



# **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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## ANNUAL REPORT

*2018*

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Halifax

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Honourable Kevin Murphy  
Speaker  
House of Assembly  
Province House Halifax,  
Nova Scotia

Dear Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the committee for September 2017 to August 2018 of the Sixty-third General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Bain".

Keith Bain, MLA  
(Victoria-The Lakes)  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Halifax, Nova Scotia  
2019

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## INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts, an all-party committee of the House of Assembly, was struck at the beginning of the Sixty-third General Assembly. Pursuant to Rule 60(2)(b) of the *Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly*:

(b) the Public Accounts Committee is established for the purpose of reviewing the public accounts, the annual report or other reports of the Auditor General, and any other financial matters respecting the public funds of the province.

## MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Public Accounts Committee is as follows:

Mr. Allan MacMaster, MLA – Chair  
Mr. Gordon Wilson, MLA – Vice-Chair  
Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, MLA  
Mr. Brendan Maguire, MLA  
Mr. Ben Jessome, MLA

Mr. Hugh MacKay, MLA  
Mr. Tim Houston, MLA  
Ms. Lisa Roberts, MLA  
Hon. David Wilson, MLA

## MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Hon. Chris d'Entremont, MLA, replaced Mr. Tim Houston, MLA, in July 2018.

## PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS

The Public Accounts Committee ordinarily meets weekly on Wednesday morning in the Legislative Chamber at Province House.

The Auditor General for the Province of Nova Scotia attends all meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. As well, in camera briefings are provided by the Auditor General and staff to members of the Public Accounts Committee in advance of meetings related to Auditor General reports.



## **SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGENDA AND PROCEDURES**

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts' all-party Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures has traditionally been comprised of the Chair, Vice-Chair and a member of the Third Party. The Auditor General is invited to attend the meetings of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures, as well.

The Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures meets in camera at the call of the Chair to review and propose topics to be scheduled before the Public Accounts Committee, assist in finalizing reports, review sensitive documents, monitor the progress of the committee's work and other matters as deemed necessary. Decisions of the subcommittee are put before the standing committee for their approval.

The membership of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures is:

Mr. Allan MacMaster, MLA – Chair  
Mr. Gordon Wilson, MLA – Vice-Chair  
Hon. David Wilson, MLA

The Chair requested, and it was agreed, that a member of the Official Opposition be invited to attend the meetings of the subcommittee. Mr. Tim Houston, MLA, has been regularly attending these meetings.

## **NOTICES**

Notice of the Public Accounts Committee meetings are sent to all members of the committee, staff of the caucus offices, Legislative staff, the Auditor General's Office and the House of Assembly Press Gallery. The notices are also posted in Province House and on the committee's web page at the following address: <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/>

## **TRANSCRIPTS**

Transcripts of all Public Accounts Committee public meetings are available from the Legislative Library in Province House, the Legislative Committees Office or on the Public Accounts Committee's web page at the following address:  
[http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee\\_hansard/C7/](http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/committee_hansard/C7/)

## **ANNUAL REPORTS**

All reports of the Public Accounts Committee are compiled by the Legislative Committees Office and forwarded to committee members for consideration. Upon completion of the review and approval of the report, the Chair tables the report with the Speaker of the House of Assembly or with the Clerk of the House of Assembly.

Distribution of the report is as follows:

To the Speaker and to the Clerk of the House of Assembly, committee members, all witnesses who appeared before the committee, the Nova Scotia Legislative Library, the Auditor General's Office, the caucus offices and the media. The report is also available to the general public upon request through the Legislative Committees Office, and is available on the committees' web page at the following address:

[http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/standing\\_committees/public\\_accounts](http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/standing_committees/public_accounts)

## **RESEARCH MATERIAL**

All research for the Public Accounts Committee is coordinated between the committee clerk and the researcher at the Legislative Library. Research material is compiled in an electronic format and is distributed prior to the meeting to members, staff and witnesses.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts wishes to extend its gratitude to the witnesses for their time and co-operation. Special appreciation is extended to the Legislative Committees Office; Hansard Reporting Services; Legislative Television and Broadcast Services, and the Nova Scotia Legislative Library.



**STANDING  
COMMITTEE  
ON  
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS  
  
MEETINGS**

**WITNESSES**

There were no witnesses invited to attend this session.

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this meeting was to review committee procedures and practices with the newly-formed committee. The Auditor General and the Chief Legislative Counsel also provided information on their roles as they relate to the Public Accounts Committee.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

It was agreed to extend the meeting time to finish the committee's business.

Correspondence was received from:

- The Office of the Auditor General
  - Providing the 2016-17 Performance Report and the 2017-18 Business Plan

The committee was presented with the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures Record of Decision for approval.

A number of motions were put forward:

- That the topics submitted from the subcommittee be approved at the full committee.
  - Moved by Hon. David Wilson, MLA
  - Motion defeated
  
- That the next three items on the agenda list be accepted as topics: funding for the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship (COVE), with Duff Montgomerie as the witness; Alternate Procurement Process and IT Services, with Internal Services; and funding for pre-Primary with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- To have meetings on October 4<sup>th</sup>, November 1<sup>st</sup>, November 8<sup>th</sup>, November 22<sup>nd</sup> and November 29<sup>th</sup>, with the Auditor General on audit work that that office has completed.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

The following topics were approved:

WITNESS	TOPIC(S)
Duff Montgomerie, Deputy Minister – LAE and Murray Coolican, Deputy Minister – Business	Funding Ocean Innovation Centre: COVE (Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship)
Internal Services	Alternate Procurement Process and IT services
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	Funding for Pre-Primary
Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Financial Audit-related work (October 4, 2017 In Camera and Public)
Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Environment-related audits (November 1, 2017 In Camera)
Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Environment-related audits (November 8, 2017 Public)
Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Health and Corrections audits (November 22, 2017 In Camera)
Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Health and Corrections audits (November 29, 2017 Public)

It was agreed to organize a training session on the public accounts with the Department of Finance and Treasury Board.

A training session with the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation was also discussed, and it was agreed to refer the matter to the subcommittee.

#### TRANSCRIPT

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2017sep20>

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**

Ms. Sandra McKenzie – Deputy Minister

Ms. Janet Lynn (JL) Huntington – Executive Director, Pre-Primary Program

Ms. Vicki Elliott-Lopez – Executive Director, Regulated Child Care

Mr. David Potter – Director, Financial Services

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss funding for pre-Primary.

The pre-Primary program will be rolled out across the province over four years and will be available to 4-year olds. There are 52 classes in 45 locations, with 818 children entering pre-Primary this week. School boards assisted with site selection and often communities that didn't have regulated daycare were selected. The maximum class size will be 24 children. The curriculum is play-based and inclusive, not outcome based. Access to hearing and speech supports, EIBI, etc., will be offered in pre-Primary.

Only 25 per cent of eligible children access daycare programs. Regulated daycare is not available in all areas. The Early Development Instrument has revealed that 1 in 4 children arrive at school with vulnerabilities. Research shows that early learning has a significant impact on children's lives socially, emotionally and academically. Work is also being conducted with the African and Mi'kmaq communities regarding access.

An evaluation was done of the Early Years Centres and other jurisdictions were looked at, as well. The Inclusion Commission is looking at the model and will report back in March. The total investment in the pre-Primary program is \$6 million. The cost of each program is \$125,000, which is based on the costs of the Early Years Centres that were already in place.

More of a focus has been placed on the early years over the last decade and that teachers do see pre-Primary as part of the solution. The Early Years Centres pilot began in 2014. A review of Early Intervention Services was also done in 2014, which resulted in the expansion of services, with 500 more children receiving supports. The 2015 review of regulated child care contained 27 actions, such as creating a comprehensive child care plan, improving wages for early childhood educators (ECEs), and improving subsidies, which have been implemented.

Concern was expressed regarding the impact the introduction of the pre-Primary program may have on regulated child care centres. Consultations with families and daycare centres are planned. Any ECE positions that have been vacated as a result of taking positions in the pre-

Primary program will be backfilled to ensure appropriate staffing at the school level and at daycare centres.

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

There was no committee business.

### **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- The curriculum framework.
- How many families that applied to the pre-Primary program did not get a spot?

### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2017sep27>



**WITNESSES**

**Office of the Auditor General**

Mr. Mr. Michael Pickup – Auditor General

Ms. Tammy Squires – Assistant Auditor General

Mr. Mike MacPhee – Audit Principal

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Office of the Auditor General were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the October 2017 Report of the Auditor General – Financial. This meeting was held over a 3-hour period. The first hour of the meeting was held in camera to brief the members of the committee prior to the public meeting. A two-hour public session was held following the in camera briefing.

The provincial budget is \$11 billion. The province received a clean audit report the past 17 years, which was commended by the Auditor General. The Auditor General was also pleased that it is now mandatory to disclose travel and hospitality expenses but, did note that some improvement is required.

The Auditor General had previously recommended that a fraud policy be put in place and this has been done. It was noted, however, that there was a lack of fraud risk assessments being conducted. It was also recommended that Executive Council consider implementing a fraud hotline. Studies indicate that approximately 40 per cent of fraud is reported via a hotline.

Concerns were raised about gaps in management controls found in previous audits that continue to not be addressed. The Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA), IWK Health Centre (IWK) and Housing Nova Scotia (HNS) were found to have significant control weaknesses. HNS and the IWK plan to have some measures in place by December 2017 to address the weaknesses. The NSHA will have measures in place by March 2018.

The amount of vacancies on provincial agencies, boards and commissions was raised as a concern by the Auditor General. It was found that 33 per cent of board positions were vacant at the time of the audit and, on average, positions were vacant for more than 13 months.

Pensions for the province's public sector employees were reviewed by the Auditor General. This was done solely for information purposes given the significance of the amounts involved and no opinions were offered in this regard. The province contributes over \$250 million to pensions annually. Concerns were raised with respect to the Nova Scotia Teachers' Pension Plan deficit of \$1.4 billion. Although teachers have been contributing more and the province has put in \$52 million, the plan remains significantly underfunded. The Public Service and Health Care Employees Pension Plans are both in surplus positions.

The October 2017 Report of the Auditor General – Financial is available at:

<https://oag-ns.ca/sites/default/files/publications/FullOct2017.pdf>

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

The Chair informed the committee that the Auditor General has advised that the November 22, 2017, Report of the Audit General will be solely focused on Health and not Health and Corrections as originally planned.

### **DOCUMENTATION**

No documentation was requested.

### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2017oct04>

**In Camera**

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Finance and Treasury Board**

Mr. Robert Bourgeois – Director, Financial Accounting Division

Mr. Justin Melnyk – Financial Accountant, Financial Accounting Division

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Finance and Treasury Board were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to provide a training session regarding the public accounts of the province.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Due to difficulty in finding a date that both approved witnesses were available to appear regarding the topic Funding Ocean Innovation Centre: COVE (Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship), a motion was put forward:

- To approve that the Senior Executive Director with the Higher Education Branch of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education appear on behalf of the Deputy Minister, should the Deputy Minister be unable to attend.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

As the meeting was held in camera, it was agreed to make the above decision public.

**TRANSCRIPT**

There is no public transcript as this meeting was held in camera.

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Internal Services**

Mr. Jeff Conrad – Deputy Minister

Mr. Chris Mitchell – Chief Procurement Officer

Ms. Sandra Cascadden – Associate Deputy Minister and CIO

Mr. Kevin Briand – Executive Director, Business Solutions

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Internal Services (DIS) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Alternative Procurement Process and IT Services.

DIS was created in 2014, and 600 people were brought together when the department was formed. DIS provides internal audit functions, manages major purchases and handles information technology services. At present, there are approximately 100 vacant FTE positions, which was raised as a concern. The rapidly changing environment has contributed to vacancies occurring, and the department wants to ensure the right people are in the right positions and achieve efficiencies where possible.

Eighty per cent of procurement is done through a competitive process. The procurement policy has been modernized and the Sustainable Procurement Policy was put in place in October 2016, and staff training has been improved.

Twenty per cent of procurement is done through an alternative procurement process. There are 28 different justifications to use alternative procurement, such as emergency situations or where there are no successful bidders. Criteria has been put in place, which is scored.

A number of questions focused on Axios Assyst, the new Help Desk application, which replaced six different applications. The Nova Scotia Health Authority had begun implementation of the Axios Assyst application when DIS began investigating it. It was then reviewed by government and it was decided to use this application. It is now fully functional in all government departments, the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK.

Sierra Systems was contracted to provide service desk tools and conducted months of functional tests. The tender was awarded for \$3.8 million, with the actual cost being \$7.3 million. The original tender called for the work to be done by August 2016, however, it was extended to March 2018, as additional modules were rolled out which increased the cost. The expected lifespan of the product is 15-20 years.

