



Office of the Ombudsman

Business Plan 2017-2018

March 1, 2017



Contents

Message from the Ombudsman	3
Mandate	4
Mission	4
Strategic Outcomes.....	4
Government Priorities.....	5
Budget Context	7
Appendix A – Outcomes / Performance Measures	8

Message from the Ombudsman

In keeping with our legislative mandate, this document has been prepared for the 2017-2018 planning cycle. This Office remains committed to providing effective provincial and municipal government oversight by conducting relevant investigations in a timely manner and where appropriate, issue meaningful recommendations. Specifically, recommendations which improve delivery of services to the public and maintain government accountably. In addition to the formal investigations and recommendations process, this Office will continue to seek to resolve concerns brought forward in a less formal approach or manner using administrative reviews. Administrative reviews tend to be shorter in length, and straightforward for the parties involved.

While government oversight is an important function of this Office, we also seek in this planning cycle to continue our programs focused on youth, seniors, inmates of correctional facilities, and the increasingly diverse population of Nova Scotians. As a compliment to the roles and responsibilities under the Ombudsman Act, this Office serves as an outlet for the public and provincial government employees to submit allegations of disclosure of wrongdoing. The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act and Regulations, enable Ombudsman Representatives to receive and assess information related to allegations of wrongdoing within provincial government.



William A. Smith
Ombudsman

Mandate

The Ombudsman is established as an Officer of the House of Assembly, a commissioner for investigations. The Office of the Ombudsman investigates complaints arising from the administration of provincial or municipal laws within Nova Scotia. The Office of the Ombudsman may also initiate investigations of administrative activities and practices, (own motion investigations) or matters referred to it by a committee of the House.

The primary mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman is to review and respond to citizens' concerns arising from the administration of provincial and municipal laws, pursuant to the Ombudsman Act. In addition, the mandate has expanded to include a proactive role in relation to the province's programs and services for youth, seniors, adult correctional facilities, as well as systemic and policy reviews. The Office also investigates allegations of disclosure of wrongdoing pursuant to the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act and Regulations.

Mission

To foster confidence in the public service by promoting the principles of fairness, integrity, and good governance.

Strategic Outcomes

1. **Complaint Resolution:** Ensure fair and accountable public sector administration by addressing complaints in a timely, comprehensive, objective, and independent manner. With a dedicated focus on matters related to children, youth, seniors, correctional services inmates, and diversity.
2. **Education and Outreach:** Broad public awareness and understanding of the role and mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman, and access to services. Increase presence within diverse communities, areas relating to youth, seniors, and government stakeholders.
3. **Public Policy and Initiatives:** Ensure the review and development of sound and effective government policy and procedures; with a focus on youth, seniors, and cultural

diversity initiatives. Including the establishment of internal complaint resolution and quality assurance processes. As well as the broader application of children's rights impact assessment tools.

Government Priorities

Priority areas identified by the Government of Nova Scotia include People, Innovation and Education. The Office of the Ombudsman is an independent oversight body which sets priorities specific to our role, and mandate of the Ombudsman. However, much of the work by Ombudsman Representatives aligns with the work and broader goals of provincial and municipal government.

People: *Nova Scotia's Population is growing, productive, and thriving.*

A key component to a productive and thriving population is one that is satisfied with the provision of government services. People want effective and diverse services from their departments, agencies, boards, and commissions. They want them to be fair and accountable. All three of the strategic outcomes for this Office align with the broader goal of supporting a population that can thrive and grow because of the confidence it has in government. This is in part obtained through:

- **Complaint Resolution:** When Nova Scotians have concerns about government services they are entitled to have access to avenues which enable them to express complaints in a manner that will produce timely and effective results. Investigations by this Office produce recommendations that have a direct impact on government policy development.
- **Education and Awareness:** The Office established and maintains an internal education and outreach committee. An outreach strategy was produced. The strategy places emphasis on reaching youth outside of care, as well as the public – particularly in diverse communities, while maintaining regular outreach efforts for vulnerable groups such as seniors in Long-Term Care (LTC) Facilities and Youth in Residential Child-Caring Facilities (RCCF's) and Detention Centres. In addition, this Office has a de-facto role of referring Nova Scotians to the support and services they seek through our intake and assessment staff.
- **Public Policy and Initiatives:** Our public reports demonstrate ours, as well as governments, accountability in providing Nova Scotians with an independent oversight agency. These reports include clear and realistic resolutions that government may implement to ensure effective public policy. Informally, our

interactions with responding agencies allow us to indicate issues with policy, before they escalate.

