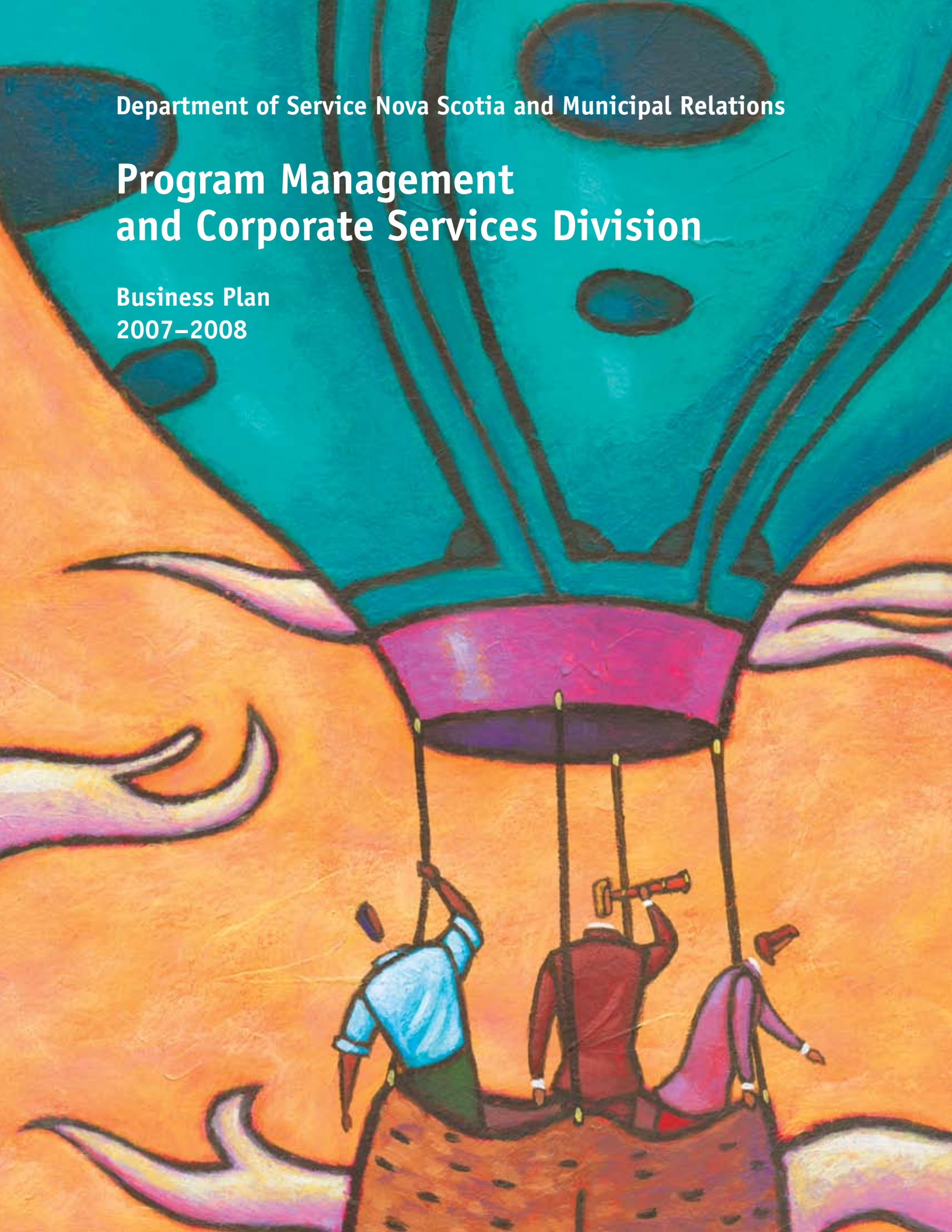


Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

Program Management and Corporate Services Division

Business Plan
2007–2008



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**Business Plan
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**Department of Service Nova Scotia
and Municipal Relations**
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Message from the Executive Director

In the past 12 months, Program Management and Corporate Services has been asked to deliver on several major government initiatives – implementing gasoline price regulation, developing legislation to control the activities of payday lenders, and designing the rebate of the provincial portion of HST on home heating fuels. All of this is in addition to the significant ongoing responsibilities the division has in the areas of corporate support services, consumer protection, fuel and tobacco tax administration, business licensing, and corporate collections.

I am extremely proud of the way we have stepped up to these challenges while carrying on with our regular activities. The staff of this division deserve the greatest respect for their skills and professionalism as they serve Nova Scotians and work towards enhancing their well-being.

Within these pages, you will find descriptions of the purpose, people, and priorities of the Program Management and Corporate Services Division. We're a diverse group with extraordinary reach into the lives of Nova Scotians. The tax revenue we protect is measured in the hundreds of millions of dollars and funds countless critical government programs. Our tenancies legislation provides the framework for over a billion dollars' worth of transactions each year between landlords and tenants. Our consumer protection statutes ensure that citizens are treated fairly in the marketplace. And our human and financial corporate services units make all of this, and more, possible by ensuring that we have the best staff and financial resource management tools available to do our important work.

