



Business Plan

2023-24

Justice

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2023

Budget 2023-24: Business Plan
March 2023
ISBN 978-1-77448-508-8

Department of Justice

2023-24 Priority Actions in Support of Government's Business Plan

The Department of Justice is responsible for the administration of justice and for promoting access to justice and the safety and security of Nova Scotians through its programs, services, and initiatives. The Department delivers this mandate with a staff of approximately 1700 employees who administer Nova Scotia's courts and correctional facilities, oversee public safety and policing, deliver restorative justice services, administer maintenance enforcement and supports for victims of crime, work toward an accessible Nova Scotia, and provide legal services to all of government.

Priority Areas

Address systemic discrimination in the justice system and improve services for those dealing with addictions and mental health conditions

- In 2023-24, the Department will continue to address recommendations from the 2019 Wortley Report, including the implementation of a race-based data collection model for police stops.
- The Department will continue to develop the province's first African Nova Scotian Justice Action Plan, following an extensive province-wide community engagement process completed in 2022-23. This plan will outline actions to address the issue of systemic anti-Black racism in the criminal justice system.
- In 2023-24, engagement will be undertaken with community leaders and members to develop the province's first Indigenous Justice Action Strategy. This strategy will propose actions to transform the justice system to meet the needs of Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous persons.
- The Department will continue to work with community partners to expand access to transitional housing for individuals reintegrating into community following involvement with the criminal justice system. The housing programs will be accompanied by access to mental health and addictions treatment, as well as other supports to facilitate education and employment opportunities.

Work to prevent human trafficking and enhance supports for victims of sexual violence

- In 2023-24, the Department will identify proposed amendments to the *Victims' Rights and Services Act*. This will include amendments to entitle a victim of sexual violence to be treated with respect when testifying about the sexual violence. It will also include proposed amendments to ensure victims are informed of any entitlement they may have to legal representation during a sexual assault court proceeding and/or financial support available to assist victims in accessing legal representation or information. In addition, the Department is examining an expansion of the types of private records that entitle victims of sexual assault to receive legal counsel at trial through the Sexual Offence Legal Representation (SOLR) program.
- The Public Prosecution Service's dedicated team of prosecutors and legal staff will continue to focus specifically on human trafficking and deliver enhanced education in these areas to justice stakeholders.

Lead work to modernize the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPOP)

- Working with the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services, the Department of Justice will lead a review of FOIPOP and related legislation in 2023-24 and make recommendations to modernize the province's access and privacy legislative framework. Amendments will ensure that this legislation reflects the contemporary environment of information sharing and privacy, incorporating best practices in these areas.

Lead work to create an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030

- Nova Scotia's *Accessibility Act* sets a goal of achieving an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. In 2023-24, the Department's Accessibility Directorate will continue to lead the work across government toward this goal, in collaboration with persons with disabilities, other levels of government, public sector bodies, businesses, and others.
- The Directorate will also continue to support municipalities, post-secondary institutions, and others in the implementation of their accessibility plans and initiatives. Guided by the Accessibility Advisory Board and the Standard Development Committees, the built environment, education, employment, and goods and services standard areas will be further developed.
- In addition, the Department will consider and respond to the recommendations from the 2022 review of the *Accessibility Act*.

Work to modernize the court system to improve access to justice

- In 2023-24, the Department will continue to advance the work of the Digital Task Force co-led by the Department and the Judiciary. This will include the development of a road map outlining next steps to ensure Nova Scotia's court system is integrated with digital ways of working with improved technology and to enhance accessibility for users.
- The road map will comprise plans in three key areas: electronic filing and legal tools, virtual and remote court offerings, and access to improved online information and tools for members of the public interacting with the court system.

Financial Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2022 -2023</u> <u>Estimate</u>	<u>2022-2023</u> <u>Forecast</u>	<u>2023-2024</u> <u>Estimate</u>
Administration	33,483	47,613	34,341
Nova Scotia Legal Aid	29,450	30,236	30,473
Court Services	74,993	77,203	81,522
Correctional Services	80,745	83,846	85,270
Public Trustee	3,109	3,007	3,300
Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service	5,537	6,324	6,057
Public Safety and Security	174,427	171,343	194,209
Serious Incident Response Team	661	802	1,424
Accessibility Directorate	2,837	2,744	2,290
Maintenance Enforcement and Victim Services	10,508	11,597	11,402
Total - Departmental Expenses	415,750	434,715	450,288
Ordinary Recoveries	142,204	140,767	153,010
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	1,717.6	1,601.8	1,728.6
Note: For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2 For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1			

