

The Better Regulation Initiative

Why is Better Regulation Necessary?

When regulations are easier to follow, more people follow them. When businesses can spend less time figuring out regulations and more time doing business, business improves. When this happens, we protect our workplaces, our communities, and our environment. We ensure that Nova Scotia is a place where people want to live, work, visit, play, and stay.

That, in a nutshell, is what Better Regulation is all about – improving our quality of life at the same time that we improve our economy.

Regulation affects each and every Nova Scotian. That is why Better Regulation is everyone's business.

How do we achieve Better Regulation?

Government's starting point for the Better Regulation Initiative is that there need not be a conflict between a thriving business climate and the protection of our quality of life.

Nova Scotia's exceptional quality of life reflects the high value we attach to safeguarding our citizens, protecting the environment, and supporting our communities. We believe our quality of life is one of the province's biggest strengths and competitive advantages.

There are a number of examples of how we secure Nova Scotia's quality of life through better regulation. We have added nearly 10,000 hectares to our protected areas. We have improved food safety standards under a new Health Protection Act. And we have brought in new standards for occupational diving that are helping to keep workers safe at the same time that they are creating a level playing field for the industry.

We know that regulations represent a cost that can affect economic competitiveness if not applied with care. So while government has an obligation to protect the quality of life of Nova Scotians, we also need to be sensitive to the burden regulations can place on our business community.

What does business say about regulations?

Businesses are not telling us they want regulations done away with. They want safe communities and safe workplaces. But they also want government to do a better job of considering a regulation's effect on business, as well as on our quality of life.

If a regulation is unnecessary, they don't want it. If a regulation is needed for the public good, business wants government to find ways to cut the time and effort needed for them to comply with it. This is particularly true when it comes to the administrative effort, or paperwork, required of business.

The Better Regulation Initiative is an important step in that direction.

How does the Better Regulation Initiative differ from the Red Tape Reduction Task Force?

Better Regulation is a new, long-term project involving many provincial government departments. It builds on the findings of the Red Tape Reduction Task Force, which made its final recommendations in the Fall of 2004.

After reviewing almost 150 Acts and regulations, the Task Force acknowledged the progress that had been made since 2000. However, they also knew that more work remained. The Task Force recommended that government develop a habit of reducing unnecessary, uncoordinated and duplicative regulatory requirements as a routine business practice.

Since the formation of the Red Tape Reduction Task Force in 2000, Nova Scotia has become a national leader in streamlining administrative processes. The Nova Scotia Business Registry and its expanded online services are a case in point. Businesses can now apply for, pay for, and renew more than 60 different licences, permits, registrations and certifications online through the registry.



On the advice of the Red Tape Reduction Task Force, the government of Nova Scotia made a commitment to continuous improvement of our regulatory systems, which we are doing through the Better Regulation Initiative.

How does Better Regulation work?

It works on four fronts at once, which will be our main priority areas over the next couple of years.

Corporate Policies and Procedures

The Corporate Policies and Procedures project led by Treasury and Policy Board is building a strong network of regulatory coordinators across government departments. These experts will keep a watchful eye within their departments, to ensure that any new or amended regulations from their departments meet the Better Regulation principles.

In practice, this means the regulation in question has been developed only after a thorough evaluation of regulatory and non-regulatory tools, which determined that the new regulation is the best solution for whatever situation it is designed to address.

Small Business Solutions Project

A second project under the Better Regulation umbrella is a government/industry effort to assess the accumulated impact of regulations from various levels of government on small and medium sized business. This aspect of the initiative is being led by Service Nova Scotia.

They have begun a pilot project to identify and streamline approval processes for business people either starting up or operating an Inn in Nova Scotia. If overlap and duplication among the various levels of government can be reduced, the Inns project could serve as a model to apply to other sectors to reduce regulatory burden.

Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI)

The third major component of Better Regulation is the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI) led by the Department of Environment and Labour (NSEL). NSEL is the government's main regulatory arm, given the Department's wide-ranging responsibilities for protection of the environment, public and workplace safety, labour standards, liquor licensing, and pensions. The CCI aims to achieve "regulatory excellence" across programs of the department by improving our regulatory system and achieving better compliance with our laws.

There have been several exciting accomplishments. One project has implemented stronger public-safety protections for the maintenance of amusement rides. At the same time, the project harmonizes the certification of amusement-ride mechanics throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, making rides safer and also helping the industry by reducing insurance premiums.

Another project is developing specialized training programs that will strengthen inspectors' skills and improve consistency across the province.

Measurement and Reporting

The fourth major focus under the Better Regulation banner is measuring the cost of regulation. This work is directed at finding out what it costs business to meet the administrative requirements laid out in regulations.

To understand administrative burden, you have to measure and collect baseline data. After researching measurement approaches in Canada and worldwide, the Better Regulation Initiative is developing a model to measure the time it takes business to meet requirements such as finding the right forms, filling them out, and submitting them to provincial departments and agencies. Baseline data will be collected and reported during 2006, and will provide an important standard against which to measure our performance.

How does Better Regulation affect me?

Business owners will find that running a business is more competitive when regulations are easier to understand and follow. When regulations are followed, Nova Scotians can protect the things they value – clean soil, air and water, and safe, healthy workplaces and communities.

If we can get better at explaining, streamlining, and enforcing regulations, and harmonizing them with other governments, we will produce a fairer environment for business and a better economy for all. More trust in our regulatory systems will in turn encourage respect and compliance with the rules. Over time, we will build up a better business environment, a better economy, and a better quality of life for all Nova Scotians.

To find out more about Better Regulation – Everyone's Business, visit: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/betterregulation>

A closely related site is the Environment and Labour's Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI), a key part of the Better Regulation Initiative: www.gov.ns.ca/enla/cci



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