



ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

2024-25

Environment and Climate Change

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Accountability Report 2024–2025

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of *Environment and Climate Change* for the year ended March 31, 2025, 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 2024-25 Business Plan*.

Original signed by

Timothy A. Halman
Minister

Original signed by

Lora MacEachern, K.C.
Deputy Minister

Measuring Performance

The Department of Environment and Climate Change supports a clean and healthy environment for the wellbeing and benefit of Nova Scotians. We lead Government's response to climate change and achieving net-zero by 2050. As a regulator, we help make sure the Province has clear, modern laws in place to protect the environment, while supporting safe and responsible economic development.

We also lead work to transition Nova Scotia to a clean economy and we help make sure Nova Scotians have clean, safe drinking water and air, and protected natural areas to enjoy.

In 2024-25, through legislation, regulation, enforcement, programs and investments, the Department worked to fulfill this mandate by continuing work in the areas of sustainable prosperity, climate action, land protection, circular economy, sustainable development, and protecting human and environmental health.

Climate Action

Nova Scotians are impacted by the globally changing climate, and Government is taking action to help communities and people be resilient to climate change. Guided by [*Our Climate, Our Future: Nova Scotia's Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth*](#), the Province is advancing 68 actions to combat climate change and build sustainable, resilient, prepared communities.

In 2024–25, the Department, in collaboration with other departments, continued to make progress on key initiatives such as growing the clean economy, coastal protection, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, supporting Nova Scotians to address energy costs, and unlocking the full potential of Nova Scotia's natural resources to support a quick response to climate change.

Funding Community Climate Action through the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund

The Department funds community-led climate action through the [Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund](#). Funding community initiatives is a key driver for reaching our ambitious climate goals and addressing our priorities, like coastal protection. In 2024-25, over \$3.2 million in grants supported 17 new projects across Nova Scotia, which funded community-led climate action, including:

- Installing clean energy upgrades: solar panels, heat pumps, electric vehicle chargers
- Safeguarding walking trails and aquatic habitats from climate impacts, including coastal flooding, erosion, and storm surge
- Tracking blue-green algae and sharing findings province-wide
- Creating a debris plan to improve climate cleanup and protect ecosystems

Implementing the Department of Environment and Climate Change's Climate Adaptation Plan

In 2024-25, the Department of Environment and Climate Change continued to implement its Climate Adaptation Plan.

Highlights included purchasing 26 air quality sensors to support health warnings during wildfires and developing materials for drinking water suppliers to help them keep water supplies safe for Nova Scotians during and after an extreme weather event.

The Department also continues to support eight other departments in the development of their adaptation action plans, helping ensure consideration of climate adaptation across all of government.

Supporting the Work of Nova Scotia's Youth Climate Council

Youth are key leaders in climate action and bring valuable insights to shaping a sustainable future. Decisions made today—especially around electricity system transitions—will directly impact future generations, and Government is committed to incorporating youth perspectives.

2024-25 was the second year of the Council, which was made up of 15 youth, aged 14-24. The Council's input informs policy development and ensures that climate solutions reflect their concerns, creativity, and vision for a hopeful, opportunity-rich future. The Council also supports the Nova Scotia Youth Climate Bursary, the Creative Climate Showcase Microgrant, and an annual Youth Climate Summit.

Highlights from this year include:

- Year two of the bursary program for youth who are pursuing post-secondary education or professional training that will help to address climate change. This year, the program supported four youth from across Nova Scotia, each receiving \$2,500 for a total of \$10,000 in bursaries
- Providing support to the Council for their 10 monthly meetings, with Environment and Climate Change staff coordinating six presentations designed to build the Council's knowledge on topics related to government's mandate, such as transitioning off coal and meeting 80 per cent renewable electricity by 2030
- The Council meeting with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change multiple times throughout the year and engaging in conversations on the transition off coal and Nova Scotia's net-zero future

Operationalizing Nova Scotia's Output-Based Pricing System

Nova Scotia's Output-Based Pricing System (OBPS) applies to large emitters in the province. It has been in place since January 1, 2023, is fully operational, and will – in conjunction with other initiatives such as the transition to clean energy – help Nova Scotia achieve its emissions reduction targets of 53 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and net-zero by 2050. With competitiveness as a priority, it helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Nova Scotia by keeping costs low for industry, incentivizing emissions reductions, and attracting investment.

