



ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

2024-25

Office of the Premier/
Executive Council Office

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Accountability Report 2024–2025

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Office of the Premier/Executive Council Office (Offices) for the year ended March 31, 2025, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the Offices' outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by the Offices' management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Office of the Premier/Executive Council Office 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 2024-25 Business Plans.

(original signed by)

The Honourable Tim Houston
Premier of Nova Scotia
President of the Executive Council

(original signed by)

Tracey Taweel
Executive Deputy Minister of the Office of the Premier
Head of the Public Service
Clerk of the Executive Council

(original signed by)

Kathleen Trott
Deputy Minister of the Executive Council Office
Secretary to the Executive Council

Measuring Performance

The Executive Council Office (ECO) provides central leadership to achieve government priorities and support for executive leadership. It supports the Office of the Premier (PO), Executive Council (Cabinet) and its Committees by providing strategic policy, legal, communications and labour relations advice to support decision-making and priority setting.

In February 2025, ECO was restructured to bring together central and critical functions in government to better integrate government policy, planning, operations, and communications across departments. ECO's mandate expanded to include leadership for corporate strategy and government, the rollout and communication of Government's priorities to the public and stakeholders from Communications Nova Scotia, and the transfer of the Public Sector Labour Relations division from the Department of Finance and Treasury Board.

This document reports on the activities of the Executive Council Office/Office of the Premier as outlined in the 2024-2025 Business Plan, as well as relevant activities under ECO's expanded mandate.

Progress Responses

Corporate Leadership and Strategic Policy

- Facilitated collaboration across government to support corporate horizontal initiatives.
- Strengthened corporate governance and oversight by providing policy leadership and guidance on departmental accountability reporting.
- Developed a more streamlined process for the appointment to Agencies, Boards, and Commissions (ABCs). From April 1, 2024, to March 1, 2025, 177 appointments (58 adjudicative and 119 non-adjudicative) were made to the provincial ABCs. As of March 31, 2025, there were 663 members appointed to provincial ABCs, of which 266 appointees disclosed they identified as diverse (40% of appointments).
- Coordinated the cross-departmental response to recommendations made in [Turning the Tide Together: The Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission](#) and in the [Desmond Fatality Inquiry Final Report](#). In partnership with the federal government, provided secretariat support to the work of the Progress Monitoring Committee Chair and Members.
- Supported leadership across departments to develop integrated approaches on policy, service design and delivery, aimed at generating positive system change to best meet the diverse needs of people in Nova Scotia.
- Continued support of key departmental engagement processes with external stakeholders and community partners.

Support of Executive Council and its Committees

- Supported over 720 submissions to the Executive Council through collaboration with government departments to ensure clear and concise submissions that were aligned with government's strategic direction.
- Supported informed decision making, budget allocation, and effectively and promptly communicated decisions and direction.

Operational Support for the Office of the Premier

- Provided operational and administrative support to the Office of the Premier, overseeing business continuity planning, human resources, budgeting and security.

Accessibility and Inclusive Communications

- Continued efforts to remove barriers to government communications through internal capacity building and increasing public awareness.
- Supported development of the equity impact assessment tool and guide to assist departments when developing proposals to government. The guide was published by the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism in 2024 for government-wide use.
- Accessibility Awareness:
 - Worked closely with the Accessibility Directorate on strategy and execution of the public awareness campaign Access Includes Everyone.
 - Continued to work with the Accessibility Directorate to develop advertising to build education and awareness of the Information and Communication and Transportation Standard.
- Building Capacity:
 - Provided internal training in plain language and accessible design to all communications staff.
 - Continued to work with the Public Service Commission and other partners in communities across Nova Scotia on attracting diverse talent, with the goal of better representing the province and its people.
 - Continued to update resources for suppliers with direction on using gender-neutral language for French translation.
- Continued to work with partners to remove barriers that persons with disabilities face when applying to ABCs, a commitment under the 2022-2025 Government of Nova Scotia Accessibility Plan.

Public Sector Labour Relations

- ECO is responsible for public sector labour relations and oversees more than 300 collective agreements across 200 employers with approximately 20 unions and professional associations across several sectors. In 2024-25, Labour Relations continued to develop and maintain positive working relationships with public sector unions while providing labour relations and compensation advice and expertise to publicly funded employers and government.

Government Advertising

- Government advertising in 2024-25 focused on key priorities for Nova Scotians. Campaigns focused on attracting and retaining skilled professionals for critical sectors, promoting services and supports for health and safety, making life more affordable for Nova Scotians, and other government priorities.

