



REDUCING RED TAPE TO **GROW** THE ECONOMY

YEAR IN REVIEW
2025



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A MESSAGE FROM MINISTER HALMAN

Nova Scotia is at a turning point—a moment where vision meets action. Every step we take is in service of building a province alive with opportunity and where our natural resources not only sustain our communities but drive our future prosperity.

Outdated rules and systems and cumbersome processes have long stood in the way of progress. They have slowed investment and our ability to build what we need: houses, hospitals, and industries that will drive future growth.

Red tape has also stifled innovation and weakened resilience—the very qualities we need to lead in a rapidly changing world, one where the global trading order has been turned on its head.

The cost of delay isn't theoretical—it's projects shelved, jobs lost, and young people leaving the province.

We created the Office of Service Efficiency to cut delays, simplify rules, and get decisions made faster—without compromising safety or standards.

We are cutting red tape, eliminating unnecessary rules to safely speed up the pace of government. We are ensuring we can meet this moment in history with the urgency it deserves.

This past year, we've:

- Passed the Making Business Easier Act to speed up resource development and position us to compete globally in sectors like critical minerals and clean energy.
- Improved half of the province's 300 permits and licences, helping get decisions made faster and helping industries grow. That means a small business getting a yes instead of waiting in limbo.
- We've torn down trade barriers, giving our businesses better access to new markets to help drive growth here.
- And our Business Navigation team has supported thousands of start-ups to get them in business faster and contribute to our economy and communities.

These actions matter. Less red tape means more economic growth, more homes, more jobs, and growing wages.

It's how we can create a Nova Scotia that competes—and wins—in a faster, more uncertain world.

Hon. Timothy Halman

Minister of the Office of Service Efficiency

2025 RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS



ASSESSING AND MEASURING

104 # of regulatory initiatives reviewed for business impact

\$748,000 annual savings (net) to business from regulatory changes reviewed by Office



MAKING BUSINESS EASIER ACT

\$800,000+ annual savings to business and citizens

3 elements to reduce red tape:

- resource sector efficiencies
- Permit improvements
- administrative efficiencies

8 low-risk permits eliminated



SUPPORTING BUSINESS START-UP AND GROWTH

1,780+ clients served

11,000+ clients served since 2021

68% of inquiries from business start-ups



FEWER PERMITS. FASTER

300 provincial permits reviewed, assessed for risk and opportunities for improvement

50% of provincial permits improved

\$737,000 annual savings from permit improvements.



UNLEASHING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

50%+ reduction in permitting times

2x # of exploration licenses in 2025 over 2024



MAKING INTERNAL TRADE EASIER

1st province to pass legislation to remove internal trade barriers through the Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Act

THE MAKING BUSINESS EASIER ACT

The Making Business Easier Act was passed in 2025 to improve service delivery, reduce red tape, and support economic growth across Nova Scotia.

The Office of Service Efficiency led the development of the legislation through collaboration with multiple departments—including Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change, Service Nova Scotia, Public Works, Labour, Skills and Immigration, Justice, Agriculture, and Growth and Development.



Left to right: MLA Adegoke Fadare; Hon. Timothy Halman

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ACT

Resource Sector Efficiencies: The Act enables streamlined mining and natural resource processes in 5 primary work streams: through Red Tape Reduction Plans, regulatory reviews, single-window service, waived or reimbursed fees, and a prequalified professional program. These measures reduce administrative burden while maintaining protections for communities, workers, and the environment.

Permit Improvements: The Act eliminated eight low-risk permits and requires service standards for all future permits and is part of the **Fewer Permits. Faster** project.

Administrative Efficiencies: The Act updated or repealed outdated legislation to provide clearer rules and better service for Nova Scotians.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Office of Service Efficiency will work with departments to:

- Create and maintain red tape reduction plans, with an initial focus on resources
- Complete a comprehensive regulatory review of mining to identify improvements

Support the Departments of Natural Resources and Environment and Climate Change to:

- Stand up a pre-qualified professional program for mining projects
- Review all fees related to mining for elimination or reimbursement
- Put in place a reimagined single-window service for mining

IMPACT

Efficiencies enabled by the Act are estimated to save Nova Scotia businesses over **\$800,000** annually.

