



Accountability Report 2021–22

Natural Resources & Renewables



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Accountability Report 2021–2022

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables for the year ended March 31, 2022, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Lands and Forestry and the Department of Energy and Mines Business Plans for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables outcomes necessarily include estimates, judgments and opinions by the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables' 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 Department of Lands and Forestry and Department of Energy and Mines 2021-2022 Business Plans.

Original signed by:

Honourable Tory Rushton
Minister of Lands and Forestry

Original signed by:

Karen Gatien
Deputy Minister of Lands and Forestry

Message from the Minister

I'm pleased to present the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables Accountability Report for the 2021-22 fiscal year.

This Report outlines progress made towards goals listed in the former Department of Lands and Forestry and Department of Energy and Mines Business Plans.

This year, the Department completed its transition to the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables under a new mandate. Responsible stewardship and management of our energy and natural resources remains at the heart of everything we do.

The Department is responsible for the development, management, conservation and protection of energy, forest, geoscience, mines, minerals, park and wildlife resources and the administration of the province's Crown lands.

Our government will continue working with Nova Scotians to find solutions to the great challenges of today: climate change, renewable energy, new and sustainable ways of supporting our traditional industries, and building a cleaner, greener, and more inclusive future for all Nova Scotians.

Signed,

Honourable Tory Rushton

Financial Results

	2021-2022 Estimate	2021-2022 Actual Expense	2021-2022 Variance
Program & Service Area	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)	(\$ thousands)
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	941	954	13
Clean Energy	54,804	92,585	37,781
Business Development & Corporate Services	12,123	11,620	(503)
Subsurface Energy Development	2,016	1,846	(170)
Forestry and Wildlife	22,226	26,068	3,842
Geoscience and Mines	5,578	5,392	(186)
Regional Services	41,718	43,596	1,878
Policy and Corporate Services	6,747	7,099	352
Land Services	3,648	11,352	7,704
Total: Gross Departmental Expenses	149,801	200,512	50,711
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	12,371	118,150	105,779
Fees and Other Charges	2,636	2,813	177
Ordinary Recoveries	35,501	28,080	(7,421)
Total: Revenue, Fees & Recoveries	50,508	149,043	98,535
TCA Purchase Requirements	4,456	2,650	(1,806)
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	699.4	662.9	(36.5)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

Actual Expenses are \$50.7 million higher than Estimate primarily due to \$57 million increase in Energy Efficiency Programming, \$7.9 million increase in Abandoned Mines Liability, \$2.9 million increase in Silviculture/Reforestation initiatives, and \$0.7 million increase in net operating, offset by a \$17.8 million decrease in Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program spending.

Revenue, Fees, and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

Actual Revenue, Fees and Recoveries are \$98.5 million higher than Estimate primarily due to increases in Offshore Forfeitures.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

Actual TCA is \$1.8 million lower than Estimate primarily due to the Shubenacadie operations centre water/sewer project and Vehicle purchases resulting from COVID related delays.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

Variance due to temporarily vacant positions.

Department Mandate and Core Functions

The former Departments of Lands and Forestry and Energy and Mines began the 2021-22 fiscal year as independent departments. In September, the two departments merged into the newly established Department of Natural Resources and Renewables. As a result, the year began with two distinct mandates which then merged into one. To accurately report on the work completed during 2021-22 both mandates have been identified in this report.

Department of Lands and Forestry:

The former Department of Lands and Forestry had responsibilities related to the stewardship, management, development, conservation and protection of Nova Scotia's biodiversity, forest, and park resources, as well as the administration of the province's Crown lands. Beyond its core operations and obligations, the Department committed in 2021-22 to deliver on the following actions:

- Implementing Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia (Lahey Report), including:
 - implementing the Silvicultural Guide for the Ecological Matrix
 - introducing the Biodiversity Act and amendments to the Crown Lands Act.
 - development of a wood charter supporting the turning of residual wood materials into value-added products, using wood for construction, and for heat.
- Developing policies that support movement towards a more circular economy.
- Working with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to expand biodiversity education in the school curriculum.
- Working with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to designate sites in the Parks and Protected Areas plan.
- Developing a framework for identifying areas for protecting areas of ecological significance that:
 - incorporate Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas;
 - enables fragmented wildlife populations to connect with one another;
 - helps wildlife to adapt to climate change; and,
 - increases biodiversity.
- With the Department of Energy and Mines, and the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture; expanding energy efficiency upgrades for farms and factories.