Innovation: *Nova Scotia has a strong and globally competitive economy and a sustainable, modern government.*

For a strong and competitive economy to exist, it is necessary for government to be efficient and accountable to the public. The innovation priority relates to our strategic goals of government Complaint Resolution and Public Policy and Initiatives.

- **Complaint Resolution:** Modern, sustainable governments are accountable to how effectively money is spent, especially during challenging economic times. A competitive economy cannot thrive without efficient government inputs. This Office identifies when policies designed to keep government accountable are not being followed, or efficient and effective service delivery is not being met. We also serve as an avenue for disclosure of wrongdoing so that public servants and the public may bring issues forward.
- **Public Policy and Initiatives:** Policies that support and do not burden individuals, aid in furthering innovation and supporting a modern economy. This Office routinely identifies potentially burdensome or unfair application of policies, that may inhibit Nova Scotians. Our oversight role, through the Ombudsman Act and Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act and Regulations, results in more effective delivery of government services, enhanced fairness, and accountability.

Education: *Skilled Nova Scotians drive a knowledge and innovation economy*

The Office of the Ombudsman established a dedicated role with respect to children and youth, both in and outside of government care, who routinely access government services. Part of that focus is because we understand that children and youth are vulnerable and the experiences they have at a young age will affect who they are for the rest of their lives. Children require care systems that help them grow and learn in ways that will guide them into healthy and productive adult lives. The Education priority relates to our strategic goals of Complaint Resolution and Education and Awareness:

- **Complaint Resolution:** Not all youth have the same support systems to guide them through government processes. Youth in care and other vulnerable youth often access government services out of necessity, sometimes involving multiple agencies. Reaching young people and educating them on their rights is a key component of our youth mandate. When we receive complaints from youth we endeavor to aid and support them in a way that is specific to their needs.

- **Public Awareness:** Educating the public, and youth, on our role and mandate is essential. Our work is complaint driven. It is integral that those who can make use of our services are aware of the service we provide. Representatives for the Office of the Ombudsman routinely visit youth living in Residential Child-Caring Facilities and Detention Centres to provide information sessions and listen to complaints and concerns. The Office is also committed to hosting a Youth Summit, to engage young people from across the province on issues impacting them. As well as to establish a Youth Ombudsman Advisory Council.

See Appendix A for a breakdown of performance measures, how they relate to each strategic outcome for the Office of the Ombudsman, and the strategies to achieve those outcomes.

Please also refer to Ombudsman Annual Reports located at <http://gov.ns.ca/ombu/publications.htm> for specific examples and case studies related to achieving our strategic outcomes.

Budget Context

Office of the Ombudsman			
Year	2015-2016 Estimate	2015-2016 Forecast	2016-2017 Estimate
Program & Service Area	(\$ Thousands)	(\$ Thousands)	(\$ Thousands)
Gross Expenses	1784	1602	1784
Salaries & Benefits	1534	1306	1564
Staff (FTEs)	17	15.2	17

Appendix A – Outcomes / Performance Measures

Outcome: Complaint Resolution: Ensure fair and accountable public sector administration by addressing complaints in a timely, comprehensive, objective, and independent manner. With a dedicated focus on matters related to children, youth, seniors, correctional services inmates, and diversity.			
Performance Measure	Target 2017-2018	Trend Data	Strategies
Create a systematic approach to intake with the aim of improving intake processes.			<p>Develop a guide book on intake roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Maintain accurate referral information</p> <p>Internal training to staff on mandate and jurisdiction</p> <p>External training to staff on government structure and function.</p>
Increase awareness of Disclosure of Wrongdoing process.	Provide information sessions, presentations, education and resource materials to designated officers, public servants, and the public.	<p>Disclosure investigations</p> <p>2009-10: 5</p> <p>2010-11: 2</p> <p>2011-12: 1</p> <p>2012-13: 2</p> <p>2013-14: 5</p> <p>2014-15: 0</p> <p>2015-16: 1</p>	<p>Provide information sessions, and educate government officials, Designated Officers and the public about the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act and Regulations.</p> <p>Develop and distribute resource and educational materials.</p> <p>Enhance internal communications/training on investigation processes, on the expanded role and scope of disclosure of wrongdoing, including assessing suitability under the Ombudsman Act.</p>

