **Take an evidence-informed approach to the development, analysis, and evaluation of H.R. strategies, policies, programs, procedures, and H.R. services, including:**

- **Code of Conduct review initiated in 2021-22 and continuing throughout 2022-23.**

Continued review of *Ethics, Values, and Code of Conduct*, held consultations with employees, and consulted with the public through O.E.A. This information, a Canadian jurisdictional scan, and the 2022 *How's Work Going?* survey will inform revisions next fiscal year.

- **PSC Strategic Measurement Framework initiated in 2021-22, continuing in 2022-23.**

Completed *Strategic Measurement Framework* with measures developed to assess H.R. programs and services, create online data products and infographics, and data reports.

- **Ongoing Policy Manual 500 reviews (e.g., *Employment Equity Policy*, initiated in 2021-22 and continuing into 2022-23).**

Final stages of a proposed update of the *Employment Equity Policy* and a review of the *Fair Hiring Policy*.

2. **Develop responsive H.R. systems and improve client experience, including:**

- **Continued records digitization and tracking.**

Continued to digitize corporate employee records that are in paper format (approximately 51% of paper records have been digitized). An electronic records management tool now enables employee records to be immediately filed electronically.

- **Continuous improvement of Human Resource Information Systems.**

Worked with colleagues and cross-departmental partners to design and support digital client experiences and improve H.R. information systems and products such as: a digital employee COVID vaccination attestation; the *S.A.P. Modernization Program*; and a new electronic job description management system.

- **A new analytics platform.**

Worked with N.S. Digital Services to implement a *Tableau Server* system which enables H.R. data self-service for departments and the development of infographics and reports.

- **Advancements in data literacy for the P.S.C.**

Completed a series of consultations on a data literacy roadmap for the department and created a pilot *Data Analysis* course for H.R. Business Partners to test in the fall of 2023.

3. **Better understanding of our corporate employee base through an evidence-informed employee equity data project and an audience mapping/persona creation project. The persona project is fictitious representations (employee personas) created based on motivations, similar goals, and behaviours to help inform program and services.**

Replaced the biennial *Count Yourself In!* survey with a voluntary self-identification tool in the *SuccessFactors* system to provide statistics on equity recruitment and retention, and a profile of public service employee demographics. Audience mapping/persona project was delayed because foundational data from the self-identification tool is needed to create employee personas.

4. **Leading and supporting employee understanding and engagement of corporate policy, programs, and services (e.g., through the digital engagement/client service toolkit and the National Internal Communications Network of interjurisdictional internal communications offices).**

Created a *Digital Internal Communications Toolkit* to support departments with communications information, tools, and materials. Continued to chair the inter-jurisdictional *National Internal Communications Network* and the inter-departmental *Internal Communications Network*.

Outcomes from the Business Plan:

• **Improved data literacy that considers privacy and confidentiality of employee information.**

Created a tool to outline the department's survey privacy and confidentiality guidelines and used it for the 2022 *How's Work Going?* survey. Internal surveys were conducted to determine the need for data literacy support and inform the development of a data analysis course for the department.

• **Enhanced performance measures and metrics to aid in analyzing strategies, internal policies, programs, and procedures.**

Developed a set of metrics and measures to be used for performance monitoring and H.R. data products and infographics. Continued to refine the outcomes and progress indicators for the department's *Strategic Plan* and provided client departments with ongoing talent acquisition metrics as part of the *Talent Acquisition Strategy*.

• **Better understanding of our employees, beyond demographics to help inform programs and services.**

Early insights from 2022 *How's Work Going?* survey (corporate results) demonstrated that the *Employee Engagement Index* is strong at 61%, down just 1% from 2019. The *Workplace Wellness Index*, a new metric added this year, also measured strongly at 68%.

Areas with the highest strength: *Job Suitability; Health and Safety; Team; Person I Report To; and Mental Health*. Areas requiring attention: *Professional Growth; Recognition; Staffing Practices; and*

Pay and Benefits. Employees reported that pay, work-life balance (including flexible and remote work), and workload were the top areas for workplace improvement.

- **Refined, informed, and supportive corporate employee communication, engagement, and client service applications, along with targeted development of policy, programs, and services.**

Continued with the routine internal communications work of the department, refined client service applications, developed new internal communications tools, and created a unified look and feel to engagement materials.

Many department policies, programs, and services delivered this year were designed for specific target groups such as: e-learning modules in support of E.D.I.A. groups; O.W.M.H. programs for specific demographics of employees; and tailored H.R. advice and services.

4.0 Financial Results

	2022-2023 Estimate	2022-2023 Actuals	2022-2023 Variance
Program & Service Area		<i>(\$thousands)</i>	
Departmental Expenses:			
Client Service Delivery	6,534	6,664	130
Employee Relations	3,384	3,526	142
Office of the Commissioner	475	836	361
People & Culture	5,049	4,451	(598)
Corporate Services	5,659	5,163	(496)
Total: Departmental Expenses	21,101	20,640	(461)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	0	0	0
Fees & Other Charges	0	0	0
Ordinary Recoveries	98	211	113
Total: Revenue, Fees & Recoveries			
T.C.A. Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (F.T.E.s)	187.4	177.9	(9.5)
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u>			
Actual expenses were \$461 thousand lower than Estimate primarily due to renovation delays and other operating savings.			
<u>Revenues, Fees, & Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u>			
Actual recoveries were \$113 thousand higher than Estimate primarily due to recoverable salaries.			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (F.T.E.s) Variance Explanation:</u>			
F.T.E. variance due to staff vacancies.			

5.0 Report of Disclosure of Wrongdoing

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 N.S. Public Service Commission in 2022-23:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2022-2023
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A