

Accountability Report 2017–2018

Communications Nova Scotia

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, July 2018

Accountability Report 2017–2018

ISBN: 978-1-55457-867-2

Contents

Accountability Statement	2
Message from Minister	3
Financial Results.....	4
Budget Context Chart.....	4
Priority Actions.....	5
Priority Action 1 Strategic communications	5
Priority Action 2 Evidence-based strategy	5
Priority Action 3 Leveraging digital media platforms to engage and inform citizens.....	5
Priority Action 4 A citizen-centric government website	5
Priority Action 5 Efficient and coordinated resources.....	5
Measuring our Performance	6
Priority Action 1 – Strategic communications	6
1. Recreational cannabis legalization.....	6
2. Volta Lab investment	7
Priority Action 2 - Evidence-based strategy.....	8
1. Public opinion research.....	8
2. Stakeholder engagement.....	9
Priority Action 3 – Leveraging digital media platforms to engage and inform citizens.....	11
1. Specific campaigns	12
2. Social media platforms.....	15
Priority Action 4 – A citizen-centric government website	17
Priority Action 5 – Efficient and coordinated resources	17
1. Process improvements supported by technology	18
2. CNS Diversity plan	18
3. Youth opportunities initiatives	19
Appendix A - Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act.....	21

Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of Communications Nova Scotia for the year ended March 31, 2018 is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against Communications Nova Scotia's Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of Communications Nova Scotia outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Communications Nova Scotia management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Communications Nova Scotia 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 Communications Nova Scotia 2017-2018 Business Plan.

Hon. Patricia Arab
Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Melissa MacKinnon
Associate Deputy Minister, Communications Nova Scotia

Message from Minister

From graphic designers and photographers to research experts and communications advisors, Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) staff provide a range of communications services to help government departments and offices inform Nova Scotians about available programs and services.

The communications landscape has changed and CNS must constantly evolve, reflect and evaluate to ensure it is positioned to give Nova Scotians the information they need.

Government programs and services are only successful if they are accessible to the people they are designed to serve, and if people know about them. CNS will continue to help departments and partners adapt to the challenges and opportunities facing our province, and will look for new and useful ways to engage with Nova Scotians.

Original signed by,

Hon. Patricia Arab
Minister
Communications Nova Scotia

Financial Results

Budget Context Chart

Communications Nova Scotia			
	2017-2018 Estimate	2017-2018 Actuals	2017-2018 Variance
<i>(\$thousands)</i>			
Departmental Expenses:			
Office of the Associate Deputy Minister	950	955	5
Client Services	846	889	43
Communications Planning	895	960	65
Communications Services	691	697	6
Marketing	3,079	2,367	(712)
Total: Departmental Expenses	6,461	5,868	(593)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	0	0	0
Fees and Other Charges	0	0	0
Ordinary Recoveries	403	41	(362)
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	403	41	(362)
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	88.8	90.5	1.7
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u> Delayed start of non-recoverable projects which were anticipated in 2017-18.			
<u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u> Decrease in recoverable projects from agencies and commissions.			

Priority Actions

Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) is government's full-service communications agency, providing a range of communications services to help government departments and offices inform Nova Scotians about available programs.

As a centralized agency, mandated under legislation, CNS ensures that communications services are effective and cost efficient. CNS uses communications and marketing expertise, as well as research and evaluation, to support department efforts to reach their audiences using innovative tools that respond to evolving information needs.

The following priority actions guided the agency's work in 2017-2018.

Priority Action 1 Strategic communications

Priority Action 2 Evidence-based strategy

Priority Action 3 Leveraging digital media platforms to engage and inform citizens

Priority Action 4 A citizen-centric government website

Priority Action 5 Efficient and coordinated resources

Measuring our Performance

Priority Action 1 – Strategic communications

Department and corporate initiatives are supported by strategic communications plans that are developed, implemented and evaluated. The approach is integrated across departments and work units to draw upon the expertise of the agency and its clients.

2017-2018 highlights:

1. Recreational cannabis legalization
2. Volta Lab investment

1. Recreational cannabis legalization

The federal government announced plans to legalize recreational cannabis in 2015. In April 2017, the federal government introduced two pieces of legislation legalizing cannabis. Recreational cannabis will be legal in Canada in October 2018.

