

Government Accountability Document – June 2009

Communications Nova Scotia

Annual Accountability Report For The Fiscal Year 2008–2009

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Accountability Statement

The accountability report of Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) for the year ended March 31, 2009 is prepared pursuant to the Provincial Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against CNS's business plan information for the fiscal year 2008-2009. The reporting of CNS outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgements and opinions by CNS management.

We acknowledge that this accountability report is the responsibility of CNS management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in CNS's business plan for the year.

Frank Corbett, Minister

Robert Fowler, Deputy Minister

Message from the Assistant Deputy Minister

Communications Nova Scotia continues to focus on finding the best ways to inform and engage Nova Scotians on what their government is doing and why.

In 2008–09 Communications Nova Scotia incorporated new ways to reach citizens in its arsenal of communication methods. By building on advancements in technology, specifically more social media and web based platforms, CNS has provided citizens with more options than ever before in their interactions with government. The objective is to inform Nova Scotians so they may engage in good public debate, and become more involved in the development of good public policy.

CNS has also been focusing on sustainable practices. This year, the Queen’s Printer in Nova Scotia has become one of the few in Canada to achieve Forestry Stewardship Council designation promoting sustainable practices in its print operation. Also this year, the Queen’s Printer has been preparing to host the Annual Queen’s Printer Conference in Nova Scotia, which will focus entirely on green and sustainable practices in the print industry.

These are among the highlights of the accomplishments of Communications Nova Scotia this past year. Building on this success, CNS welcomes the opportunity to further demonstrate excellence in quality, value and communication products and service to our clients and the citizens of Nova Scotia.

Laura Lee Langley, Assistant Deputy Minister

Introduction

This accountability report is based on the goals, priorities, and outcomes set out in the 2008–2009 business plan of Communications Nova Scotia (CNS).

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 2008-2009 business plan. CNS is pleased to report the achievement of all major priorities and considerable progress toward the rest.

In addition to pursuing the plans and priorities set out in the 2008-2009 business plan, the agency responded to new opportunities, including the use of social media, in its efforts to achieve its vision and mission.

Strategic Goals

1. Communicate government initiatives and decisions to Nova Scotian audiences.
2. Provide the highest quality, best-value and environmentally sustainable communications products and services to government.
3. Make communications an integral part of all business in government.
4. Promote Nova Scotia and its many success stories and attributes within the province and throughout the world through *Nova Scotia Come to life*.

Core Business Areas

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

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.

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

Communications Nova Scotia continues to support the development of French language capacity through a number of initiatives: recruitment of bilingual communications professionals; supporting several communications professionals in pursuing French language training; increasing the number and frequency of translating public documents (including news releases, reports, fact sheets). In the coming year, CNS will intensively train bilingual communications professionals to ensure there is a bank of professionals with the qualifications to assist departments when dealing with important issues in French.

- **Continue to develop a Business Continuity Plan.**

Business continuity management continues to be an important initiative for Communications Nova Scotia. CNS has developed a comprehensive plan which allows the agency to continue to provide mission critical communications support and services to government. It also allows the agency to carry out its responsibility to provide Nova Scotians with information about what its government is doing and why.

CNS staff have the capability to work from offsite locations through its investment in computers, laptops, backup systems, service delivery agreements, USB drives and access to virtual private networks and TSWeb accounts. Key staff also have BlackBerries or cellphones. All design- and Macintosh-based systems are fully backed up at the Queen's Printer location.

During this past fiscal year, CNS business continuity planning strategies and resources were put to the test. CNS successfully coordinated resources and provided services outside of regular business hours during Hurricane Kyle, winter storms, and a major forest fire. Through successful planning, CNS effectively managed communications during these events. A few areas were identified as needing improvement. Work has begun to address these areas and they will be tested once completed.

- **Concentrate additional effort on exploring and developing technology - especially internet-based - to improve communication with Nova Scotians.**

This year saw a much wider adoption of social media tools to help keep Nova Scotians informed about and engaged with their government. Use of Facebook increased, and we saw early adoption of Twitter — the use of which is expected to increase significantly in the future. Alongside these new technologies, we have been consulting with other government groups such as Information Access and Privacy, Information Management, and WAN Security to make sure we use these new tools in ways that are appropriate and in keeping with government policies.

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

- **Continue to support a healthy and productive staff through the Agency's comprehensive wellness program.**

In 2008–2009, the CNS Wellness Committee continued to strengthen its three-year plan. Initiatives included two walking challenges and support for smoking cessation throughout the year. CNS Working Well was adopted as the committee's official title and a logo was developed and incorporated into CNS working well materials and collaterals.