This plan is our commitment to strive to do things better. The priorities we report in this document don't form an exhaustive list of what we do. Instead, they identify key areas we want to improve, enhance, or expand. Best of all, we'll achieve our priorities without sacrificing the quality of our day-to-day work, or placing unreasonable burden on staff.

Thanks for taking the time to learn about Program Management and Corporate Services.

Cameron MacNeil
Executive Director

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Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

Advance the policy, regulation, and administration of programs and services for business, consumers, and internal clients in a fair, consistent, and timely manner.

Vision

Our efforts support a level playing field for business, consumers, and the Nova Scotia taxpayer. The revenues administered by the division fund crucial programs and services for citizens. The support services we provide within the department and to external partners and government clients are second to none and are recognized for the value they add.

Values

- Fairness and consistency guide our interactions with clients, consumers, and taxpayers.
- Activities and services are timely and efficient, without compromising quality.
- Progress, innovation, and consultation are encouraged.
- Clients and staff deserve respect, privacy, confidentiality, and the highest standards of integrity.
- Staff have important contributions to make and merit investment in their professional development.
- Collaborative approaches to problem solving are favoured.

The Big Picture

Government-Wide Context

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) is one of 17 government departments. Each department must support the strategic goals of government. These goals, entitled the Corporate Path, have three key strategic directions:

- [1] Creating winning conditions
- [2] Seizing new economic opportunities
- [3] Building for individuals, families, and communities

Department Context

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations organizes itself into four units, which are aligned with its core business areas:

- Program Management and Corporate Services
- Access Nova Scotia
- Municipal Services
- Assessment Services

The following department-wide goals, which support government's Corporate Path, have been identified:

- [1] Partner with municipalities to promote effective local government and healthy and vibrant communities.
- [2] Improve accessibility and quality of government information and services in a cost-effective manner, while maintaining security, integrity, and accuracy of records/data and revenues.
- [3] Modernize departmental programs and infrastructure to support citizen-centred service models and to address emerging issues.
- [4] Provide a motivating work environment and develop staff to meet current and future departmental needs.

