

**Nova Scotia Office of Immigration  
Annual Accountability Report  
for the Fiscal Year 2005-06**

**Date: November 30, 2006**

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## Accountability Statement

The accountability report of the Office of Immigration for the year ending March 31, 2006, is pursuant to the Provincial Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Office of Immigration business plan information for the fiscal year 2005-2006. The reporting of the Office of Immigration performance measures necessarily includes estimates, judgements and opinions by the Office of Immigration.

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

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Hon. Carolyn Bolivar-Getson  
Minister

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Elizabeth Mills  
Acting Deputy Minister

## **Message from the Minister**

As of March 2006, the Office of Immigration completed its first full fiscal year of operation. As such, I am very pleased to present the office's first Accountability Report. The report outlines the work of the office in addressing the goals and priorities of the business plan, which are designed to help us meet our targets as set forth in the province's immigration strategy, introduced in January 2005.

Activities of the 2005-2006 fiscal year reflect the underpinnings of our immigration strategy – to attract and retain newcomers, who can contribute to our economy, help diversify our communities and generate new ideas and new ways of thinking.

The activities were wide ranging and served either directly or indirectly to encourage new immigrants to build their futures here, in Nova Scotia.

To this end, we tweaked our policies to clarify nominee program elements and eligibility requirements, produced a framework for an existing category and developed draft criteria for a new stream.

A fee review was also conducted to ensure that our program's fee structure could compete successfully with other provincial immigration programs.

Attracting newcomers was the primary draw behind our participation in three European immigration fairs. Our participation, coupled with the development of brochures and display materials aimed at marketing Nova Scotia and the nominee program, helped to place Nova Scotia in the minds of young Europeans thinking about a change.

Establishing new partnerships and strengthening existing ones with our federal counterparts go a long way in giving Nova Scotia a national voice on immigration issues. By working with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Heritage Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, and the Council of Atlantic Premiers' Immigration Working Group throughout the year, we now hold seats on a number of federal-provincial-territorial committees and sub-committees aimed at ensuring good communication and collaboration.

These partnerships led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the province and CIC, which enable international students, who meet the criteria, to obtain a work permit allowing them to be employed off-campus. In return, international students gain valuable Canadian work experience that may encourage them to become permanent residents of our country.

Partnering at the local and community levels was also a critical component of our work this past year and key to helping all Nova Scotians understand and embrace the benefits of immigration as a means of growing our businesses, our economy, and improving the quality of life in our communities.

In 2005-2006, meetings were held with more than 100 organizations including regional development authorities, community groups, settlement agencies, employers and labour organizations to identify potential barriers to immigration and to identify opportunities for achieving common goals.

Of equal importance, if not more so, is our work in the area of retention. Encouraging a potential immigrant to choose Nova Scotia is only part of the equation. Helping that individual overcome language barriers and cultural differences, find suitable employment and integrate successfully into the community once he/she arrives here is another.

That's why addressing the settlement needs of newcomers remains a priority for the office and why more than \$1.5 million was allocated to 30 projects for language training, ESL programs in public schools and employment-related programming for adults. Funding to help French-speaking immigrants settle in Nova Scotia's Francophone communities and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Canada also made additional dollars available for further Francophone attraction and recruitment initiatives.

The Office of Immigration is also a key player in addressing credential recognition, one of the fundamental issues impacting the ability of a newcomer to secure employment in his/her chosen profession, and ultimately, to decide to stay in Nova Scotia. By working with our partners at both the federal and provincial levels and with settlement organizations this past year, we helped identify and distribute federal funding for seven projects in the health care sector and identify and address barriers to credential recognition in occupations such as engineering.

This is the Office of Immigration's first Accountability Report. We are proud of our accomplishments to date and look forward to similar success next year as we move even closer to reaching our immigration targets.

Thank you.

# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 Context**

In January 2005, Nova Scotia released its first immigration strategy with ambitious goals:

- to more than double the number of immigrants coming to our province by 2010
- to help immigrants settle, succeed, and stay - specifically, to increase our retention rate from 40 to 70 per cent by the 2011 census.

Communities that have welcomed families from other countries already recognize the cultural and social benefits of immigration. Demographic and labour market realities make reaching our immigration goals even more important.

Nova Scotia's rate of natural increase (births minus deaths) will soon be zero or on the decline. Our province needs new families to reverse our population decline, to keep our communities thriving, and to create jobs.

Nova Scotia anticipates a shortage of skilled workers in certain trades and professions. The province has several strategies in place, including the immigration strategy, to address these labour force needs. At the same time, immigrants with the right skills can play a critical role in boosting economic growth, and ensuring Nova Scotians have access to the services they need.