Key results include:

- **100 per cent compliance:** all 15 participating facilities met the program's compliance standards
- **\$17.4 million in credits:** participants collectively purchased \$17.4 million in credits to offset emissions beyond their reduction targets
- **Revenue use:** the \$17.4 million generated will support actions through Our Climate, Our Future: Nova Scotia's Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth that will help Nova Scotians save on energy bills and prepare for climate change impacts
- **Emissions reduction:** Nova Scotia Power was responsible for approximately 94 per cent of the province's total emissions, but in a positive shift, it reduced its emissions by 14 per

cent from 2022 levels—largely due to increased renewable energy supplied through the Maritime Link

- **Overall emissions reductions:** emissions across all facilities in the program decreased by 13 per cent compared to 2022 levels

The results of the first compliance year, covering 2023, are summarized in the [OBPS Annual Progress Report](#). The 2024 report covers the results from January 1 to December 31, 2023, and outlines emissions performance, credit generation, and overall program outcomes.

Supporting a Healthy Environment and Healthy Communities

The [Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act](#) legislates 28 goals to transition Nova Scotia to a clean economy and respond to climate change, as well as support a healthy environment and resilient, sustainable communities in Nova Scotia.

In 2024-25, the Department advanced these goals, including:

Ongoing Implementation of the Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy

[The Collaborative Protected Areas Strategy: An Action Plan for Achieving 20 per cent](#) guides Nova Scotia's work to protect land and water. Government is currently focused on achieving its interim goal of protecting 15 per cent of the province's land and water by 2026, including supporting the work of private land conservation trusts.

As of March 31, 2025:

- 13.7 per cent of Nova Scotia's land and water are protected
 - 3,700 hectares of land was newly protected contributing to a total of:583,375 hectares of provincial lands are protected
 - 25,443 hectares of privately conserved land are protected

Implementing the Nature Agreement

Under the Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement, the Government of Nova Scotia, in partnership with the Government of Canada, will work towards achieving 82,500 hectares of land by 2026.

Key results include:

- Invested \$3.91 million in land conservation
 - Includes \$2.46 million to: Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Kingsburg Coastal Conservancy, LaHave Coastal Conservation Association, Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, who protected 1,555 hectares of private land with the funding
- Directly acquired 299 hectares (purchased and donated)
- Reported 708 hectares of old-growth forest and parks as new protected areas
- Since 2021, over 24,000 hectares of the province's land and water have been protected, increasing the percentage of the province's land and water that are protected.

Supporting Equity in the Sustainable Community Challenge Fund

The Department continues to support and invest in equity through the work of the [Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund](#). This year:

- 15 per cent of funds from the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund are funding projects led by Indigenous and/or African Nova Scotian communities
- In 2024-25, \$100,500 was funded to the Akoma Black Business Hub to develop energy-efficient and renewable energy sources for a second B3 (Black-owned, Black-serving, Black-run) business incubator

Additional Areas

In 2024-25, Environment and Climate Change continued making progress on additional legislated goals that support a healthy environment, a circular economy, and resilient communities, including:

- In February 2024, the province launched the [Coastal Protection Action Plan](#)—a three-year plan with 15 actions to support the protection of coastal homes, communities and areas through informed decision-making and municipal leadership. In 2024-25 :
 - New example bylaws were released to help municipalities guide coastal development, including coastal buffers and elevation rules
 - \$1.34 million in funding was announced to help municipalities adopt bylaws
 - Tools for property owners were launched, including the updated [Coastal Hazard Map](#) and [Coastal Hazard Assessment Report](#), as well as a [nature-based solutions guide](#) and educational materials for real estate professionals
- In addition, the Government is in the seventh year of a nine-year project aimed at upgrading and improving the provincial dykeland system. Upgrades were completed to St. Mary's Bay system and upgrades continued within the Annapolis dykeland system. In 2024-25:
 - 680 acres of farmland and infrastructure were protected
 - 2.8 kilometers of dyke were upgraded
- In July 2024, the Regulated Battery Extended Producer Responsibility Program came into effect, making Nova Scotia the seventh province in Canada to enact regulations for the safe and responsible collection of household batteries. This program will keep batteries out of landfills and promote recycling
- As of January 2025, lamps and lighting products are banned from disposal in landfills
- In 2024-2025, Government provided \$1.8 million to the ENRICH project through the Climate Change Action Plan. ENRICH is using this funding to:
 - Launch the African Nova Scotian Climate Justice Ambassadors Program, supporting a cohort of African Nova Scotian community leaders in building skills to address local climate issues
 - Deliver climate preparedness workshops and develop community resilience plans
 - Build local climate leadership through skills training and education
 - Hire a project coordinator and assistant to support implementation
 - Partner with local organizations to strengthen community climate resilience