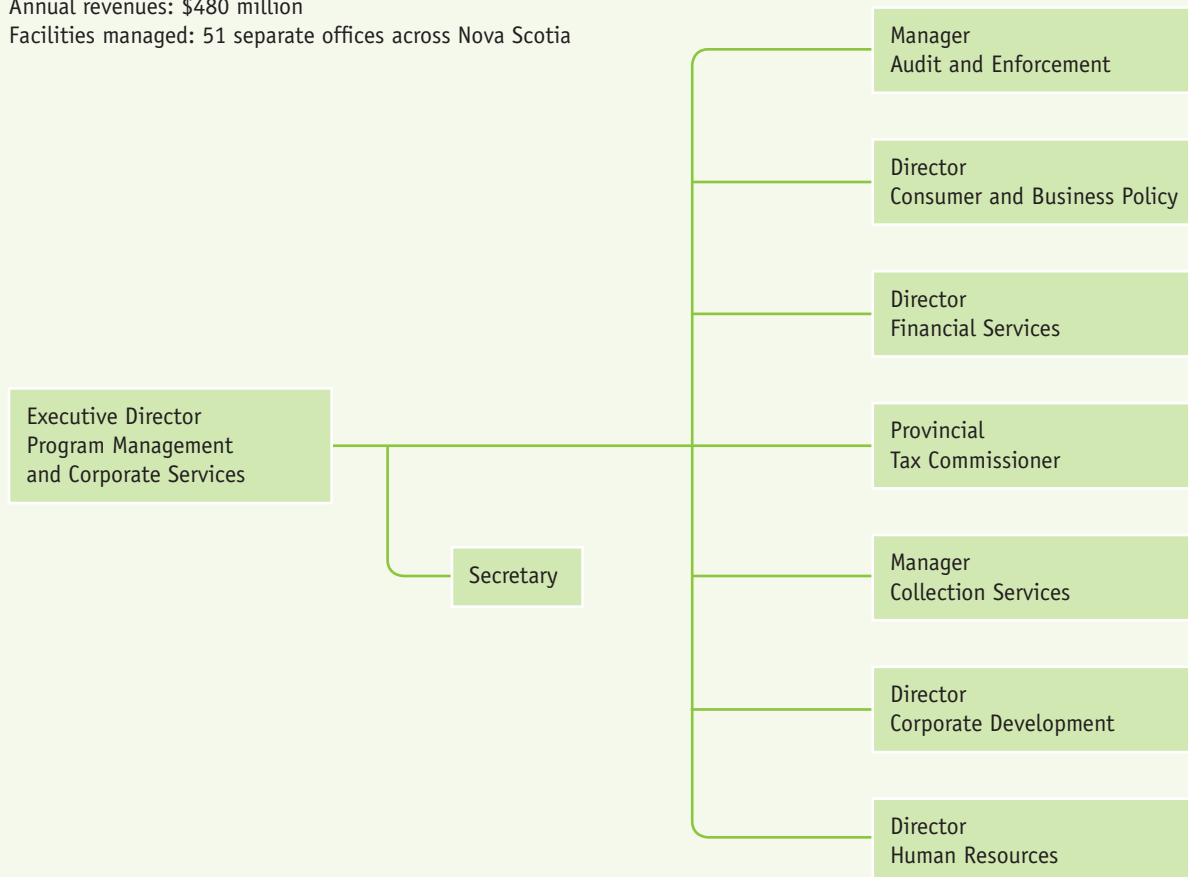
Division Context

Program Management and Corporate Services strives to achieve the following five goals:

- [1] Improve the protection of the revenue base assigned to the department by fair and effective enforcement and collection activities.
- [2] Enhance tax compliance through the effective development and consistent application of tax policy, legislation, and regulations that support government objectives and minimize unnecessary burden on businesses.
- [3] Enhance consumer protection services and promote an orderly market place through improved program design and delivery.
- [4] Enhance the effectiveness of human resource and financial services delivery within the department.
- [5] Improve the quality of support services provided to the department and enable more efficient and effective programs offered by SNSMR.

Program Management and Corporate Services

Number of employees: 122 full-time equivalents
Annual budget: \$13 million
Annual revenues: \$480 million
Facilities managed: 51 separate offices across Nova Scotia



Core Business Areas

Audit and Enforcement

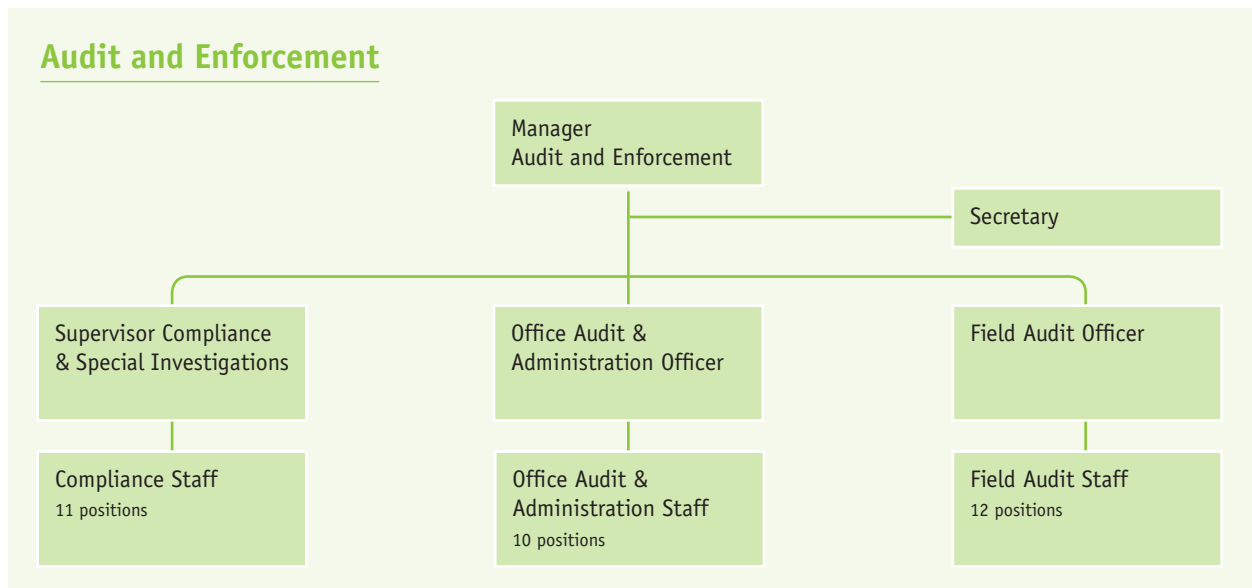
- Protects the revenue base by providing audit and enforcement functions under the Revenue Act, the Petroleum Products Pricing Act, and others
- Enhances department consumer protection activities by providing audit support under consumer protection and business licensing programs

Our Priorities

[1] Tax Compliance and Revenue

The division is responsible for collecting nearly \$470 million in fuel, tobacco, sales, and corporate capital taxes each year. These revenues help to fund essential provincial programs and services.

Compliance staff will turn their attention to making it more difficult for individuals and businesses to evade tax responsibilities through their participation in black market sales. Efforts will focus on maximizing voluntary compliance with tax remittance and on enhancing audit and enforcement capabilities.



[2] Your Energy Rebate Program

This program was designed and launched in 2006–2007 to respond to consumer concerns over the cost of home energy. Department staff will work closely with vendors to ensure that they understand and fulfil their obligations under this program.

Our Activities

[1] Tax Compliance and Revenue

A strategy to increase visibility among vendors will be developed and implemented. More audits and inspections will be carried out across all program areas.