Action

CNS has worked closely with impacted departments including Justice, Health and Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development, Service Nova Scotia, Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and Labour and Advanced Education to ensure they, and their stakeholders, are involved and informed about decisions and the provincial approach. Nova Scotia's focus is on protecting youth from the harms of using cannabis, reducing the involvement of organized crime, and keeping impaired drivers off the roads.

Results

All work units within CNS were involved from the start, providing strategic communications advice, issues management and media relations, leading public and stakeholder consultation, and development a website and digital media plan to share public health and safety information.

An awareness campaign will communicate who can buy cannabis and where, rules regarding public consumption, and safety information on impaired driving to key audiences.

2. Volta Lab investment

Volta Labs was established in 2013 by a group of emerging technology entrepreneurs and is now the cornerstone of Halifax's Innovation District. On December 5, 2017, government announced a \$2.25-million investment over three years to help Volta expand, making it one of Canada's largest technology hubs and better able to serve Halifax's growing technology sector. CNS worked closely with staff at Volta Labs to set strategic communications goals and achieve them.

Action

Two media events, a tour of Volta Labs with Premier McNeil and a press conference were held to announce Volta's expansion and government's continued support for entrepreneurs. CNS also proactively reached out to media and key stakeholders, including current and past residents of Volta (startup companies), universities, chambers of commerce and other support agencies. A social media campaign was planned and executed using the Department of Business Twitter account (@NS_Dob) posting digital features on the five companies that Premier McNeil visited during the tour (in-real-time) and live-tweeting the press conference. Facebook posts to the government account extended the reach of the announcement.

Results

An objective of government is to work with communities, business associations, universities and other levels of government to increase the number of new businesses and share stories of innovation and risk-taking with larger audiences. The media event was well-attended and resulted in positive media coverage in mainstream media and digital/tech media. Proactive outreach resulted in over 100 people attending this event.

Social media posts supported the announcement and had above-average results, generating record traffic for the Department of Business and Volta Labs.

- A Facebook post to the government corporate account reached 7,834 people, received 221 reactions/comments/shares and 1,045 post clicks (where readers clicked to read more information)
- The Twitter campaign with Volta helped reinvigorate the Department of Business account
 - The number of followers on #NS-Dob doubled in 2017-2018
 - Impressions in December were 61,000 - double the impressions in August (30,000) and 20 per cent higher than November (51,000)

Priority Action 2 - Evidence-based strategy

Communications Nova Scotia relies on evidence to inform planning and post-evaluation practices, and to ensure communications efforts are strategic, effective and support government priorities.

2017-2018 highlights:

1. Public opinion research for the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, the Nova Scotia Public Prosecution Service and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
2. Stakeholder engagement relative to the legalization of recreational cannabis and e-licensing

1. Public opinion research

Communications Nova Scotia is responsible for the centralized delivery of public opinion, behaviour and attitude research on behalf of government departments. Research informs communications planning and can evaluate the impact of a communications strategy.

A. Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency

The Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency (NSAA) was tasked with increasing both the number of apprentices entering and completing training, and the number of employers offering required on-the-job training. CNS collaborated with NSAA to develop an awareness campaign to improve the perception of apprenticeship as a post-secondary learning model and skilled trades as a potential career choice.

Action

Public opinion research was conducted to measure perceptions of careers in skilled trades and the advertising campaign performance based on awareness and ad recall. Baseline opinion on perceptions of careers in skilled trades was measured in May 2016, and post-campaign measures were taken in February 2018.

Results

- When provided a brief description of the campaign, close to one-half of Nova Scotia residents recall seeing or hearing advertising about apprenticeship or skilled trades (45%).
- A majority of residents aware of the advertising agree with the campaign messages, with the main message of improving the perception that a career

in the skilled trades is a good choice with a promising future performing most favourably (87%).

B. Nova Scotia Public Prosecution Service: Victims of sexualized violence brochure

Sexual violence is a serious health, social and public safety issue and we know that incidents of sexual violence are under-reported in our province. Statistics indicate that of 19,000 self-reported incidents, only 500 are reported to police. When a victim of a sexual assault does come forward and reports the crime to the police, the crime is investigated. If there is a charge laid, the Crown Attorney meets with the victim and reviews the case and the prosecution process.

Action

A brochure was determined to be the most appropriate product to explain the prosecution process given the target audience and subject matter. To ensure it was meeting the objective of explaining the process clearly and was an effective resource for victims, CNS worked with the Public Prosecution Service to conduct qualitative research (in-person and online focus groups) with key target audiences.