Research shows that immigrants hold Nova Scotia in very high regard, but often leave the province because they cannot find meaningful employment

Based on economic and demographic realities, the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration is working to:

- attract immigrants with the backgrounds and experiences the province needs
- help them find employment, gain work experience, and receive the settlement services they need, so they succeed and stay for years to come

The Nova Scotia Nominee Program is the mechanism that can be used to select immigrants who can directly increase the economic benefits of immigration to Nova Scotia, based on industrial and economic priorities and labour market conditions. The nominee program also recognizes the importance of encouraging the development of the Acadian and Francophone communities.

The Nova Scotia Nominee Program is open to qualified business people, skilled workers, and other immigrants who meet community needs. These immigrants are nominated to the federal government, which conducts security and medical checks before issuing a Canadian permanent resident visa.

2005-06 was the first full fiscal year of existence for the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration. During this year the foundation was laid for future growth and implementation of the immigration strategy—a 5-year plan. As noted in the immigration strategy, it is important for the Office of Immigration to not only increase the number of immigrants coming to the province but also to stop the population decline. As shown in the tables in the Performance Measurement section on page 13, this downward trend has been reversed, largely due to the Nova Scotia Nominee Program.

## **2. Progress and Accomplishments**

### **2.1 Office Goals**

The following Strategic goals of the Office of Immigration support our long term targets to attract 3,600 immigrants per year within four years of full strategy implementation and retain 70 percent of immigrants during the 2006–2011 census period:

- Market and promote Nova Scotia as an attractive immigration destination.
- Assist immigrant integration into Nova Scotia society by ensuring that they have access to necessary settlement services to help them live, work, and learn in Nova Scotia.
- Retain immigrants by working with partners to address barriers to social and economic inclusion that allow them to make Nova Scotia their permanent home.
- Encourage a welcoming community for newcomers by educating Nova Scotians about the contributions immigrants make to our social, cultural, and economic prosperity.

### **2.2 Progress and Accomplishments 2005-2006**

#### **Core Business Area: Attraction and Recruitment**

#### **Promote and market Nova Scotia, in partnership with communities, as an attractive immigrant destination.**

Materials to promote Nova Scotia as an attractive immigration destination were developed, in both French and English, and used at immigration fairs and conferences to promote immigration to Nova Scotia in general and the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP).

In September 2005, the Office of Immigration released *The First Two Years: A Status Report* outlining the progress being made by the NSNP in attracting immigrants to the province.

Public presentations about the nominee program were held with numerous organizations and industry representatives.

In partnership with the other Atlantic provinces, the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration attended immigration fairs in Scotland, France, England and the Netherlands to promote immigration to both Nova Scotia and the Atlantic region.



**Manage the Nova Scotia Nominee Program, the province's primary immigrant attraction tool, and use it to address Nova Scotia's immigration, economic, labour force, and community development needs.**

Responsibility for the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP) was transferred from the Office of Economic Development to the Office of Immigration and capacity of the NSNP was significantly enhanced with the hiring and training of three new staff members.

Policy and program changes were introduced to clarify eligibility requirements for the Nominee Program (e.g., refugee claimants are not eligible) and better define program elements, which has led to parity with other nominee programs in Canada.

Negotiations with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) were successful in increasing the number of nominations that could be issued by Nova Scotia from 200 (as noted in the Canada-Nova Scotia Agreement on Provincial Nominees) to 400 for the 2005 calendar year. 303 Certificates of Nomination were issued.

A feasibility study on the development of an Entrepreneur stream of the NSNP was completed by the Office of Economic Development and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. This study was provided to the Office of Immigration to ensure relevant information was available to the Office for the drafting of new nominee streams.

A review of the fees charged under the NSNP was completed between December 2005 and March 2006 to ensure that the NSNP fee structure was competitive with other provincial immigration programs with recommendations that the Skilled Worker and Community Identified category fees be lowered and that a comprehensive review of the Economic category be conducted.

Draft criteria for a new NSNP category - Family Business - were developed and consultations were held on the proposed criteria.

Close linkages were established with Service Canada's Foreign Worker Program (FWP) to explore partnerships between the FWP and the NSNP to bring in skilled workers to meet employers labour market needs. Joint presentations were made by Service Canada, Cornwallis Financial Corporation and the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration in order to demystify the immigration and foreign worker application processes.

A framework for the NSNP Community Identified stream was developed and a training session was held, to enhance regional development authority's participation in the nominee program.

A review of International Student streams offered by other provincial nominee programs was conducted as a first step toward developing a similar stream in Nova Scotia.