A computerized tax information system will be commissioned to assist with administration of the International Fuel Tax Agreement.

Increased collaboration with the RCMP will improve our ability to investigate and prosecute tobacco smugglers.

Education activities highlighting the negative effects of the underground economy will target businesses and individuals.

[2] Your Energy Rebate Program

Education, inspections, and audits are some of the tools that will be used to evaluate and encourage vendor compliance with program requirements.

Measuring Our Success

Our success will be measured by

- the number of investigations/charges from joint efforts with the RCMP
- progress achieved in building a computerized tax information system
- the number and success of initiatives to educate stakeholders about the consequences of the underground economy
- the number of audits and inspections carried out under the Your Energy Rebate Program

Our efforts protect the most significant own-source revenue collected by government. I'm proud of my team and the important work they do.

Bernie Meagher
Manager, Audit and Enforcement

Consumer Programs

- Promotes the interests of consumers through regulation of business activities
- Provides information/dispute-resolution services

Our mandate includes administration of legislation governing many aspects of consumer protection

Our Priorities

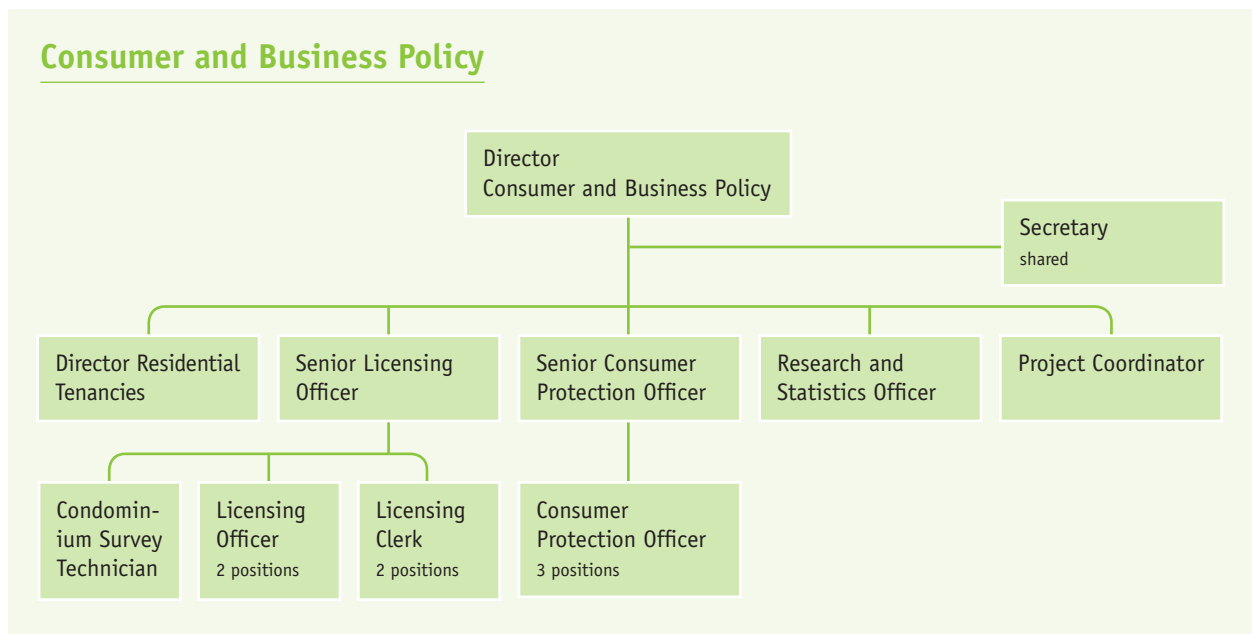
[1] Consumer Protection

An effective consumer protection program ensures consumers have the legal protections they need to successfully navigate the marketplace and helps consumers understand their rights.

In 2007–2008 the department will improve several key consumer-protection statutes. As well, resources will be directed toward communicating marketplace rights and responsibilities to both consumers and businesses.

[2] Condominium Act Administration

The number of condominiums being developed in Nova Scotia has been steadily increasing for the past 10 years. A strategy will be developed and implemented to ensure that program resources and infrastructure can meet demand.



Our Activities

[1] Consumer Protection

Legislative amendments will be made or implemented in five important areas: Collection Agencies Act, Consumer Protection Act, payday lenders legislation, funeral services legislation, and the Residential Tenancies Act.

A strategy to identify key messages, stakeholder groups, and preferred communication tools will be developed, and implementation will begin.

[2] Condominium Act Administration

Resource needs will be assessed based on workload histories and projections. Any human or physical resource needs that are identified will be pursued. Program infrastructure will also be assessed to identify efficiencies that can be gained.

Measuring Our Success

Our success will be measured by

- whether we achieve improvements in our five identified areas
- the existence of quality communication material for consumers and businesses
- the number of consumer education pieces and guides for businesses prepared
- how we address identified resource needs in the administration of the Condominium Act

Consumer protection is the result of strong legal protections and widespread knowledge that those rights exist.