E-bidding is being implemented and is expected to be in place by the first of November. This will be advantageous for vendors. As well, a system known as Flextrack has replaced some

standing offers. Standing offers are still in place and are usually locked in for a period of time, whereas those vendors who use Flextrack are able to come and go. It was initially set up for 3 years and has been extended twice. DIS will be going to market this year looking for a Flextrack-like solution. Vendors pay a fee to use the service, and \$4.8 million has been paid for services.

A number of questions were asked relating to the one person/one record initiative particularly around the timelines for implementation and the cost of the project, as well as the use of P3.

#### **TABLED DOCUMENTATION**

- ITSM Program Scope, Contracts and Financials
  - Tabled by Tim Houston, MLA
- Tender Details - IT Service Management Transformation Partner Sponsored by the ICT Services, Department of Internal Services
  - Tabled by Tim Houston, MLA

#### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

It was agreed to allow children to attend the in camera meeting with their parents on November 1, 2017, as it is “Take Your Child to Work Day.”

#### **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- Are the tenders to Livus Consulting part of the Axios Assyst implementation?
- A detailed synopsis of the entire Axios Assyst project to date (including a list of functions and what are operational, cost, risk assessment and people engaged in it).
- What is the percentage fee paid to Flextrack?
- Information on the costs to date relating to the one person/one record initiative.
- How much money did the NSHA invest in Axios Assyst prior to the decision by Internal Services to use the same system?

#### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2017oct18>

**In Camera**

**WITNESSES**

**Office of the Auditor General**

- Mr. Michael Pickup - Auditor General
- Mr. Andrew Atherton – Assistant Auditor General
- Ms. Dianne Chiasson – Audit Principal
- Ms. Janet White – Audit Principal
- Ms. Angela Provoe – Audit Manager

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Office of the Auditor General were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to brief members of the committee on the November 1, 2017, Report of the Auditor General prior to the public meeting to be held on November 8, 2017.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

The committee was presented with the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures Record of Decision for approval.

A motion was put forward:

- That all six topics be approved, but that the witnesses for the topic of physician recruitment and retention will be discussed next week.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

The following topics were approved:

WITNESS	TOPIC(S)
	Physician Recruitment and Retention
Department of Health/NSHA, TIR, Internal Services	Redevelopment of the QEII
Michele Saran, CEO	Tourism Nova Scotia
TIR and Western Alignment Corporation	Cobequid Pass

Department of Community Services	Transformation of the ESIA System
Frank Dunn, Deputy Minister, Fisheries	Seafood Exports

As the topics were approved at an in camera meeting, it was agreed to make the approved topics public.

**TRANSCRIPT**

There is no public transcript as this meeting was held in camera.

**WITNESSES**

**Office of the Auditor General**

Mr. Michael Pickup – Auditor General

Mr. Andrew Atherton – Assistant Auditor General

Ms. Dianne Chiasson – Audit Principal

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Office of the Auditor General were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the November 1, 2017, Report of the Auditor General.

The November 1, 2017, report focused solely on environment-related topics and contained 4 chapters. The report contained 2 audits and 2 information pieces. The Department of Environment (DOE) agreed to all recommendations.

The Auditor General found that the environmental assessment approval process was conducted appropriately and that from 2013-2016, 53 of 54 projects were approved; however, the terms and conditions of the agreements are not monitored effectively to ensure that they are working. In fact, of the 675 terms and conditions associated with the agreements, approximately half were not monitored. The SNAP system will assist with monitoring when it is put in place. The industrial approval process was not part of the audit.

Risk assessments relating to climate change have not been updated since 2005, which is concerning. This was noted as a concern in the Critical Infrastructure Resiliency audit, as well. DOE has indicated plans would be updated and shared in 2018. The Auditor General did note that government has already met the 2020 greenhouse gas reduction targets, which is positive.

Concerns were raised by the Auditor General relating to contaminated sites in the province and the fiscal challenge they create. While the accounting for the sites has been done properly, the liability for these sites is \$212 million, and will continue to grow. The cleanup costs for Sysco and Boat Harbour are responsible for the vast majority of the liability. The liability for Sysco is \$68 million and is declining, while the liability for Boat Harbour has increased from \$88 million to \$130 million in a one-year period, because of additional work required to remediate the site. A number of other smaller projects make up the remaining liability of \$14 million.

Over the past 10 years, 3 environment-related audits have been conducted. The Auditor General is concerned that while these recommendations were agreed to, half of them have still not been implemented. Only 8 of 19 recommendations that were made relating to drinking water have been implemented, which is concerning.



It was noted that over that past two years, DOE has undergone a major restructuring and has taken on new responsibility. The inspection, compliance and enforcement budget increased in 2015-16, as well as the number of employees.

The November 1, 2017, Report of the Auditor General is available at:  
[https://oag-ns.ca/sites/default/files/publications/FullNov2017\\_1.pdf](https://oag-ns.ca/sites/default/files/publications/FullNov2017_1.pdf)

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
  - Information requested from the September 27, 2017, meeting

It was agreed to approve the Deputy Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness; Janet Knox on behalf of the Nova Scotia Health Authority; and the College of Physicians and Surgeons as witnesses relating to the topic of Physician Recruitment and Retention, as was submitted on the November 1, 2017, Record of Decision.

It was also agreed to reschedule the November 15, 2017, meeting regarding the Cobequid Pass, as the Deputy Minister of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal may not be able to attend the full meeting due a requirement to attend Treasury Board at that time.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

No documentation was requested.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:  
<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2017nov08>

**In Camera**

**WITNESSES**

**Office of the Auditor General**

Mr. Michael Pickup – Auditor General

Mr. Andrew Atherton – Assistant Auditor General

Ms. Dianne Chiasson – Audit Principal

Ms. Ashley Richardson – Audit Principal

Ms. Emily Dickey – Audit Principal

Mr. Adam Harding – Audit Principal

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Office of the Auditor General were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to brief members of the committee on the November 22, 2017, Report of the Auditor General prior to the public meeting to be held on November 29, 2017.

**DOCUMENTATION**

See November 29, 2017.

**TRANSCRIPT**

There is no public transcript as this meeting was held in camera.

**WITNESSES**

**Office of the Auditor General**

Mr. Michael Pickup – Auditor General

Mr. Terry Spicer – Deputy Auditor General

Mr. Andrew Atherton – Assistant Auditor General

Ms. Dianne Chiasson – Audit Principal

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Office of the Auditor General were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the November 22, 2017, Report of the Auditor General.

The report contained 3 chapters focusing on Family Doctor Resourcing; Mental Health Services; and Managing Home Care Support Contracts. Twenty-One recommendations were made and all were accepted.

In response to questions, the Auditor General reviewed the audit process for members.

The Auditor General was critical of the communication around the primary care plan. Many Nova Scotians don't understand collaborative care and how it will work in the province, and this needs to be communicated. The Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) has developed communications plans and submitted them to the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW); however, none have been implemented. Communication with stakeholders was noted as being good. Consultations with the public are being planned with respect to a draft health communication plan in 2018.

The effectiveness of the recruitment strategy, which came out in the Spring, was not part of the audit relating to Family Doctor Resourcing, as it was outside of the audit period. The NSHA has begun quarterly reporting in response to the recommendation that it should define and measure performance indicators for the recruitment strategy, and report these to the board of directors. Long-range planning is being done relative to physician recruitment. It was recommended that the role of the DHW and NSHA regarding incentives should be reviewed. It was also concerning that there is no triaging of those on the family practice registry who have serious health issues.

The Together We Can strategy relating to mental health was put in place for 5 years, 2012-2017, and contained 26 strategies. It is now time to review the strategy to determine whether it is still relevant and achieved its desired results. Policies for mental health, as well as wait-time standards, also need to be put in place. Concern was expressed that the same services are not able to be accessed in all areas of the province. It was also noted that the Dartmouth

General Hospital, which has one of the busiest ERs in the province, has no mental health crisis services available.

The Auditor General found that there was a lack of contract management relating to home care, and that there is insufficient evidence that home care providers are meeting their contract obligations. It was also noted that 8 Auditor General recommendations from a 2008 audit of home care have not been implemented; however, the government continues to feel that they are relevant. Pay for home care workers was raised as a concern during questioning, as well.

The November 22, 2017, Report of the Auditor General is available at:

[https://oag-ns.ca/sites/default/files/publications/FullNov2017\\_2\\_1.pdf](https://oag-ns.ca/sites/default/files/publications/FullNov2017_2_1.pdf)

#### **TABLED DOCUMENTS**

- Correspondence to the Nova Scotia Health Authority dated October 20, 2017
  - Tabled by Tim Houston , MLA
- Department of Health and Wellness Press Release dated October 10, 2017
  - Tabled by Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, MLA

#### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Internal Services
  - Information requested from the October 18, 2017, meeting

Information had been requested at the November 22, 2017, in camera meeting. It was agreed to make the requested information - which had been received - public in order that it could be referenced during the current meeting discussions. The following information was requested and received from the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority:

- The incentives that are administered by the Department of Health and Wellness relating to physician recruitment.
- The incentives that are administered by the Nova Scotia Health Authority relating to physician recruitment.

#### **DOCUMENTATION**

No documentation was requested.

#### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2017nov29>

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture**

Mr. Frank Dunn – Deputy Minister

Mr. Bruce Osborne – Executive Director

Mr. Scott Hosking – Director of Business Development

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DOF) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Seafood Exports.

For the past two years, Nova Scotia has been the largest seafood exporter in Canada, with \$1.8 billion exported in 2016. The province has already met the One Nova Scotia goal of doubling seafood exports by 2020. Sustainability is key to a successful industry, Industry growth is due to the focus on producing high-quality products and obtaining premium prices. It was noted that exchange rates do play a role in export value.

Most of the province's seafood is exported to the United States, Europe and Asia. Lobster is the highest export, with snow crab, scallops and shrimp playing an important role, as well. Underutilized species, such as sea cucumber and jellyfish, are also growing. There are approximately 13,000 fish harvesters in Nova Scotia. Exports of seafood account for 27-30 per cent of provincial exports, and are important to economic growth, particularly in rural areas. It is predicted that the global demand for food will rise by 70 per cent by 2050, and seafood will play a role in meeting that demand and grow the provincial economy.

Diversifying markets is important and the Chinese market is significant for seafood exports. The Chinese consume 40 kgs of seafood per capita compared to 20 kgs per capita elsewhere. The middle class is expanding in China and demand is increasing. India and Southeast Asia markets are of interest, as well.

There is also a great deal of potential for growth in aquaculture. The current value is \$55 million, with the goal being \$300 million. It is anticipated that by 2030, approximately two thirds of seafood will be produced by means of aquaculture. A strategy has been developed and new regulations are now in place. Since January 2016, there have been 92 renewals, 12 assignments, 6 amendments and approval of 1 land-based site. No new shellfish sites have been approved since 2015, as there are a number of underutilized sites in the province. Oysters have been affected by disease, which impacted Nova Scotia production compared to other provinces; however, suspended culture applications are being taken for a variety of species, including oysters. A policy is being developed, as well.

Trade shows and missions are used to highlight Nova Scotia seafood. A Nova Scotia international brand, 45°North 63°West, has been launched to distinguish our products. It has been receiving a positive response at trade shows.

The Atlantic Fisheries Fund was announced in March 2017 by the federal government. The fund is jointly funded with the Atlantic provinces and promotes innovation, infrastructure and research and development. In 2017/18, the province contributed \$2.5 million, and approximately \$38 million will be invested over the 7-year span of the fund. The total investment from all players will be more than \$400 million. Applications are being reviewed; however, no project funding has been awarded, to date.

Changes to NAFTA and any impact on the province's seafood exports was discussed. DOF works closely with the Nova Scotia Trade Minister and monitors what's happening relating to NAFTA and have general discussions with the federal government on the issue. Currently, \$952 million of seafood is exported to the United States. The percentage of seafood being exported to the United States has decreased from 80 per cent in 2002 to 52 per cent, presently. Fourteen per cent is exported to China and 11 per cent to Europe. It was noted that CETA has been beneficial to Nova Scotia seafood and resulted in 96 per cent of tariffs being eliminated.

Concern were raised during the meeting with regard to the impact of the new treatment facility for Northern Pulp.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

There was no committee business.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- How much growth have we seen over the last 10 years to our export market?
- Has the minister seen a plan for the Northern Pulp effluent plant yet?

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2017dec06>

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Health and Wellness**

Ms. Denise Perret – Deputy Minister

Ms. Jeannine Lagassé – Associate Deputy Minister

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

Ms. Janet Knox – President and CEO

Dr. Lynne Harrigan – Vice President, Medicine

Dr. Richard Gibson – Medical Director, Primary Health Care and Department of Family Practice

**Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons**

Dr. D.A. Grant – Registrar and CEO

Dr. Graham Bullock – Deputy Registrar, Physician Performance

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) and the Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons (NSCPS) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Physician Recruitment and Retention.