Healthy Workplace Month in October featured distribution of a *Healthy Workplace* calendar and *Take Back the Lunch Break* postcards produced by the Public Service Commission. A second edition of the *Make a Healthy Change* personal planners was designed and developed by a CNS committee member and distributed by the group.

A second round of health risk assessments was offered to staff in October also as part of Healthy Workplace Month. Sixty-nine (69) participated in this year's assessment compared to 54 in 2006. The information will be used to support further CNS healthy workplace initiatives.

For the third year in a row, the committee provided weekly smoothies to staff during Nutrition Month in March, as a means of encouraging healthy breakfast habits. Along with the smoothies, participants received a *Canada's Food Guide* and activity books for youths, adults and families.

A committee member represented the CNS Working Well group at a Level 2 Certification training session presented by the National Quality Institute (NQI) in March.

Priorities for 2009–2010 are to revisit the plan in the context of NQI's level 2 certification healthy workplace planning.

- **Demonstrate the value of staff through continued professional development opportunities.**

CNS continues to incorporate skills training, leadership development, and continuous learning opportunities in the career planning and workplace routines of staff. These opportunities are supplemented by monthly breakfast meetings that focus on professional development and team building and by an annual, agency-wide half-day professional development session.

Succession management, organizational and employee needs and interests, and the agency and corporate business plans are considered when developing individual and agency training plans. Employees are encouraged to review their plans annually during performance reviews with their supervisors.

Communications Nova Scotia also continues to implement a formal employee recognition program that was created in 2007–08. The agency-wide recognition program is designed to reflect organizational values at CNS and to include such formal elements as an awards program and long-service pins and informal elements, like a bulletin board showcasing success stories, and a series of “good work” note cards. Developed by a team of employee volunteers representing a broad spectrum of CNS skills and workers, the program provides staff with opportunities to recognize and be recognized for their contributions to the professional excellence and the spirit of community within the agency.

- **Continue to promote diversity to staff and community through goals and initiatives identified in the 2007-2008 CNS Diversity Plan.**

Communications Nova Scotia has continued with its diversity initiatives which included a strong focus on workforce education and community outreach. The agency held its second annual film festival, which was open to a government-wide audience. Also, the diversity committee held seven lunch and learns with staff that covered a variety of topics from the new government employment equity policy to celebrating diverse holidays. CNS held two half-day career fairs for university students that gave them an opportunity to ask questions about the organization, government and the industry, find out more about CNS and spend time with a professional who works in their field of choice. Both sessions were filled and a wait list for future sessions was created. Two bursaries were awarded this year to encourage students to become interested in careers in line with the work of Communications Nova Scotia. Communications Nova Scotia also remained actively involved in the government Diversity Round Table and Partner's for Human Rights and help plan the 2008 International Human Rights Day (Dec. 10th) event.

- **Develop a program to encourage environmental awareness and responsibility among staff and in the way we conduct our business**

Communications Nova Scotia continues to develop and implement processes that highlight its environmental stewardship and sustainability commitments. The aim is to incorporate the principles that encourage environmental stewardship and the province's economic and social prosperity. To that end, all private sector suppliers on the communications standing offer list are asked to present their sustainability vision as part of their prospectus for work with Communications Nova Scotia.

In 2008–09, a committee of communicators from key government departments continued to provide communications planning, support, and advice to the Deputy Ministers' Forum on Sustainable Prosperity. This group meets regularly to help inform and communicate the decision-making process and long-term implementation of programs and services that focus on economic and environmental sustainability.

Communications Nova Scotia was especially pleased during this fiscal year to also announce that the Queen's Printer division of the agency had completed all the necessary steps to attain Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification. This audited process allows the Queen's Printer to produce materials that meet the rigorous standards required for FSC chain of custody labeling. The FSC certification and labelling system promotes environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.

- **Continue development of government's intranet site to improve collaboration and sharing of information among government employees.**

Planning for a corporate intranet site proceeded during the review period: by year-end, best practices research and a number of internal consultations resulted in the formulation of a detailed strategy for this corporate resource.

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

• Continue to participate in senior management teams of all government departments.

Communications directors are members of and participate in meetings of senior management teams of each government department.

• Continue to participate in corporate forums (e.g., Legislative Committee).

CNS staff continued to participate in a weekly senior government planning meeting, as well as twice-weekly Focus meetings with communications staff from the Premier's Office, meetings of the Legislative Committee, the French Language Co-ordinators' Committee, the Senior Policy Forum, the Better Regulation Initiative Steering Committee, the Consultation Working Group, the Sustainable Prosperity deputies' and senior officials groups, and other regular and ad hoc corporate committees.

4. *Promote Nova Scotia and its many success stories and attributes within the province and throughout the world through Nova Scotia Come to life.*

• Build on the current initiative and its success, focusing on key markets external to Nova Scotia.

