

Government Accountability Document – October, 2008

Communications Nova Scotia

Annual Accountability Report For The Fiscal Year 2007–2008

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Accountability Statement

The accountability report of Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) for the year ended March 31, 2008 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 2007-2008. 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.

The Honourable Judy Streach, Minister

Robert Fowler, Deputy Minister

Message from the Assistant Deputy Minister

Communications Nova Scotia continues to focus on advancing its business goals to support government's corporate objectives, and provide platforms for excellence in communication to Nova Scotians.

In 2007–08 Communications Nova Scotia expanded its reach to citizens by building on advancements in technology, offering Nova Scotians more options for direct communication and better interaction with government. CNS was part of a collaborative effort to provide an interactive vehicle for public consultation via the Voluntary Planning website; staff worked on interactive web casts giving instant access to government officials via the internet; and the CNS web team launched a new government web site, designed for easy navigation and enhanced accessibility. These are just a few examples of how CNS has used technology to help government communicate with more Nova Scotians.

Communications Nova Scotia has also expanded and intensified its efforts in support of broad government commitments to the environment, wellness and people. The Agency's efforts in this regard have ranged from implementing sustainable management practices at Queen's Printer, hosting the second CNS Diversity Film Festival, and the creation of an employee recognition program.

Communications Nova Scotia embraces the corporate values, and demonstrates excellence in quality, value and communication products and services to our clients and citizens.

Laura Lee Langley, Assistant Deputy Minister

Introduction

This accountability report is based on the goals, priorities, and outcomes set out in the 2007–2008 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 2007-2008 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 2007-2008 business plan, the agency continued its strategic planning process begun last year. Key areas that were defined last year have been expanded upon, and much progress has been made in developing these.

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.
4. Promote Nova Scotia within the province and throughout the world through the Brand Nova Scotia initiative.

Core Business Areas

- **Communications Planning** - advice, issues management, media relation, 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 hired two additional bilingual employees and continued to support French language training for eight other staff members. The number of news releases issued in French increased by more than fifty per cent compared with the previous year (from 51 to 88 releases), and advertising in French language media grew by a further eight per cent.

- **Implement a business continuity plan.**

Business continuity management continues to be an important initiative for Communications Nova Scotia. Work continues on the development of a comprehensive plan which will allow CNS to continue to provide mission critical communications support and services to government. It will also allow the agency to carry out its responsibility to provide Nova Scotians with information about government services and activities during business interruptions caused by weather related events, an influenza pandemic, natural disasters or other incidents.

CNS has expanded its capability to have staff work from offsite locations through investment in computers, laptops, backup systems, USB drives and access to virtual private networks and TSWEB accounts. Key staff also have BlackBerries or cellphones.

During this fiscal year, staff actively participated in training sessions and meetings with co-ordinators across government to share best practices, experiences and strategies. In conjunction with EMO, CNS also completed a crisis communications plan guide for use by departments.

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

This year has seen some significant steps forward in employing technology to improve our communication with Nova Scotians. A notable example was the new Voluntary Planning website for public consultation. Working with the Corporate IT Operations team at Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, the CNS Communications Technology team implemented web technology that allows Voluntary Planning to easily maintain and update their site and, more importantly, operate web-based logging (blogs) to solicit online input from citizens.

This year also saw a technological first for the government in the form of two interactive webcasts that were held (in November and in January) to allow government officials (in these instances, Ministers) an opportunity to interact more directly with citizens. In both instances, citizens were invited to watch a live, moderated webcast during which the Minister involved answered questions submitted by citizens via e-mail. Both of these events were very successful and introduced an exciting new approach to engaging citizens and helping them understand what their government is doing.

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

- **Invest in a healthy and productive staff through the implementation of a comprehensive wellness program.**

In 2007-08, the CNS Wellness Committee began implementing its three-year plan, CNS Working Well. Initiatives included a walking challenge and support for smoking cessation. Healthy Workplace Week featured a walk and healthy lunch, a breakfast chat on supportive workplace culture, and a graffiti wall for sharing wellness ideas. Smooth Tuesdays were expanded to include treat bags with healthy food samples, tips and recipes distributed with smoothies every Tuesday in March (Nutrition Month). A strength training workout was launched with resistance bands for all staff, a how-to video and instruction cards.