The DHW establishes health policy and is responsible for physician compensation. Its priority is to connect Nova Scotians to primary health services. It provides incentives to recruit doctors and works with many players to do so, such as the NSHA, NSCPS, and Dalhousie Medical School.

The NSHA is responsible for the delivery of health services and became responsible for recruitment in April 2016. Weaknesses were identified in the recruitment strategy and a new strategy has been launched.

The NSCPS is responsible to license competent doctors. Its primary goal is to ensure patient safety. The NSCPS ran a program for international medical graduates known as CAPP (Clinical Assessment for Practice Program), but it was felt it was not meeting the national standard and was shut down. There are currently 16 CAPP participants that are practicing with defined (conditional) licenses. The NSCPS feels that there is a need to identify international medical graduates and a decision was made to allow family physicians from outside of Canada with 5 years of experience to practice in Nova Scotia without having to write more tests, so long as their current training is recognized in Canada, which is expected to assist in recruitment.

Nova Scotia is competing across Canada and the world to recruit doctors. A national survey indicated that compensation is important but is lower on the list after community and lifestyle. The new strategy focuses on Nova Scotia as a great place to live and work, and a new advisory group has been created to aid in recruitment. Community engagement plays an important role

in successful recruitment. Stakeholder feedback assisted in making changes to the recruitment of doctors.

Since April 2017, 92 doctors have come to the province, consisting of 26 family physicians and 66 specialists. There are 44 offers that are pending, as well. The current Physician Resource Plan indicates that 100 doctors are required; however, an updated plan is being developed. Data from 811 indicates that approximately 42,000 Nova Scotians are actively seeking a doctor; however, information compiled from a number of other sources indicates that 100,000 individuals don't have a family doctor.

Physician recruitment is being done in conjunction with the collaborative team initiative. Collaborative practices consist of doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses and other health care providers according to the needs of the community. There are 50 collaborative teams in various stages of development across the province. Enhancements have been made to 14 family practices by adding 22 nurse practitioners and practice nurses, and work is being done to identify others who wish to expand. Last year, \$3.6 million was invested in enhancements and an additional \$6 million will be invested this year, with a goal of enhancing an additional 21 teams. Concerns were raised during questioning regarding doctors being restricted from practicing in certain communities under the new collaborative practice process.

#### **TABLED DOCUMENTS**

- Nova Scotia Health Authority Voicemail message re: Family Practice Registry
  - Tabled by Tim Houston, MLA

#### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

It was agreed that Una Hassenstein, Executive Director, appear as the witness for the Department of Business on January 10, 2018, as the Deputy Minister, Murray Coolican, is retiring. The committee was later advised that Ms. Hassenstein would not be attending and were provided with alternative representatives for the Department of Business, which were unanimously agreed to by committee members.

#### **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following documentation from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- The average age of the 1092 billing family practitioners in the province.

#### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2017dec13>



**FUNDING OCEAN INNOVATION CENTRE: COVE (CENTRE FOR OCEAN VENTURES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP)**

**January 10, 2018**

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Business**

Mr. Kent Roberts – Managing Director, Business Relations and Innovation

Ms. Jennifer Angel – Acting President and CEO, Waterfront Development Corporation Limited

Mr. Jim Hanlon – CEO, Institute for Ocean Research Enterprise

**Department of Labour and Advanced Education**

Mr. Duff Montgomerie – Deputy Minister

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Business (DOB) and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Funding Ocean Innovation Centre: COVE (Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship).

The province is home to approximately 300 ocean-related companies worth approximately \$4.5 billion and provide 35,000 jobs. Halifax is the fifth largest technical hub in Canada. The DOB is looking to drive innovation and build innovation districts not only in urban areas, but in rural areas, as well. Investments have been made in 7 collaborative collision spaces (sandboxes), with an 8<sup>th</sup> on the way, which encourage entrepreneurial experimentation and connection with industry. The Nova Scotia Research Trust has been created and has received funding in the amount of \$6.5 million to fund research for 9 ocean-related projects. These projects are expected to create approximately 170 jobs and more than 200 training opportunities for research graduates, etc.

The DOB is the lead department on the COVE file and they work with a number of partners/collaborators such as the Nova Scotia Community College, Nova Scotia Business Inc., Dalhousie University and Innovacorp. COVE is located on the former coast guard property in Dartmouth. It is expected to open in the Spring and will be the hub for the province's ocean economy. The location is unique as it offers incubation space, as well as an ocean tech park. The site is owned and managed by the Waterfront Development Corporation. Approximately \$20 million has been invested in the site, with contributions from both the provincial and federal governments. Additional funding will likely be required due to unexpected issues that have arisen with the property.

It is anticipated that there will be approximately 20-30 tenants initially, with 5 start-ups located on the site, as well. A general expression of interest was done in October 2016, followed by a second, more specific, expression of interest. To date, 51 replies have been received from within the province, as well as across Canada and internationally. The total annual operating budget is projected to be \$1.7 million, with the goal to be self-sustaining within 5 years. The

federal government will be approached to assist with program funding that might be available relating to innovation. It was noted that COVE is a finalist for federal funding for a super cluster.

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
  - Information requested from the December 6, 2017, meeting

### **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- A breakdown of the \$19.7 million project budget as well as a breakdown on capital costs, maintenance costs and operational costs.
- A timeline on accessing the full amount of the federal funding for the project.
- How does the money actually move through the system?

### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018jan10>

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal**

Mr. Paul LaFleche – Deputy Minister

Ms. Diane Saurette – Executive Director, Finance

Mr. Bruce Fitzner – Executive Director, Infrastructure Programs (Former Chief Engineer)

**Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation**

Mr. Peter Hackett – President

Ms. Eva Hislop – Controller

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (TIR) and the Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the Cobequid Pass.

The Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation is a crown agency which is responsible for the collection of tolls, financing, maintenance and operations of the highway. The board consists of one board member from TIR, currently it is the Chief Engineer, and one shareholder, who is the TIR Minister.

The Cobequid Pass is a 45 km, 4-lane divided toll highway, which is owned by the province and is part of the Trans-Canada Highway system. It opened in 1997 and took 20 months to construct at a cost of approximately \$113 million. The project was considered a P3, because over 50 per cent of the funding was raised from the issuing of bonds that were sold to private investors. The bonds are due in 2026; however, it is anticipated that they will be paid off in fiscal 2019/20.

Toll revenue is \$19 million annually. Yearly expenses are \$12 million, which is made up of maintenance, salaries and financing costs. Toll revenue is split 50/50 between car and truck traffic. Twenty per cent of the toll revenue associated with cars is from local traffic and 30 per cent is from Nova Scotian and out-of-province motorists.

In April 2017, a commitment was made to remove the tolls for Nova Scotia motorists once the debt is repaid. TIR is reviewing options in this regard and will be presenting them to Cabinet, who will ultimately make the decision. Concerns were raised regarding increased use of the old Highway No. 4 should tolls remain for trucks. The speed limit and barring of trucks on this highway would be looked at in this situation, as well as increasing enforcement of weight restrictions. Concern was also expressed about the impact to employees who work at the Cobequid Pass should there be changes to the tolls.

The Cobequid Pass is an important provincial link and work is being done to ensure that goods can move through the province should the highway be closed for any reason. It was also noted that 38 different measures were enacted resulting from recommendations following the issues encountered from a winter storm, which closed the highway and stranded travellers.

Twinning of highways is generally considered when the traffic count is 10,000 or more vehicles per day. There are a number of twinning options, which are reviewed when twinning is being considered. The high number of fatalities and the percentage of truck traffic on the old Highway 104 contributed to the decision to build the Cobequid Pass.

#### **TABLED DOCUMENTATION**

- Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Press Release dated April 26, 2017
  - Tabled by Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

#### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Health and Wellness
  - Information requested from the December 13, 2017, meeting

#### **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following documentation from the Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation:

- What is the weighted average speed limit on Trunk 4?

#### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018jan17>

**WITNESSES**

**Tourism Nova Scotia**

Ms. Michele Saran – Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Michael Johnson – Chief Operating Officer

Ms. Anna Moran – Manager, Research, Planning and Decision Support

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from Tourism Nova Scotia (TNS) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Tourism Nova Scotia.

TNS is a private sector-led Crown Corporation which was established in April 2015. It has a mandate to drive tourism growth for the province. Tourism in the province has had 4 consecutive years of growth, and TNS is working hard to reach the Ivany report goal of increasing tourism revenue to \$4 billion by 2024.

As of November 2017, there were 2.3 million non-resident overnight visitors to the province, which is shaping up to be an excellent year. The Halifax and Lunenburg waterfronts are the most visited in the province. An investment of \$1 million was made in the digital marketing campaign in 2017, of which half was contributed by stakeholders. Twenty-three new experiences have been created. Current marketing efforts are more web-based focused. It is difficult to judge the impact of marketing; however, they can see the level of engagement on the website and are aware that the organic search has increased and click-throughs to operators have gone up 40 per cent. TNS works closely with Destination Canada, as well as all regional marketing organizations to promote Nova Scotia as an attractive destination.

The strategy to grow tourism focuses on attracting first-time visitors, investing in markets of highest return, offering world-class experiences and building tourism confidence. There are many partners, including the private sector, which play an important role. TNS works closely with the Business Development Officer at the Department of Business. TNS oversees 3 partnership programs; the Inspiring Content program, Digital Marketing program and the EXCELLerator Program, all aimed at growing tourism in the province.

More than half of the of tourism revenue comes from non-residents. The Eastern Seaboard of the United States is targeted as a high-yield market. An export strategy has also been developed. The UK and Germany are targeted markets, and China has been identified as an emerging market for tourism. An additional \$500,000 in funding specific to China has been provided.

Air access is very important for tourism. When new flights are added, the economic impact is increased immediately. A request for \$2.5 million has been made for an air access fund. Visitors who come by air are high-yield visitors, who spend more while in our province.

There are some challenges facing the industry. There is a lack of accommodation capacity in the province, which is an issue. Consumers are driving the demand for Airbnbs, as they are looking for high-end accommodations. An industry working group has been created to look at Airbnbs. Their work is to be wrapped up by the end of March. Upgrades are also required to provincial tourist infrastructure. Extending the tourism season into the shoulder season is important, as well.

### COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The committee was presented with the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures Record of Decision for approval.

A motion was put forward:

- That the topics and witnesses be approved for scheduling for future committee meeting, just noting also the witnesses under the topic for the PCs with the Nova Scotia Health Authority would be the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness; under the NDP topics for Department of Environment would be the Deputy Minister of Environment; under Community Services and Health and Wellness would be both Deputies for that; and the Department of Business would be the Deputy Minister of Business – or if they have subordinates they would like to appoint to that.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

The following topics were approved:

WITNESS	TOPIC(S)
Department of Agriculture, Deputy Minister, Frank Dunn	Wine Development
Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, Deputy Minister, Tracey Taweel	Funding and Grants
Service Nova Scotia, Chief Executive Officer, Joanne Munro	Service Modernization and Access Centers
NSHA – Janet Knox, President and CEO, and Department of Health and Wellness, Deputy Minister	Mental Health Strategy

NSLC – Brett Mitchell, President and CEO, and Department of Finance and Treasury Board	Listing Local Products and New Products
Department of Environment - Francis Martin, Deputy Minister	Northern Pulp Environmental Assessment
Department of Environment, Deputy Minister	November 2017 Report of the Auditor General on Accounting for Contaminated Sites, Previous Audits Related to the Environment, Climate Change Management and Environmental Assessments
Department of Community Services, Deputy Minister and Department of Health and Wellness, Deputy Minister	Services and Supports for Children with ASD/complex needs
Department of Business, Deputy Minister	Economic Development and Employment Trends in the Nova Scotia Film Industry
Office of the Auditor General	Report of the Auditor General - Follow-up of 2014 and 2015 Recommendations (April 4, 2018)

## DOCUMENTATION

The committee requested and received the following information:

- Information related to how the exchange rate has an influence on whether or not people stay and travel within Canada and whether they travel outside of Canada.
- What percentage of tourism revenues are actually as a result of Nova Scotians or Maritimers travelling in the province?
- What amount of money is spent on marketing on the Eastern Seaboard of the US?

## TRANSCRIPT

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018jan24>

**TRANSFORMATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT & INCOME ASSISTANCE SYSTEM**

**January 31, 2018**

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Community Services**

Ms. Lynn Hartwell – Deputy Minister

Mr. Brandon Grant – Executive Director, Employment Support and Income Assistance

Ms. Vanessa Chouinard – Executive Director, Policy and Innovation

Ms. Dale MacLennan – Executive Director, Finance and Administration

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Community Services (DCS) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Transformation of the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) System.

The last changes were made to the ESIA program around 2000. In 2015, DCS engaged Nova Scotians, including organizations, advocates and clients regarding making changes to the system. The system is being revamped to better meet the needs of clients. Some changes have already been made, such as implementing bi-monthly payments or e-payments to clients. Changes have also been made relating to education and training for children and youth, which is key to breaking the cycle of poverty. Changing the system takes time because of the nature and complexity of clients.