In the past year, Nova Scotia Come to life has reached a wide and varied audience through its' marketing campaigns, partnerships and sponsorships.

Come to life launched a viral marketing campaign in September 2008 called the Pomegranate Phone NS 08. The website continues to record new visitors everyday and has resulted in considerable buzz online about Nova Scotia with thousands of blogs, tweets and mentions. It has also been covered by local and national media, the L.A. Times and NPR in the US and the campaign has also been featured by media in Japan and the UK.

The campaign has won several awards and to date, the pomegranate phone website has recorded more than 1.1 million visits from more than 200 countries.

Nova Scotia *Come to life's* website — Novascotialife.com — receives an average of 13,000 visits a month from key markets in Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary, as well as the U.S., UK, Germany, Brazil, India, Australia and elsewhere. Nova Scotia *Come to life's* "Friends of Nova Scotia" email newsletter is sent to more than 1,000 subscribers from around the globe every two weeks promoting positive Nova Scotia stories, incorporating online news, images, video and audio. A Nova Scotia *Come to life* Facebook group has more than 1100

members who are being kept up-to-date and receiving updates on positive Nova Scotia news via this growing social medium.

A Pride of Place campaign was carried out to improve perceptions of the Province within our own borders. The vignettes featured stories about Nova Scotians and the success they've been able to uncover here. One of the featured Nova Scotians, Lisa Draper Murphy and her company Turbine, received 50,000 hits to her website while her vignette was airing. This is typically the traffic she gets in a year. Dan Ross, of Ross Screenprint, has been stopped on the street by Nova Scotians who've been inspired by his story. Traffic to novascotialife.com increased by 50% while the vignettes were airing.

- **Keep government departments and agencies informed about the initiative and its goals so that they can help communicate Nova Scotia's many attributes to key arenas.**

The Come to life team has been tracking all brochures and collateral items that have been requested by government departments and agencies. In the last year, Come to life has touched almost every department, and two of the political parties. The breadth of events that were supported by Come to life was wide and diverse. Twenty-nine government departments and agencies used some form of Come to life collateral for a variety of events. The Come to life team is now looking at housing a variety of items at stationary stock and giving all of government the ability to order these items online. This will bring down costs and encourage wider use of Come to life.

- **Continue to build private sector support in Nova Scotia *Come to life* and encourage our charter members to embrace the look and feel of *Come to life* in all of their messaging and marketing.**

In the last year, the number of Nova Scotia Come to life charter members has increased dramatically this year. There are currently more than 300 charter members, that's an increase of 230% since January 2008. Charter members are private sector businesses, communities/municipalities, organizations, universities, colleges and successful Nova Scotian entrepreneurs. Each one is helping to tell the Nova Scotia story wherever they do business.

- **Ensure government agencies, departments and charter members think of Nova Scotia *Come to life* and the impact decisions will have on the way people perceive Nova Scotia.**

This past year, the Nova Scotia Come to life team has worked to build stronger relationships with the Come to life liaison group with representatives from each government department and agency. This group will help inform their colleagues about the objectives and goals of Come to life. It is imperative that policies and programs support the image Come to life represents. Come to life is more than marketing and communications and in order to achieve real change in perceptions of Nova Scotia, government must lead by example. Strengthening this group will help us achieve a better government wide understanding. The team has also forged partnership

with NSBI, Labour and Workforce Development and Education to work on shared projects. These types of partnership extend the reach of Come to life and pool resources and efforts.

Financial Results

In 2008–2009, Communications Nova Scotia had an approved budget allocation of \$8,864,000. Actual net 2008–2009 expenditures totalled \$8,416,000 (95% spent to budget). The following table provides a breakdown of authority versus actual 2008–2009 CNS expenditures.

| Communications Nova Scotia | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Program and Service Area | 2008–2009 Estimate | 2008–2009 Actual | Variance | Note # |
| | (\$ 000's) | (\$ 000's) | (\$ 000's) | |
| Gross Expenses | | | | |
| Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister | \$1,045.0 | \$1,120.0 | \$75.0 | 1 |
| Client Services | \$3,146.0 | \$2,870.0 | (\$276.0) | 2 |
| Communications Planning | \$6,883.0 | \$7,933.0 | \$1,050.0 | 3 |
| Communications Services | \$12,147.0 | \$12,463.0 | \$316.0 | 4 |
| Communications Technology | \$627.0 | \$753.0 | \$126.0 | 5 |
| Total Gross Expenses | \$23,848.0 | \$25,139.0 | \$1,291.0 | |
| Net Program Expenses | \$8,864.0 | \$8,416.0 | \$448.0 | 6 |
| Salaries and Employee Benefits | \$9,133 | \$10,080 | \$947.0 | 7 |
| Funded Staff (FTEs) | 124.0 | 133.4 | 9.4 | 8 |

Variance Reference Notes

1. Expenditures are over budget due to an increase in general operating expenses and salary costs as the result of MCP, AS and NSGEU wage settlements.
2. The decrease is attributed to savings in professional services.