Department of Energy and Mines:

The then Department of Energy and Mines served the social, environmental, and economic interests of Nova Scotians by ensuring that all energy and mineral resources were developed and used in an efficient and sustainable manner. The Department delivered programs and activities related to electricity, renewable energy, energy efficiency, geoscience, petroleum, minerals, and industry development.

Once merged, the new Department of Natural Resources and Renewables was directed to:

- Develop a timeline for completion of all tasks identified within the Department's mandate letter within the next four years.

- Continue to implement the Independent Review of Forestry Practices (the “Lahey Report”).
- Protect at least 20% of the total land and water mass of Nova Scotia for nature conservation by 2030. These “Protected Areas” will now include Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.
- Implement the Nova Scotia Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan through an Order-in-Council.
- Provide options for regulated wildlife centres to rehabilitate bears and orphaned bear cubs.
- Amend the *Crown Lands Act* to increase the fine for the offence of dumping or depositing materials on Crown lands, without legal justification or the permission of the Minister.
- Work to secure 80% of Nova Scotia’s electricity needs being supplied by renewable energy by 2030.
- Work with the auto and gas service industries to sell 30% zero-emission vehicles by 2030.
- Offer rebates, during the first year of the Government’s mandate, of up to 50 percent of the installation cost to service providers on the install of one Electric Vehicle charging station.
- Support and strengthen Efficiency Nova Scotia to meet identified clean energy goals.
- Encourage private sector to work with property developers to establish grants to reduce the increased cost that may be associated with building net-zero buildings.
- Explore preferential electricity rates for onshore aquaculture.

Natural Resources and Renewables was also directed to work with other Departments to:

- Review and update school curriculum related to environmental stewardship.
- Develop and introduce the *Environment Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act*.
- Build climate change adaptive capacity and resilience across every government department.
- Pursue federal funding programs that enhance environmental and economic sustainability.
- Work in partnership with municipalities, First Nations, businesses, community groups and non-profit organizations, researchers, and institutions to continue to position Nova Scotia as a world leader in sustainable development.
- Encourage innovative, sustainable, and green businesses to establish or relocate to the province.
- Undertake discussions with the province’s major industry leaders - agriculture, fishing, forestry, etc. to determine what steps they can take to make more environmentally conscious progress.
- Work with small businesses across the province and in all sectors to get their feedback on all potential ways to further support them in taking actions to reduce emissions, including through rebates, targeted investments, and other supports.
- Assist in the development of a full inventory of lands owned and identify areas that could be used for housing.

Vision and Strategic Priorities

The Department of Natural Resources and Renewables is continuing to work to develop a Vision for the merged Department. Following the merger, the Department worked under the two visions and strategic priorities of the two former Departments for the remainder of the 2021-22 fiscal year.

The Department of Lands and Forestry's vision was for Nova Scotians to understand, value and benefit from the province's natural resources, including biodiversity and the land we manage.

Guiding the work towards its vision were the Department of Lands and Forestry's four strategic priorities:

- People: Cultivate an engaged, effective, empowered, and diverse workforce;
- Public: Strengthen public trust in the stewardship of our natural resources;
- Services: Deliver services collaboratively, efficiently, and effectively; and,
- Natural Resources: Provide stewardship of our natural resources for public benefits.

The Department of Energy and Mines did not operate under a corporate level vision. However, The Department of Energy and Mines work was guided by the following strategic actions:

- Grow an evolving economy through development of our diverse energy and mineral resources;
- Transform our energy economy, driving clean inclusive growth while minimizing impact on affordability;
- Strengthen public, stakeholder and investor confidence in energy and mineral development; and,
- Invest in our staff, using our technical and business knowledge to inform development of good public policy and ensure we are a best-in-class regulator.