At present, there are approximately 26,000 people on ESIA, the majority of which are young single adults. Between 10-17 per cent of DSC clients have employment income. Currently, DCS clients can keep the first \$150 of income, and then 30 per cent thereafter. This is being changed to allow for the first \$250 to be kept; then 75 per cent of the amount between \$250-\$500; 50 per cent between \$500-\$750; and 25 per cent between \$750-\$1,000. The goal is to have the changes in place by 2019-20. The implementation of a standard household rate, which will see an increase for many on income assistance, is also planned for 2018-19.

DCS is aware that transportation is an issue for many clients. They are working on a project with HRM to provide free bus passes. This will be run as a pilot and will assist approximately 11,000 people. It was noted that transportation is also a big issue in rural areas, and that poverty itself is different in rural areas compared to urban areas. The Building Vibrant Communities fund aims to address the different needs of communities across the province and is focusing on food security, youth transitioning into adulthood, and transportation.

Housing is also an issue, with concerns being expressed regarding the adequacy of the housing allowance. The shelter allowance has not increased for many years. Support workers provide assistance to those experiencing housing challenges and additional amounts are paid if required. Efforts are being made to address housing issues. The wait-list for affordable housing



has been reduced by approximately 20 per cent and rent supplements have been increased, as well. As the transformation moves forward, the housing allowance will be removed and a standard household rate will be put in place.

The Disability Support Program has also been undergoing a significant transformation. Changes have not been made to the Disability Act in decades. There are nine adult residential and regional rehabilitation centres in the province. Work is continuing to move toward a community-based model; however, the pace at which this is able to occur is dependent on the clients' readiness for change, and the proper supports being put in place. Twenty-five people were moved into the community in 2016/17 with funding being provided in the amount of \$2 million.

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

There was no committee business.

### **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- How much does the department currently collect in terms of the clawbacks relating to employment income?

### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018jan31>

**WITNESSES**

**Office of Service Nova Scotia**

Ms. Joanne Munro – CEO

Ms. Gillian Latham – Executive Director, In-Person Services

Mr. Paul Benoit – Director, Client Relations & Operational Support

Ms. Natasha Clarke – Executive Director, Digital Services

Ms. Darlene O’Neill – Director, Financial Services

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Office of Service Nova Scotia (SNS) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Service Modernization and Access Centres.

SNS is responsible to design and deliver services to Nova Scotians and also help other departments deliver services. Their goal is to provide trusted, accessible, modern products that are client focused, innovative, convenient and efficient.

More than 40 pieces of legislation fall under the responsibility of SNS. It manages the Registry of Joint Stock Companies, Registry of Deeds and Vital Statistics and collaborates with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to manage the Registry of Motor Vehicles. There are 13 Access Centres, 7 Registries of Motor Vehicles and 5 Land Registries in the province.

A new IT system is required for the registries. A plan to modernize services was announced in April 2016. The modernization will occur as part of a multi-year plan with work to commence with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies, as it is the most outdated system. The RFP was issued for this registry in December 2017. The cost to modernize all 4 registries is expected to be \$35-40 million.

The SNS service standard is to serve 80 per cent of clients within 20 minutes. Since April 2015, weekly tracking has been done and significant improvements have been made. A seasonal workforce of 10 FTEs is used during the peak period from April to September to increase flow, which has reduced the need for temporary services.

Interest was expressed during the meeting in the department’s efforts to reduce red tape. Efforts are being made with the goal of having 20 red tape reduction initiatives over 2 years. Last year, 13 reductions were made and, so far this year, three have been completed and nine are in progress.

The number of land registries was reduced from 18 to 5 to reflect changes in how services are accessed. Seventy-five per cent of land transactions are done online. The change resulted in savings of approximately \$2 million. There is consideration being given to piloting a terminal at the Digby access centre, as this was an area where they received complaints on the changes to the land registry.

The implementation of facial recognition on Nova Scotia driver's licences was discussed. The decision was made to go to central issuance of driver's licences as the current contract ended, which provided an opportunity to increase security to meet the industry standard and that of other jurisdictions. Although licences do have the ability to be RFID enabled, it is not in place at present.

Questions were also raised with respect to the move of the Access Centre from downtown Halifax to Bayers Lake. SNS received some complaints and are working with HRM regarding access to the location. The lease expires in 2020, and the concerns raised will be taken into consideration when the new RFP is being developed.

Discussion was broad ranging and also touched on the co-location of provincial, federal and municipal services, the removal of gender identity from identification documents and employee engagement.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation
  - Information requested from the January 17, 2018, meeting

The Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures was asked to review the practice of endorsing Auditor General recommendations. It approved changes to the wording used to endorse the recommendations.

A motion was put forward:

- That the following statement be adopted as a revised motion for endorsing the AG recommendations:

“I move that the Public Accounts Committee formally accept and endorse recommendations contained in the ‘blank report’ of the Auditor General that have been accepted by the audited departments or agencies and ask that these departments and agencies commit to and take responsibility for full and timely implementation of the recommendations accepted by these departments and agencies.”

- Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
- Motion carried

The Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures was asked to review the practice relating to Auditor General reports and agreed to the following, which was approved by the committee:

- That the Auditor General's Office table performance audits the day prior to a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee and that the meeting to discuss that audit with the Auditor General on the Wednesday be in public.
- That financial and follow-up reports by the Auditor General be released on the Tuesday prior to the meeting of the Public Accounts Committee, and that the meeting to discuss those reports be in public.

The Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures discussed Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation (CAAF) training and agreed that no training would be arranged at present, which was approved by the committee.

The Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures advised the committee that it will be discussing further the issues relating to members being aware of the items on the meeting agenda; however, in the interim, the agenda will be sent out to members on the Monday before the Wednesday meeting.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- Is there any role in Nova Scotia and for this piece of legislation (Consumer Protection Act) to protect consumers so that does not happen (price fixing)?
- When is the lease for the Access Nova Scotia facility in Sackville up for renewal? Is this something that the Minister has to approve?

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018feb07>

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Environment**

Ms. Frances Martin – Deputy Minister  
Ms. Lorrie Roberts – Executive Director, Policy  
Mr. Paul Keats – Regional Director

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Environment (DOE) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the Northern Pulp Environmental Assessment.

The Northern Pulp mill has been in operation since 1967, and a new effluent treatment plant is needed for the facility. The Boat Harbour Act was passed in 2015, which created a lot of debate. The Act states that the old treatment plant is to be closed out by January 2020.

The project description was filed in April 2017, which contained technical information. DOE has reviewed the information submitted by Northern Pulp. In June 2017, it was determined that the project met the Class 1 standard - as it is a modification to the existing mill and not a fully new plant. Northern Pulp will be responsible to design the system. A Class 1 assessment is a shorter process than Class 2 but still as rigorous. A Class 2 assessment is used for larger projects. The specifications for a Class 1 assessment are laid out in the Environmental Assessment Regulations – Schedule A.

As a Class 1 project, a lot of environment work must be done before registering the project, and it can take up to a year or more to register. Northern Pulp elected to hold consultations prior to registering the project, including with the First Nations and Northumberland Fishermen's Association. Once the project is registered, there is a 30-day period for the public to have input. Public comments will be made publicly available, as well as the proposal. The minister will then make a decision, which must be made within 50 days of receiving the registration. The minister can also require that additional information and reports be provided.

Concerns were raised during questioning regarding past environmental infractions at the facility. As well, the November 2017 Auditor General's Report noted that projects required better monitoring and included 7 recommendations to the DOE, which were all accepted. It was noted that an IT system is now in place which will assist the department to better monitor and track projects. A number of the recommendations have been completed and the DOE expects to have all the recommendations implemented by the end of the year.

## COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Labour and Advanced Education
  - Information requested from the January 10, 2018, meeting

Pursuant to the procedure adopted by the committee, the Chair asked for a motion to endorse the accepted recommendations contained in the October 2017, November 1, 2017, and November 22, 2017, Reports of the Auditor General.

A motion was put forward:

- That the Public Accounts Committee formally accept and endorse recommendations contained in the October 2017 Report of the Auditor General, the November 1, 2017, Report of the Auditor General, and the November 22, 2017, Report of the Auditor General that have been accepted by the audited departments or agencies, and ask that those departments and agencies commit to and take responsibility for full and timely implementation of the recommendations accepted by those departments and agencies.
  - Moved by Hugh MacKay, MLA
  - Motion carried

It was also agreed to write letters to each of the ministers of the departments responsible for the recommendations to make them aware of the motion passed by the committee.

## DOCUMENTATION

The committee requested and received the following information:

- Did the boardwalk project along the front of the Northumberland Fisheries Museum require a Class 2 assessment?
- A list of where an environmental assessment report has been provided.
- Has the Premier responded directly to Premier MacLauchlan's letter? If so, provide a copy of the letter that was sent back.

## TRANSCRIPT

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018feb14>

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage**

Ms. Tracey Taweel – Deputy Minister

Mr. Marcel McKeough – Executive Director, Culture and Heritage Development

Mr. Bill Greenlaw – Executive Director, Communities, Sport and Recreation

Ms. Rebecca Doucett – Manager, Financial Advisory Services

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage (CCH) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Funding and Grants.

The investments made by CCH support the culture sector and creative economy in the province and help build strong, vibrant and healthy communities. The sector contributes almost \$1 billion to the provincial GDP and employs approximately 14,000 people.

There are 34 programs offered by CCH. Program officers are assigned when groups apply for funding. In addition to meeting grant criteria, addressing community need is also considered. In addition to monetary assistance, CCH also provides advice to organizations on the feasibility of projects and board governance.

Investments have been made in new programs, such as \$600,000 for the Building Vibrant Communities Fund and \$1 million in the Bus ACCESS-Ability Program. An additional \$1 million was also provided for trails to assist with the connection of trails and completion of the Trans Canada Trail.

Operational funding for the arts has been the same since 2010. There are, however, a number of other programs that support arts in the province, such as the newly created Culture Innovation Fund and the Creative Industries Fund.

Although, Nova Scotia Business Inc. funds film production, CCH worked with industry to develop the Screen Writers Development Fund. It was launched in January and provides 50 cent dollars. The fund is fully awarded, and \$262,000 was provided. CCH also provides operational funding to Screen Nova Scotia in the amount of \$238,000 annually.

Funding to libraries was discussed during the meeting. Library funding is based on a per capita model and has increased over the last decade by 34 per cent. Total funding is \$14.4 million. An additional \$474,000 was provided both last year and this year and was distributed evenly to the 9 boards. It was noted that libraries are facing challenges, and that a core services review is being conducted.

Nova Scotia's first Culture Action Plan was launched a year ago. The plan contains 60 actions which will be led by or supported by CCH. A number of initiatives are underway, including launching a culture innovation fund, modernizing the Multiculturalism Act, implementing a trail strategy and large event strategy, and the creation of a Mi'kmaq Cultural liaison position.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Tourism Nova Scotia
  - Information requested from the January 24, 2018, meeting

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- How many languages does the application form come in?
- What percentage of the grants went to HRM?
- The same 27 arts organizations have received operational funding for the last two years. Can you tell us how many years it has been the same 27 organizations?
- The overall rink investment in Membertou.
- In 2015-16, the department gave \$6,000 in funding to the English-language school boards, and that increased in the next year to \$144,000. Please explain that increase and what's going to happen to that funding if the school boards are eliminated?
- The name of the individual who has been working with the Mi'kmaq community.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018feb21>



**WITNESSES**

**Department of Health and Wellness**

Ms. Denise Perret – Deputy Minister

Mr. Craig Beaton – Executive Director, Strategic Operations

**Department of Internal Services**

Mr. Jeff Conrad – Deputy Minister

**Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal**

Mr. Paul LaFleche – Deputy Minister

Mr. John O’Connor – Executive Director, Major Infrastructure Projects

Mr. Brian Ward – Director, Major Infrastructure

Mr. Gary Porter – Executive Director, Corporate Initiatives

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

Ms. Janet Knox – President and CEO

Ms. Paula Bond – Vice President, Integrated Health Services Program Care

Ms. Victoria van Hemert – Senior Director, QEII Health Sciences Centre & QEII Redevelopment

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), Department of Internal Services (DIS), the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (TIR) and the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Redevelopment of the QEII.

The QEII consists of 10 buildings located on 2 sites. It is a resource for all of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada with more than 1 million visits being made to the facility annually. The redevelopment of the QEII involves moving services out of the Victoria and Centennial Buildings of the Victoria General site. TIR is responsible for the construction side and DHW and NSHA are responsible for the health plan.