Result

Two phases of qualitative research were conducted. The first phase with victims of sexualized violence and key stakeholders (June 2017) examined the language, layout and perceived purpose of the brochure. Insights from this phase were used to inform the redesign of the brochure to ensure overall readability, understanding, comprehension and comprehensiveness. A second phase in March 2018 tested the redesign before it was finalized. Participants confirmed the redesign of the brochure was improved with a more victim-centric style, use of clear and concise language, and improved layout. The redesigned brochure better helped to address some of the key questions and concerns victims would have when making the decision whether to proceed with a prosecution for sexual assault.

2. Stakeholder engagement

CNS has continued to focus on a strategic approach to stakeholder relations to support thoughtful consultation on government priorities. Consultation can provide opportunities for input and awareness of upcoming legislation, program or policy changes; increases transparency of decision making; engages Nova Scotians to inform the development of provincial regulatory framework; and can identify preferred sources of information and key areas of concern.

A. Cannabis

In October 2017, government consulted with Nova Scotians to inform the provincial legislative and regulatory framework in response to the federal government's plan to legalize recreational cannabis.

Action

Government announced consultation on the legalization of recreational cannabis on October 6, 2017. Nova Scotians were invited to complete an online survey and a cross-section of stakeholders were invited to sessions throughout the province. The public consultation was focused on legal age, public consumption, distribution and sales, and driving while impaired.

Results

A total of 31,031 surveys were completed and 194 individuals representing 49 organizations and 41 municipalities participated in 10 in-person sessions. Twenty-four organizations provided written submissions. Consultation with Nova Scotians, health experts, law enforcement officials, municipalities, and other stakeholder groups informed the key decisions made by the province and announced in December 2017.

Government will continue to review the feedback received through consultation as plans and strategies are developed going forward.

B. E-licensing

Government is committed to improving and modernizing service delivery, making it easier for citizens to access services from wherever they are, and ensuring good management of the province's resources. Government is also putting more of its programs and services online. After the Registry of Motor Vehicles and health cards, hunting and fishing licenses are the third highest interaction in terms of volume between government and Nova Scotians. About 200,000 hunting and fishing licenses are issued each year to more than 100,000 individuals.

Action

Over the past several years, government has been exploring moving to an electronic system for managing and issuing hunting and fishing licenses, either in addition to paper licenses or replacing paper licenses.

To inform government's decision, consultation with approximately 275 Nova Scotia businesses, mostly in rural communities, that issue hunting and fishing

licenses was conducted to fully understand potential barriers, concerns and impacts to the businesses.

Results

Insights from this targeted consultation will inform government's decisions. Department of Natural Resources will continue to engage with provincial partner departments on the electronic licensing system project to transition to online hunting license sales. This is a multi-year project, with planned next steps including the release of a Request for Proposals for system software in 2018-2019.

Priority Action 3 – Leveraging digital media platforms to engage and inform citizens

CNS is using analytics to improve government's social media presence and to inform innovative approaches to communicate with Nova Scotians. CNS continues to identify more effective ways to reach our traditional media partners including proactively pitching stories of interest to regional media and considering new ways to share government news.

2017-2018 highlights:

1. Specific campaigns: Ticks, Halifax Explosion – 100 years, HARP and Driver's Licences
2. Increased and strategic use of social media platforms

Definitions:

Organic search	Visits to the website from those who clicked a link in a search engine; non-paid
Direct	Visits to the website from those who visited a page directly without being referred by another page/site
Paid search	Visits to the site from those who clicked a link that was part of a paid campaign with a search engine (e.g. AdWords)
Referral	Visits to the site from those who clicked a link on another page/site

Social	Visits to the site from those who clicked a link in a social media platform
Impressions	How many times the post showed up in feeds
Engagement	Comments, reactions and shares; engagement rate is the amount of people who engaged with the post out of the total number of impressions.

1. Specific campaigns

Advertising is used to communicate government programs and services to Nova Scotians. Using innovative advertising like Facebook ad campaigns allows a more targeted and measurable approach, with the ability to modify based on results mid-campaign.

A. Ticks

A campaign was launched to promote tick safety to reduce the occurrence of Lyme disease in Nova Scotia.