Measuring our Performance

COVID-19 Measures

Throughout 2021-2022, the Department continued to adapt to ensure safe and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In advance of the 2021 parks season, the Department worked with the then Department of Labour and Advanced Education and Public Health to have COVID-19 Operational Plans for camping and day use parks updated and in place.

Provincial campgrounds delayed opening to June 2, with 6.8% (105 sites) of campsites remaining closed, due to COVID restrictions. On July 6th 50 of those sites were opened to reservation, leaving a total of 3% (55 sites) of all campsites available remaining closed for the full season. Campground operations followed public health guidelines. Bookings continued to be delivered online to reduce face-to-face interactions with staff, and signage to communicate public health guidelines were posted throughout the parks.

The Department returned to work in our offices across the province in early fall but returned to virtual work platforms and practices as the number of COVID-19 infections rose again, enabling staff to continue their work and meet commitments made under the Department's mandate in fiscal year 2021-2022.

Accessibility Initiatives

The goal of Nova Scotia Provincial Parks is to sustain a diverse system of parks, beaches and trails that protect natural and cultural values while providing nature-based recreation experiences. Provincial parks are accessible year-round, but sites are not staffed or maintained during the off season. Gates are closed to prevent weather-related damage and vandalism. Some infrastructure is not designed for winter use, like washrooms and parking lots.

Examples of accessibility initiatives include roll-out beach mats and adaptive equipment as well as upgrades to facilities such as comfort stations, washrooms, picnic shelters and more. We also made washrooms gender neutral at numerous parks across the province.

Specific infrastructure projects this year included providing park visitors with accessible vault toilets in five parks (Pomquet Beach, Port Maitland Beach, Ellenwood Lake, Heather's Beach, and Lake O'Law). Other project resulted in accessible and gender-neutral comfort stations in two other parks (Valleyview and Five Islands) and an accessible sportfishing dock and picnic shelter at Lake O'Law. A mobility accessible, gender-neutral washroom facility was built at The Islands. Mobility accessible park office with a gender-neutral washroom was installed at Blomidon. Mobility accessible gender-neutral public washroom was installed at Battery Park Office. Accessible campsites and camper shelter at Amherst Shore were developed. Water system upgrades at Blomidon, Ellenwood Lake, Graves Island and Mira River were made. Campsites were upgraded with water and electrical service at Caribou-Munroes Island, Ellenwood Lake and Valleyview. Accessible beach equipment (roll out boardwalk and chair) was installed at Melmerby Beach. Finally, a platform with change houses and vault toilet was developed at Lawrencetown Beach.

Legislative Amendments

The Department saw a several pieces of legislation passed in the Spring and Fall of 2021.

In the Spring, the *Biodiversity Act* was passed and came into force in October. The *Biodiversity Act* is this first of its kind in Canada and mandates the conservation and enable sustainable use of the provinces Biodiversity. Amendments were also made to the *Crown Lands Act* and *Electricity Act*. The *Crown Lands Act* was amended to incorporate changes to the purpose of the Act to address recommendations made in the Independent Review of Forest Practices. The *Electricity Act* was amended to establish the Shared Solar Program. This program aims to reduce the barriers to communities and businesses to adopt or transition to solar power.

In the Fall, amendments were made to the *Marine Renewable-energy Act* to improve the regulatory framework for the tidal industry, allowing for shared use of subsea infrastructure and move to a competitive project approach from the current “first-come-first-served” approach. Amendments were also made to the *Wildlife Act* to enable the Department to create regulations to address the feeding of wildlife and to minimize instances of human-wildlife conflict as a result.

Forestry Sector Support and Transition

The Department continued to implement a series of complex and interconnected projects to enable the shift to ecological forestry – many of which involved public, stakeholder and Mi'kmaw engagement and are being phased in over time.

