



# Accountability Report

2018–2019

*Lands and Forestry*



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Accountability Report 2018–2019  
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## Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry for the year ended March 31, 2019 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Lands and Forestry Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department of Lands and Forestry outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Department of Lands and Forestry management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry 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 Department of Lands and Forestry 2018-19 Business Plan.

*Original signed by*

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Honourable Iain Rankin  
Minister of Lands and Forestry

*Original signed by*

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Julie Towers  
Deputy Minister of Lands and Forestry

## Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

We are pleased to report our activities and accomplishments for 2018-19.

In 2018-19, we've made notable progress in many areas that support government priorities and commitments.

Professor William Lahey delivered the *Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia* in August 2018. We accepted Professor Lahey's recommendations and have begun the significant transformation to balance the long-term environmental, social and economic interests in managing the province's forests. The recommendations will be phased-in over time, but project teams are already working on several foundational projects that will help us move towards greater ecological forestry. These teams are guided by external expert advisors and input from stakeholders.

We've invested \$1 million in new funding to support Crown land silviculture as we move towards more partial harvesting and less clearcutting. This approach better supports ecological forestry through the implementation of a triad model.

In partnership with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, we launched a forestry initiative that gives the Mi'kmaq forest planning and management responsibility over 20,000 hectares of Crown land.

As part of our response to Professor Lahey, we have committed to a culture of openness, transparency and accountability. The Department will report on our progress to Nova Scotians, and we've asked Professor Lahey to evaluate our progress.

Government has introduced the *Biodiversity Act*, the first stand-alone biodiversity legislation of its kind in Canada. The legislation is intended to enable Nova Scotia to improve the conservation and sustainable use of wild species and ecosystems in flexible and adaptive ways, address legislative gaps and manage emerging risks. The Department's next step is to conduct consultations to clarify the scope and powers of the Act, identify regulatory priorities and develop priority regulations.

Work to complete the Auditor General's recommendations on conservation and recovery of species at risk continues. The Department revitalized recovery teams for multi-species recovery work and is completing recovery plans. These efforts are moving us forward with recovery planning and will help us to meet requirements under the *Endangered Species Act*.

Our dedicated employees continue to work diligently to serve Nova Scotians and to achieve the goals set out in the Business Plan. We are pleased to share our progress for the 2018-19 fiscal year and look forward to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

## Financial Results

	<b>2018-2019 Estimate</b>	<b>2018-2019 Actual Expense</b>	<b>2018-2019 Variance</b>
Program & Service Area	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)
<b>Gross Departmental Expenses:</b>			
Senior Management	521	519	(2)
Renewable Resources	24,748	26,084	1,336
Geoscience and Mines	4,704	4,544	(160)
Regional Services	40,659	41,669	1,010
Policy, Planning and Support Services	4,791	5,290	499
Land Services	4,178	51,863	47,685
<b>Total: Gross Departmental Expenses</b>	<b>79,601</b>	<b>129,969</b>	<b>50,368</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>			
Ordinary Revenue	13,611	13,209	(402)
Fees and Other Charges	2,105	2,459	354
Ordinary Recoveries	1,092	1,720	628
<b>Total: Revenue, Fees &amp; Recoveries</b>	<b>16,808</b>	<b>17,388</b>	<b>580</b>
TCA Purchase Requirements	<b>4,860</b>	<b>3,193</b>	<b>(1,667)</b>
<b>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)</b>	<b>629.0</b>	<b>565.9</b>	<b>(63.1)</b>