Richard Shaffner
Director, Consumer and Business Policy

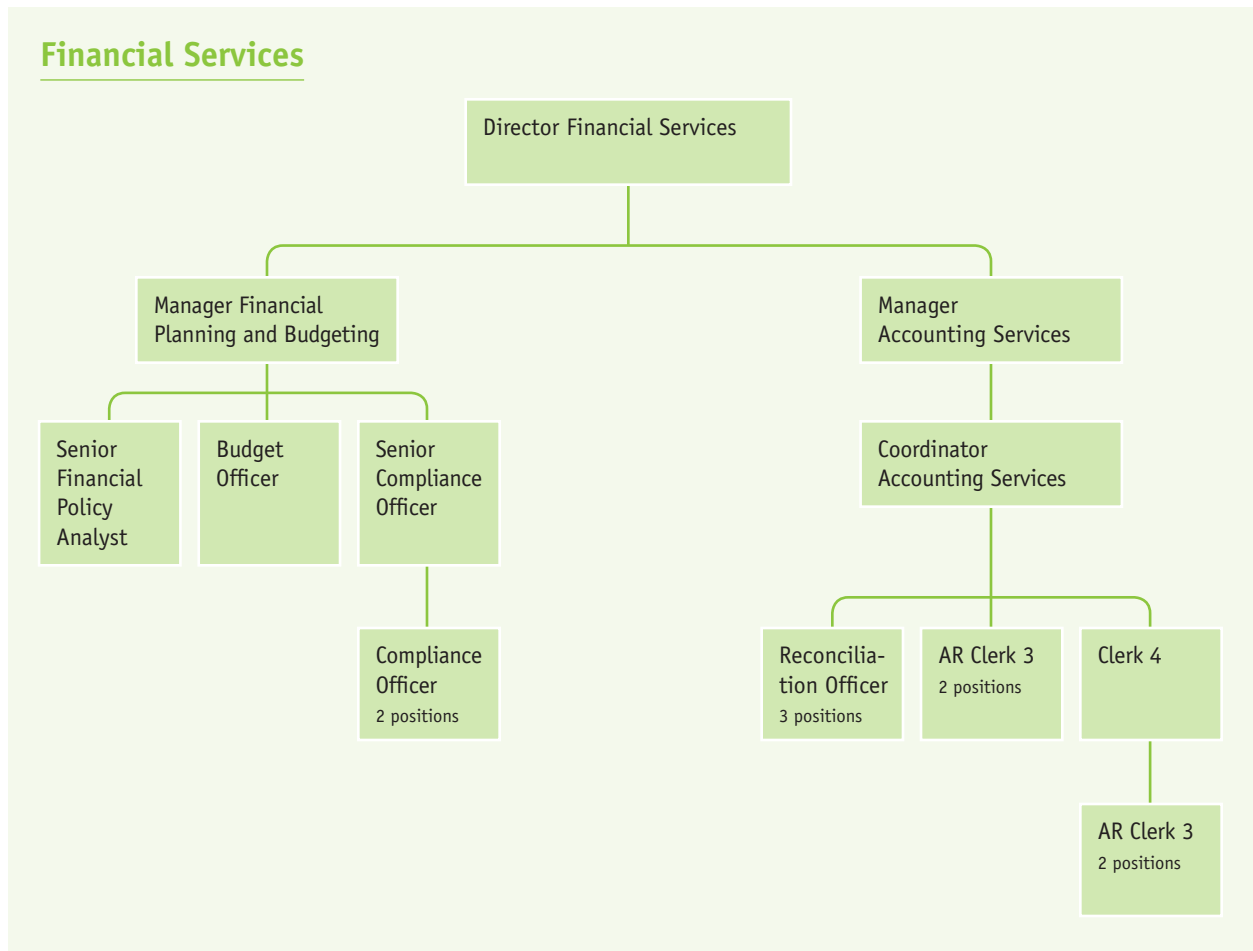
Financial Services

- Ensures that timely and quality financial information and analysis are provided to management to allow for sound financial strategic and operational decisions
- Develops, maintains, and ensures adherence to financial policies and procedures

Our Priorities

[1] Financial Policies and Procedures

Clear and consistent approaches to financial management are important to the functioning of an organization and are necessary to allow for an appropriate system of financial control.



Financial policies and procedures for Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations will be developed based on current practices, will incorporate feedback from internal stakeholders, and will be compared to best practices.

[2] Financial Information

Financial information available to managers will be enhanced through improvements to both the quality of the information and the timeliness of its availability.

Our Activities

[1] Financial Policies and Procedures

Meetings will be held with key internal stakeholders to identify their information and process needs. Subsequently, required policies and procedures will be developed and adopted.

[2] Financial Information

The amount of time needed to reconcile bank deposits to revenue will be shortened. The number of unreconcilable items will also be reduced.

A revised forecast process will allow for a higher quality of information for decision makers.