Training from the National Quality Institute shed some light on improvements that can be made to the three-year plan in order to qualify for Level 2 certification as a healthy workplace. Strengthening the plan

and continuing to coordinate programs and activities, including a second round of health risk assessments for staff, are priorities for 2008-09.

- **Demonstrate the value of staff through continued professional development opportunities, and develop a formal employee recognition program.**

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 an annual, agency-wide half-day professional development session and by monthly breakfast meetings that focus on professional development and team building. Succession management, organizational and employee needs and interests, and the agency and corporate business plans are considered when developing individual and agency training plans.

The 2007-08 business year saw the creation and implementation of a new, agency-wide recognition program, designed to reflect organizational values at CNS. Formal elements (like an awards program and long-service pins) were combined with 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.

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

In the spirit of the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*, Communications Nova Scotia continues to focus on issues and processes that will provide critical environmental stewardship while helping to ensure the province’s economic prosperity. In 2007-08, a committee of communications directors from key government departments was established to provide communications planning, support, and advice to the Deputy Ministers’ Forum on Sustainable Prosperity. The Queen’s Printer also began working collaboratively with the departments of Environment, Natural Resources, and others to implement policies and procedures that encourage sustainable internal operations and that set an example for its contracted service providers. Attention to environmental concerns has become a factor for everything from the CNS request for standing offer providers, to its use of reusable cups and recycle bins at all CNS meetings.

- **Continue to promote diversity through a community outreach program.**

CNS was involved in a number of diversity initiatives this year. Included in this was the creation of a film festival that showcases diversity-focused films and will become an annual event for government. A bursary was also created to encourage diverse students to become interested in careers in line with the work of CNS. CNS also remained actively involved with Partners For Human Rights, and helped plan the 2007 International Human Rights Day event (Dec. 10th). For March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, CNS partnered with African Nova Scotia Affairs (ANSA) and several other departments and businesses to bring Jane Elliot, diversity educator/activist to Halifax for three events.

- **Redesign the government intranet site to improve collaboration and sharing of information among government employees.**

The CNS intranet project was used as a testing ground for a government-wide intranet and has been highly successful. This year also saw the adoption of a new content management system (CMS) by Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR). CNS Communications Technology was pleased to work with SNSMR e-service staff as part of the evaluation of CMS options. It is our plan that this new product will form the core technology, while the work done internally within CNS and by other agencies will support the framework for re-building the government's intranet.

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 and Treasury and Policy Board, meetings of the Legislative Committee, the French Language Co-ordinators' Committee, the

Senior Policy Forum, the Better Regulation Initiative Steering Committee, the Sustainable Prosperity deputies' and senior officials groups, and other regular and ad hoc corporate committees.

4. ***Promote Nova Scotia within the province and throughout the world through the Come to life initiative.***

- **Continue to increase awareness of Come to life attributes in key arenas.**

Come to life has sponsored events that target our key audiences. In addition to hosting several charter signing ceremonies that formalize the partnership between government and the private sector and increasing the number of charter members to 194, Nova Scotia *Come to life* has produced three galas in locations across the province with the goal of celebrating our successes, the success of our charter members and other companies and business in our province. Galas were held in Antigonish, Yarmouth, and Sydney.

- **Build on the success of the current program by focusing attention on markets external to Nova Scotia.**

Several campaigns have focused on external markets (Toronto, Calgary, Boston and Ottawa) to address the key attributes of the province. A desktop news application and two social marketing applications have been developed and a viral campaign is scheduled for launch in September. Nova Scotia *Come to life* has partnered with government departments and agencies and outside organizations to help promote the province and further spread the message.

Financial Results

In 2007-2008, Communications Nova Scotia had an approved budget allocation of \$8,184,000. Actual net 2007-2008 expenditures totalled \$8,064,000 (99% spent to budget). The following table provides a breakdown of authority versus actual 2007-2008 CNS expenditures.

