



Accountability Report 2019–20

Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services



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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services for the year ended March 31, 2020 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services Business Plan for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services' outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services 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 Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services 2019-2020 Business Plan.

Original Signed by

Hon. Patricia Arab
Minister

Original signed by

Joanne Munro
Deputy Minister

Message from Minister and Deputy Minister

It is our pleasure to present the Accountability Report for the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. This document reports on the activities outlined in our 2019-20 Business Plan.

This has been an exciting and challenging year for our department, which was created in June 2019 by bringing together the unique service mandates of the Office of Service Nova Scotia and the Department of Internal Services. It has been a pleasure to work with our staff over this past year to serve Nova Scotians and support programs and services that are important to them.

Service excellence for our partners and the citizens we serve underlines everything we do. Our work is front and centre for Nova Scotians with about five million client interactions each year including issuing marriage licenses, drivers' licenses and vehicle permits and delivering support to businesses and consumers across the province. We also ensure access to information, privacy protection, procurement and corporate information technology deliver value and support critical corporate needs across Nova Scotia's public sector.

The Accountability Report is our opportunity to highlight for you some of our innovative and transformational accomplishments over the past year. This includes our progress in making it easier for people to access government programs and services. As the fiscal year was ending, Nova Scotia was facing an extraordinary challenge to the health and safety of our communities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud of the work our staff did to ensure that the public could continue to access the services they needed during this unprecedented time.

The team at Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services are innovative, collaborative, and creative and they are committed to the people and communities we serve. We know they will continue to work together to help Nova Scotia recover and thrive again in the next fiscal year.

Original signed by

Honourable Patricia Arab
Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

Original signed by

Joanne Munro
Deputy Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services

Financial Results

Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services			
	2019-20 Estimate	2019-20 Actual	2019-20 Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)
Senior Management	393	380	(13)
Strategy and Corporate Services	10,334	10,097	(237)
Government Services	32,114	37,549	5,435
Internal Audit Centre	2,217	2,342	125
Customer Contact & Collection	8,341	8,437	96
Financial Service Delivery	9,155	8,874	(281)
In-Person Service Delivery	24,500	27,501	3,001
Nova Scotia Digital Services	144,354	156,376	12,022
Procurement	9,615	8,343	(1,272)
Program Modernization	41,924	39,396	(2,528)
Total: Departmental Expenses	282,947	299,295	16,348
Ordinary Revenue	716,182	696,944	(19,238)
Fees and Other Charges	8,987	8,601	(386)
Ordinary Recoveries	16,960	20,788	3,828
Total: Revenue, Fees, And Recoveries	742,129	726,333	(15,796)
TCA Purchase Requirements	8,307	9,839	1,532
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	1,621.9	1,543.9	(78.0)

Departmental Expense Variance Explanation:

The Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services expenditures were \$16.3 million or 5.8 percent higher than Budget primarily due to \$6.8 million for the Modernization and Sustainment of SAP, \$4.0 million for software licensing, \$3.5 million increase in recoverable expenses for health related equipment, \$2.2 million in insurance claims, \$1.0 million reserve for impaired fines and temporary staff vacancy savings of (\$1.2) million.

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services revenues were (\$15.8) million or (2.1%) lower than estimate primarily due to (\$22.4) million decrease in tobacco tax, (\$10.4) million decrease in motive fuel tax, and (\$1.8) million decrease in fines partially offset by \$15.0 million increase in corporate capital tax, \$3.5 million increase recovery for health related equipment, and \$0.3 million net increase in other areas.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

Departmental TCA purchases were \$1.5 million or 18.4% higher than estimate due to \$1.2 million increase to computer hardware related to Health IT projects, \$0.4 million increase in customized software primarily resulting from project cash flows, \$0.4 million increase related to cash flow changes for mobile communications support vehicles offset by (\$0.5) million decrease in computer software projects.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

Departmental FTEs were (78.0) lower than estimate due to continued transition of the department and delays in filling vacancies.

Measuring Our Performance

The annual Accountability Report for the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services (SNS-IS) reports on the progress achieved in meeting the outcomes, commitments and targets outlined in the 2019-20 Business Plan. SNS-IS measures its performance through a series of service standards, client feedback mechanisms, and tracking the progress of key initiatives that support government priorities.