Research will help determine what financial information managers and decision makers need.

Measuring Our Success

Our success will be measured by

- whether financial policies and procedures have been developed
- how punctually and completely revenue accounts are reconciled
- whether savings are identified early enough in the fiscal year to allow the department to undertake additional initiatives

Our clients are also our colleagues. By partnering, we can help them achieve their objectives and make the most of their resources.

Pamela Muir
Director, Financial Services

Tax Policy and Administration

Provides an effective and efficient taxation system that optimizes provincial revenues and promotes consistency, fairness, and service excellence through the development and consistent application of tax policy, legislation, regulations, and communications

Our Priority

[1] Fair Administration

Create a level playing field for businesses that are compliant in the remittance of taxes by ensuring that taxes are applied in a fair and consistent manner and by enhancing the knowledge base of program staff.



Our Activities

[1] Fair Administration

- Staff training will ensure a consistent knowledge base among program employees.
- Enhanced information resources will provide staff with fast access to key program policies and requirements.
- Public information will be continually updated to reflect new developments in tax programs.
- A memorandum of understanding will be developed with Transport Canada to allow access to pleasure craft licensing information.

Measuring Our Success

Our success will be measured by

- a reduction of reported errors in processing claims and providing information to clients
- a qualitative assessment of the level of satisfaction and quality of information referenced by either internal or external clients
- a reduction in the number of queries to the tax information line by staff, who should be able to self-serve most of their information needs
- whether access to pleasure craft licence information is achieved

Most people think tax administration is all about the revenue, but it's as much about ensuring that all businesses and consumers are treated fairly.

Frank Moore
Provincial Tax Commissioner

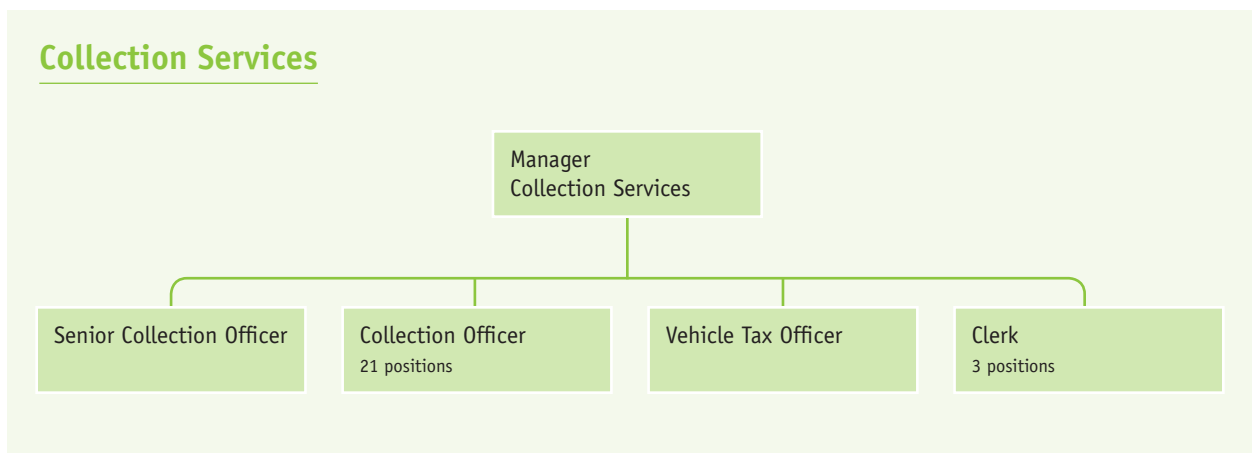
Collection Services

- Legislated to collect debts on behalf of all government departments and units
- Provides a means for Nova Scotians to meet their financial obligations to the Crown by developing and monitoring arrangements that fit an individual's ability to repay
- Monitors remittance of fuel, tobacco, and corporate capital taxes

Our Priority

[1] Enhanced Collection

Increase the role of Collection Services in overall government debt recovery.



Our Activities

Enhanced Collection

We will

- motivate staff by providing training and development opportunities
- ensure that departments and government units are actively transferring debts that are more than 90 days delinquent
- meet regularly with client departments to foster positive working relationships
- highlight the benefits of Collection Services to prospective new departments

Measuring Our Success

Our success will be measured by

- monitoring percentage increase in revenues
- the status of efforts to implement an employee performance management program
- the number of new client departments recruited
- the quality of our relationship with existing client departments

When collecting debts due to the province, our hard-working team maximizes revenues, while ensuring that no undue hardship is imposed on debtors.