### Variance Explanation:

1. Gross Departmental Expenses were \$50.4M above estimate due to \$48M for projected remediation costs for abandoned mine sites; \$1 million for implementation of Forest Practices Review initiatives; \$500 thousand in funding to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Urban Wilderness Park; \$535 thousand for recoverable out-of-province fire suppression expenses; and expenses incurred to repair winter storm damage in parks.
2. Revenue, Fees and Recoveries were \$580 thousand above estimate, mostly from increased recoveries for out-of-province fire suppression expenses.
3. TCA Purchase Requirements were \$1.7 million lower than estimated, primarily due to a delay in the Shubenacadie operations centre water/sewer project (will be completed in 2019-20).
4. Provincial Funded Staff decrease due to temporarily vacant positions; and transfer of Geoscience and Mines operational control to the Department of Energy and Mines in July 2018. Most 2018-19 Geoscience and Mines costs incurred by the Department of Energy and Mines were reimbursed by the Department of Lands and Forestry, with budget transferred in 2019-20.

## Department Mandate and Core Functions

The Department of Lands and Forestry (the Department) has broad responsibilities relative to the management, development, conservation and protection of Nova Scotia's biodiversity, forests, and park resources, as well as the administration of the province's Crown land. In addition to our core operations and obligations, the Department is delivering on the following actions identified as priorities in the Minister's 2017 Mandate Letter:

- Created a new Nova Scotia Biodiversity Council
- Introduced a *Biodiversity Act*
- Appointed an independent expert to review forestry practices
- Expanding trail access across Nova Scotia

Lands and Forestry established four strategic priorities to guide our work in 2018/2019. These included:

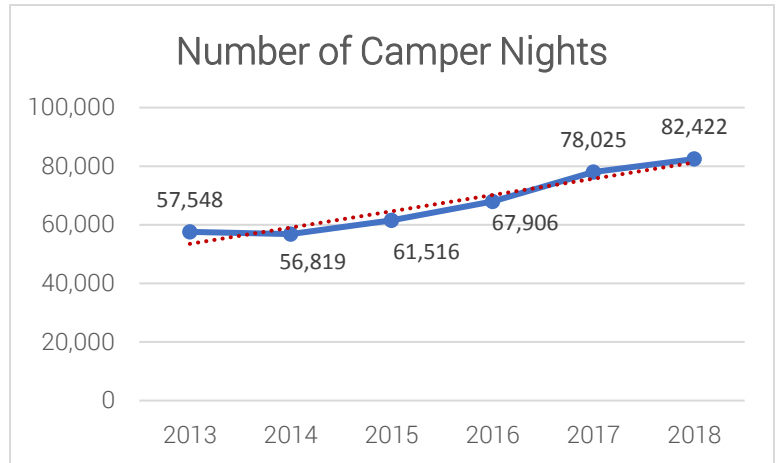
- Our People: Cultivate an Engaged, Effective, and Empowered Workforce
- The Public: Strengthen public trust in the management of our natural resources
- Our Services: Deliver services collaboratively, efficiently and effectively
- Our Natural Resources: Manage our natural resources for public benefits

### Fast Facts

In 2018-19:

- The Department's name changed on July 5, 2018 from the Department of Natural Resources to the Department of Lands and Forestry.
- Lands and Forestry is a science-based department located in 25 offices from Tusket to Coxheath.
- Staff of the Department include biologists, forest professionals, park professionals, surveyors, along with a variety of other experts.
- Nova Scotia's annual Christmas tree gift to Boston came from Cumberland County for the first time. An Oxford family donated the 14 metre (46 foot) white spruce as the traditional thank you to Boston for sending aid after the Halifax Harbour Explosion.
- Nova Scotia had 190 wildfires in 2018, burning 251 hectares of land.
- Nova Scotia also sent three 21-person wildfire fighters crews and equipment to help in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario. Lands and Forestry also sent four staff with expertise in coordinating resources to Quebec, along with 50,000 feet of hose.
- 2627 students, from primary through Grade 12, received the Department's biodiversity outreach education programming through the Natural Resources Education Centre and the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park.

- On opening day, 6,500 reservations were made by visitors for our provincial parks, which marks yet another record. There are 20 provincial camping parks and more than 100 day-use parks across the province.
- Nova Scotia set another record for camping nights within the provincial parks. A total of 82,422 campsites nights reserved, an increase of 5% over last year.