In 2021-22, the Department:

- Continued to develop and implement processes to support public and stakeholder input into forestry-related decisions to improve openness, transparency, and accountability, including utilizing the Minister's Advisory Committee.
- Invested in research and technology, including LiDAR, related to ecological forestry.
- Built nine public buildings at six sites selected as Phase One of the Small Scale Wood Heat Initiative. Work continued on the operation of efficient wood chip heating systems for the duration of the long-term heating contract. Government began to expand the program through Phase Two. Phase Two was initiated with the relevant line departments that build, own, or operate the candidate facilities and going through its own due assessment, consideration, and approvals process.
- Continued its support and engagement as a founding member of the Nova Scotia Innovation Hub, including annual support to research and initiatives to advance Nova Scotia's low carbon, bio-circular economy, including new uses of wood fibre.
- Provided \$1,059,000 in funding to the Private Woodland Outreach program.

Implementation of the Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices

The Department recognizes the importance of protection and enhancement of ecosystems and biodiversity as a policy priority.

The Department continued its work to introduce an Environmental Assessment process for the forestry industry, submit a scientific paper on the application of Natural Disturbance Regimes to the Nova Scotia landscape for peer review, develop a revised Old Forest Policy, release a new State of the Forest Report, design an approach for Outcomes-based Forest Management, conduct a review of Crown and private land silviculture programs, and implement the Forest Practices Review evaluation framework recommended by Professor William Lahey.

Further initiatives included:

- Implementing the Silviculture Guide for the Ecological Matrix (previously known as the Forest Management Guide) and with finalizing initial High Production Forestry site selection process as a priority.
- Implementing the Department's Full and Whole Tree Harvesting Policy on Crown lands. The policy dictates when and if full-tree harvesting may take place on Crown lands. It further identifies and whole-tree harvesting is prohibited under any circumstances on Crown lands.

Wildlife and Species at Risk

The Department updated the management system for the Species at Risk program to institutionalize a collaborative approach to species recovery, leverage diverse resources, and use risk management within a framework of robust and current policy for implementing the provincial *Endangered Species Act* in Nova Scotia. This work addresses the outcomes of a recent judicial review, recommendations from the Auditor General, and a commitment in the Government Response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices. Protection and recovery programs for Species at Risk and their habitats were fully completed in 2021.

Work continued on the development of regulations under the *Wildlife Act* to address the issue(s) of human-wildlife conflict. An amendment was made to the Wildlife Act to allow Government to develop regulations to address the issue.

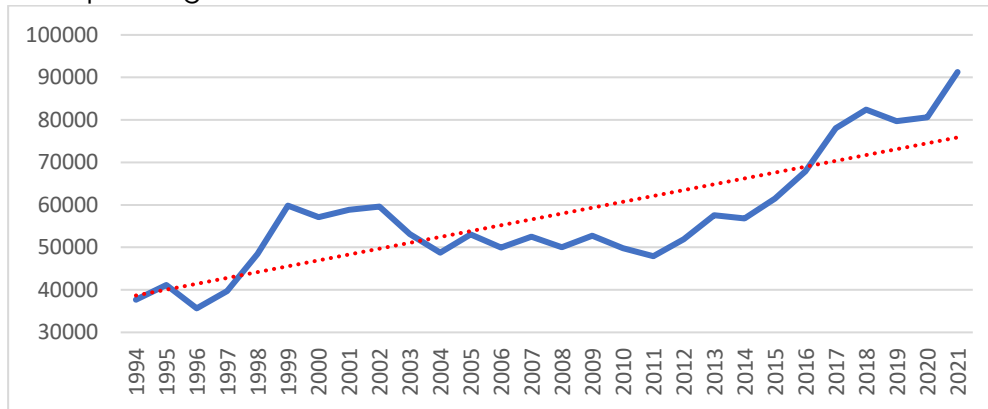
Nova Scotia Provincial Parks System

The Department has \$1.0 million under tangible capital asset funding (TCA) allocated to provincial parks on an annual basis. This covers major redevelopments within parks. We determine where to spend the money based on a priority system to ensure critical projects (affecting visitor safety and experience) are prioritized. In 2021, parks revenue totaled \$3.7 million, this revenue goes back into provincial general revenue. The total value of parks is more than revenue, it is the economic benefit to the rural economy, protection of ecological and cultural values and the positive impact to the physical and mental health of Nova Scotians

We continually evaluate park operations to balance high demand and visitor expectations during the most popular months with the need to ensure sustainable operations. The Department hires more than 220 seasonal workers to operate and maintain provincial parks across the province for the May to October operational season.

