



ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

2024-25

Growth and Development

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Accountability Report 2024–2025

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Department of Growth and Development

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Accountability Statement

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

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Department of Growth and Development 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 Plan.

Original signed by

Original signed by

Honourable Colton LeBlanc
Minister

Chris Morrissey
Deputy Minister

About Department of Growth and Development

The Department of Growth and Development drives economic growth and productivity by creating the conditions for communities, businesses and households to thrive. The Department works with key partners to foster a dynamic environment that supports housing innovation and sector development, providing the necessary solutions to grow our population and economy.

In December 2024, the Department of Economic Development and the Housing branch of the former Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing merged to become the Department of Growth and Development. This Accountability Report reflects the outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the 2024-25 business plans of these two predecessor departments.

Housing

The Department develops strategic housing policy and develops and implements programs and services to increase housing in Nova Scotia, through increased housing supply, preserving existing affordable housing supply, promoting homeownership, and growing the community housing sector.

The work includes setting strategic policy for the operations and management of the Province's publicly owned housing assets, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency (NSPHA).

The Department also has responsibility for the regulation of short-term rentals across the province and administration of applicable legislation. Other accountabilities and responsibilities include the implementation of the five-year housing plan, working across government and with partners to address changing housing needs, through innovation, by maintaining comprehensive housing data to support informed decisions, leading housing Federal-Provincial-Territorial relations, and negotiating and implementing Federal-Provincial funding agreements. The Housing branch oversees the Nova Scotia Building Codes, ensuring that new construction meets high standards of safety, accessibility, energy efficiency, and structural integrity, while providing technical and policy advice to partners across the province.

Additionally, the Housing branch leads the Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

Economic Development

The Department advises and develops economic policy in the province and advances government and departmental priorities by ensuring alignment on economic objectives. The Department builds and maintains close relationships with provincial departments, offering strategic advice on economic issues, and providing data-informed analysis.

Working alongside crown agencies - Invest Nova Scotia (INS) and Events East Group (EEG) - the Department leads and aligns government efforts to create the foundation for business growth, sector development, and community growth and development across the province.

Measuring Performance

Housing

In collaboration with our partners, the Department continued to advance the implementation of the 12 Key Actions of the provincial Housing Plan, [Our Homes, Action for Housing](#), under the three strategic solutions. Accomplishments in 2024-25 under these strategic solutions are described below.

Increase housing supply

- An estimated 23,541 new units were supported through the designation of four Special Planning Areas (SPAs) through the Executive Panel on Housing in the HRM. This is in addition to the 11 SPAs designated prior to 2024-25 that will create an estimated 25,694 new units for a total of 49,235 in 2024-25.
- The Department entered into Conditional Land Contribution agreements on five opportunity sites through the Land for Housing Program. 624 units are enabled across the five sites, of which 253 will be affordable.
- The new Short-Term Rental Registration Act and regulations came into effect September 2024 with a new Short-Term Rental (STR) registry. 3,173 STRs were registered as of March 31, 2025.
- The Student Housing Development Program launched, and a proposal call resulted in eight submissions that could create 923 new student beds.
- The Housing Trust completed two projects to create housing for healthcare workers and is currently working on six more projects towards the delivery of at least 112 units.
- Updates to Minimum Planning Requirement Regulations for HRM were adopted in August 2024 to remove barriers and create more opportunities for housing in HRM. HRM is required to implement these regulations by June 30, 2025.

Grow and sustain affordable housing

- The Department funded repairs for units owned and managed by Tawaak Housing Association, a non-profit Indigenous housing organization. Repair to 111 units of affordable housing is underway with approximately 91 units repaired as of March 31, 2025.
- 48 units of public housing were divested to the Preston Area Housing Fund in September 2024 along with an investment of \$8.5M to support the project and assist with repairs and maintenance. The organization is planning to divest some of those units to provide homeownership opportunities in the community.
- In August 2024, the Community Housing Capital Fund launched with a provincial funding contribution of \$11.5M. Five community housing providers have successfully completed the pre-qualification stage. Requests under evaluation totaled just under \$3M as of March 31, 2025.
- The Executive Panel on Housing in HRM granted Akoma Holdings \$1.2M to support the Organizational Structure and Capacity Building and Development Planning and Partnerships Plan for Akoma's development in Westphal.
- The Community Housing Acquisition Program invested \$6.31M to support the acquisition of 38 units of supportive housing in five projects including \$3.68M to support Phoenix Youth to acquire a property on Kencrest Avenue in Halifax to support up to 24 youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Deliver programs people need

