



ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

2024-25

Fisheries and Aquaculture

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Accountability Report 2024–2025

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department for the year ended March 31, 2025, is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the Department outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by the Department's management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Department's 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 Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture's 2024-25 Business Plan.

Original Signed by

Minister Kent Smith

Original Signed by

Deputy Minister Jason Hollett

Measuring Our Performance

The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (the Department) aims to be a global leader in fisheries and aquaculture for the benefit of all Nova Scotians by stewarding the innovation and sustainable growth of our sectors. Nova Scotia continued to be Canada's leading seafood exporter in 2024, totaling approximately \$2.5 billion. In 2024-25 we developed, promoted, and advanced Nova Scotia's fishing, aquaculture, seafood processing, and sportfishing industries by undertaking the following priority initiatives:

Improving the Fisheries and Aquaculture Regulatory Frameworks

The Province is committed to an **aquaculture regulatory framework** that supports low-impact sustainable aquaculture. The Department conducted a [review of this framework](#) involving public and stakeholder consultation, which informed a series of recommendations from the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Regulatory Advisory Committee (NSARAC), completed in March 2023.

In 2024-25, the Department has been implementing the recommendations for improvements to the aquaculture regulatory framework, including:

- Amended the **Fisheries Coastal Resource Act (FCRA)** in fall 2024 under [Bill 471: Advancing Nova Scotia Opportunities Act](#), to improve the licensing process for low-impact sustainable aquaculture.
- Developed proposals for **amendments to the aquaculture regulations**.
- Implemented initiatives to support development in the sector and reduce business red tape by:
 - Working with the Municipality of Argyle to issue six calls for proposals for shellfish and marine plant aquaculture in the proposed [Argyle Aquaculture Development Area \(ADA\)](#).
 - **Reallocating inactive aquaculture sites** to industry for development. In the past year, the Department issued eight public calls for proposals for sites eligible for reallocation.

Nova Scotia is world renowned for producing safe, high-quality seafood. The Department is committed to a **fair and modern fish buying and fish processor licensing framework** in Nova Scotia; one that supports the seafood industry, inspires investor confidence, and generates economic returns for fishing communities.

In 2024-25, the Department **advanced regulatory and policy changes** to strengthen the current fish buyers and fish processors licensing system, which included:

- A review of the licensing regulations and policy, in consultation with industry and other interested parties. Consultations included presentations and discussions with the Nova Scotia Seafood Processor Advisory Committee, plus individual meetings and calls with licensed buyers, processors, and other participants in the seafood industry.
- As part of advancing the licensing system, several [changes to licensing terms and conditions](#) were made to improve reporting and accountability. For example, additional reporting requirements for lobster buyers related to lobster facilities, location of sales, and amount of dead loss.

Delivering a Coastal Classification System for Aquaculture

Aquaculture is an economic driver and an important part of Nova Scotia's future – employing nearly **800 people** and generating about **\$120 million** every year for Nova Scotia's economy. To guide planning for **responsible and sustainable aquaculture development**, the Province is creating a [Coastal Classification System](#) (CCS). The CCS is a tool that will map Nova Scotia's coastline to highlight areas that may be suitable for farming salmon, trout, oysters, or mussels. The new mapping tool is not intended to be used for regulated decision-making. Interested industry members will still be required to go through the traditional licensing and leasing process.

In 2024/2025, the Department:

- Created an [external engagement website](#), and shared information, factsheets, and a project update report to inform the public.
- Finalized the list of criteria to be used for the suitability assessments, after consulting with the public and stakeholders, including 368 responses to the online survey.

The new mapping tool, including the results of the suitability screening assessments, will be publicly available in 2025. The tool will be used to inform and improve future planning.

Supporting Government's Climate Change Plan and Climate Change Readiness in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sectors

The Department is playing a leading role in delivering on Government's [Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth](#), in partnership with the Department of Environment and Climate Change. The Department continued to leverage funding received under the Climate Change Plan to work with seafood sector operators to enhance understanding of potential climate change impacts to sectors and develop mechanisms to help industry adapt to and mitigate climate change.

In 2024-25, the Department:

- Launched the [Fisheries and Aquaculture Climate Change Portal](#) website. The Portal is an interactive information hub with resources and a dashboard specific to Nova Scotia's seafood sector and climate change.
- Partnered with the Centre for Marine Applied Research (CMAR), to conduct a **climate change vulnerability assessment** on the province's aquaculture industry. The results of the assessment will be available on the Climate Change Portal in 2025 to support the aquaculture industry in adapting to climate change.
- Launched the \$6.5 million [Fisheries and Aquaculture Energy Efficiency Innovation Fund \(FAEEIF\)](#) in June 2024, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Department of Energy, and administered by Efficiency Nova Scotia. The first round of funding recipients were announced with **14 projects receiving \$1.8 million** in FAEEIF funding with an estimated lifetime greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions savings of **39,200 metric tonnes (MT), equal to taking 9,100 cars off the road**.
- CLIMAtlantic was hired to design and administer the **Fisheries and Aquaculture Climate Change Adaptation Fund**. This innovative fund is expected to be allocated to pre-qualified applicants starting in 2025-26.