DHW is working to modernize and expand system capacity. The redevelopment provides an opportunity to look at how services are delivered presently and into the future. The redevelopment plan is not yet fully completed. Costing is being done as the project moves ahead, with approximately \$37-\$40 million being spent so far. It is estimated that the project will be finished in 2022.

This is a very large and complex project. A great deal of consultation has taken place involving a broad range of stakeholders, both within the medical field and outside, including the general public. To assist in determining what the project will look like and where services will be

delivered, Kasian Architecture has been hired to prepare a master plan for the QEII redevelopment project. As well, Deloitte has been hired to look at financing options and to help design a business case for the Halifax Infirmary and Bayers Lake sites only. They will be looking at traditional and P3 financing options. Their report is expected in April or May and it is estimated that it will cost \$500,000.

Renovations at the Dartmouth General and Hants Community hospitals, as well as the purchase of the former CBC property and Bayers Lake property are part of the redevelopment project. The renovations have been completed at the Hants Community Hospital, which will enable up to 800 more day surgeries to be conducted. Renovations at Dartmouth General Hospital will result in 48 more inpatient beds and increase the operating rooms from 4 to 8, and renovations to the Halifax Infirmary will mean the hospital will have a total of 500 inpatient beds, 28 operating rooms and a specialized outpatient centre.

As approximately 62,000 people come into Halifax yearly for medical services, the Bayers Lake site was chosen because of its location, and is part of the move to locate services out of the downtown. It will consist of outpatient clinics, as well as an urgent care access clinic. Discussions are taking place with the municipality to address concerns relating to transit. As well, the Highway No. 102-103 interchange is being updated, which will help to address capacity issues.

#### **TABLED DOCUMENTATION**

- QEII Redevelopment Project, February 2018
  - Tabled by Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

#### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

There was no committee business.

#### **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- A list of what and where services are delivered now and where those services will be located in the future.
- The list of what has been spent to date, the actuals, and the separate list of what has been announced.
- Is there a document that shows how patients and families helped to shape the care plan? Is there a finalized care plan in terms of what services we actually need delivered when, and by whom and where?
- A list of committees and the membership of those committees.

**TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018feb28>

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Agriculture**

Mr. Frank Dunn – Deputy Minister

Ms. Loretta Robichaud – Executive Director, Agriculture and Food Services

Ms. Lori Kittilsen – Director, Programs and Risk Management

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Agriculture (DOA) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Wine Development.

DOA is working to create conditions to help the wine industry reach its full potential. In 2015/16, \$1 million was provided to support the industry. In 2016/17, the Vineyard Development and Expansion Program was announced, which represents a \$12 million investment in the industry to be used over four years. It is aimed at expansion, innovation, development and quality enhancement. As well, last year \$916,000 was provided to the wine lab at Acadia University, and another \$487,000 was invested this year.

In 2014, the Wine Development Board was established to engage with the industry and is made up of industry members and departmental staff. The DOA minister meets regularly with the board.

It takes several years of growth before grapes are ready to be used for wine. When the Vineyard Development and Expansion Program first began, there were 640 acres; currently there are 900. To receive provincial funding, a site assessment is done to ensure that the land is suitable for growing grapes, and growers must have a least 5 acres of land or be planning to have that amount for growing grapes. There are currently 16 wineries in the province, with another 4 growing grapes.

Last year, the industry produced revenue of \$17 million, with approximately \$9 million coming from the NSLC and approximately \$8 million from farm gate sales. The industry benefits rural areas of the province. In 2016/17, 642 people were directly employed by the industry. Wine tourism is also very important to Nova Scotia's economy.

Nova Scotia wines are garnering a worldwide reputation. To be classified as a Nova Scotia wine it must be made of at least 85 per cent Nova Scotian grapes. Nova Scotia wines represent 12 per cent of all wine sold in the province.

The mandate of the DOA has expanded to include craft breweries and distilleries. To date, no targeted programs have been created for these sectors.

The impact of climate change, reserving and protecting agricultural lands, funding for dykes and cannabis production were also touched on during questioning.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

It was agreed to extend the meeting time to finish the committee's business.

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Community Services
  - Information requested from the January 31, 2018, meeting
- Service Nova Scotia
  - Information requested from the February 7, 2018, meeting

It was agreed to hold an in camera briefing with the Auditor General on March 28<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am in preparation for the topic which will be discussed at the public meeting that day. It was also agreed that the issue of holding in camera briefings with the Auditor General in advance of witnesses appearing with respect to an Auditor General chapter/report should be referred to the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures for further discussion.

The committee was advised that the Auditor General will be tabling a collaborative Climate Change Report, to which Nova Scotia was a signatory, with the House on March 27, 2018.

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- The GDP multiplier for winery sector versus the craft brewery sector versus the local food sector.
- Of the 642 people directly employed in the wine industry in Nova Scotia - what are the wage levels of those jobs?
- Are we on track to increase our number of small farms to meet the target of 2,736 by 2020?

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018mar07>

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Environment**

Ms. Frances Martin – Deputy Minister

Ms. Lorrie Roberts – Executive Director, Policy

Mr. Adrian Fuller – Executive Director, Inspection, Compliance & Enforcement

Mr. Andrew Murphy – Executive Director, Sustainability & Applied Science

Mr. Jason Hollett – Executive Director, Climate Change

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Environment (DOE) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the November 1, 2017 Report of the Auditor General. An in camera meeting was held with officials from the Auditor General's Office to brief members with regard to the November 1, 2017 Report of the Auditor General, in advance of the public meeting.

DOE is responsible to enforce 35 Acts and over 85 regulations. There are approximately 230 field staff who carry out approximately 22,000 inspections annually, with about one third being related to the enforcement of the Environment Act. In 2016, a number of services were transferred from Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Natural Resources and public health, which increased capacity.

Progress is being made on the three recommendations made by the Auditor General relating to climate change, with most of the goals and actions being accomplished. Work is continuing on the cap-and-trade program to have a price on carbon in place by January 2019, the federal deadline, which will help meet the Auditor General's concerns for more public reporting. Greenhouse gas data from Nova Scotia companies will also be fed into the cap-and-trade program. It is also important to evaluate the impact of climate change, and risk profiles are being updated in this regard. It was noted that DOE has been focused on the federal carbon policy which has caused delays in updating the climate change report.

Work is underway to improve documentation relating to the terms and conditions of environmental assessments in response to Auditor General concerns. DOE has followed up on all terms and conditions and a new IT system has been put in place to track them. It was noted that of the seven recommendations, only two remain to be completed.

Half of the recommendations made by the Auditor General in previous audits are now complete, with more to be completed by the end of the year. In some cases, new regulations and consultation were required to respond to previous recommendations, which required more time.

A 1-800 number for environmental-related complaints has been put in place, and a competitive process is underway to identify a prosecutor who will be dedicated to DOE to assist the department in meeting its mandate to protect the environment and human health.

There was discussion related to greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction. The production of electricity is the largest source of GHG emissions in the province. A lot of focus is being placed on this sector, as well as the reduction of energy consumption and clean energy alternatives.

The Northern Pulp effluent treatment system, as well as the Auditor General recommendations relating to species at risk, contaminated sites and drinking water were also discussed during the meeting.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Environment
  - Information requested from the February 14, 2018, meeting
- Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage
  - Information requested from the February 21, 2018, meeting
- Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
  - Information requested from the February 28, 2018, meeting
- Nova Scotia Health Authority
  - Information requested from the February 28, 2018, meeting

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- The three sets of documents that the federal government has provided for the cap-and-trade benchmark and the discussion documents that were put in place for the consultation on the cap-and-trade program.
- Where can the accounting be found of the public expense involved in the cleanup of the Triangle Petroleum waste ponds near Kennetcook?

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018mar28>

**APRIL 2018 REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL – FOLLOW-UP OF 2014 AND 2015 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**April 4, 2018**

**WITNESSES**

**Office of the Auditor General**

Mr. Michael Pickup – Auditor General

Mr. Andrew Atherton – Assistant Auditor General

Ms. Dianne Chiasson – Audit Principal

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Office of the Auditor General were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the April 2018 Report of the Auditor General – Follow-up of 2014 and 2015 Recommendations.

The Auditor General conducts a follow up of its recommendations after 2 years to check on the status of their implementation. Twenty audits were being followed up in this report, consisting of over 200 recommendations.

The Auditor General expects that 80 per cent of the recommendations made should be implemented within 2 years. This follow-up report revealed that 75 per cent of the recommendations have been implemented, which is positive. This is an improvement from 2014, when the Auditor General began his term, when the implementation rate was at 53 per cent.

Fifty-two recommendations have not been completed. Particular mention was made of the number of recommendations that were still outstanding relating to surgical wait times, educational oversight, public drinking water, mineral resource management, integrated case management, responsible gambling, business continuity management, aquaculture and procurement.

Much of the discussion during the meeting revolved around the outstanding recommendations related to wait times for hip and knee replacements, the computer system used by the Department of Community Services, drinking water and aquaculture.

In instances where the responsibility for the implementation of recommendations has changed, the Auditor General will follow up with the department or entity that now has responsibility.

The April 2018 Report of the Auditor General – Follow-up of 2014 and 2015 Recommendations is available at: <https://oag-ns.ca/sites/default/files/publications/FullApr2018.pdf>



## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
  - Correction to information provided in response to information requested from the February 28, 2018, meeting

## **DOCUMENTATION**

No documentation was requested.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018apr04>

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT TRENDS IN THE  
NOVA SCOTIA FILM INDUSTRY**

**April 18, 2018**

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Business**

Mr. Bernie Miller – Deputy Minister

Mr. Raye Lemke – Strategist

Ms. Linda Wood – Manager, Film & Television Incentives, Nova Scotia Business Inc.

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Business (DOB) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Economic Development and Employment Trends in the Nova Scotia Film Industry.

The Film Tax Credit was introduced in 1995 and provided a credit of 32.5 per cent to support labour in the film industry. In 2014, the maximum credit was 65 per cent. The incentive fund was introduced in July 2015 and is focused on building a Nova Scotia Indigenous industry that provides long-term impact. There is also a bonus subsidy available to increase Nova Scotia content.

The intent in changing from a tax credit to an incentive fund was to provide a competitive fund, not to save money. The previous credit was back-end loaded, which made it very difficult to forecast budget. Between 1995 and 2017, the Nova Scotian share of Canadian film and television production volume has been between 1-2 per cent. Nova Scotia can't compete with provinces, such as Ontario, who have 35 per cent of the national market.

Much concern was raised during the meeting with respect to the impact on the industry as a result of the change, particularly related to employment in the industry. IATSE indicates that 350,000 person hours were worked in 2014, but in 2015 it decreased to 139,000. DOB indicated that there was a period of adjustment which resulted from the change from a labour-based credit to a production incentive; however, employment numbers are now trending upward and are nearing previous levels. The volume of industry activity is also similar to the average activity over the past 10 years. The average production volume between 2000 and 2014 was \$105 million per Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA) data. The production value in 2016/17 averaged \$100 million, and the total production value in Nova Scotia was higher in 2016/17 than it was in five of the last 10 years. It was noted that there are various sources of film industry data and that the DOB uses the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office/CMPA data.

Nova Scotia has an infrastructure disadvantage as it does not have a sound stage and this is something that is being looked at. However, it has a competitive advantage for locations and

talent. The province is encouraging innovation and has a unique creative advantage. In addition to the incentive fund, the DOB works with a number of partners, including the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage (CCH) and Nova Scotia Business Inc. (NSBI) to support the industry. CCH introduced the Screen Writers Development Fund in the amount of \$262,000 this year, and also provides \$238,000 to Screen Nova Scotia. NSBI has export programs and other initiatives which also support the industry. A review of the fund is scheduled in 2020/21.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Environment
  - Information requested from the February 14, 2018, meeting

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- Do the CMPA numbers include animation?

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/public-accounts/archive/public-accounts/pa2018apr18>

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Health and Wellness**

Ms. Denise Perret – Deputy Minister

Ms. Charmaine McPherson – Executive Director, Risk Mitigation-Primary and Acute Care

Ms. Jennifer Heatley – Project Executive, Risk Management-Health Promotion

Dr. Alexa Bagnell – Chief, Department of Psychiatry, Mental Health and Addictions Program,  
Mental Health and Addictions, IWK Health Centre

Ms. Jocelyn Vine – Vice President, Patient Care and Chief Nurse Executive, IWK Health Centre

Ms. Maureen Brennan – Director, Mental Health and Addictions, IWK Health Centre

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

Ms. Janet Knox – President and CEO

Ms. Lindsay Peach – Vice President, Integrated Health Services-Community Support and  
Management

Ms. Samantha Hodder – Senior Director, Mental Health and Addictions

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) and the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the Mental Health Strategy.

The DHW is the policy and funding arm of the system and the NSHA and IWK organize and deliver health services. The budget for mental health and addictions is \$287 million, with the NSHA portion being \$172,855,000.

