



Accountability Report 2022–23

Environment & Climate Change



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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of Environment and Climate Change for the year ended March 31, 2023, is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of Environment and Climate Change outcomes necessarily include estimates, judgments, and opinions by Environment and Climate Change management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of Environment and Climate Change 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 Environment and Climate Change 2022-23 Business Plan.

Original signed by:

Original signed by:

Honourable Timothy A. Halman

Lora MacEachern, K.C.

Minister

Deputy Minister

Measuring Performance

The Department of Environment and Climate Change has a mandate to protect the environment, human health, and the welfare of farm animals (until December 31, 2022), and to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Through legislation, regulation and enforcement, the department works to support a clean and healthy environment in Nova Scotia, advance a clean economy, address the climate crisis, and guide the province towards a sustainable and clean future where all Nova Scotians can thrive.

Implementation of the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act

The Department of Environment and Climate Change released its [first annual progress report](#) on work happening under the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act ('EGCCRA') in July 2022. The first annual report details progress on the following areas:

- climate action,
- clean air and water,
- modernizing environmental assessments,
- food and aquaculture,
- circular economy and reducing waste,
- supporting businesses and youth,
- education and training, and
- diversity, equity and inclusion.

The report profiled good news stories from sectors across the province who are contributing to a clean economy, healthy environment, and resilient communities.

The Department met all its 2022-23 commitments under the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Act. These include:

Releasing the Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth

In December, the department released the [Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth](#), which outlines government's next steps to address climate change and reach its 2030 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets. In addition to the work to lower our emissions, the Climate Plan outlines how government will improve access to climate data and information, build capacity for climate change adaptation planning and implementation, and minimize our climate impacts by restoring natural areas and ecosystems. The Climate Plan details how the Province will develop a clean electricity system, support more sustainable transportation options, reduce our demand for energy, help Nova Scotians get off home heating oil, and fast-track the creation and retrofit of net-zero and climate resilient buildings.

Releasing the Climate Change Risk Assessment

In December, the department completed and released a [Climate Change Risk Assessment](#). The climate change risk assessment explores how the climate is changing and how these changes will impact the well-being of Nova Scotians over the course of the century. The risk assessment informs governments, businesses, and communities to help them respond to and prepare for the changing climate.

Establishing the Panel to Address Environmental Racism

In December 2022, the province appointed Afassou (Augy) Jones as the panel's first member. His initial duties were to develop draft terms of reference and recommend other members. The department will collaborate with the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism to support the panel's important work.

Creating the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund

In April 2022, the Province announced its partnership with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities to design and deliver the [Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund](#). Over 100 applications from municipalities, non-profits, post-secondary institutions and First Nations bands from around the province were received during the first call for applications in November 2022.

In 2022-2023 the Department also continued to advance work on the following commitments under the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act:

Parks and Protected Areas Plan & 20 Per Cent Protected Areas Strategy

Work progresses to advance sites remaining in the 2013 Parks and Protected Areas Plan, and efforts are underway to develop a new 20 per cent Protected Areas Strategy. In 2022-23, 14 new or expanded areas became protected. As well, a \$20 million investment was made in the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust to support private land protection in Nova Scotia. Negotiations to develop a bilateral Nature Agreement with the federal government are ongoing between Canada and the Province, in consultation with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. Resources from this agreement will help achieve Nova Scotia's 20 per cent land and water protection goal.

Water Quality Objectives

Preliminary work to develop provincial water quality objectives to protect designated water uses (e.g., drinking water, aquatic life, recreation, agriculture) is underway and will continue in 2023-24. This work is on track to meet our legislative deadline of 2026.

Expanding Extended Producer Responsibility

The department consulted with municipalities, businesses, and other stakeholders regarding expanding Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and paper products, batteries, lighting, and other electronics to create incentives to reduce waste. Work continues on regulations to implement changes.

Climate Adaptation Leadership Program

The Climate Adaptation Leadership Program (CALP) pilot continued in 2022-23 to build climate change adaptive capacity and resilience within provincial departments and with external industry and community stakeholders. The CALP team completed several climate adaptation strategies with external stakeholders and provided training to more than 100 participants via online learning modules.

Modernize Environmental Assessment

Preliminary work to modernize the environmental assessment process was initiated in 2022-23. Modernization of the process will include consideration of cumulative impacts, diversity, equity and inclusion, independent review, Netukulimk, and climate change. Initial work included project planning and jurisdictional reviews. Work is on track to meet the legislated deadline at the end of 2024.

Advancing Legislative and Regulatory Initiatives to Protect the Environment

Output-Based Carbon Pricing System

Government made changes to the Environment Act and introduced new regulations to transition Nova Scotia to an output-based pricing system for greenhouse gas emissions. The output-based pricing system meets the federal government's updated rules for the carbon pricing for 2023-2030.

Green Hydrogen

Amendments were made to the Environmental Assessment Regulations and the Activities Designation Regulations to clarify the rules for the green hydrogen sector so they have clear, easy-to-understand information about the environmental regulations they must follow in Nova Scotia. These changes clarify the environmental regulatory path for green hydrogen, while also maintaining our high environmental protection standards.

Coastal Protection Act

The department established focus groups with municipal representatives and designated professional organizations and used the conversations with those groups to refine the approach. Work continues to prepare materials for further public engagement and education in 2023-24.

Penalizing Environmental Offenders

Work was initiated to consider approaches to managing litter and to align with Divert Nova Scotia's anti-litter campaign.

Financial Results

Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2022-2023 Estimate</u>	<u>2022-2023 Actuals</u>	<u>2022-2023 Variance</u>
Administration	984	1,007	23
Policy	6,215	5,877	(338)
Inspection, Compliance, Enforcement	16,398	16,463	65
Sustainability and Applied Science	12,446	34,894	22,448
Climate Change	1,858	141,739	139,881
Total - Departmental Expenses	37,901	199,980	162,079
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenues	4,361	8,282	3,921
Fees and Other Charges	2,432	2,598	166
Ordinary Recoveries	3,870	6,784	2,914
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	10,663	17,664	7,001
TCA Purchase Requirements	1,455	2,978	1,523
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	318.8	297.5	(21.3)
<u>Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:</u> Department of Environment and Climate Change expenses were \$162.1 million higher than estimate primarily due to funding of \$140.0 million for home efficiency and heat pump programs, \$20.0 million to the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust, \$2.9 million increase in fully recoverable expenses related to Federal agreements. These increases were partially offset by net operating savings of \$0.8 million.			
<u>Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:</u> Revenue, Fees and Recoveries were \$7.0 million higher than estimate primarily due to \$4.9 million in new and amended agreements with the Federal government, \$1.5 million in increased revenues allocated from the Resource Recovery Fund Board, and \$0.6 million in additional revenues and fees collected.			
<u>TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:</u> TCA Purchases were \$1.5 million higher than estimate due to additional land purchases under the amended Target 1 Challenge Fund agreement with the Federal government.			
<u>Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:</u> FTEs were lower than estimate primarily due to temporarily vacant positions			

Public Interest Disclosure and 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 Environment and Climate Change:

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 (Insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	NA
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing. (Insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	NA

NA – not applicable