- The Survivors of Gender-based Violence benefit was launched in June 2024, offering monthly rental support. The benefit provides a monthly benefit to individuals and families fleeing or planning to leave their home due to acts of gender-based violence who need assistance to pay their rent. 249 households received support through the benefit from launch to March 31, 2025. Applications are processed within 1 to 2 weeks.
- In 2024-25, the Department contributed an additional \$2M to the Community Housing Growth Fund (CHGF), delivered by the Community Housing Transformation Center, funding grant allocations that support the growth and capacity of the provincial community housing sector. To date, \$9.5M has been invested in the CHGF; \$2M of that funding is dedicated to African Nova Scotian/Black-led non-profit housing organizations.
- Initiated a new self-identification project for housing program applications in alignment with the provincial standards developed by the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism under the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*. The data collected will provide valuable insights into our clients, helping identify any barriers or gaps, and uncover opportunities for future program improvements.
- In 2024-25, the Rent Supplement program evolved from a regional model to a province-wide delivery model with centralized intake. To date there has been an increase in efficiency, more equitable access to support for all Nova Scotians, and a reduction in application processing time from 7.6 months in 2022-23 to 2.2 months in 2024-25. Applications from households experiencing homelessness are processed within 1-2 weeks.
- Home repair programs have been restructured into two program streams - the Housing Repair Program and the Accessible Housing Program. Policy and procedural changes include clarifying repairs classified as urgent, emergency, and health and safety-related; increasing the maximum house value thresholds (\$360K for HRM; \$280K for the rest of the province); a new program guide; and refreshed website to provide improved information for applicants and clients. The program continues to provide up to \$18,000 in assistance with the first \$10,000 in the form of a grant and the remaining \$8,000 as a forgivable loan.

Key Performance Indicators

The Department developed key performance indicators and metrics to monitor progress toward five-year targets set out in the Housing Plan. Progress as of March 31, 2025 is described below for each target:

Create the conditions and pave the way for 41,200 new household units

Created conditions for 25,064 new units in 2024-25. Progress highlights include:

- 624 units conditionally approved in 2024-25 on provincial land through the Land for Housing program, of which 253 (41%) will be affordable.
- 355 secondary and backyard suites were approved in 2024-25.

Help make 17,250 household units more affordable

Last year, 13,848 household units were made more affordable. Progress highlights include:

- 1,362 new affordable and supportive housing units have been enabled through government support.
- 466 first time homebuyers purchased their first home with the support of the Down Payment Assistance Program.
- As of March 31, 2025, there were 8,922 active rent supplement recipients.

Improve housing conditions for more than 47,900 households.

Housing conditions were improved for 41,267 households in 2024-25. Progress highlights include:

- 2,687 households received support to complete emergency home repairs or adaptations through the Home Repair Program.
- 132 public housing units received energy-efficiency upgrades.
- The Seniors Care Grant helped over 38,000 people with household and healthcare services.

Working with the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency (NSPHA)

The Department worked with NSPHA to advance the priorities of the provincial Housing Plan, ensuring more Nova Scotians have access to affordable public housing that meets their diverse needs. Key results included:

- The Strategic Asset Management Framework was launched in May 2024 to provide guidance on the best use of publicly owned assets including divestiture, repair/rehabilitation, transform, and rebuild.
- 242 new public housing units were announced in February 2025 representing a \$136.4M investment in new public housing. These units are in addition to 273 units, including 51 modulars, announced in September 2023, bringing the total number of new public housing units planned, completed, or under construction to 515 which will provide safe, affordable housing for about 600 Nova Scotians.
- An information-sharing MOU allows the Department and NSPHA to collaborate effectively while serving shared clients efficiently and protecting personal information.