Use of provincial parks continues to increase as evidenced by the Camper nights graphic.

Camper Nights



Community Projects to Reduce Emissions

Low Carbon Programming is the result of a four-year funding agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada, and additional provincial funding, that supports energy efficiency retrofits and community-driven low carbon projects through the Low Carbon Communities and Connect2 programs. This year there was a continued pursuit of clean energy projects with funding from the Low Carbon Communities program. The Province invested over \$971,000 for 16 projects across Nova Scotia under the Low Carbon Communities program for 2021-22.

Solar gardens and amendments to the *Electricity Act* were made to establish the Shared Solar Program. Work within the Shared Solar Program during 2021-22 included investment in training for solar maintenance.

Working with municipal partners, a design study was also undertaken on net zero, high performance conversions for municipal buildings.

In partnership with CAA, the province invested \$500K in the installation of roadside charging stations across the province, to encourage

Renewable Energy – progress towards 2030 goal

Just a decade ago, 80 per cent of our electricity came from coal and heavy carbon fuels. By the end of 2022, this will have fallen to about 30 per cent. Meeting our 80 per cent 2030 goal requires a suite of solutions, all moving us along that path.

In cooperation with Infrastructure Canada and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, the Department supported investments in infrastructure projects that reduce emissions from the largest emitting sectors in the province: electricity, transportation, and buildings.

Three key areas focused on in 2021-22 were:

- Electric Vehicle investment and programming
- Community Capacity and Low Carbon programming
- Development of Green GHG Reduction infrastructure
- Supporting the implementation of the provinces Climate Change Plan

The Department continued work with our partners across the Atlantic region on a path to get off coal-generated power, a key step as we work to achieve our 2030 goal. In February, the Province's Procurement Administrator, CustomerFirst Renewables, launched a Request for Proposals (RFP) to attract low-cost and innovative solutions to supply 10 per cent of Nova Scotia's electricity, or 350 megawatts of electricity, from wind and solar. Once up and running, these projects will reduce Nova Scotia's greenhouse gas emissions by more than 1 million tonnes each year. This work supports the province's goal of achieving a 53 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and become net-zero by 2050.

The Department invested another \$57 million to expand energy efficiency programming for homes and businesses across the province. The majority of the funding, \$50 million, will be focused on residential energy efficiency programs to address energy poverty and equity. The remaining \$7 million is for energy efficiency programming for businesses.

Investment was also made in the future of renewable energy in the form of scholarships. In 2021-22 the Department provided 16 scholarships to students in energy related studies at post secondary institutions. A total of 8 - \$10K (over 4 years) and an addition 8 - \$2.5K one-time scholarships were awarded.

Active Transportation

We continue to invest in projects across the province to support and advance community-based clean energy and transportation initiatives through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, Low Carbon Communities and Connect2 programs.

The Department invested a total of \$4.85 million in five communities for the expansion and development of active transportation pathways and bridges. The Department also invested \$37.3 million in two communities to both study the viability of transferring to and to purchase buses to begin the transfer to Battery/Electric buses. We announced \$500,000 to install more electric vehicle charging stations across Nova Scotia.

Geoscience and Mines

In 2021-22 the Department's Mineral Resources Development Fund committed a total of \$1.3 million to 44 projects. These projects resulted in the development of mineral exploration programs, a university research project, training, and professional development for industry.

In addition to investing in mineral exploration and development projects the Department also invested in research. The Department continued its study of the Province's geology and mineral and resources, with a focus on critical minerals for clean growth and identified opportunities for mineral exploration and development through ongoing geoscience and research activities. Projects included an updated Quaternary geological framework to support mineral exploration in southwest Nova Scotia and Comprehensive understanding of the geological framework and soil geochemistry to support the wine industry.