## **Core Business Area: Integration and Retention**

**Partner with existing funders and settlement providing organizations (SPOs) to coordinate delivery of settlement and integration programming and, therefore, ensuring that newcomers have better access to timely and quality information and services upon arrival.**

A Settlement Funding Framework was developed including eligibility criteria, application materials and deadlines, reporting requirements, and funding disbursement. This framework was posted on the Office of Immigration web site along with a call for proposals to submit applications for settlement funding based on this document.

An Assessment Committee was created comprising federal and provincial government members in order to draw on their experiences with settlement and community organizations to make more informed decisions on funding allocation.

Over \$1.5 million was allocated by the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration to 30 approved projects providing direct services to immigrants including language training and employment related programming for adults as well as for ESL in public schools. This funding allows organizations to develop new programming or to identify targeted initiatives.

- Of these approved projects, 13 were located in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), 5 were located outside of HRM, and 12 programs offered province-wide impacts.
- To seek program improvements for future funding cycles, the Office of Immigration surveyed applicants to gain their feedback on the application process. We also hosted a focus group with key stakeholders in January 2006.

Support to the Francophone community was enhanced through the settlement funding program by funding a project to help attract French-speaking immigrants to the province. The Province also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Canada allowing for additional dollars to be provided to the Francophone community by Citizenship and Immigration Canada for further attraction and recruitment initiatives.

Meetings were held with over 100 organizations in order to initiate partnerships for the purposes of ensuring that immigrants are able to enter the labour force in their chosen professions.

A website, [www.novascotiainmigration.com](http://www.novascotiainmigration.com), was launched to provide information about the Nova Scotia Nominee Program and to assist with settlement and integration.

On February 22nd, 2006, the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Atlantic Metropolis Centre of Excellence - Gender / Immigrant Women Domain, and the YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs, brought 62 immigrant women together

from the Halifax Regional Municipality area to discuss their views and experiences settling and living in Nova Scotia.

**Raise awareness and educate the public about the importance of immigration to Nova Scotia's future.**

Numerous presentations were delivered to organizations both in the province and throughout Canada in order to educate the public, stakeholders, and our intergovernmental partners about the purpose of the Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy, why this initiative was being implemented, and how people and organizations could get involved.

The Nova Scotia immigration website was updated in order to share information about the activities of the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and to educate the public about our programs.

In the 2005-2006 business plan the following item was included under this priority:

*Identify and where possible help address capacity needs of private and group refugee sponsors in communities interested in aiding those in need of protection.*

Other priorities were identified and the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration determined that this item would be addressed at a later date.

**Core Business Area: Corporate Services and Administration**

**Provide advice and support in policy, planning, research, interdepartmental coordination, and intergovernmental relations as they relate to immigration.**

Strengthened partnerships with federal departments, regionally and nationally, including CIC, ACOA, Heritage Canada, and HRSDC, through working on federal-provincial and interdepartmental committees, ensuring good communication, collaboration and coordination. This ensured that all work in the area of immigration was coordinated and there was no duplication of research and program funding.

Partnerships were developed and enhanced with the provincial departments responsible for immigration in the other Atlantic provinces through participation on the Council of Atlantic Premier's Immigration Working Group and the Atlantic Population Table.

The Nova Scotia Office of Immigration participated on numerous Federal-Provincial/Territorial (FPT) immigration working groups on settlement, nominee programs, policy, business immigration, and promotion and recruitment, in order to adequately advance the priorities of Nova Scotia to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) on October 31, 2005 which allows international students, who meet the eligibility criteria, to obtain a work permit allowing them to work off-campus during their course of study. This will allow international students to obtain valuable Canadian work experience which would help them if they decide to apply to become permanent residents of Canada.

A project was funded to develop a resource base of research available and currently underway by universities, research institutions, governments, NGOs so that the Office of Immigration will be able to draw upon this research in future for policy and program development and not fund duplicate studies.

In the 2005-2006 business plan the following item was included under this priority:

*Work with CIC, through the development of Canada's Immigration Framework, to address issues identified by immigrants and settlement providing agencies, concerning processing time frames, client service issues, and visa posts.*

With a change in Minister at CIC, the Canada's Immigration Framework initiative was not pursued by the Federal Government, however, the Office of Immigration utilized other venues such as Minister's meetings and senior official's tables to advance these issues at the federal level.

**Develop partnerships with all key stakeholders to leverage existing and new resources and create synergies to achieve our common goals.**

Meetings were held with over 100 organizations (e.g, RDAs, community groups, economic development partners, employers, labour organizations) in order to initiate partnerships for the purposes of informing them of the responsibilities of the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and to ensure that work is not being duplicated.

An Assessment Committee was created comprising federal and provincial government members in order to draw on their experiences with settlement and community organizations to make more informed decisions on funding allocation.