Health

- Action for Health:
 - Aligned proactive and reactive communications strategies with overarching advertising and social media planning to ensure clear communications to citizens on how and where to access healthcare services. The province-wide 'always on' Action for Health campaign (2022-2026) supports the Nova Scotia Health Action Plan by sharing information about health systems transformation, new services provided through the YourHealthNS app, and how Nova Scotians can access care in communities across the province.
 - Advertising included Television, Streaming Media, Radio, Direct Mail, Digital Audio, Print, Out-of-Home (OOH), Cinema, Online, Social, Search (SEM) and Digital Screens.
 - Completed 26 news releases.

Cost of Living and Economy

- School Lunch Program:
 - Developed an advertising campaign and website to inform Nova Scotians with elementary-aged children that the Province implemented a new School Lunch Program and encourage participation in the program.
 - Advertising included Radio, Digital Audio, Streaming Media, Online, Social and Digital Screens.
 - Supported the launch and rollout of the School Lunch Program and internal rollout to schools.

Inquiry Response and Gender-based Violence

- Progress and action on the recommendations from Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission (MCC).
 - Support for announcements to introduce the new Progress Monitoring Committee Chair was undertaken with a mix of traditional and digital communications activities.
 - Support for multiple MCC-related announcements, including mental health supports in affected communities and the launch of the policing review.
- Led a coordinated and strategic approach to marketing and communications to raise awareness of access to mental health services, grief and bereavements supports and supports available to Nova Scotians as part of government's commitment to help address the epidemic of intimate partner violence in Nova Scotia. Focus was on sharing information about supports available to people experiencing intimate partner violence, mental health services and resources, and reducing stigma related to help-seeking for men.
 - Advertising for mental health and wellness resources included Radio, Print, Online, Digital Audio, Social and Digital Screens.
 - Completed 8 news releases.

Skilled Trades Actions:

- Developed an advertising campaign and website to encourage Nova Scotians entering post-secondary or older Nova Scotians considering a career change to pursue a career in skilled trades as well as encourage Nova Scotian businesses to hire and train apprentices.
- Advertising included TV, Streaming Media, Out of Home (OOH), Digital Audio, Online, Social, Search (SEM) and Digital Screens.

Seniors Care Grant:

- Developed an advertising campaign to build awareness of the Seniors Care Grants available to help seniors stay in their homes.
- Advertising included Radio, Print, Social, Search (SEM) and Digital Screens.

HARP (Heating Assistance Rebate Program):

- Developed an advertising campaign to build awareness of the heating assistance rebate program available to help low-income Nova Scotians with the cost of home heating.
- Advertising included Radio, Print, Online, Social, Search (SEM) and Digital Screens.

Residential Tenancies:

- Developed an advertising campaign to inform tenants and landlords of Nova Scotia's renting rules and to encourage them to learn their rights and responsibilities.
- Advertising included Social and Digital Screens.

Emergency Response

Continued to lead communications for the emergency response to natural disasters and critical events during 2023-24.

- Wildfire Prevention:
 - Developed an advertising campaign to build awareness and education about wildfire safety, fines for burning outside of approved hours and where Nova Scotians can go to see the daily burn maps. Included Radio, TV, Online, Social, Digital Audio and Digital Screens.
- Nova Scotia Guard:
 - Developed an advertising campaign and website to build awareness of the opportunity to join the Guard and encourage volunteers to sign up to help during times of emergencies. Included Streaming Media, Online, Social, Search (SEM) and Digital Screens.

Financial Results

**Executive Council Office / Office of the Premier
Departmental Expenses Summary
(\$ thousands)**

<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2024-2025 Estimate</u>	<u>2024-2025 Actuals</u>	<u>2024-2025 Variance</u>
Executive Council Office*	7,745	7,691	(54)
Total - Departmental Expenses	7,745	7,691	(54)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenues	-	-	-
Fees and Other Charges	-	-	-
Ordinary Recoveries	(10)	(3)	7
Total - Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	(10)	(3)	7
TCA Purchase Requirements	-	-	-
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff*	53.0	45.2	(7.8)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Actual expenses are less than estimate due to vacancy savings.

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Actual recoveries were lower than estimate due to less Gift Bank purchases from external agencies

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

FTEs are less than estimated FTEs due to temporary FTE vacancies.

Notes:

*In February 2025, ECO was restructured to include communications, labour relations and corporate strategy and priorities. Expenses related to these areas are found in the Public Accounts under Communications Nova Scotia, Finance and Treasury Board and the Office of the Office of Planning and Priorities. As of 2025-26, these amounts will be reported under the Executive Council Office.

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 Labour Board.

A wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

- a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations;
- a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets;
- 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,
- directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing.

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Office of the Premier/Executive Council Office.

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2024-2025
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