More information can be found in [NSPHA's Accountability Report](#).

Economic Development

Growing Nova Scotia's Strategic Sectors

The Department collaborated with our partners at the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship (COVE) to measure progress of the ocean sector and to assess new opportunities created by the establishment of NATO's Defense Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (NATO DIANA) program at COVE. NATO DIANA accepted its first cohort of 10 start-up companies in 2024-25.

The Provinces announced a [\\$1,055,000 investment in the Verschuren Centre](#) to increase its fermentation capacity, increasing the number of clients it can serve at a given time to 50 from 40.

The Province [invested \\$1,421,800 in Life Sciences Nova Scotia](#), via the Community Economic Development Fund, to support the growth of the life sciences sector through enhanced programming and supports for growing companies.

Enabling Increased Productivity for Businesses

In 2024-25, the Department worked with INS and provincial departments to provide strategic direction and share research and analysis and opportunities to increase productivity. This included providing input and advice to partner departments on their initiatives, economic analysis on proposals to identify productivity impacts, and cross-government presentations on Nova Scotia's productivity.

Through INS, business incubators and accelerators, and Regional Enterprise Networks (RENS), the Department delivered programs and services to help companies navigate, scale, invest in productivity, and adapt to the complex global business environment. Programs like the Innovation Rebate Program (IRP) play a vital role in driving private sector investment in facilities, innovative processes, and green technologies that enhance productivity and sustainability. With an annual commitment of \$12M, IRP supported 15 projects across 7 counties in 2024-25, with a strong emphasis on rural economic development. Since inception in 2022, the program has enabled businesses to undertake 87 projects with \$290M in private sector investment, helping to modernize operations and contribute to economic development in Advanced Manufacturing, Agri-Food & Beverage (Including Seafood), and ICT sectors across Nova Scotia.

INS's Productivity and Innovation Voucher program aligned technological expertise within Nova Scotia's universities and community college system with companies exploring new ideas, refining process, and testing potential producers to help companies evaluate and decide on changes that could impact business-level productivity.

Supporting Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Innovation and entrepreneurship continue to be key drivers of economic growth and resilience in Nova Scotia. In 2024–25, the Department strengthened its commitment to fostering a dynamic and inclusive innovation ecosystem by deepening partnerships with public and private sector organizations across the province.

The Department provided targeted funding to support early-stage, high-potential businesses, helping them scale, create quality jobs, and bring innovative solutions to market. Through collaboration with business accelerators and incubators, post-secondary institutions, and research organizations, the Department worked to ensure that entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in all regions have access to the resources, mentorship, and infrastructure they need to succeed.

Key initiatives included over \$2.8M investment in business accelerators and incubators, support for commercialization of research, and efforts to increase participation from underrepresented groups in the innovation economy. In addition, the Department [provided \\$5M to Neptune BioInnovation Centre](#), a world-class and first-of-its-kind facility for Canada. These actions are helping to build a more competitive, sustainable, and inclusive economic future for Nova Scotia.

Ensuring all Communities Experience Growth and Prosperity

Over the past year, the Department has taken several key actions to support a consistent and collaborative approach to community economic development across Nova Scotia to ensure all communities experience growth and prosperity.

The Department engaged with RENs, municipal leaders, and provincial departments to ensure alignment between local and provincial economic development priorities and to foster stronger coordination and collaboration across regions. The Department also supported cross departmental initiatives that incorporated REN input to ensure that potential impacts on communities were thoroughly considered during the development of programs and policies.

The Department applied a community lens to multiple government initiatives ensuring both the implications for rural and underserved communities, as well as a broader community economic development perspective, were meaningfully integrated into provincial decision-making. The

Department provided recommendations to other departments on key programs where economic development intersects with critical areas such as housing, workforce development, immigration, tourism and transportation.

Strengthening partnerships remained a priority. The Department worked to facilitate and deepen collaborations between RENs and other stakeholders, including federal agencies and local business associations, to build stronger regional strategies and align investments with community needs. The Department continued to collaborate closely with INS to ensure that strategic investments reflected local priorities and complemented the REN-led efforts.

