



2SLGBTQIA+ Action Plan

Office of Equity and Anti-Racism



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A Message From the Minister

I want to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to the 2SLGBTQIA+ Nova Scotians who generously shared their time, stories, and lived experiences to inform the development of this Action Plan. Your voices are powerful, and your contributions are helping to shape a more inclusive and equitable future for our province.

We have heard loud and clear that while progress has been made, challenges remain. This plan is not just about recognizing those challenges; it is about taking concrete steps to address them.

Change does not happen in isolation. It requires ongoing collaboration across and between government, community organizations, and the people most impacted. The Office of Equity and Anti-Racism (OEA), as government lead for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, will oversee the implementation of this plan and provide annual public reports on progress.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering a province where everyone, no matter who they are or how they identify is valued, supported, and welcomed.

This is just the beginning. Together, we will continue the work to build a Nova Scotia that is inclusive, safe, and equitable for all.

Honourable Scott Armstrong

Minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism

Introduction and Purpose

Equity and inclusion are essential to Nova Scotia's prosperity and the well-being of all who call this province home. They reflect shared values and are fundamental to building stronger communities, fostering innovation, and ensuring continued growth for future generations.

The 2SLGBTQIA+ Action Plan represents an all-of-government commitment to creating a safer, more inclusive, and equitable Nova Scotia. Rooted in community engagement, this plan outlines concrete steps to address systemic barriers, improve access to services, and ensure government policies and programs reflect the lived experiences and needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

The *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* provides the foundation for this work. The plan builds on this legislation by highlighting priority areas where government action can make a meaningful difference and outlining mechanisms for accountability and progress tracking.

How We Developed This Plan

In 2022, the provincial legislature passed the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*, mandating the development of a provincial Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy. Released in July 2023, the Strategy highlighted the need for a dedicated approach to address the specific challenges faced by the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, with OEA designated as the lead for this Action Plan.

OEA established an Interdepartmental Working Group and conducted public engagement, including surveys and events led by OEA and nine community-based organizations. Hundreds of Nova Scotians shared their input to inform this plan.

Engagement identified recurring themes across health care, justice, housing, education, community support, employment, and government services. The Action Plan is structured around these themes, with a focus on "What We Heard" from communities and "What We Will Do" to address each priority.

Public Survey	448 respondents
OEA led engagement sessions with the community	5 sessions 44 registrants
CBO led engagement with the community	9 organizations 137 participants across all organizations
OEA led engagement sessions internal to the provincial public service	4 sessions 39 participants

Survey Demographics

Age	62% of survey respondents identified as being under the age of 40.
Region	46% of survey respondents live outside Halifax Regional Municipality.
Financial ¹ Hardship	49% of survey respondents reported they are currently experiencing financial hardship, difficulty or insecurity.
Disability	43% of survey respondents identified as living with a disability; of those who live with a disability 94% have an invisible disability.
Indigeneity ²	5% of survey respondents identified as Indigenous; 2% identified as Mi'kmaq.

¹ Financial Hardship was not defined by income in the survey.

² All survey data from respondents who identified as Indigenous was analyzed by an Indigenous evaluator in recognition of the importance of Indigenous knowledge and lived experience in data interpretation and analysis. This process aligns with ongoing efforts toward reconciliation and acknowledges the critical importance of Indigenous-led methodologies in fostering respectful and meaningful partnerships. We thank Every One Every Day, a project of the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre, for their partnership in this significant work.



Access to Services

What We Heard

- Community members face barriers to accessing health care, housing, and justice services.
- Access to culturally competent health care is limited, particularly for those without a family doctor.
- Gender-affirming care (GAC) is inconsistent, with long wait times and limited rural availability.
- Housing instability and discrimination disproportionately affect trans and gender-diverse people, as well as racialized individuals.
- Trust in the justice system is low, and respondents noted negative interactions with police, courts, and corrections.
- Government forms, processes, and data collection are often not inclusive of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities.

What We Will Do

Health Care and Gender-Affirming Care

- Provide operational funding for prideHealth to support province-wide continuity of care for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities across Nova Scotia – including training, patient navigation, community outreach, and other resources.
- Improve the surgical application process for GAC procedures.
- Establish province-wide virtual navigation support for GAC through prideHealth.
- Support training for health care providers on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and trauma-informed care.
- Enhance mental health supports, including virtual care options, particularly for youth.

Housing

- Enhance inclusive housing programs and support safe housing for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community.
- Review continuing-term care policies to ensure safety and inclusivity for older 2SLGBTQIA+ adults and elders.

Justice and Public Safety

- Advance training for police, corrections, and victim services staff to reduce bias and improve safety.

Government Services

- Modernize forms, correspondence, and data collection to reflect inclusive language and respect pronouns.



Safety, Education, and Social Inclusion

What We Heard

- Schools, workplaces, and communities are not always safe or welcoming.
- Bullying and exclusion persist, particularly in rural areas.
- Inclusive curriculum, teacher training, and anti-bullying policies were repeatedly requested.
- Public visibility and government support foster trust and a sense of safety.

What We Will Do

- Strengthen inclusive education curriculum to reflect 2SLGBTQIA+ perspectives.
- Where building design permits, provide gender-neutral washrooms in libraries and Access centres.
- Provide training for educators and staff on inclusion and anti-bullying practices.
- Promote Rainbow Registered accreditation in tourism, culture, and recreation sectors.



Community and Economic Participation

What We Heard

- Community-based organizations (CBOs) are essential.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs can face barriers to financing and growth.
- Limited community spaces exist, particularly outside urban areas.

What We Will Do

- Continue to support CBOs.
- Create a supportive ecosystem where 2SLGBTQIA+ entrepreneurs can access resources, programs and services to start and expand their businesses.
- Partner with tourism and cultural sectors to advance inclusive economic development.
- Support 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusive community spaces for social and cultural engagement.

Government as an Employer

What We Heard

- Government must be a model inclusive employer.
- Many 2SLGBTQIA+ employees feel invisible and face barriers to promotion.
- Workplace culture, unconscious bias, and lack of support reduce inclusion.

What We Will Do

- Formally designate 2SLGBTQIA+ as an employment equity group.
- Provide mandatory training on 2SLGBTQIA+ equity and inclusion.

Accountability and Reporting

- **Annual Reporting:** OEA will report publicly on progress and challenges.
- **Community Engagement:** Ongoing consultations will ensure initiatives meet evolving needs.
- **Five-Year Review:** The Action Plan will undergo a formal review to assess impact, inform next steps, and guide future iterations.

Progress will be measured not only by government actions but also by the lived experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ Nova Scotians.

Conclusion

The 2SLGBTQIA+ Government Action Plan charts a path forward to:

- Improve access to services.
- Build safe and more inclusive schools and communities.
- Strengthen economic and cultural participation.
- Make government a truly inclusive employer.

Government alone cannot dismantle the barriers faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

This work requires partnership with communities, allies, and organizations to ensure everyone in Nova Scotia is respected, valued, and able to thrive.



Office of Equity and Anti-Racism