## Measuring Our Performance

### Mineral Resources Development Fund & Mineral Resources Act and Regulations

*Goal: Introduce a new Mineral Resources Development Fund (MRDF) & Implement a new Mineral Resources Act and Regulations.* In 2018-19:

- The Department launched the new MRDF on April 1, 2018. This new multi-year project replaced the Mineral Incentive Program and was designed to increase mineral exploration and mine development, invest in mineral research for Nova Scotia and provide cooperative education opportunities.
- The accountability and associated budget for both the new MRDF and for the *Mineral Resources Act* transferred, along with the Geoscience and Mines branch, to the Department of Energy and Mines, on July 5, 2018.

### Independent Review of Forest Practices

Professor William Lahey was commissioned to conduct an *Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia* in August 2017. The report was received in August 2018. The report provided recommendations to improve how Nova Scotia balances long-term environmental, social, and economic interests in managing the province's forests.

On December 3, 2018, the Government issued its response to the recommendations made by Professor Lahey. The Response acknowledges that many of the recommendations are interconnected, and their implementation will need to be phased-in over time.

As part of the Government's implementation of the Response and commitment to ecological forestry, in 2018-19 the Department:

- Released an interim retention guide for Crown land harvesting with an increased focus on multi-aged management practices. This was a first step taken in December 2018 to provide licensees guidance, while waiting for the longer-term changes to the Forest Management Guide framework, which is a priority for 2019-20.



- In partnership with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, on March 15, 2019, the Department launched the Mi'kmaq Forestry Initiative. This initiative transfers forest planning and management responsibility over 20,000 hectares on two blocks of Crown Land - one in the St. Croix area of Hants County, and another in Digby and Annapolis counties - to the Mi'kmaq. The Province will contribute \$600,000 to the initiative over three years.
- Government committed an additional \$1 million in silviculture funding to support partial harvesting, reduced clearcutting, and the implementation of the triad model recommended by Professor Lahey. The funds are in addition to the \$4.2 million dollars invested in Crown land silviculture in 2018-19.
- The Department has also committed to an interim evaluation by Professor Lahey to be conducted in 2019-20.

*The **triad model of ecological forestry** is an approach to zoning that consists of three zones, or three "legs" as described by Professor Lahey. One zone is the conservation zone in which timber harvesting is prohibited. A second zone is the high production zone, in which high production methods are used to maximize timber production, while still being subject to measures to ensure environmental protection such as watercourse buffers and species at risk protection. The third zone is a matrix – it applies a blend of conservation and production objectives on a wider landscape. This means that forestry would be generally be of a low-intensity nature to ensure consistency with broader biodiversity objectives.*

Implementation of the Government's response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices remains a key priority going forward in 2019-20.

### ***Biodiversity Act***

*Goal: Introduce a Biodiversity Act to provide a tool to address our needs for defining biodiversity, establish leadership and governance and manage emerging risks to biodiversity. In 2018-19:*

- The *Biodiversity Act* was introduced in the legislature on March 14, 2019. This Act is intended to provide essential tools for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It will help us address the range of challenges, emerging risks and opportunities facing the ecosystems, species, and genes, and the systems and processes that link them together in our province. Once passed, Nova Scotia will be the first province in Canada to create stand-alone legislation on biodiversity.
- Additional consultations with stakeholders to help refine the priorities for work under the Act and inform regulation will take place throughout the Summer of 2019 in preparation for the Fall 2019 session of the Legislature. Work will also continue with the Biodiversity Council - an important external source of advice and expertise - on this initiative.