[CLIMAtlantic](#) launched the [Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Training](#), a 12-week, part-time program designed for individuals who want to address climate change in their workplace or community. The first Nova Scotia cohort ran from January to March 2025, with 20 participants from municipalities, not-for-profits, First Nations communities and students.

Supporting Sustainable Prosperity

The [Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act](#) is the legislated roadmap to achieve sustainable prosperity, including a transition to a clean energy economy that will benefit every Nova

Scotian today and create generational change in the province. This requires an all-hands-on-deck approach, which Government is leading through demonstrated action.

In July 2024, the Department released its [third annual progress report](#) to outline Nova Scotia's progress on the *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act* and the Climate Change Action Plan, detailing efforts to respond to climate impacts, reduce emissions, and foster a sustainable economy. It highlights significant achievements, ongoing initiatives, and future plans to ensure the province's resilience and sustainability. It detailed progress in:

- Climate action, clean growth, modernizing environmental assessment, sustainable farming and aquaculture, circular economy and waste, supporting communities, and research and education
- Working with multiple sectors to advance our climate goals and contribute to a clean economy, healthy environment, and resilient communities

Modernizing the Environmental Assessment Process

The Department continued its work on modernizing the environmental assessment process. The Department seeks ongoing opportunities to speed up our transition to clean energy, fight climate change faster, support responsible use of our natural resources – building economic and energy resilience while protecting the environment.

Optimizing Funding Opportunities and Community Support through the Funding Navigator

In 2024–25 fiscal year, the Department's [Funding Navigator program](#) responded to 73 referrals and actively engaged in outreach efforts through conferences and community events to raise awareness of the program. The program continues to help non-profits, businesses, academic institutions, and all levels of government to access climate funding opportunities.

Additional Areas

In 2024-25, additional areas of focus included the following:

- Renewal of the [Canada–Nova Scotia Equivalency Agreement](#) which supports the Province's goals to reach 80 per cent renewable energy by 2030, phase out coal, cut electricity emissions by 90 per cent, and strengthen the grid
- Supporting the Community Climate Capacity program, which builds capacity in communities to advance climate initiatives that will have a positive impact. In May 2024, 19 participating communities were accepted into the program, providing them with a dedicated team of climate change experts that will help them with the projects over a period of three years to provide climate change educational and capacity-building support

Financial Results

Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

Environment and Climate Change	2024-2025 Estimate	2024-2025 Actuals	2024-2025 Variance
Program & Service Area	<i>(\$thousands)</i>		
Departmental Expenses:			
Administration	1,116	1,063	(53)
Policy	6,126	5,711	(415)
Inspection, Compliance, and Enforcement	16,728	16,134	(594)
Sustainability and Applied Science	9,943	14,291	4,348
Climate Change	39,963	39,201	(762)
Total: Departmental Expenses	73,876	76,400	2,524
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	26,969	21,893	(5,076)
Fees and Other Charges	2,176	2,485	309
Ordinary Recoveries	1,201	6,546	5,345
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	30,346	30,924	578
TCA Purchase Requirements	1,301	1,426	125
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	302.8	274.4	(28.4)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Department of Environment and Climate Change expenses were \$2.5 million higher than estimate due to fully recoverable expenses \$5.3 million, primarily related to the Canada-Nova Scotia Nature Agreement, partially offset by \$2.8 million in vacancy and operational savings.

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries were \$578 thousand higher than estimate primarily due to \$5.3 million in new agreements with the Federal government, \$0.3 million additional revenues and fees collected, partially offset by \$5.1 million in reduced Output-Based Pricing System revenues from estimate.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

TCA Purchases were \$125 thousand higher than estimate due to additional land purchases under Federal Agreements.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

FTEs were lower than estimate primarily due to temporarily vacant positions.

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 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 2024-25
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