Communications Nova Scotia				
Program and Service Area	2007-2008 Estimate	2007-2008 Actual	Variance	Note #
	(\$ 000's)	(\$ 000's)	(\$ 000's)	
Gross Expenses				
Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister	\$1,003.0	\$1,118.0	\$115.0	1
Client Services	\$3,169.0	\$3,148.0	(\$21.0)	2
Communications Planning	\$6,407.0	\$6,932.0	\$525.0	3
Communications Services	\$10,799.0	\$12,336.0	\$1,537.0	4
Communications Technology	\$607.0	\$611.0	(\$4.0)	5
Total Gross Expenses	\$21,985.0	\$24,145.0	\$2,160.0	
Net Expenses	\$8,184.0	\$8,064.0	\$120.0	6
Salaries and Employee Benefits	\$8,447.0	\$9,072.0	\$375.0	7
Funded Staff (FTEs)	120	125.5	5.5	8

Variance Reference Notes -

- Expenditures are over budget due to an increase in general operating expenses and salary costs as the result of additional casual positions, MCP, AS and NSGEU wage settlements and an increase in Pension Contribution costs. Funding to support these additional costs were transferred from savings across the Agency.

2. The decrease is attributed to savings related to vacant positions and savings in general operating expenses.
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, MCP, AS and NSGEU wage settlements and an increase in Pension Contribution costs.
4. Expenditures are over budget in professional services in Queen's Printer, equipment leases in Queen's Printer (Docutec) and equipment purchases in Queen's Printer and Video Production , salary costs as the result of MCP, AS and NSGEU wage settlements, an increase in Pension Contribution costs and an increase in demand from other departments for the following services: Advertising, Creative Design, Graphic Display, Print Production and Video Production, which are offset by recoveries from other departments.
5. No significant variance.
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, MCP, AS and NSGEU wage settlements and an increase in Pension Contribution costs.
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.

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 from time to time. Omnifacts Research conducted an extensive evaluation of Nova Scotia *Come to life* marketing and communications efforts in its key markets. CNS staff at the Public Service Commission continued a program of annual staff surveys which have led to measurable improvements in employee satisfaction.

Evaluation of internet use has been constrained by the absence of suitable software. A corporate committee has chosen and purchased software that should enable the effective tracking of on-line communications.

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?

CNS maintained its satisfaction rating of 4.4 (out of a possible 5) and strives to enhance service to our clients by continuing to visit the way in which we do business. 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, quality of service, and turnaround time.

Work by a subcommittee of CNS's creative committee continues. Some information for "Beyond the Brochure: A Guide to CNS Services" is available to CNS staff on the intranet site, with further guidelines to be added in the near future.

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

Maintain the satisfaction level at 4.4 or higher. Continue to educate our clients on services provided by CNS using presentations, open houses, advertising in departmental newsletters, and the intranet site (FAQs, interactive Form 130, etc.). A follow-up survey will be conducted in the spring of 2009.

Client Services Standards are in the process of being developed and will be communicated to all Communications Nova Scotia staff.

Measure: Regular job-completion survey.

What does the measure tell us?

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

Where are we now?

Client Services sends a survey via email to clients upon the completion of specific projects. The survey can be completed online within 5 minutes and the results are sent directly to Client Services. A report compiling all results can also be compiled upon request.

Each client services representative is responsible for a number of departments (based on the same breakdown of departments used by Managing Directors), ensuring consistency for the clients and efficiency for the representative.

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

Continue to monitor projects produced by CNS to ensure continued good quality service, and complete the development of Client Services Standards. In addition, a corporate system is now in effect at CNS, logging all requests and projects. Features are being added to the system regularly, based on need/priority. The job-completion survey will be included in a subsequent upgrade, allowing for the survey to be sent out automatically once a project is complete.

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:* Perception research 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?

Perception research conducted in 2007 showed there have been improvements in the perceptions that Nova Scotians and others have of Nova Scotia, but more work needs to be done before the province is recognized for its many advantages.

For example, the perception of Nova Scotia as a good place to do business has improved within Nova Scotia (by 8%) and among senior civil servants in Ottawa (by 3%). However, the research also showed lack of awareness among target audiences about Nova Scotia's telecommunications infrastructure and transportation links. Recall of the Pride of Place advertising campaign was good, with more than 80% of respondents agreeing that the ads were enjoyable and made them feel proud.

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

Additional research is scheduled for 2010 to measure effectiveness of the initiative in moving attitudes and understanding of Nova Scotia within key markets.