The Nova Scotia Office of Immigration participated in advancing the very large and complex issue of credential recognition by:

- working with the Department of Education, under the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET), to explore the establishment of an Atlantic foreign credential assessment centre.
- working with the Department of Health and health partners on the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative (IEHP). This federally funded initiative supports seven projects in the health care sector including registered nursing and licenced practical nursing initiatives.

- supporting the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and other partners in stakeholder tables to address barriers to credential recognition in specific occupations such as engineering.

### 3.0 Budget Context

<b>OFFICE OF IMMIGRATION</b>			
	<b>Estimate 2005-06 (thousands)</b>	<b>Forecast 2005-06 (thousands)</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Total Program Expenses - Gross Current</b>	<b>\$ 2,728</b>	<b>\$ 2,603</b>	<b>\$ 125</b>
<b>Net Program Expenses - Net of Recoveries</b>	<b>\$ 2,628</b>	<b>\$ 2,181</b>	<b>\$ 447</b>
<b>Salaries and Benefits</b>	<b>\$ 718</b>	<b>\$ 535</b>	<b>\$ 183</b>
<b>Funded Staff (FTE's)</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>2.4</b>

#### **Budget Variance**

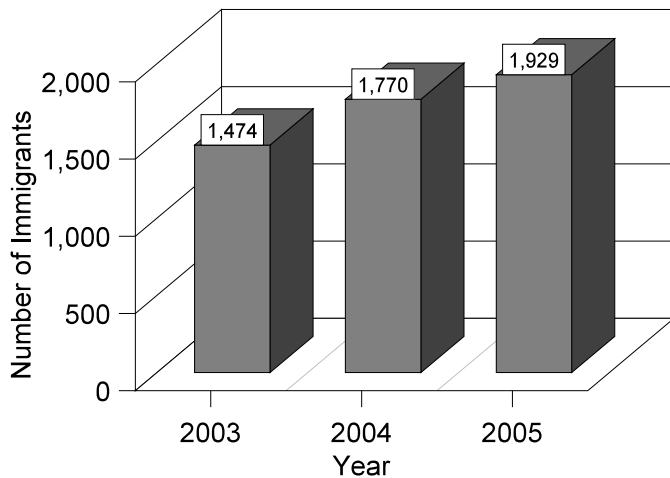
The variance in the net budget of \$447,000 is a result of lower salary obligations as staff were not obtained until after the office moved to its permanent space in September 2005 and higher than anticipated recoveries generated through fees paid through the Nova Scotia Nominee Program.

## 4.0 Performance Measures

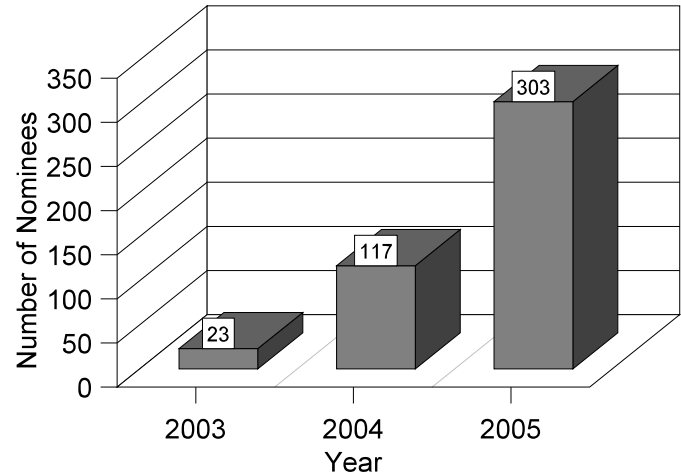
### IMMIGRANT ATTRACTION

One of the goals outlined in the Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy is to increase the number of immigrants who choose to resettle in Nova Scotia in order to address population and skilled workforce needs.

**Chart 1: Permanent Resident Landings in Nova Scotia**



**Chart 2: Nominee Certificates Issued**



■ Permanent Resident Landings

■ Nominee Certificates Issued

### WHAT DOES THE MEASURE TELL US?

This measure shows the progress we are making in attracting newcomers to the Province of Nova Scotia and what the impact of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program has been since its inception.

### WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The above tables show that the number of immigrants choosing to make Nova Scotia their home is on the increase. Chart 1 shows that the total number of immigrants coming to Nova Scotia in 2005 has increased by 8% over 2004. This increase can be directly attributed to the increasing number of persons selected by the province under the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (Chart 2).

### WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO/BE IN THE FUTURE?

Our target for this measure is to attract 3,600 immigrants per year by the year 2010.

NOTE: Our second Performance Measure, Immigrant Retention, is not being reported on in this Accountability Report as data will be based on 2011 census.