One in five people are living with a mental health issue and one in seven experience a substance abuse problem. Child and youth mental health require a particular focus. The IWK has a strategic plan to work on the issue.

Access to services varies throughout the province. Work is underway to strengthen and improve access to mental health and addiction services, including putting in place a central access system. More capacity is needed in the system and there should be more connection and integration with non-profit providers to build a more comprehensive system. Virtual assistance options are important and will play an increasing role.

Wait times for mental health are too long, services are not uniform across the province and services are not triaged. The IWK and the NSHA are working closely to address these issues. Additional resources are beginning to be put in place, such as adding clinicians, putting people in place in schools and hiring youth outreach workers. They are working to address the areas of highest need.

A new triage system has been put in place and a tele-psychiatry option has been started in the Northern and Eastern Zones. The plan is to roll out the triage system across the province within the year. Work is also being conducted to have measures in place to evaluate whether the desired outcomes are being achieved, with reporting on wait-times to begin in the first quarter of this fiscal year.

A number of questions were asked with respect to the agreement between the province and the federal government regarding health funding. An agreement has been reached on overall funding over a 10-year period. Negotiations are continuing on the bilateral agreement, which identifies the projects and the anticipated outcomes of those projects.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

It was agreed to extend the meeting time to finish the committee's business.

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Health and Wellness
  - Proposing an additional witness for the May 9, 2018, meeting.
    - It was agreed to approve the additional witness.
- Department of Environment
  - Information requested from the March 28, 2018, meeting. The department also advised that one question asked by the committee would best be addressed to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.
    - It was agreed to request this information from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

The committee was presented with the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures Record of Decision.

A motion was introduced:

- That the committee approve these topics.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated

A second motion was introduced:

- That we approve the six topics, that would be: Community Services, funding for sexual violence; Department of Business, Rural Internet Middle Mile; Department of Seniors, Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Aging Population; Department of Health and Wellness,

funding for home care; Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, immigration streams and programs; and Department of Health and Wellness, rural health care delivery.

- Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
- Motion carried

It was also agreed to approve the Auditor General as a witness on May 30<sup>th</sup> with respect to the Spring 2018 Report of the Auditor General.

The following items were approved:

WITNESS	TOPIC(S)
Department of Community Services – Lynn Hartwell, Deputy Minister	Funding for Sexual Violence Outreach
Department of Business – Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister	Rural Internet Middle Mile Project
Department of Seniors – Simon d’Entremont, Deputy Minister	SHIFT: Nova Scotia’s Action Plan for an Aging Population and Age friendly grants
Department of Health and Wellness	Funding for Homecare
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration - Tracey Taweel, Deputy Minister	Immigration Streams and Programs
Department of Health and Wellness – Denise Perret, Deputy Minister (or NSHA)	Rural Healthcare Delivery
Office of the Auditor General	Spring 2018 Report of the Auditor General (May 30, 2018)

The Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures also reached the following agreements:

- That members and researchers for the caucuses receive meeting agendas on Fridays before the Wednesday meeting the following week and that any information that is sent to members be sent to researchers, which was approved by the committee.
  - It was further agreed that the Chair would send letters to each of the Chiefs of Staff and caucus chairs to advise them that it is the responsibility of committee members to notify the committee clerk when there is a change to their caucus research staff serving the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.
- To hold a 30-minute in camera briefing with the Auditor General in advance of a witness appearing in relation to an Auditor General’s report, as well as in advance of meetings when the Auditor General is presenting a report, which was approved by the committee.
  - It was also agreed to include this information in the correspondence to the caucus chairs, as well.

Neither the Chair nor Vice-Chair are able to attend the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

A motion was introduced:

- That Suzanne Lohnes-Croft be the chairman for the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- A breakdown of how much of that targeted federal funding will be allocated specifically to mental health this year, and where it will be spent.
- Is the \$287.8 million over 10 years that is targeted for mental health for both mental health and addictions for both health authorities?

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa\\_20180425.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa_20180425.pdf)

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Finance and Treasury Board**

Mr. Byron Rafuse – Deputy Minister

Ms. Lilani Kumaranayake – Executive Director, Fiscal Policy, Economics & Budgetary Planning

**Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation**

Mr. Bret Mitchell – President and CEO

Ms. Heather MacDougall – Director, Policy Public Affairs, Corporate Secretary

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Finance and Treasury Board (FTB) and the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation (NSLC) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Listing Local Products and New Products.

The sale of alcohol is regulated both provincially and federally. FTB has the responsibility for the sale of alcohol under the Liquor Control Act. Service Nova Scotia has the responsibility for enforcement and licensing under the Act.

The NSLC opened in 1930 and now has approximately 1400 employees. It is the provincial liquor authority and provides the province with its largest single source of revenue after income tax and HST.

There are 58 craft and 2 commercial breweries, 21 farm and 2 commercial wineries, and 16 distilleries in the province. Local alcohol producers are charged a 5 per cent fee by the NSLC whether their products are sold at the NSLC or not. The NSLC provides \$50,000 in support to each of the 3 industry associations.

Eighteen of the 21 wineries sell to the NSLC. Local distillers make up between 6 and 7 per cent of the entire spirit industry in the province. Craft beer is booming in Nova Scotia and has experienced 40-50 per cent growth, annually, in recent years. Nova Scotia craft beer makes up 4.8 per cent of sales, and 27 per cent of shelf space is dedicated to this product. Supporting local is part of the NSLC retail philosophy. New stores in Dartmouth and the Nova Centre will focus on local products.

Much of the meeting discussion revolved around the sale of cannabis, for which the NSLC will be responsible. Cannabis will be sold in 12 locations. It is anticipated that 85 full-time employees will be added. Approximately 150 products will be sold in stores and between 400-450 online. The stand-alone store on Clyde Street will have approximately 300 products. The



NSLC has invested \$9 million in capital and is expecting \$87.2 million in cannabis sales. It was noted that Nova Scotia has the highest use of cannabis per capita in Canada.

It is anticipated that cannabis will begin being sold on July 1, however, the Federal Government must first provide provinces with the legal ability to do so. A provincial public education campaign is planned and the NSLC website will contain a great deal of information. Employees will also receive more robust training.

Growers need to have a license to cultivate and sell, which is managed by Health Canada. There are between 2-3 local producers at present, with a view to have approximately 12 in the future.

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Agriculture
  - Information requested from the March 7, 2018, meeting

It was agreed to have Mr. Brendan Maguire chair the next meeting as Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, who had been previously appointed to chair the meeting, would like to participate in questioning at this meeting.

The committee was asked to revisit its decision not to call the Department of Internal Services before it, in light of additional information that has come out.

A motion was introduced:

- That the committee ask the clerk to schedule Internal Services to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to talk about security, and do that sooner rather than later.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated

### **DOCUMENTATION**

No documentation was requested.

### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa\\_20180502.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa_20180502.pdf)

**SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM  
DISORDER/COMPLEX NEEDS**

**May 9, 2018**

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Community Services**

Ms. Lynn Hartwell – Deputy Minister

Mr. Joe Rudderham – Executive Director, Disability Supports Program

Ms. Wendy Bungay – Director, Placement Services

**Department of Health and Wellness**

Ms. Denise Perret – Deputy Minister

Ms. Francine Vezina – Project Executive, Risk Mitigation-Primary and Acute Care

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**

Ms. Karen Gatien – Associate Deputy Minister

Ms. Ann Power – Executive Director, Student Equity and Support Services

Ms. Susan Jozsa – Autism Consultant

**IWK Health Centre**

Ms. Jocelyn Vine – Vice President, Patient Care & Chief Nurse Executive

Dr. Andrew Lynk – Chief Pediatrics, IWK Health Centre Halifax Nova Scotia

Chair of Pediatrics, Dalhousie University

Consultant Pediatrician, Cape Breton Regional Hospital Sydney Nova Scotia

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

Ms. Lindsay Peach – Vice President, Integrated Health Services-Community Support and  
Management

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Community Services (DCS), Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), IWK Health Centre (IWK) and the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss Services and Supports for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder/Complex Needs.

DHW provides the health authorities with a base operating grant, as well as funding for the early diagnosis and services for children with ASD. Of the \$15 million the DHW provides for autism, approximately \$13 million goes to the IWK and NSHA for Early Intensive Behavioral

Intervention (EIBI). In addition to EIBI, diagnosis and other supports are provided by teams at the IWK and NSHA to assist families to access supports for children with complex care needs and mental health services. The IWK has specialized resources for ASD and works to have supports brought to individuals at home. High acute care is provided in the Garron Unit at the IWK to those in extreme crisis. The IWK conducted a review of services related to ASD and the recommendations are being used to improve, streamline and identify gaps in the system.

The prevalence of ASD has been increasing, with 1 in 68 having ASD presently. A diagnosis needs to be made in order for children to be eligible to receive supports. As there can be long waits, the ability to get a diagnosis can be an issue to accessing the program; however, some services can be put in place while awaiting a formal diagnosis.

There are many degrees of ASD, including social, behavioral and developmental issues. Children with ASD in the pre-Primary program can access EIBI and other special supports, and the DOE assists to transition children with ASD into school. There are 14.5 ASD consultants in place in the English and French school boards. DOE has been provided with an additional \$15 million to enhance education for all students, including those with ASD. Funding will be provided for training and intervention strategies to assist those children who need it in the early grades. Additional ASD specialists, behavioural support teachers, learning centre resource teachers and, program planning specialists will be put in place throughout the Regional Centres for Education. Investments are also being made in parent navigators, child and youth care practitioners and, training for teachers. This year's budget contains \$300,000 for Autism Nova Scotia to establish 8 regional autism centres around the province.

The Direct Family Support for Children program offered by DCS provides respite services to families of children with special needs. There is no wait-list for child respite now, and they are working to reduce the wait-list for adults. DCS has programs to support children as they age into adulthood to assist them to live independent lives, as well as to become part of the labour force.

DCS provides approximately \$12.5 million in support for children. Approximately 35 per cent of the DCS caseload are children on the autism spectrum. It was noted that 45 per cent of those with ASD don't have an intellectual disability, which is a requirement for services. This has been identified as a gap, and work is ongoing to establish a better method of assessment.

Residential centres for children no longer exist and the focus is now on providing services to support children and families in their homes. Families who are in crisis can pose a challenge, as more complex supports are required. A great deal of collaboration between departments is often required to put the proper supports in place in these situations.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

A motion was introduced:

- To invite the Department of Internal Services to appear before the committee on May 23 to talk about protection of personal data and government’s response when personal data has been comprised.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion deferred

## **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- How many people are waiting on a wait-list to get assessed for ASD now compared to 5 or 10 years ago and how long are they waiting to get diagnosed?

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa\\_20180509.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa_20180509.pdf)

**SHIFT: NOVA SCOTIA'S ACTION PLAN FOR AN AGING POPULATION AND AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES GRANTS**

**May 16, 2018**

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Seniors**

Mr. Simon d'Entremont – Deputy Minister

Mr. Faizal Nanji – Executive Director

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Seniors (DOS) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss SHIFT: Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population and Age-friendly Communities Grants.

Nova Scotia was the first province to create a Department of Seniors. The SHIFT Action Plan has been in place for one year. The action plan is based on 3 pillars: that older adults are valuable socially and economically; to promote healthy active living; and to support aging in place. It contains 12 priorities and 50 actions. The initial investment announced was \$13.6 million and spread over many departments.

The role of DOS as it relates to SHIFT is to create an overall policy framework and coordinate action with government departments. A lot was accomplished in the first year, notably a \$110,000 investment in a mobile food market; 60,000 individuals no longer paying tax as a result of the increase to the basic personal income tax exemption; \$2.4 million to expand community transit; new affordable housing projects are planned with funding from the federal Social Infrastructure Fund; \$200,000 in the Works for You Program; online training for employers regarding age-friendly workplaces; the creation of the social innovation lab focused on addressing issues relating to an aging population.

Seniors make up 20 per cent of the population in Nova Scotia. The Group of IX is the permanent seniors' advisory council to the department and the voice of seniors in the province and a great resource for the department. DOS meets with the Group of IX eight times a year and the minister meets with them annually.

Age-friendly Communities Grants have helped to support many projects over the years. This year, 47 projects have been supported in communities across the province. The Senior Safety Program also benefits seniors. Senior safety officers are in place in communities to help seniors with safety issues. Five communities have been added to the Senior Safety Program to ensure province-wide coverage.

Aging in place is a big issue, as the majority of seniors wish to stay in their homes as long as possible. The ability to carry out necessary property maintenance plays a role in the ability of seniors to stay at home. Affordability and adequacy of housing is an issue for 44 per cent of

seniors who live alone. Housing affordability is a focus in SHIFT. The province is leveraging the \$20 million housing funding from the federal government to help to address housing. Currently, 60 per cent of affordable housing units in the province are for seniors.