The impact will grow as the Act is fully implemented.

WHAT BUSINESS SAYS ABOUT THE **MAKING BUSINESS EASIER** ACT



“Nearly nine in 10 small businesses cite red tape as a significant impact to their business. With this Act, Nova Scotia is continuing to lead the way cutting red tape and making it easier to do business in our province and doing so through an act that removes red tape across government.”

Louis-Philippe Gauthier, Vice-President, Atlantic, Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses

“Regulatory effectiveness, streamlining regulations, reducing unnecessary regulatory burden, fostering a strong economy, and balancing regulatory oversight with economic growth are all principles outlined in the Making Business Easier Act that IBC is strongly supportive of. These are pillars of an effective regulatory environment that will enable business to respond to consumer needs.”

Amanda Dean, Vice-President, Atlantic and Ontario, Insurance Bureau of Canada



Left to Right: Hon. Timothy Halman; Amanda Dean

“We need to cut red tape, while maintaining the highest environmental standards, in order to take advantage of our mineral potential and create more jobs for Nova Scotians. These proposed changes to permitting for the mineral sector are an important step in the right direction.”

Sean Kirby, Executive Director, Mining Association of Nova Scotia

UNLEASHING OUR **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The Province of Nova Scotia is taking action to make mining projects easier to advance to create jobs, attract investment, and support clean energy.

ACTION

Repeal of Uranium Exploration and Mining Prohibition Act

- Signals openness for business and encourages responsible mineral development.

Streamlined Environmental Approvals

- Modernized environment assessments and improved industrial approvals for predictable, efficient resource development while upholding our high standards.

Expanded Critical & Strategic Minerals Focus

- Added 4 minerals to critical list: high-purity silica, silver, tellurium, and uranium.
- New Strategic Minerals list created with gold, aggregate, potash, and gypsum.

Targeted Funding

- \$1.35M federal and \$500K provincial investment to advance critical mineral projects.

Faster, Smarter Permitting

- Cut permitting times by over 50%, introduced service standards.

NovaMINE Online Portal

- Centralized tracking of licences, permits, and approvals; moving toward full online permitting and payments.

Industry-Focused Service Delivery

- Mineral development facilitator to help navigate processes.

Making Business Easier Act

- Cuts red tape, revamps single-window service, regulatory review, fee elimination/reimbursement for mining projects.

IMPACT

New Goldboro gold mine expected to start in 2026

- Anticipated to create more than **700 jobs** and contribute more than **\$2 billion to GDP**

Exploration licences doubled in 2025

Land under licence expanding significantly

WHAT INDUSTRY SAYS ABOUT NOVA SCOTIA'S **ACTION ON MINING**



"Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change's work to create the Large Industrial File Team (LIFT) has been welcomed by St Barbara and other mining industry players. Nova Scotia has a robust and stringent framework for mining approvals and environmental enforcement. The LIFT team has brought the provincial government's mining expertise together with the regulatory certainty required to once again make Nova Scotia an attractive place to invest. We look forward to additional efforts by LIFT, and the Province as a whole, to further streamline mining requirements in Nova Scotia, while protecting our shared environment."

Andrew Strelein, Managing Director and CEO of St Barbara

"This is, indeed, a tremendous moment, and is a testament to the hard work and effort by all parties to reach this critical milestone. Canada is a global leader in precious metal products and Nova Scotia will be a part of that valuable industry."

Kevin Bullock, President and CEO, NexGold Mining Corp.

"Much has been accomplished in the past year with the Government of Nova Scotia's support. Improved policies are making it easier to create jobs and attract investment, while continuing to ensure that we take excellent care of the environment and worker safety."

Sean Kirby, Executive Director, Mining Association of Nova Scotia



2,500

Number of jobs in Nova Scotia in Mining

\$100,000

Average Annual Wage & Benefits in Mining

FEWER PERMITS. **FASTER**

Permits and licenses are essential for protecting people, the environment, and public safety, but they can be time-consuming and complicated.