Sharon Glazebrook
Manager, Collection Services

Corporate Development

- Supports all other units of the department by managing physical and operational infrastructure
- Coordinates many of the submissions to central agencies of government

Our Priorities

[1] Business Continuity Management

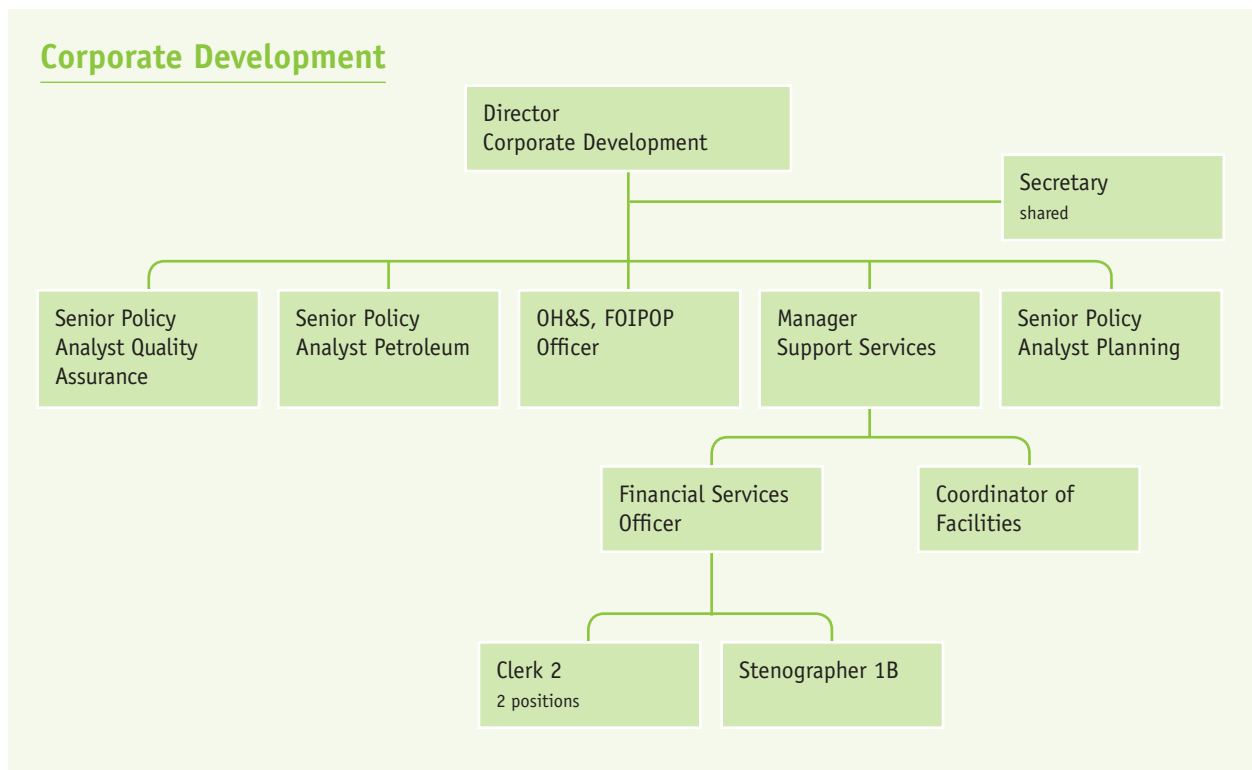
Identify and prioritize mission-critical tasks to create a plan, based on recognized standards of corporate governance and best practices, so that essential public services can continue to operate during an emergency.

[2] Petroleum Product Pricing

Administer fair regulatory models for petroleum product pricing, with an emphasis on compliance activities.

[3] Department Operational Infrastructure

Improve operational infrastructure of the department, focusing on Quality Assurance, Occupational Health and Safety, facilities management, and corporate support.



Our Activities

[1] Business Continuity Management

A hazard, vulnerability, and risk assessment will be conducted, followed by an analysis of the potential impact of an occurrence on department business areas. Using this information, a plan will be developed to ensure the delivery of critical programs and services regardless of the event.

[2] Petroleum Product Pricing

Findings of an independent consultant's analysis of the current petroleum product price regulation regime will be reviewed, and a response will be prepared for consideration by government. Any required legislative or regulatory amendments to the Petroleum Products Pricing Act will be prepared.

Prices will continue to be set on a weekly basis, and stakeholder issues will be addressed as they arise.

[3] Department Operational Infrastructure

Quality Assurance activities will include a focus on identifying program areas for potential application of the QA process and staff training in Quality Assurance techniques.

Occupational Health and Safety activities will focus on implementing recommendations that resulted from the OHS audit conducted in January 2007 and collaboration in the development of a common Occupational Health and Safety program framework for the Government of Nova Scotia.

Each and every day I want staff to ask themselves "What did I do to add value to government operations today?"

Mike Duda
Director, Corporate Development

Activities around facilities management will include consultations on space requirements for new tenders and assessment of leasehold improvements for pending lease renewals.

Corporate support activities will concentrate on building processes that help reduce the burden on department staff when preparing submissions for central agencies such as Treasury and Policy Board.