- Expanded access to the seafood sector **Onsite Energy Manager (OEM) program** in partnership with Efficiency Nova Scotia. The Department's OEM works directly with seafood sector operators to adopt efficient technology, lowering greenhouse gas emissions and saving operators money. To date, the OEM's work has resulted in an estimated **reduction of 17,000 MT GHG emissions** (equal to taking nearly 4,000 cars off the road) and **\$3.3 million in sector energy cost savings**.

Developing Nova Scotia's Sportfishing Sector and Advancing Government's Accessibility Commitments

The Department supports advancing economic growth within our province through the continuous growth of the sportfishing sector, which contributes an estimated **\$70 million** to Nova Scotia's economy. We do this by **leveraging innovative partnerships** with Tourism Nova Scotia and targeted marketing, positioning Nova Scotia as a sportfishing destination through [Fish Nova Scotia](#).

The Department also **contributes to Nova Scotia's goal to be an accessible province** by 2030. [Government's 2022-25 Accessibility Plan](#) includes a goal of enhancing the accessibility of government-owned public spaces, including accessible sportfishing sites.

In 2024-25, the Department:

- Improved existing **barrier-free sportfishing sites** and created resources to encourage the development of additional accessible fishing sites, in addition to the 20 sites currently in place, including:
 - Beginning work with New Harbour River Association on a multi-phase access project which will involve aspects of easy access sportfishing.
 - Evaluated Lock 5 at the Shubenacadie Canal for future development.
 - Developed guidelines for easy access sportfishing sites which will serve as a resource for new developments and improvements to existing sites and will align with the Built Environment Accessibility Standard where appropriate.
- **Delivered 51 [Learn to Fish \(L2F\)](#) events** by staff directly and in collaboration with several volunteer sportfishing organizations, five hosted specifically for individuals with disabilities. In total, more than 120 individuals were able to take part and learn to sportfish.

Supporting the Innovation and Sustainable Growth of our Fishing and Seafood Processing Sectors

Atlantic Fisheries Fund

The [Atlantic Fisheries Fund](#) (AFF) continued **to support innovation and opportunities for growth** within the fish and seafood sector. The fund supports **360+ projects** to grow and innovate Nova Scotia's seafood sector in coastal communities across the province.

Market Development and Promotion

The Department is actively working to reduce dependency on US markets and supporting industry to grow and diversify into existing and new markets.

In 2024-2025, the Department:

- **Promoted Nova Scotia's premium seafood in domestic and international markets** to reinforce its status as Canada's leading seafood exporter. This included participating in five domestic events and six international events in South Korea, Philippines, Hong Kong, Boston, Spain and Singapore.
- Collaborated with industry stakeholders and government entities to **diversify seafood species and sales distribution channels**, focusing on strategic markets such as the Indo-Pacific and the European Union.
- Actively supported and participated with industry in **market diversification activities** in Singapore, the European Union, and the United Kingdom.
- **Grew local seafood consumption** through Department marketing initiatives and ongoing collaborations with the [Nova Scotia Loyal Program](#) and the Department of Agriculture.

Supporting Growth in our Fishing and Seafood Processing Sectors

The Department is committed to advancing the development and long-term sustainability of the industries we support.

In 2024-2025, the Department:

- Continued to support **industry development projects** related to food safety, product quality, new product development, sector safety, and sector awareness programming by:
 - Renewing the [Seafood Accelerator Program](#), administered by Perennia, and adding a technical advisory services component to make resources more accessible to industry.
 - Renewing the [Team Seafood Student Bursary](#) program for two years and enhancing bursary offerings to focus on fisheries-related fields of study.
 - Launching the second phase of the **Marine Education classroom materials initiative** which is designed to provide resources to teachers in grades 7-12 in addition to the resources already available for grades primary-6 students.
- **Advocated for and represented Nova Scotia's seafood interests** regionally, nationally, and internationally, including:
 - Nova Scotia's interests in the Unit 1 Redfish Fishery.
 - Nova Scotia's and Canada's interests regarding proposed harvesting changes in the Lobster Fishery which would drastically impact live lobster imports and sales to the United States.

Financial Results

	2024-2025 Estimate	2024-2025 Actuals	2024-2025 Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$ thousands)		
Departmental Expenses:			
Administration	842	594	(248)
Policy and Strategic Advisory Services	1,408	1,541	133
Aquaculture	5,454	5,148	(306)
Inland Fisheries	3,138	3,071	(67)
Marine	4,475	4,845	370
Marketing	634	1,087	453
Total Departmental Expenses	15,951	16,286	335
Additional Information:			
Revenues	794	776	(18)
Fees and Other Charges	1,001	1,084	83
Ordinary Recoveries	500	981	481
Total: Fees and Recoveries	2,295	2,841	546
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	82.2	80.6	(1.6)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanations:

Increase in recoverable expenses relating to ACOA Hurricane Fiona relief.

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Miscellaneous increases across the department, mainly related to ACOA Hurricane Fiona relief and the Fish Harvester Organization Support Act.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

N/A.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

Vacant positions across the Department.

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 the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture:

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	n/a
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	n/a