Outcome: Education and Outreach: Broad public awareness and understanding of the role and mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman, and access to services. Increase presence within diverse communities, areas relating to youth, seniors, and government stakeholders.

Performance Measure	Target 2017-2018	Trend Data	Strategy
Information, meetings and site visits.	Increase presentations, site visits, and the access individuals have to Ombudsman Representatives.	Individuals reached: 2010-11: 439 2011-12: 423 2012-13: 558 2013-14: 603 2014-15 511 2015-16 403 Youth, Seniors, Adult Detention Facilities reached: 2010-11: 247 2011-12: 260 2012-13: 321 2013-14: 243 2014-15: 243 2015-16: 182	Implement our outreach strategy, targeting public, government officials, civil servants, seniors, youth, and diverse communities. Ensure robust service delivery by increasing presence in youth and detention facilities. Increase the number and frequency of site visits/information sessions in relation to youth and seniors. Host a Youth Summit and establish a Youth Ombudsman Advisory Council.
Increased distribution of multi language materials.			Increase distribution of materials in French and Mi'kmaq. Distribute updated posters in all languages to site visit locations. Encourage office staff to enhance ability to provide services in French.

Outcome: Public Policy and Initiatives: Ensure the review and development of sound and effective government policy and procedures; with a focus on youth, seniors, and cultural diversity initiatives. Including the establishment of internal complaint resolution and quality assurance processes. As well as the broader application of children’s rights impact assessment tools.

Performance Measure	Target 2017-2018	Trend Data	Strategy
Resolution of Administrative Review investigations, Formal and Own Motion investigations.		Percentage of Administrative Review investigations and resolutions with positive outcomes: 2011-12: 88% 2012-13: 89% 2013-14: 90% 2014-15: 92% 2015-16: 69%* *In 2015 the way Administrative Reviews are categorized was changed	Increase public and government’s awareness of the role of the Office. Increase site specific visits to provincial and municipal government facilities. Provide reports to departments on issues relating to youth and adult inmates. Timely resolution of reviews and investigations.
Acceptance and implementation of recommendations. Recommendations under the Ombudsman Act	Formal Ombudsman Act Recommendations Maintain standard at or near 2008-2009 base year: Accepted and implemented: 27	Formal recommendations made under Ombudsman Act: 2011-12: 60 2012-13: 23 2013-14: 44 2014-15: 7 2015-16: 12 Accepted and implemented: 2011-12: 21 2012-13: 22	Continue to monitor implementation of recommendations. Where appropriate upon completion of an administrative review or formal investigation, issue recommendations with a focus on government accountability and policy development.

		2013-14: 44 2014-15: 7 2015-16: 12 Rejected: 2011-12: 1 2012-13: 1 2013-14: 0 2014-15: 0 2015-16: 0	
Recommendations under the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act	Formal Disclosure of Wrongdoing Regulations Recommendations* (*now the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act) Maintain standard at or near 2008-2009 base year: Accepted and implemented: 14 Rejected: 1	Formal recommendations made under Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act: 2011-12: 4 2012-13: 0 2013-14: 0 2014-15: 0 2015-16: 0 Accepted and implemented: 2011-12: 0 2012-13: 4 accepted and monitored from 2013-14: 4 accepted and monitored from 2014-15: 0 2015-16: 0 Rejected: 2011-12: 0 2012-13: 0 2013-14: 0 2014-15: 0 2015-16: 0	Continue to monitor implementation of recommendations. Where appropriate upon completion of an administrative review or formal investigation, issue recommendations with a focus on government accountability and policy development.