In 2025, the Office of Service Efficiency launched the Fewer Permits. Faster project to strengthen Nova Scotia's economy by creating a more efficient, accessible, and predictable regulatory and service environment.

This initiative reviewed nearly 300 provincial permits, assessed their risk, and identified opportunities to improve.

2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

Legislative Action: The government passed the Making Business Easier Act, **eliminating 8** low-risk permits and committing to implement all identified improvements by January 2026.

Regulatory Updates: Advanced amendments to improve **several permits** across multiple departments, enabling permit eliminations, extended renewal periods, and online applications.

Cross-Department Coordination: Streamlined processes across departments to deliver cumulative benefits, saving time and effort for businesses and citizens.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- **Implementation:** Initially identified improvements will be completed through policy or process changes by Red Tape Awareness Week 2026.
- **Service Standards:** All Nova Scotia permits have service standards.
- **Measure impact:** All improvements will be measured for time and cost savings.
- **Ongoing improvement:** With departmental partners, the Office will review permits for additional improvements to create a faster, more user- and business-friendly regulatory and service environment.

IMPACT

The **Fewer Permits. Faster** project improves 50% of provincial permits and is expected to save Nova Scotians and businesses over **\$737,000** annually.

MAKING INTERNAL TRADE EASIER



From left, Minister Joseph Schow (Alberta), Minister John Lohr (Nova Scotia), Minister Jamie Moses (Manitoba), Minister Victor Fedeli (Ontario), Minister Caitlin Cleveland (Northwest Territories), Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Canada), Minister Samuel Poulin (Québec), Minister Jean-Claude D'Amours (New Brunswick), and Minister Craig Parry (Newfoundland and Labrador). (Angela Gzowski Photography / Internal Trade Secretariat Corp.)

In 2025, Nova Scotia was a national leader in advancing internal trade reform by embracing the principle of mutual recognition. This set the stage for significant progress toward a more integrated Canadian economy.

The Office of Service Efficiency helped negotiate the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement on the Sale of Goods, in partnership with the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Legislation Passed

Nova Scotia was the first province to pass legislation to remove barriers to internal trade. The **Free Trade and Mobility Within Canada Act** is based on the principle of mutual recognition: Nova Scotia will recognize rules of other Canadian jurisdictions that reciprocate, removing duplication, and cost for business.

Historic Agreement Negotiated

To support the Act's implementation, the Office and Intergovernmental Affairs led the negotiation of the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement on the Sale of Goods (CMRA). Under the CMRA, mutual recognition is applied to the sale of goods across all provinces, territories, and the federal government.

Broader Reform Package

The CMRA was part of a suite of initiatives to advance the vision of One Canadian Economy. Other measures included removing barriers in financial services, trucking, and labour mobility.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- **The Office of Service Efficiency** will support implementation and monitor the CMRA to ensure smooth adoption across jurisdictions.
- It will support the expansion of mutual recognition beyond goods, to services.
- It will work with other jurisdictions on a consistent, approach and methodology to measure impacts of mutual recognition.

REFLECTIONS ON NOVA SCOTIA'S REGULATORY LEADERSHIP



Ryan Manucha is a leading expert on interprovincial trade in Canada and a research fellow at the C.D. Howe Institute, with degrees in law and economics.

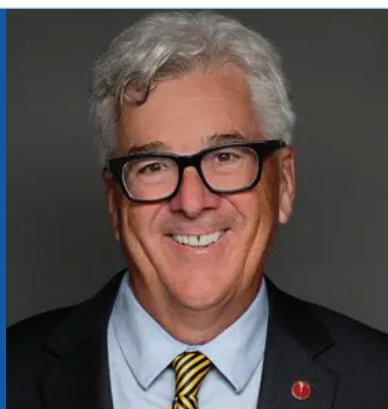
“Since the start of the US tariffs, Nova Scotia has been an unequivocal leader on Canadian internal trade reform.

Research suggests that by reducing Nova Scotia’s internal trade barriers by as little as 10%, Nova Scotia could boost GDP by 4.1% (\$2.5B).

The Office of Service Efficiency’s work on the Canadian Mutual Recognition Agreement ensures that goods sold in one province can be sold in another.