Priorities

SNS-IS supports government priorities through the delivery of a high standard of service every day and by making it simple and fast for Nova Scotians to interact with government. We put the client at the centre of everything we do, deliver service and operational excellence across all channels with a digital culture driving the focus on excellence, and support public sector partners to deliver services to the citizens and businesses of Nova Scotia.

Accomplishments

Registries Transformation

- Continued the implementation of new IT solutions for the Joint Stock Companies (RJSC) and Vital Statistics (VS) registries.
- Continued preliminary work for the modernization of the registries of Land and, in partnership with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Motor Vehicles (RMV).

Enhancing Digital Services

- In November 2019, SNS-IS created the Nova Scotia Digital Service (NSDS) to advance government's priority to enhance digital services for Nova Scotians. This team continued to collaborate across government and other jurisdictions while making advancements on the development of digital guidance, best practices, and standards, to make it easier for people to do the things they need to do with government. The team was a key part of SNS-IS efforts to quickly respond to the COVID-19 public health orders issued in March 2019 and ensure needed services were available.
- Working with our partners, SNS-IS introduced online tools to help deliver key services and continued to improve online service options, including:
 - An easy to use online tool that allows hosts to register their short-term accommodations.
 - Quickly mobilizing supports to assist in government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including assisting Government's response to protecting public safety in March 2019 by initiating the development of a self-assessment tool to help citizens understand when they should call 811 for COVID-19 testing and an employer assessment tool to help business owners understand whether they could stay open and how to keep their staff and customers safe.
- Continued to simplify and standardize the digital environment to reduce support costs and increase stability, allowing clients to concentrate on delivering consistent, high quality programs and services.
 - Worked with Mental Health and Addictions to implement contact centre software in eight physical locations across the province to have a single toll-free number to allow Nova Scotians to self-refer for intake.

- Modernized telecom infrastructure in three health locations where the technology was no longer supported and at risk of failure to ensure there were no impacts to patient care and safety.
- Shaped by user needs to create consistent, trusted experiences, with a commitment to continuously improve services, SNS-IS continued to:
 - Improve the Online Dealer Service by adding more than 11 new features to make it easier for car dealerships to register vehicles they buy or sell.
 - Improve citizen-facing online services such as renewing a licence plate sticker or paying a fine, by adding over 14 new features to these services.
 - Initiated the design and development of modern and scalable digital service delivery which will allow government to launch digital services faster and with less investment by re-using common components.
 - Advance key digital platform offerings for all of government, including a digital identity service, which received regular upgrades with new and improved functionality through the year.
- Continued operational excellence during Hurricane Dorian and in response to the developing COVID-19 pandemic by being able to quickly mobilize teams to deliver consistent, high quality programs and services.
 - Initiated work to develop a modern curriculum website with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development which made it easier for parents, students, teachers, and schools to have the information needed for at home learning.
 - Rapid deployment in the initial stages of lockdown of new collaboration tools that enabled people to work remotely, with access to virtual meetings, chats, and to share and collaborate on content.

Reducing Red Tape

- Continued to work closely with the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness to better serve the citizens and businesses of Nova Scotia, and through service enhancements and process improvements across the department's programs and services, and introducing legislative and regulatory changes to ease burden while protecting the public interest.
- Introduced electronic certificates to simplify and improve the business registration process and allowing applicants to create, maintain and store records electronically and submit and track transactions online anytime. These and other improvements helped reduce red tape and wait-times, while also lowering fees such as extra provincial registration and renewal fees for businesses operating in but incorporated outside of Nova Scotia - a cumulative savings for businesses upwards of \$10M annually.

Delivering for Nova Scotians

- Continued implementation of our Citizen and Business Feedback Strategy, partnering with Narrative Research to directly collect information concerning our service delivery from those we serve. This year, through in-person interviews, telephone surveys, and online surveys, SNS-IS collected 29,000 responses from our clients. This information helps guide decision-making related to service excellence, program excellence, red tape reduction, and public protection.
- Expanded the Open Data Portal, releasing more than 30 datasets and 17 new visualizations in 2019-20. SNS-IS also employed new strategies to identify and release new data, through:
 - Broadening the scope of identifying potential data sets, through engaging directly with departmental business areas, expanding open data beyond departments to Crown Corporations and Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABCs), and engaging with the Canadian Open Government Working Group (COGWG).