Action

The non-paid campaign (July to October 2017) included organic social posts and advertising on Access Nova Scotia, Halifax Regional Municipality and Nova Scotia Health Authority waiting room and public digital screens. Efforts were focused on driving traffic to the destination URL (novascotia.ca/ticksafety).

Results

Web analytics

- Page views – 1,977
- Users – 1,723

Top entry channels

- Organic search – 10%
- Direct – 4%
- Referral – 63%
- Social – 79%

B. Halifax Explosion – 100 years

2017 marked the 100th anniversary of the Halifax Explosion. A campaign was launched to turn people's attention to the event and remind them of the significance of this moment in our history.

Action

CNS launched a campaign to drive traffic to a destination URL (100years100stories.ca). A web and social media campaign ran August 29 to December 6, 2017. A paid Facebook campaign ran from October 3 to 21, 2017 and November 2 to 5, 2017. A video commemorating the Halifax Explosion was produced and posted online.

Results

Video

- Reach - 228,870
- Views - 85,000 plus
- Shares - 2,820

Web analytics

- Page views – 63,306

Top entry channels

- Social – 59%
- Referral – 10% (from Halifax.ca)

Facebook

- 402,000 impressions
- Engagement - 12,487
- Click through rate (CTR) – 3.1%

Twitter

- 351,600 impressions
- Engagement – 7,265
- CTR – 2%

C. Heating Assistance Rebate Program

The heating assistance rebate program (HARP) provides help with the cost of home heating to lower income Nova Scotians.

Action

A campaign was launched (October 2017 to March 2018) to increase visits to homeheatinghelp.ca, increase the number of online applications and create awareness of new income thresholds.

Results

Web

- Page views – 340,850
- New users – 49,998
- Page views increased 3% over 2016-2017

Top entry channels

- Organic search – 30%
- Direct – 30%
- Paid search – 21%
- Referral – 8%
- Social – 8%

Video Views

- 23,799 views

Facebook

- Impressions – 1,474,729
- Engagements – 11,637
- Engagement rate - .8%

Online applications

- In 2017-2018, online applications increased 3% over last year; 20% of all HARP applications were from online.

D. Driver's Licences

Government changed the way drivers receive their new driver's licence and photo identification. As of November 2017, licences and ID cards are mailed to individuals.

Action

Collaborating with Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, CNS launched a campaign to raise awareness and understanding about the changes to the driver's licences and photo identification process. The campaign directed traffic to the destination URL (novascotia.ca/driverslicence). Tactics included paid social campaign (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and direct mail.

Results

Web

- Page views- 32, 950

- New users – 30,727

Top entry channels

- Organic search – 24%
- Direct – 8%
- Social – 60%

Paid Social Campaign (Facebook)

- Impressions – 282,491
- Engagements – 9,036
- CTR – 3.2%

Google Adwords

- Impressions – 53,250
- Clicks – 5,349
- CTR – 10%

Twitter

- Impressions – 351.6K
- Engagement – 7,265
- CTR – 2%

2. Social media platforms

CNS is responding to the public's changing preferences about how they access information.

Action

Social media channels are becoming more critical. To meet Nova Scotians where they are, government is using social media to engage and inform the public, using a *Digital First* strategy.

Results

Government reaches over 1 million people each month through its social media channels. The number of followers of corporate accounts has continued to grow in 2017-2018:

Twitter	48,632 followers (14.57% growth)
Facebook	28,854 followers (13.19% growth)
Instagram	2,021 followers (22.86% growth)
YouTube views	206,449 views (67.49% growth)

Action

Communications Nova Scotia is using social media in new and innovative ways. This year, CNS used Facebook 360 to help paint a fuller picture for several events.

Results

During the launch of government's new pre-primary program in Fall 2017, many common questions from parents were addressed by taking them on a virtual video tour of a classroom using Facebook 360.

- 25,163 people reached
- 8,210 views
- 238 engagement

On January 23, 2018 the Education System Administrative Review by Dr. Avis Glaze was released using Facebook Live, allowing parents and educators from across the province to listen to Dr. Glaze deliver her report.

- 27,387 people reached
- 15,434 views
- 3,032 engagement

Action

During the rollout of the provincial Budget in Spring 2018, social media channels provided Nova Scotians with important information about the province's finances. Both corporate and Department of Finance and Treasury Board social media accounts provided social media posts.

