

**Government Accountability Document – October, 2006**

Annual Accountability Report For The Fiscal Year 2005–2006

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## **Accountability Statement**

The accountability report of Communications Nova Scotia for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2006, is prepared pursuant to the Provincial Finance Act and government policy and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against Communications Nova Scotia's business plan information for the fiscal year 2005-2006. The reporting of Communications Nova Scotia outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by Communications Nova Scotia's management.

This accountability report is the responsibility of Communications Nova Scotia's management and to the extent possible is a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in Communications Nova Scotia's business plan for the year.

**The Honourable Barry Barnet, Minister**

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**Robert Fowler, Deputy Minister**

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## **Message from the Assistant Deputy Minister**

Communications Nova Scotia continues to work hard to achieve its goals within the context of government's corporate objectives to provide the best possible communication and information products to the citizens of Nova Scotia. We have talented and loyal staff who strive for excellence and continue to set the bar high—achieving quality and value for our clients and stakeholders and citizens.

The 2005–2006 year marked our first within a new organizational structure designed to maximize efficiencies in meeting the needs of our audiences and clients. CNS priorities challenged staff to move beyond traditional boundaries by providing more of our communication in French in an effort to reach even more Nova Scotians with information on what their government is doing and why. The addition of a project management team has added to our capacity to coordinate functions more effectively and to provide better service all around. Our network within government has improved with CNS representation on a number of boards and committees, enhancing our ability to move information through government and to the public as quickly as possible.

It is delightful to watch CNS grow and mature as a leader in communications in Nova Scotia, and Canada.

**Laura Lee Langley, Assistant Deputy Minister**

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## **Introduction**

This accountability report is based on the goals, priorities, and outcomes set out in the 2005–2006 business plan of Communications Nova Scotia (CNS).

## **Strategic Goals**

1. Communicate government initiatives and decisions to Nova Scotian audiences.
2. Provide the highest quality and best-value communications products and services to government.
3. Make communications an integral part of all business in government.

## **Core Business Functions**

- ! **Communications Planning** - advice, issues management, media relation, event management, writing, editing, promotion
- ! **Production** - advertising, graphic design, multimedia, photography, printing, production management, video, web.

The purpose of this report is to provide an account of the progress that has been made in the pursuit of the objectives set forth in the 2005-2006 business plan. CNS is pleased to report the achievement of all major priorities and considerable progress toward the rest.

In addition to the plans and priorities set out in the 2005-2006 business plan, the agency embarked upon a strategic planning process in a number of areas.

## Priorities

### 1. *Communicate government actions to Nova Scotian audiences*

- **Develop and carry out communications plans for all significant government initiatives, so that the people who have an interest in those initiatives know about them.**

Communications staff in government departments and agencies produced communications plans for all significant government initiatives. Communications plans now accompany virtually all proposals submitted to Executive Council.

- **Co-ordinate communications planning, so that Nova Scotians continue to hear coherent and consistent messages from government.**

Managing directors work with staff in the Premier's Office to co-ordinate and schedule communications activities. Public events and news releases are plotted on a central, confidential planning calendar, and managing directors review and approve communications plans, news releases, and other public materials, to ensure consistency. Communications staff in departments routinely share information and collaborate on matters that cross departmental lines.

- **Improve French language capacity so that government can speak to Francophone audiences in their preferred language**

CNS led the development of French language translation guidelines, which have been accepted by the provincial government. The agency has increased the number of news releases it issues in French (in accordance with the translation guidelines), and supported French-language training for half a dozen employees.

### 2. *Provide the highest quality and best-value communications products and services to government.*

- **Improve project management, so that work is completed as quickly and economically as possible, by the most appropriate people, and according to corporate priorities.**

Communications between workgroups within CNS has been increased with the result of improved efficiency within the agency and improved customer service by

- ▶ holding regular (daily) production/information sharing meetings
  - ▶ identifying appropriate staff to work on these projects
  - ▶ initiating client contact within 48 hours of receiving CNS Service Requests (Form 130)
  - ▶ sending a Client Satisfaction Survey when the project is completed to gauge how we perform
  - ▶ sending monthly reports to communication staff within departments to make them aware of projects being requested
- **Continue to plan and invest in professional development of staff.**

Professional development continues to be an important aspect of the support that CNS provides to its staff. CNS invests in the ongoing participation of its staff in leadership development programs and is working with the Public Service Commission to find ways of increasing the level of staff involvement. CNS continues to host large seminars designed to include as many of its staff as possible as both a professional development and team-building activity. During this fiscal year, many of the staff participated in the Aboriginal Perceptions program sponsored by Aboriginal Affairs.

- **Continue to obtain the best value from service providers by establishing guidelines for selecting who is appropriate for a given job and by developing, with procurement division, a standing offer for professional communications services.**

To provide government and MASH sector users an effective means to procure cost-effective communications services from the marketplace, to address their short-term project support needs, the Marketing Promotion and Communication service function was added to Procurement Branch's annual Standing Offer for Consulting Services. This standing offer was effective from June 1, 2005, to May 31, 2006. Within this service function, 11 separate categories of communication specialization were identified. CNS received responses from 152 different individuals and firms identified as being qualified to provide communications services under the terms of the standing offer.