We also continued assessments of water, coasts and geohazards to protect the health, prosperity and safety of Nova Scotians, through improved outreach of public health messaging around private wells; improved understanding of well water testing behaviours and vulnerable communities in the province; and examination of the distribution of Aluminum and the hydrogeological conditions that influence salmon mobility in groundwater in Nova Scotia to better understand human and ecosystem health risk of aluminum transport to water wells and watercourses. Research also, improved real-time understanding of shallow aquifer levels so that we can monitor drought conditions and respond with appropriate adaptive action.

Other initiatives completed in 2021-21 resulted in the increased availability of maps and database information on the provinces bedrock and minerals to enable Government to make science based decisions on potential development.

The Department also continued to work with Nova Scotia Lands on the identification and rehabilitation of contaminated sites across the province. Working with Nova Scotia Lands (NSLands) continued with assessment on Montague and Goldenville former mine sites. The Department and NSLands also obtained approval to evaluate five additional former mine sites, this work will be conducted in 2022-23. In order to protect people from potential exposure, the Department posted additional Human Health signage at several former mine sites on crown land sites with documented evidence of contamination.

Finally, the Department, working with DPW and ECC, continued with Phase I and II Environmental Assessments on three Oily Waste Disposal Sites (OWDS) at Hadleyville and Sand Point in Guysborough county and at Evanston in Richmond county. Work on these sites will continue in 2022-23.

Fast Facts

- The Department of Natural Resources and Renewables operates 205 parks – 130 operational parks (20 campgrounds and 110 day-use parks), 75 non-operational parks.
- Provincial parks span 32,841 hectares/81,152 acres and welcome over 1 million visitors annually.
- Through new provincial park designations, the Department is contributing to achieving Government's land protection objectives.
- The Province's helicopter fleet is used to fight wildfires, respond to disasters, help with search and rescue missions, and conduct aerial surveys of wildlife populations.
- The Department is closely monitoring the spruce budworm and continues to gather data we need to manage the environmental, economic, and social impacts of this natural forest pest cycle and other impacts to our forests.
- The Department has recognized excellence in forest stewardship and resource management with the Woodland Owner of the Year award every year since 1990.
- The Department maintains the Infrastructure in Canada Program. Under this 2018 Bilateral Agreement, a maximum of \$834.5M is delivered to Nova Scotia in five key areas: public transit; green infrastructure; community, culture, and recreation infrastructure; rural and northern communities infrastructure; and Covid-19 resilience.
- The Department supports the increase of electric vehicles. In 2021, 1,300+ e-bikes were purchased from Nova Scotia local businesses.
- The Department strives to attain the recovery of endangered or threatened wildlife species and habitats in Nova Scotia.
- The SolarHomes program helps residents get solar panels with the help of a rebate of up to \$6,000.
- Advancing the electrification of transportation is a key component of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, and we are working with the Federal Government to advance electric vehicle adoption through incentives, education, and building charging infrastructure across Nova Scotia.
- The Department is currently tracking 68 former mine sites on Crown lands with contamination or potential contamination. The majority of the sites are historical gold mines and coal mine sites, with a mix of other sites including gypsum and metals.
- The Department's Small Scale Wood Heat Initiative is converting hot water heating systems from oil to wood chips in select public buildings. This is creating new markets focused on private land. Phase 1 is complete with nine buildings at six sites. This includes two district heat systems.
- We are also committed to working with the auto and gas service industries so that by 2030, 30% of their sales are zero-emission vehicles.
- In partnership with the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs, we are delivering the Mi'kmaq Home Energy Efficiency Program.
- The 2021 season saw more than 91,000 camper nights booked, an increase of 13 per cent over the previous year.
- Last summer, more than 300,000 people visited provincial beaches and more than 100 rescues took place

Appendix A – Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

The *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A Wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

- a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
- b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
- c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
- d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the former Department of Lands and Forestry and the former Department of Energy and Mines, now the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables in the fiscal year 2021-2022

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2021-2022
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	N/A
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing	N/A