### **Biodiversity Council**

*Goal: Establish a Biodiversity Council to support our commitment to making informed decisions based on science and implementing balanced and sustainable management practices at Lands and Forestry. In 2018-19:*

- The Minister of Lands and Forestry announced the establishment of a Biodiversity Council, on May 22, 2018, with the responsibility to help inform areas for regulations under the Act, and recommend new actions that promote biodiversity in Nova Scotia.
- The Council, consisting of subject matter experts, met quarterly in 2018-19 to provide

feedback on the draft *Biodiversity Act* and advice on priorities for regulation under the Act.

- The Department is investigating the potential to expand the scope of the Council. The work of the Council in support of the *Biodiversity Act* remains a priority for 2019-20.

### Trail Connectivity

*Goal: Complete the Nova Scotia Shared Trails Strategy to deliver trail management services more efficiently, and effectively by developing and utilizing partnerships to support our mandate and service delivery.* In 2018-19:

- Continuing work over the past several years, Lands and Forestry collaborated with trail partner departments and the NS Trails Federation to develop and complete the provincial trail connectivity strategy. The document called, "*A Shared Strategy for Trails in Nova Scotia: Advancing Pathways to Discovery, Wellness and Community Connections*" was approved for implementation in September 2018.
- The Department, in partnership with Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, launched the Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) pilot project in 7 communities. This project enables connectivity for OHVs to safely travel along roadways from one OHV trail to another or to access facilities, such as gas stations.
- The Department continues to sit on the Nova Scotia trails western loop steering committee to expand the Trans-Canada Trail to the western end of the province.

### Amendments to the *Ministerial Land Transaction Regulations*

*Goal: Amend the Ministerial Land Transaction Regulations to deliver services efficiently and effectively.* In 2018-19:

- The Department has prepared draft amendments to the *Ministerial Land Transaction Regulations* with a goal of finding efficiencies and reducing red tape for business. Once implemented improved business processes will require less time for clients, less staff time and resources to complete transactions.
- The review is ongoing as part of the review of the *Crown Lands Act* review and business process improvements.

### Land Titles Initiative

*Goal: The Land Titles Initiative will address land title issues for African Nova Scotians who own land in five communities: North Preston, East Preston, Cherry Brook, Lincolnville and Sunnyville.*

Working collaboratively across government under the leadership of Communities, Culture, and Heritage, and in partnership with Nova Scotia Legal Aid (NSLA), the Department is providing support for African Nova Scotian residents who have been impacted by historical disparities and systemic discrimination to get clear legal title to their land. Community outreach by program staff and NSLA is increasing participation in the program. In 2018-19:

- The Department continued its support for program implementation by providing survey services (where eligible) through a dedicated survey team and processing applications under the *Land Titles Clarification Act*.

- Joining other departments, Lands and Forestry completed training for program staff as well as identified partners and stakeholders; supported the establishment of mediation services to help families resolve land title conflicts; and helped develop an evaluation framework for the program.

**Accessibility Act Commitments and Plans**

*Goal: Lands and Forestry will make improvements to provincial parks, beaches and campgrounds to ensure that more services are accessible to people regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age. Commencing in 2018-19 and going forward, Lands and Forestry will make at least one provincial beach in every region barrier free within three years after the NS Accessibility Plan is in place.*

The Department Continues to work towards the implementation of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act, the Access by Design 2030 Framework, and the Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan (2018-2021). In 2018-19:

- The Department advanced progress to make provincial parks and beaches, as well as Department offices, more accessible. We have installed ramps to various pieces of infrastructure in our parks to promote accessibility, this includes comfort stations, toilets and picnic shelters. Looking forward, all new infrastructure that is being designed and built with accessibility considerations.
- The Department delivered on its commitment to make at least one provincial beach in every region accessible before 2021. Our Clam Harbour (Halifax County), Pomquet (Antigonish County) and Rissers (Lunenburg County) provincial beaches will have Mobi-Mats installed for this season, and the Department has purchased more to pilot in some of our other beach properties in Cape Breton to promote accessibility.



Pomquet Beach

*Annual Report under Section 18 of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2018-2019
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