- **Improve the quality of government multimedia productions by developing and implementing a multimedia policy.**

A team from within CNS conducted research into a multimedia policy. The outcome of that research and consideration was a recommendation to develop multimedia guidelines rather than a specific policy which is consistent with the internet guidelines. The recommendations included a staff position—coordinator of multimedia—for which a well-qualified candidate has been hired.

- **Define strategies for providing timely and appropriate web support services.**

The agency hired a winter co-op student from the Dalhousie School of Business to conduct research into this and make recommendations. The student worked diligently, interviewing both staff within CNS and its clients, and conducting research into other government jurisdictions and the private-sector. The result was a comprehensive report that identified a high degree of customer satisfaction in our present level of service combined with a high risk for failure due to sharply increasing demands for our services. CNS has begun addressing means to increase its capacity for service delivery and to better support the government internet/web structure as a whole.

**3. *Make communications an integral part of all business in government.***

- **Continue to participate in senior management teams of all government department.**

Communications directors participate in senior management meetings in all government departments.

- **Participate in corporate forums (e.g., Legislative Committee).**

CNS staff continue to participate in a weekly senior government planning meeting, as well as thrice-weekly Focus meetings with key communications staff from the Premier's Office and Treasury and Policy Board, the Legislative Committee, the French Language Co-ordinators' Committee, an Employee Survey Advisory Committee, and other regular and ad hoc corporate committees.



## Financial Results

<b>Communications Nova Scotia</b> 2005–2006 Expenses		
Core Business	Authorized Budget	Actual Expenditures
	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)
Total - Gross Expenses	15,107	17,749
Net Program Expenses	4,091	3,961
Salaries and Employee Benefits	6,704	6,752
Funded Staff (FTE's)	103.1	104.5

## Performance Measures

***Measure:* Quantitative and qualitative assessments of media coverage, including the percentage of stories in which government messages accurately appear; stakeholder feedback; hits to web sites; polling data of communications programs for significant government initiatives.**

### **What does the measure tell us?**

The measure tells us how effectively CNS's communications efforts are meeting their objectives.

### **Where are we now?**

The vast majority of the communications plans produced by CNS staff include some approach to evaluation. While much of the evaluation is informal – a quick analysis of media coverage or stakeholder comments, for instance – communications staff are undertaking formal evaluations of significant initiatives more often than ever before. The CNS advisor at the Public Service Commission, for instance, was able to determine the effectiveness of a multi-faceted internal communications campaign over the course of a year through surveys with staff. The surveys showed that employee satisfaction jumped from 16 per cent to 72 per cent between 2005 and 2006. The department of Energy's Keep the Heat Energy Savings kit featured a telephone survey of people who received the kit, which determined how effective the communications materials were to users.

### **Where do we want to go/be in the future?**

Evaluation of significant communications initiatives will become even more of a standard practice, and the results of those evaluations will be shared within the agency and with senior manager of client departments.

***Measure:* Customer satisfaction survey.**

### **What does the measure tell us?**

This measure reflects the overall service level CNS provides to government. This was measured by a Client Satisfaction Survey carried out recently by the Marketing Clinic in August and September 2006, and was based against a survey completed by them in February 2003.

### **Where are we now?**

The results of the current survey were largely consistent with the previous study for service ratings. Overall, CNS had ratings of Good to Very Good for services on a variety of criteria including: overall level of satisfaction, overall service level, accessibility of staff, and quality of service, and turnaround time.

### **Where do we want to go/be in the future?**

Maintain the satisfaction level of 4.4 (out of a possible 5) or higher, continue to educate our clients on services provided by CNS using presentations, open houses, and a new intranet site (FAQs, the new interactive Form 130, advertising in departmental newsletters, etc.)

### ***Measure: Regular job-completion surveys***

#### **What does the measure tell us?**

This measure reflects the satisfaction to which CNS's clients are content with the quality of product, turnaround time, and accessibility to their project manager.

#### **Where are we now?**

Clients are happy to hear from CNS so quickly after their project was completed. We received good overall satisfaction with the services we provided.

#### **Where do we want to go/be in the future?**

Continue to monitor every project produced by CNS to ensure continued good quality service.

### ***Measure: Percentage of cabinet documents accompanied by a communications plan.***

#### **What does the measure tell us?**

This measure tells us that members of Executive Council are able to consider communications analysis and approaches when making decisions about government initiatives and policy.

**Where are we now?**

Virtually all Memoranda and Reports and Recommendations to cabinet are accompanied by an approved communications plan.

**Where do we want to go/be in the future?**

Maintain.

***Measure: Deputy minister confidence in the benefit of early involvement of CNS in departmental or corporate initiatives.***

**What does the measure tell us?**

This measure tells us that the most senior civil servants in government agree that early involvement of CNS personnel in department or corporate initiatives is important to the success of those initiatives and that they ensure the communications staff assigned to their departments are, therefore, appropriately involved.

**Where are we now?**

All of the deputies surveyed agreed that early involvement of CNS staff in departmental initiatives is important.

**Where do we want to go/be in the future?**

Maintain.