The Department invested over \$3.1M in RENs and other key partners such as the Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse (CDÉNÉ), Halifax Partnership, and the Black Business Initiative. These investments were aimed at strengthening the capacity of the organizations to drive local and regional economic growth and supported a range of activities including business retention and expansion services and the advancement of inclusive economic development strategies across the province.

The Community Economic Development Fund continues to help sectors and communities become more competitive by funding projects that have a broad impact on a sector or region. During 2024-25, 18 new projects were approved with total funding commitments of \$11.4M. These projects will support both regional and sector development across the province. Examples include:

- Dalhousie University - \$1,415,250 to establish a Semiconductor Design Hub at Dalhousie.
- Celtic Music Interpretive Centre - \$750,000 to support a renovation to the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre in Judique.
- Western REN - \$78,313 to increase visitation and economic impacts of the Digby to Shelburne multi-use trail system.
- Strait of Canso Superport Corporation Ltd - \$750,000 to fund capital upgrades to the port that will facilitate the movement of onshore wind turbine components from the terminal.
- Life Sciences Nova Scotia Association - \$1,421,800 to support the growth of the life sciences sector in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia Loyal

Nova Scotia Loyal is an economic development program promoting local growers, harvesters, crafters and manufacturers to create a steady, loyal demand for local products so Nova Scotia businesses can grow and thrive.

Nova Scotia Loyal helps shoppers more easily identify local products and provides consumer incentives through partnerships with industry associations and retail to reward Nova Scotians when they shop local.

Highlights of the program in 2024-25 include:

- The program officially launched in July 2024.
- Over 1,000 Nova Scotia businesses have been approved for the program.
- The Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia voucher program saw 38% of redeemed vouchers being first-time visitors to a Farmers' Market location.

- Retail partnerships were established with Sobeys, Foodland, Co-op, Loblaws, No Frills, Your Independent Grocer, Walmart, and the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation (NSLC).
- The Nova Scotia Loyal brand ambassador team attended 384 consumer events and engaged with 329,753 Nova Scotians educating them on the program and the importance of buying local.

Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)

<u>Programs and Services</u>	2024-25 Estimate	2024-25 Actuals	2024-25 Variance
Senior Management	971	761	(210)
Policy and Operations	11,633	20,590	8,957
Halifax Convention Centre Amortization	7,720	7,722	2
Nova Scotia Job Fund	10,027	35,675	25,648
Community Economic Development Fund	3,000	4,141	1,141
Crown Corporations	63,431	50,725	(12,706)
Public Housing	96,954	116,287	19,333
Housing	176,514	180,455	3,941
Total - Departmental Expenses	370,250	416,356	46,106
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenues	54,561	40,118	(14,443)
Fees and Other Charges	1	1	--
Ordinary Recoveries	74,943	68,907	(6,036)
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	129,505	109,026	(20,479)
TCA Purchase Requirements	47,130	46,785	(345)
Funded Staff (# of FTEs)			
Department Funded Staff	134.8	126.1	(8.7)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Actual over Estimate Expenses \$ 46.1M:

Department of Growth and Development expenses were:
 \$46.1 million or 12.5 per cent higher than the estimate primarily due to \$25.6 million for Nova Scotia Jobs Fund for revised valuations and loss claim updates,
 \$19.8 million related to the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency,
 \$7.4 million under the Repair and Accessibility Programs,
 \$5.0 million for Neptune BioInnovation funding, and
 \$4.2 million for Nova Scotia Loyal.

These increases were partially offset by \$ 9.5 million in Invest Nova Scotia for payroll rebates, and \$8.1 million for the Rent Supplement Program.

Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Actual under Estimate Recoveries (\$ 6.0M): Mainly due to HRM Service Exchange Agreement. Actual under Estimate Revenue (\$ 14.4M): (\$ 9.4M) Interest, and (\$ 4.1M) Short Term Rentals registration fees

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

Actual under Estimate (\$ 0.3M): timing delays offset by increased major repair work

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

Actual under Estimate (8.7)

*Instructions: Please note - variance explanations should be for material differences only.

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 Growth and Development:

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)	n/a
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing. (Insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	n/a