Measuring Our Success

Our success will be measured by

- whether we have a comprehensive business continuity plan in place
- the effectiveness and timeliness of our response to the independent assessment of the petroleum product price regulation regime
- the number of Quality Assurance projects undertaken in the department, and client satisfaction with the process
- the percentage of identified facilities management projects completed
- the average cost per square foot of leased space
- the existence of improved and streamlined processes for making submissions to central agencies

Human Resources

Designs and delivers a full complement of human resource services, including staff relations, labour relations, compensation and benefits, staff development and training, human resource planning, organizational effectiveness, and recruitment and selection

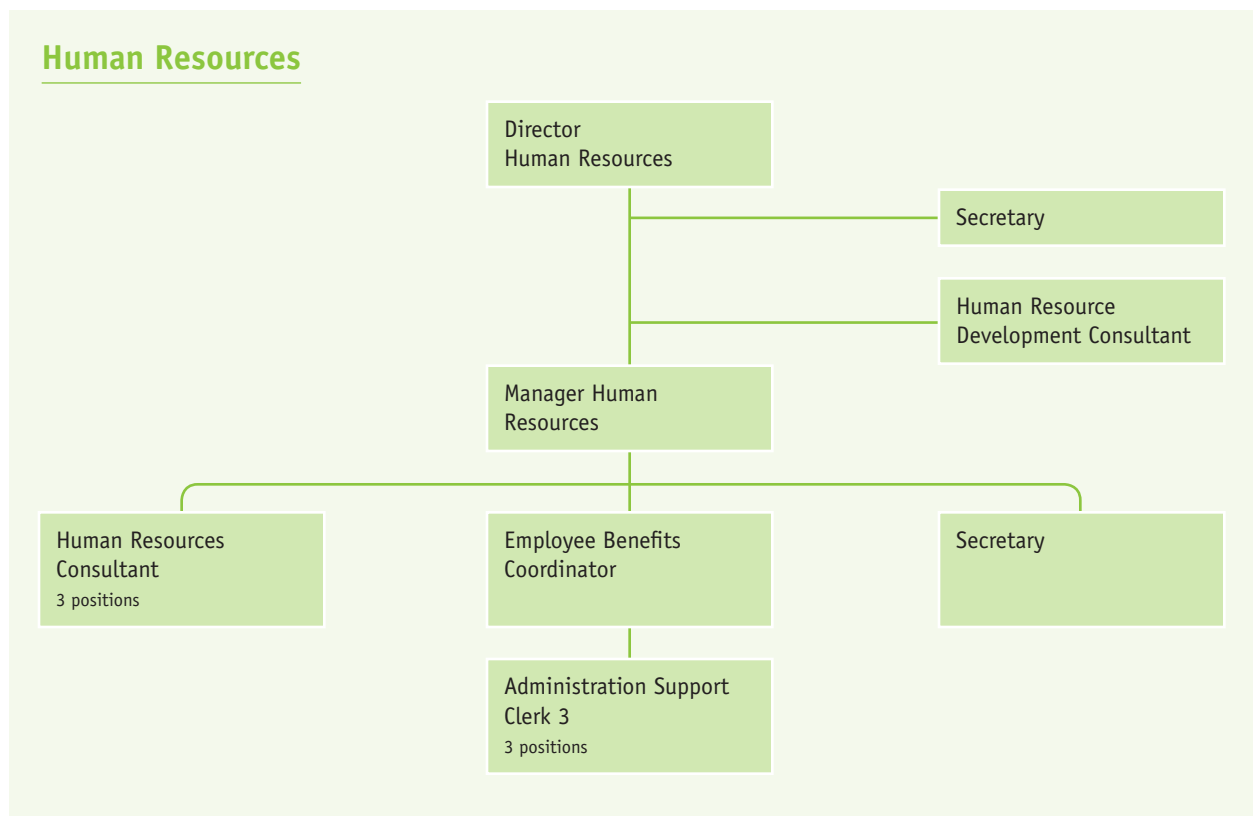
Our Priorities

[1] Knowledge and Tools

Ensure that managers can access appropriate human resource knowledge and tools to augment their efforts to recruit, retain, and develop employees.

[2] Employee Training

Enhance staff effectiveness by providing role-specific training and developing web-based information resources.



Our Activities

[1] Knowledge and Tools

A succession plan will be developed to help mitigate the impact of employee departures in key areas. As well, web-based resources will be developed to help managers with recruitment, training, and retention of employees.

[2] Employee Training

Although not specifically led by the Human Resources unit, various sections across the division will undertake employee-training activities. Examples include training for audit and enforcement, collection services, and business licensing staff. Web-based resources will also be created or enhanced across the division to ensure that staff have adequate tools and information to perform their duties.

Measuring Our Success

Our success will be measured by

- employee satisfaction survey results
- agreement to and action against a succession plan
- our ability to recruit and retain qualified employees
- progress in developing web-based resources for managers and employees
- progress achieved in unit-based employee training

Our greatest looming challenge will be to recruit and retain talented people. We're approaching the day when people will be retiring from public service faster than we can replace them.

Steve Jamieson
A/Director, Human Resources



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