Home care is also a concern relative to aging in place. The Continuing Care Strategy is being renewed and will be looking at what services should be provided, including long-term care needs. It was noted the families often play a role in carrying for aging relatives. The caregiver program provides financial assistance to families in this regard and has been expanded this year. It was noted that Nova Scotia is the only province that provides this benefit.

One of the biggest challenges faced by seniors is ageism. Workplace practices need to be modernized to accommodate seniors, and work is underway to address this. Training has been provided to Nova Scotia Works on creating age-friendly workplaces.

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

The motion which was deferred from the last meeting was put before the committee:

- To invite the Department of Internal Services to appear before the committee on May 23 to talk about protection of personal data and government's response when personal data has been comprised.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated

### **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- How many of the units that are specifically for seniors under Housing Nova Scotia are barrier free and fully accessible for people with physical disabilities?
- How many people are receiving the Caregiver Benefit?

### **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa\\_20180516.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa_20180516.pdf)

**WITNESSES**

**Office of the Auditor General**

Mr. Michael Pickup – Auditor General  
Mr. Andrew Atherton – Assistant Auditor General  
Mr. Robert Jewer – Audit Principal  
Ms. Ashley Richardson – Audit Principal

**MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Office of the Auditor General were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the May 29, 2018 Report of the Auditor General. An in camera meeting was held with officials from the Auditor General’s Office to brief members on the report prior to the public meeting.

This report contained three chapters relating to the Maintenance Enforcement Program; corrections; and grants. All recommendations were accepted by the departments responsible.

The audit of grant programs reviewed grants provided over a two-year period by the Departments of Communities, Culture and Heritage; Agriculture; and Natural Resources, totaling \$45 million. Eighteen programs were reviewed consisting of 170 grants. Concern was raised with respect to discretionary grants and one-time grants provided by the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, as they do not have a measurement of success or expected outcome attached to them. The Auditor General did note that, overall, there are controls in place and payments are occurring properly.

The audit of the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage regarding grants was finalized on May 14, 2018. The department was called before the Public Accounts Committee on February 21, 2018, to discuss funding and grants. The Auditor General indicated that his office has no issue with departments appearing before the Public Accounts Committee while an audit is taking place so long as the Act is respected and confidentiality is maintained.

There is approximately \$60 million in outstanding maintenance enforcement payments, of which approximately \$15 million relates to inactive files. Maintenance enforcement officers have a caseload of between 330-450. The audit of the Maintenance Enforcement Program revealed that the move of the office to New Waterford attributed to issues and delays. Approximately \$64 million in maintenance enforcement payments were outstanding in 2011. After the move to New Waterford, outstanding amounts increased to \$70 million in 2014 and \$73 million in 2015; however, in 2018, the amount decreased to \$63 million. The Auditor General did note that there have been signs of improvement on the performance management side. New legislation has been implemented to assist in the collection of outstanding payments.

There were a large number of weaknesses found during the corrections audit, which resulted in 12 recommendations. The audit raised concern regarding the hiring process for corrections officers and the amount of staff that had not completed the required training. Issues were also raised relating to close confinement and intermittent sentences.

The May 29, 2018 Report of the Auditor General – Performance is available at: [https://oag-ns.ca/sites/default/files/publications/Report\\_May\\_2018.pdf](https://oag-ns.ca/sites/default/files/publications/Report_May_2018.pdf)

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
  - Information requested from the March 28, 2018, meeting
- Department of Health and Wellness
  - Information requested from the April 25, 2018, meeting
- Department of Business
  - Information requested from the April 18, 2018, meeting

A motion was put forward:

- That the Public Accounts Committee meet on June 13<sup>th</sup>, June 20<sup>th</sup>, and June 27<sup>th</sup> to address the three topics of the Auditor General’s report in a timely fashion.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated

## **DOCUMENTATION**

No documentation was requested.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa\\_20180530.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa_20180530.pdf)



## **WITNESSES**

### **Department of Business**

Mr. Bernie Miller – Deputy Minister

Mr. Kent Roberts – Managing Director, Business Relations & Innovation

Ms. Monique Arsenault – Director, Business Relations & Innovation

## **MATTERS OF DISCUSSION**

Officials from the Department of Business (DOB) were invited to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to discuss the Rural Internet Middle Mile Project.

Access to high-speed Internet is important for economic growth in the province. There is a positive relationship between access to high-speed Internet and GDP, especially for small and medium businesses. This is particularly important to Nova Scotia as the province is home to many small and medium businesses. High-speed Internet is also important to schools, hospitals, etc., and the public.

Consultations supported government playing a role in addressing the gaps in accessing high-speed Internet. A demand and supply map was done and a strategy is being developed. The work will be done in a phased approach over a number of years. Government is making public investments to address market failure. Nova Scotia has made one of the largest per capita investments in high-speed Internet for rural areas.

The Brightstar Middle Mile Strategy was received in the Fall of 2017 and funds were released in March 2018. Its focus was on how to expand existing services to meet current needs. The Brightstar Last Mile Strategy was received in March 2018 and focused on what is needed to connect the last customers. The opinion from experts is that it is not possible to provide 100 per cent coverage. The goal is to have greater than 95 per cent coverage. It is estimated that the capital investment required will be in the range of \$300 million to \$500 million.

It is important that the providers are able to ensure they can deliver the capacity required. Concern has been expressed that the reports do not accurately reflect the need. Policy work is underway to determine what targets will be set. The 2007 program did not anticipate the pace of the demand increase. The new strategy will be scalable with the ability to upgrade as technology changes, and providers will need to adhere to service-level standards set out in contracts.

An Internet trust has been set up in the amount of \$120 million to be available for underserved communities. The trust is independent and arm's length from government. The trust makes the funding decisions and provides financial oversight. The mandate of the Waterfront Development Corporation has been broadened to include strategic economic infrastructure, which includes broadband, and they will be responsible to implement the strategy.

Access to high-speed Internet is an important issue across Canada. The federal Connect to Innovate program has assisted in funding 22 projects in Nova Scotia, and the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission has allotted \$750 million, nationally, to increase broadband in underserved areas.

#### **TABLED DOCUMENTS**

- Brightstar Canada-Nova Scotia Department of Business Middle Mile Strategy –
  - Tabled by Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister, Department of Business
- Brightstar Canada-Nova Scotia Department of Business Last Mile Strategy
  - Tabled by Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister, Department of Business

#### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence was received from:

- Department of Health and Wellness
  - Information requested from the May 9, 2018, meeting

It was agreed to extend meeting time to finish the committee's business.

A motion was put forward:

- To have the September witnesses brought forward to June.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated

#### **DOCUMENTATION**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- How long is the chairperson's contract for?
- How much subsidies have been provided over the last five years to the larger players, Eastlink and Bell, in comparison to community-owned initiatives?

**TRANSCRIPT**

The transcript for the meeting can be found at:

[https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa\\_20180606.pdf](https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/committees/pa/pa_20180606.pdf)

**SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON  
AGENDA AND  
PROCEDURES  
  
MEETINGS**

***In Camera***

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr. Allan MacMaster, MLA – Chairman  
 Mr. Gordon Wilson, MLA – Vice Chairman  
 Hon. David Wilson, MLA  
 Mr. Tim Houston, MLA  
 Mr. Terry Spicer – Deputy Auditor General  
 Mr. Gordon Hebb – Chief Legislative Counsel  
 Ms. Nicole Arsenault – Assistant Clerk, Office of the Speaker

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

The subcommittee agreed to propose the following items to the full committee for approval:

<b>WITNESS</b>	<b>TOPIC(S)</b>
Health and Wellness	IWK Governance and Oversight
Department of Health and Wellness and Tony Kelly, Digby Area Health Coalition	Physician Recruitment
Duff Montgomerie, Deputy Minister – LAE and Murray Coolican, Deputy Minister – Business	Funding Ocean Innovation Centre: COVE (Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship)
Internal Services	Alternate Procurement Process and IT services
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	Funding for pre-Primary
Frank Dunn, Deputy Minister – Agriculture	NS Farm Loan Board focus on “Jump Start Program”
Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Financial Audit related work (October 4, 2017 In Camera and Public)

Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Environment Related Audits (November 1, 2017 In Camera)
Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Environment Related Audits (November 8, 2017 Public)
Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Health and Corrections Audits (November 22, 2017 In Camera)
Office of the Auditor General	Auditor General Report – Health and Corrections Audits (November 29, 2017 Public)

**TRANSCRIPT**

There is no public transcript of this meeting as it was held in camera.

***In Camera***

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Allan MacMaster, MLA – Chairman  
 Mr. Gordon Wilson, MLA – Vice Chairman  
 Ms. Lisa Roberts, MLA  
 Mr. Tim Houston, MLA  
 Mr. Terry Spicer – Deputy Auditor General  
 Mr. Gordon Hebb – Chief Legislative Counsel  
 Ms. Nicole Arsenault – Assistant Clerk, Office of the Speaker

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

The subcommittee agreed to propose the following items to the full committee for approval:

<b>WITNESS</b>	<b>TOPIC(S)</b>
Health and Wellness – Deputy Minister NSHA – Janet Knox College of Physicians and Surgeons	Physician Recruitment and Retention
Department of Health/NSHA, TIR, Internal Services	Redevelopment of the QEII
Michele Saran, CEO	Tourism Nova Scotia
TIR and Western Alignment Corporation	Cobequid Pass
Department of Community Services	Transformation of the ESIA System
Frank Dunn, Deputy Minister, Fisheries	Seafood Exports

**TRANSCRIPT**

There is no public transcript of this meeting as it was held *in camera*.

***In Camera***

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. Allan MacMaster, MLA – Chair  
 Mr. Gordon Wilson, MLA – Vice Chairman  
 Hon. David Wilson, MLA  
 Mr. Tim Houston, MLA  
 Mr. Terry Spicer – Deputy Auditor General  
 Mr. Gordon Hebb – Chief Legislative Counsel  
 Ms. Nicole Arsenault – Assistant Clerk, Office of the Speaker

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

The subcommittee agreed to propose the following items to the full committee for approval:

<b>WITNESS</b>	<b>TOPIC(S)</b>
Department of Agriculture, Deputy Minister, Frank Dunn	Wine Development
Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, Deputy Minister, Tracey Taweel	Funding and Grants
Service Nova Scotia, Chief Executive Officer, Joanne Munro	Service Modernization and Access Centers
NSHA – Janet Knox, President and CEO, and Department of Health and Wellness	Mental Health Strategy
NSLC – Brett Mitchell, President and CEO, and Department of Finance and Treasury Board	Listing Local Products and New Products
Department of Environment - Francis Martin, Deputy Minister	Northern Pulp Environmental Assessment
Department of Environment	November 2017 Report of the Auditor General on Accounting for Contaminated Sites, Previous Audits Related to the Environment, Climate Change Management and Environmental Assessments



Departments of Community Services and Health	Services and Supports for Children with ASD/complex needs
Department of Business	Economic Development and Employment Trends in the Nova Scotia Film Industry
Office of the Auditor General	Report of the Auditor General - Follow-up of 2014 and 2015 Recommendations (April 4, 2018)

**TRANSCRIPT**

There is no public transcript of this meeting as it was held *in camera*.

***In Camera***

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr. Allan MacMaster, MLA – Chairman

Mr. Gordon Wilson, MLA – Vice Chairman

Ms. Lisa Roberts, MLA

Mr. Tim Houston, MLA

Mr. Andrew Atherton – Assistant Auditor General

Mr. Gordon Hebb – Chief Legislative Counsel

Ms. Nicole Arsenault – Assistant Clerk, Office of the Speaker

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

The subcommittee meet to discuss a number of items and agreed to propose the following items to the full committee for approval:

- Endorsement of Auditor General Recommendations
  - It was agreed to change the wording of the motion used to endorse Auditor General recommendations as follows:
    - “I move that the Public Accounts Committee formally accept and endorse recommendations contained in the \_\_\_\_\_ Report of the Auditor General that have been accepted by the audited departments or agencies, and ask that those departments and agencies commit to and take responsibility for full and timely implementation of those accepted recommendations.”
- Public Accounts Committee procedure regarding Auditor General Reports
  - It was agreed to change the procedure as follows:
    - That the Auditor General’s Office table performance audits the day prior to a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee and that our meeting to discuss that audit with the Auditor General on the Wednesday be in public.
    - That financial and follow-up reports by the Auditor General be released on the Tuesday prior to the meeting of the Public Accounts Committee, and that the meeting to discuss those reports be in public.
- CAAF Training
  - It was agreed that training would not be pursued at present.

- Meeting Agendas
  - The matter will be discussed further by the subcommittee; however, in the interim, meeting agendas will be sent to members on the Monday before the Public Accounts Committee meeting that week.

**TRANSCRIPT**

There is no public transcript of this meeting as it was held *in camera*.