Results

- Finance (Twitter)
 - 13,789 impressions and 529 engagements
- Nova Scotia Government (Twitter)
 - 4,332 impressions and 143 engagements
- Nova Scotia Government (Facebook)
 - 8,963 impressions and 123 engagements
- Nova Scotia Government (LinkedIn)
 - 3,037 impressions and 102 engagements

- Nova Scotia Government (Instagram stories)
 - 3,012 video views

Priority Action 4 – A citizen-centric government website

CNS is delivering a user-centric website that makes information about government programs and services more accessible to all Nova Scotians.

Action

Phase 1 implementation includes content which is delivered to a user without having to be generated, modified or processed. The new website will be populated with content throughout 2018-2019. As content moves to the new website, old websites will be archived. Phase 2 will include forms, documents, web applications and other web assets.

Results

- CNS is working with departments to transform 150 domains, 1.5 million web pages, 75,000 PDFs and 70,000 images into one cohesive website that will allow Nova Scotians to easily find the program and service information that they are looking for.
- CNS held a series of content development workshops where content experts and contributors learned how to locate and redevelop content, and were provided tools and writing supports.

Priority Action 5 – Efficient and coordinated resources

CNS continued to align resources and implement process improvements for effective and efficient service delivery, maximizing staff expertise, and centralizing services, creating flexibility to respond to emergency events, and meet unanticipated demands for information and support.

2017-2018 highlights:

1. Process improvements supported by technology
2. CNS Diversity Plan
3. Youth Opportunities Initiative

1. Process improvements supported by technology

CNS manages almost 10,000 projects annually. This year, CNS began work on lean process improvements to identify workflow improvements to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Action

Streamlining and restructuring agency operations has allowed CNS to provide high-quality service while meeting government's fiscal objectives. Restructuring has supported innovation, collaboration and integrated service delivery.

Result

- Reduction of FTE estimate by about 25% since 2010.
- Increased collaboration and more integrated approach across work units, supported by centralized project management.

Action

Working with partners at the Internal Services Department, CNS developed a high-level work flow process map incorporating business needs and requirements.

Result

Internal Services has identified a potential technology solution which is anticipated to increase efficiencies within CNS's project work flow.

2. CNS Diversity plan

CNS is committed to providing a workplace in which diversity is valued, respected and celebrated. As the communications agency for government, CNS also has significant opportunity to use images, words and ideas to showcase the province's diverse communities and reflect government's commitment to a multi-faceted and equitable workforce.

Action

CNS awards three bursaries to post-secondary students working towards a career in communications-related fields. This Diversity Bursary provides \$1,000 to students in one of the designated groups - Aboriginal Peoples, persons with disabilities, African Nova Scotians, racially visible people and those who speak French as a first language. The recipients are also invited to spend a day at CNS with a staff member who works in their field of study.

Result

During 2017-2018, students from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, University of King's College and Mount Saint Vincent University received the bursary.

Action

CNS has undertaken a renewed focus and specific actions to support the recruitment, mentoring, training and retention of staff from diverse groups.

Result

CNS has developed a new three-year diversity and employment equity strategy that outlines a range of actions to support hiring and recruitment, including ensuring diversity on interview panels, promoting employment opportunities to diverse communities, accommodating persons with disabilities and designating positions for diverse candidates. A 2017-2018 competition for a senior management role included positions designated for candidates from equity groups, and future openings will be considered for designation. CNS also provided Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity training for all employees.

3. Youth opportunities initiatives

CNS leveraged government's Youth Opportunities program to provide work-related experience to new graduates, co-op students and NSCC interns. CNS awarded one scholarship to support a student in the communications-related field.

Action

During the 2017-2018 fiscal year, CNS participated in government's Youth Opportunities program, providing work-related experiences to two co-op students and four NSCC interns.

Result

Through this initiative, CNS hired two Mount Saint Vincent University Bachelor of Public Relations students during the September-to-December 2017 co-op term. CNS offered three extended internships in Graphic Design, Image Services and the Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie. CNS also hired an intern as a Web Content Editor from July 2017 to March 2018.

Action

CNS provides an annual scholarship to a journalism student from either the University of King's College or NSCC. Applications for this \$1,200 scholarship

are judged by CNS staff. The scholarship is administered by the Atlantic Journalism Awards and has been awarded for the past 13 years.

Result

This year's winner was awarded to a University of King's College student.

Appendix A - Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act

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 Communications Nova Scotia:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2017-2018
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	0
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	n/a