- Beginning to transition legacy visualizations (i.e. charts and maps) to a new, simplified look and feel.
- Ongoing interjurisdictional collaboration with Pan-Canadian groups on identified priorities.
- Continued our work to modernize Government's Privacy Program, through:
 - Development and implementation of tools that guide the work of privacy services and influence the privacy culture in the civil service.
 - Collaboration with multiple stakeholders to develop a streamlined privacy and security risk assessment process that is business enabling, well understood and repeatable.
 - Initiating the Nova Scotia Public Sector Privacy Forum, which brings together individuals from across various other entities such as the health authorities, universities, and other public entities to share learnings and expertise.
- Continued to roll out the Lean Six Sigma centred continuous improvement initiative across government. SNS-IS focused on building the capabilities of our people through Lean Six Sigma training, increasing operational capacity, and improving services by eliminating unnecessary steps and streamlining processes. SNS-IS provided Lean Six Sigma training to over 270 government employees from 17 different departments and offices and supported 29 Business Process Improvement Projects across multiple departments.
- Worked with partners to initiate research into the Nova Scotia supplier market to identify composition, opportunities, and government current purchasing patterns. Discussions continue with economic development agencies related to potential opportunities and specific projects.

Core Responsibilities

In addition to our commitment to provide excellent services to Nova Scotians every day, SNS-IS accomplished the following during the 2019-20 fiscal year:

- Introduced more options to support responsible gaming in the province, including new regulations to modernize the Voluntary Self Exclusion program.
- Supported Government's Social Enterprise Strategy, Advancing Social Enterprise in Nova Scotia (2017), through:
 - The Social Enterprise Procurement Working Group (SEPWG) which meets regularly to provide advice and guidance on expanding market opportunities and development of tools to promote vendor readiness and promote social value purchasing across the public sector in Nova Scotia. This is a multi-stakeholder group that includes social enterprises, First Nations, and purchasers from across government and MASH sector. This work included:
 - Delivering vendor readiness training and guidance.
 - Delivering a Social Enterprise Trade Show in November 2019.
 - Initiating work to develop a social enterprise goods and services database, as well as tools to help Departments and MASH entities to understand how to consider social enterprise suppliers and trade agreement and policy considerations, as well as researching and developing tender language to encourage contractors on infrastructure projects to work with local small medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and social enterprise and diversity suppliers to help them identify, and be able to capitalize on, local supply opportunities.
- Continued to explore innovation opportunities through procurement, by collaborating with DivertNS and working to identify Nova Scotia products made from waste resources and/or products related to a more circular economy.
- Continued to provide processing services for licences, permits, registrations, certificates, refund, rebates, and contact centre services to clients across the Government.

- Continued to administer, and enhance the delivery of, the Heating Assistance Rebate Program (HARP). Introduced the option for Nova Scotians eligible for the Property Tax Rebate Program for Low Income Seniors to be automatically considered for HARP. This resulted in more eligible Nova Scotians receiving the rebate and receiving it quicker without needing an additional application. In addition, our continued digital enhancements and efforts to encourage applying to HARP online resulted in a 38% increase in online applicants from the previous year.
- Introduced an updated edition of the Nova Scotia Atlas produced by GeoNOVA, the corporate geomatics team that is part of SNS-IS.
- Continued to deliver an excellent client experience at Access Nova Scotia Centres through expanding service options such as expansion of driver knowledge testing services during evening hours within various regional offices, completing renovations at various offices, and providing more online tools.
- Continued our efforts to modernize legislation, to ease burden where possible while also ensuring the public is protected, as well as to ensure a better reflection the people we serve and ensure better inclusion of all Nova Scotians. Examples of this included, but are not limited to, changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act*, the *Companies Act*, and providing more options for gender identity on a birth certificate, driver's licence and a photo ID card.

Performance Measures

Measure	Target FY 19/20	Results FY 19/20
Percentage of in-person clients at Access Nova Scotia centres served within 20 minutes	80%	83%
Percentage of Government of Nova Scotia contact centre calls answered within 20 seconds	70%	71%
Percentage of digital uptake for online vehicle permit renewal services	40%	41%
Percentage variance of budget final forecast to year-end actuals	<2%	5.8%

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 Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2019-2020
The number of disclosures received	None
The number of findings of wrongdoing	None
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A