***In Camera***

**IN ATTENDANCE**

- Mr. Allan MacMaster, MLA – Chairman
- Mr. Gordon Wilson, MLA – Vice Chairman
- Mr. Tim Houston, MLA
- Hon. David Wilson, MLA
- Mr. Michael Pickup – Auditor General
- Mr. Gordon Hebb – Chief Legislative Counsel
- Ms. Nicole Arsenault – Assistant Clerk, Office of the Speaker

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

The subcommittee agreed to propose the following items to the full committee for approval:

<b>WITNESS</b>	<b>TOPIC(S)</b>
Department of Community Services – Lynn Hartwell, Deputy Minister	Funding for Sexual Violence Outreach
Department of Business – Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister	Rural Internet Middle Mile Project
Department of Seniors – Simon d’Entremont, Deputy Minister	SHIFT: Nova Scotia’s Action Plan for an Aging Population and Age-friendly grants
Internal Services - Patricia Arab, Minister and Jeff Conrad, Deputy Minister	Supplier Contracts Related to the FOIPOP Breach
Department of Health and Wellness	Funding for Homecare
Nova Scotia Office of Immigration - Tracey Taweel, Deputy Minister	Immigration Streams and Programs
Department of Health and Wellness – Denise Perret, Deputy Minister (or NSHA)	Rural Healthcare Delivery
Office of the Auditor General	Spring 2018 Report of the Auditor General (May 30, 2018)

Agreement was also reached on the following items, which will also be proposed to the full committee:

- That meetings agendas be sent to members and researchers on the Friday before the Wednesday meeting and that any information that is sent to members is to be sent to

the caucus researchers for the committee.

- It was agreed that the Auditor General would provide a half hour in camera briefing in advance of appearing before the committee regarding an Auditor General report and also in advance of witnesses appearing in relation to Auditor General chapters/reports.

#### **TRANSCRIPT**

There is no public transcript of this meeting as it was held *in camera*.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A – TABLED DOCUMENTATION

The following is a list of documents tabled before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts:

### **October 18, 2017**

- ITSM Program Scope, Contracts and Financials – Tabled by Tim Houston, MLA
- Tender Details - IT Service Management Transformation Partner Sponsored by the ICT Services, Department of Internal Services – Tabled by Tim Houston, MLA

### **November 29, 2017**

- Correspondence to the Nova Scotia Health Authority dated October 20, 2017 – Tabled by Tim Houston, MLA
- Department of Health and Wellness Press Release dated October 10, 2017 – Tabled by Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, MLA

### **December 13, 2017**

- Nova Scotia Health Authority Voicemail message re: Family Practice Registry – Tabled by Tim Houston, MLA

### **January 17, 2018**

- Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Press Release dated April 26, 2017 – Tabled by Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

### **February 28, 2018**

- QEII Redevelopment Project, February 2018 – Tabled by Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

### **June 6, 2018**

- Brightstar Canada-Nova Scotia Department of Business Middle Mile Strategy – Tabled by Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister, Department of Business
- Brightstar Canada-Nova Scotia Department of Business Last Mile Strategy – Tabled by Bernie Miller, Deputy Minister, Department of Business

## APPENDIX B – MOTIONS

The following is a list of motions put before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts:

### September 20, 2017

The committee was presented with the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures Record of Decision for approval. A number of motions were put forward:

- That the topics submitted from the subcommittee be approved at the full committee.
  - Moved by Hon. David Wilson, MLA
  - Motion defeated
- That the next three items on the agenda list be accepted as topics: funding for the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship (COVE), with Duff Montgomerie as the witness; Alternate Procurement Process and IT Services, with Internal Services; and funding for pre-Primary with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried
- To have meetings on October 4<sup>th</sup>, November 1<sup>st</sup>, November 8<sup>th</sup>, November 22<sup>nd</sup> and November 29<sup>th</sup>, with the Auditor General on audit work that that office has completed.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

### October 11, 2017

Due to difficulty in finding a date that both approved witnesses were available to appear regarding the topic Funding Ocean Innovation Centre: COVE (Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship), a motion was put forward:

- To approve that the Senior Executive Director with the Higher Education Branch of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education appear on behalf of the Deputy Minister, should the Deputy Minister be unable to attend.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

### November 1, 2017

The committee was presented with the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures Record of Decision for approval. A motion was put forward:



- That all six topics be approved, but that the witnesses for the topic of physician recruitment and retention will be discussed next week.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

### **January 24, 2018**

The committee was presented with the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures Record of Decision for approval. A motion was put forward:

- That the topics and witnesses be approved for scheduling for future committee meeting, just noting also the witnesses under the topic for the PCs with the Nova Scotia Health Authority would be the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness; under the NDP topics for Department of Environment would be the Deputy Minister of Environment; under Community Services and Health and Wellness would be both Deputies for that; and the Department of Business would be the Deputy Minister of Business – or if they have subordinates they would like to appoint to that.
  - Moved by Mr. Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

### **February 7, 2018**

The Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures was asked to review the practice of endorsing Auditor General recommendations. It approved changes to the wording used to endorse the recommendations. A motion was put forward:

- That the following statement be adopted as a revised motion for endorsing the AG recommendations:

“I move that the Public Accounts Committee formally accept and endorse recommendations contained in the ‘blank report’ of the Auditor General that have been accepted by the audited departments or agencies and ask that these departments and agencies commit to and take responsibility for full and timely implementation of the recommendations accepted by these departments and agencies.”

- Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
- Motion carried

### **February 14, 2018**

Pursuant to the procedure adopted by the committee, the Chair asked for a motion to endorse the accepted recommendations contained in the October 2017, November 1, 2017, and

November 22, 2017, Reports of the Auditor General. A motion was put forward:

- That the Public Accounts Committee formally accept and endorse recommendations contained in the October 2017 Report of the Auditor General, the November 1, 2017, Report of the Auditor General, and the November 22, 2017, Report of the Auditor General that have been accepted by the audited departments or agencies, and ask that those departments and agencies commit to and take responsibility for full and timely implementation of the recommendations accepted by those departments and agencies.
  - Moved by Hugh MacKay, MLA
  - Motion carried

### **April 25, 2018**

The committee was presented with the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedures Record of Decision. A motion was introduced:

- That the committee approve these topics.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated

A second motion was introduced:

- That we approve the six topics, that would be: Community Services, funding for sexual violence; Department of Business, Rural Internet Middle Mile; Department of Seniors, Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Aging Population; Department of Health and Wellness, funding for home care; Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, immigration streams and programs; and Department of Health and Wellness, rural health care delivery.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

Neither the Chair or Vice-Chair are able to attend the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. A motion was introduced:

- That Suzanne Lohnes-Croft be the chairman for the May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - Moved by Gordon Wilson, MLA
  - Motion carried

### **May 2, 2018**

The committee was asked to revisit its decision not to call the Department of Internal Services before it, in light of additional information that has come out. A motion was introduced:

- That the committee ask the clerk to schedule Internal Services to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to talk about security, and do that sooner rather than later.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated

**May 9, 2018**

A motion was introduced:

- To invite the Department of Internal Services to appear before the committee on May 23 to talk about protection of personal data and government's response when personal data has been comprised.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion deferred

**May 16, 2018**

The motion which was deferred from the last meeting was put before the committee:

- To invite the Department of Internal Services to appear before the committee on May 23 to talk about protection of personal data and government's response when personal data has been comprised.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated

**May 30, 2018**

A motion was put forward:

- That the Public Accounts Committee meet on June 13<sup>th</sup>, June 20<sup>th</sup>, and June 27<sup>th</sup> to address the three topics of the Auditor General's report in a timely fashion.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated

**June 6, 2018**

A motion was put forward:

- To have the September witnesses brought forward to June.
  - Moved by Tim Houston, MLA
  - Motion defeated
  - Recorded vote 5-4

## **APPENDIX C – DOCUMENTATION**

**September 27, 2017**

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- The curriculum framework.
- How many families that applied to the pre-Primary program did not get a spot?

**October 18, 2017**

**Department of Internal Services**

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- Are the tenders to Livus Consulting part of the Axios Assyst implementation?
- A detailed synopsis of the entire Axios Assyst project to date (including a list of functions and what are operational, cost, risk assessment and people engaged in it).
- What is the percentage fee paid to Flextrack?
- Information on the costs to date relating to the one person/one record initiative.
- How much money did the NSHA invest in Axios Assyst prior to the decision by Internal Services to use the same system?

**December 6, 2017**

**Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture**

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- How much growth have we seen over the last 10 years to our export market?
- Has the minister seen a plan for the Northern Pulp effluent plant yet?

**December 13, 2017**

**Department of Health and Wellness**

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

**Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons**

The committee requested and received the following documentation from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- The average age of the 1092 billing family practitioners in the province.

**January 10, 2018**

**Department of Business**

**Department of Labour and Advanced Education**

The committee requested and received the following documentation:

- A breakdown of the \$19.7 million project budget as well as a breakdown on capital costs, maintenance costs and operational costs.
- A timeline on accessing the full amount of the federal funding for the project.
- How does the money actually move through the system?

**January 17, 2018**

**Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal**

**Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation**

The committee requested and received the following documentation from the Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation:

- What is the weighted average speed limit on Trunk 4?

**January 24, 2018**

**Tourism Nova Scotia**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- Information related to how the exchange rate has an influence on whether or not people stay and travel within Canada and whether they travel outside of Canada.
- What percentage of tourism revenues are actually as a result of Nova Scotians or Maritimers travelling in the province?
- What amount of money is spent on marketing on the Eastern Seaboard of the US?

**January 31, 2018**

**Department of Community Services**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- How much does the department currently collect in terms of the clawbacks relating to employment income?

**February 7, 2018**

**Office of Service Nova Scotia**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- Is there any role in Nova Scotia and for this piece of legislation (Consumer Protection Act) to protect consumers so that does not happen (price fixing)?
- When is the lease for the Access Nova Scotia facility in Sackville up for renewal? Is this something that the Minister has to approve?

**February 14, 2018**

**Department of Environment**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- Did the boardwalk project along the front of the Northumberland Fisheries Museum require a Class 2 assessment?
- A list of where an environmental assessment report has been provided.
- Has the Premier responded directly to Premier MacLauchlan's letter? If so, provide a copy of the letter that was sent back.

**February 21, 2018**

**Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- How many languages does the application form come in?
- What percentage of the grants went to HRM?
- The same 27 arts organizations have received operational funding for the last two years. Can you tell us how many years it has been the same 27 organizations?
- The overall rink investment in Membertou.
- In 2015-16, the department gave \$6,000 in funding to the English-language school boards, and that increased in the next year to \$144,000. Please explain that increase and what's going to happen to that funding if the school boards are eliminated?
- The name of the individual who has been working with the Mi'kmaq community.

**February 28, 2018**

**Department of Health and Wellness**

**Department of Internal Services**

**Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal**

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- A list of what and where services are delivered now and where those services will be located in the future.
- The list of what has been spent to date, the actuals, and the separate list of what has been announced.
- Is there a document that shows how patients and families helped to shape the care plan? Is there a finalized care plan in terms of what services we actually need delivered when, and by whom and where?
- A list of committees and the membership of those committees.

**March 7, 2018**

**Department of Agriculture**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- The GDP multiplier for winery sector versus the craft brewery sector versus the local food sector.
- Of the 642 people directly employed in the wine industry in Nova Scotia - what are the wage levels of those jobs?
- Are we on track to increase our number of small farms to meet the target of 2,736 by 2020?

**March 28, 2018**

**Department of Environment**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- The three sets of documents that the federal government has provided for the cap-and-trade benchmark and the discussion documents that were put in place for the consultation on the cap-and-trade program.
- Where can the accounting be found of the public expense involved in the cleanup of the Triangle Petroleum waste ponds near Kennetcook?

**April 18, 2018**

**Department of Business**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- Do the CMPA numbers include animation?

**April 25, 2018**

**Department of Health and Wellness**

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- A breakdown of how much of that targeted federal funding will be allocated specifically to mental health this year, and where it will be spent.
- Is the \$287.8 million over 10 years that is targeted for mental health for both mental health and addictions for both health authorities?

**May 9, 2018**

**Department of Community Services**

**Department of Health and Wellness**

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**

**IWK Health Centre**

**Nova Scotia Health Authority**

The committee requested and received the following information from the Department of Health and Wellness:

- How many people are waiting on a wait-list to get assessed for ASD now compared to 5 or 10 years ago and how long are they waiting to get diagnosed?

**May 16, 2018**

**Department of Seniors**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- How many of the units that are specifically for seniors under Housing Nova Scotia are barrier free and fully accessible for people with physical disabilities?
- How many people are receiving the Caregiver Benefit?

**June 6, 2018**

**Department of Business**

The committee requested and received the following information:

- How long is the chairperson's contract for?
- How much subsidies have been provided over the last five years to the larger players, Eastlink and Bell, in comparison to community-owned initiatives?



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