3. Expenditures are over budget due to an increase in salary costs as the result of additional Communication Services hired at the request of other Departments, and MCP, AS and NSGEU wage settlements.
4. Expenditures are over budget due to an increase in salary costs as the result of MCP, AS and NSGEU wage settlements, and an increase in demand from other departments for the following services: Graphic Display, Photo and Video Production, which are offset by recoveries from other departments.
5. Expenditures are over budget due to an increase in salary costs as the result of MCP, AS and NSGEU wage settlements and an increase in demand for service from other departments which was offset by recoveries from other departments.
6. The decrease is attributed to savings in professional services, mainly in Communications Planning.
7. Expenditures are over budget due to an increase in salary costs as the result of additional Communication Services hired at the request of other Departments and MCP, AS and NSGEU wage settlements.
8. The FTE increase is due to additional Communication Services requested by other Departments (fte provided by other Departments), offset by vacant positions throughout the Agency.

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.

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Where are we now?

Ninety-eight percent of the communications plans produced by CNS staff include some approach to evaluation. While much of the evaluation is informal—a review of media coverage or stakeholder comments, for instance—communications staff do undertake more formal evaluations of significant initiatives.

Evaluation of the Come to life Pomegranate campaign provided detailed data about the number of discrete visitors exposed to the site, where they came from, how long they stayed and whether they proceeded to the end of the program where they would learn about Nova Scotia. Likewise, CNS staff at Conserve Nova Scotia evaluated, with both quantitative and qualitative measures, the Rethink, EnerGuide Retailer Marketing and expanded LED Holiday Lighting programs, as well as the EnerGuide How-to Videos. Objectives were met or surpassed in each instance.

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: Overall 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 by the Marketing Clinic in August and September 2006. Information from a survey conducted by the same company in February 2003 was used as the baseline for the most recent survey.

Where are we now?

In 2006, CNS maintained its satisfaction rating of 4.4 (out of a possible 5). An additional, follow-up survey is planned for early in the 2009–10 fiscal year.

It was determined that CNS may want to collect new data in some areas as the agency's focus has changed from measuring awareness levels, along with service levels, to primarily measuring client satisfaction rates. A small committee has been formed to review the questions asked within the survey and revise where necessary. As a result, it is expected that new benchmarks will be established for CNS. CNS will work with a private-sector research firm to poll clients early in 2009–10.

A draft client service charter has been developed and will be available to all CNS clients early in 2009-10. The charter sets out the standards CNS follows, its service promises, goals and accountabilities. It also establishes how clients can provide regular feedback to CNS on its services. From the charter, development of team-specific service standards will be developed in 2009–10.

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

CNS strives to enhance service to our clients by continuing to visit the way in which we do business. We want to continue to educate our clients on services provided by CNS, and also expand the educational component to include clear and concise process descriptions for all CNS services.

We will continue to use job completion surveys, the intranet, presentations, and other avenues, to solicit client feedback in an effort to enhance our services.

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?

One hundred percent of 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 this level.

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 this level.

Measure: Follow up perception research was completed for Ottawa, Toronto, Boston and other Atlantic Provinces in 2007 and that research showed improvements in many areas. Research will be carried out again in 2009 to qualitatively measure the attitude and understanding of target audiences within and outside Nova Scotia.

What does the measure tell us?

This measure tells us how effective Nova Scotia Come to life marketing and other efforts have been in shifting attitudes of key audiences within the province and in target markets.

Where are we now?

Research was carried out in 2004, 2007 and is scheduled to be conducted in 2010.

Inside the province, between 2004 and 2007, the perception of Nova Scotia's business climate increased.

9% increase — investing in Nova Scotia is smart

8% increase — a dynamic place to conduct business

In external markets between 2004 and 2007, ratings of Nova Scotia as a tourism destination remained high; rating of Nova Scotia as a good place to live, work and do business increased.

3% increase — an excellent place to do business

10% increase — the most well-established entrepreneurial business community

9% increase — easily accessed by ocean
5% increase — a good place to live and work
5% increase — a high quality health care system

13% increase — the economy (Toronto)

4% increase — the economy (Boston)

Still work to do — confidence in the Nova Scotia economy, presence of successful companies in Nova Scotia, skilled and accessible labour force, strong communications and transportation infrastructure, competitive tax rates.

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

Follow up perception research will be carried out in 2010. These results will be compared to previous research to help determine if Nova Scotia Come to life's activities are moving attitudes and increasing understanding of Nova Scotia's advantages within key markets.