For Nova Scotian businesses and entrepreneurs, this agreement will translate to less complexity, lower costs, reduced regulatory burden and greater opportunity to expand to markets elsewhere in Canada.

There is still much to do on internal trade reform, but the Office has catalyzed incredible momentum going into 2026.”



The **Hon. Colin Deacon** has represented Nova Scotia as an independent Senator since 2018

Senator Deacon is an active member of the Standing Senate Committees on Banking, Commerce and the Economy, and on Fisheries and Oceans.

“I recently had the opportunity to observe an excellent example of regulatory innovation in my home province of Nova Scotia through the Department of Environment and Climate Change and the Office of Service Efficiency, both under the leadership of Minister Timothy Halman.

They’ve created what’s called the Large Industrial File Team—or LIFT. LIFT was established to bring precision, consistency, and speed to the oversight of large and complex industrial projects. This matters because regulatory oversight is critical to building social license, while regulatory certainty is key to successfully completing the major projects that are vital to Nova Scotia’s economic growth.

The LIFT initiative shows what’s possible when regulators embrace innovation. It creates clearer, more responsive, and easier-to-navigate processes that open the door to globally competitive opportunities—all while upholding our responsibility to protect citizens, the environment, and the economy.

Effective regulation isn’t about saying “no”. It’s about saying “yes” while supporting new approaches and ensuring that strong guardrails remain. Let’s not deregulate, but regulate smarter, and empower businesses to innovate while still protecting Canadians and what they value most.”

ASSESSING AND MEASURING REGULATORY AND SERVICE CHANGES

Effective regulation safeguards citizens, workers, consumers, and the environment while fostering a competitive and responsive economy. Achieving this balance requires advancing policy priorities while carefully considering costs, administrative burden, and service implications of regulatory change.

2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

Modernized Regulatory Principles: Updated the Charter of Governing Principles for Regulation and Service Efficiency for the first time in nearly a decade, emphasizing service efficiency and effectiveness in regulatory design and implementation.

Expanded Impact Assessment: Transitioned from the Business Impact Assessment (BIA) to the broader Impact Assessment (IA), starting to evaluate impacts on citizens and non-profits, in addition to businesses.

NET SAVINGS TO BUSINESSES

In 2025, there was an estimated net savings of \$748,000 from regulatory initiatives reviewed by the Office.

Regulatory Requirement Count*

In 2025, there were 184,020 requirements, an increase of 1.7% from 2024.

*The 2025 count combined computer-assisted techniques with a manual process. The 2026 count will be an automated process.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Office of Service Efficiency will:

- Continue to update data to reflect current cost information
- Partner with other jurisdictions to align approaches to quantifying interprovincial initiatives
- Continue to measure and assess regulatory proposals

SUPPORTING BUSINESSS START-UP & GROWTH

The **Business Navigation Service** provides personalized support to thousands of businesses each year, assisting more than 11,000 clients since 2021. The service helps businesses navigate commercial and regulatory requirements, including registration with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies, licensing and permitting, and inspections.

*More than **11,000 clients** have been served since 2021; on average, each client saves 10 hours using the service.*

2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

- **High Volume of Support:** In 2025, the service supported over 1,780 clients, with 68% of inquiries coming from start-ups, reflecting a continued trend toward new business clients.
- **Responsive to Emerging Issues:** Navigators addressed pressing topics such as U.S. tariffs and interprovincial trade barriers, while maintaining high service standards.
- **Data-Driven Improvements:** Leveraged client data to identify trends and develop resources that address common challenges and systemic issues. This includes:
 - Identified permits as pain point for start ups and contributing to Fewer Permits. Faster solution.
 - Improved integration of navigation services with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies.



"I have seen and heard first-hand the value of the Business Navigation service. It reflects the dedication of the team behind it, who genuinely care about the businesses they serve and want each client to succeed. It should be the first call every start-up makes."

MLA Adegoke Fadare, Ministerial Assistant, Office of Service Efficiency

WHAT'S NEXT?

- **Enhancing Digital Resources:** Creating resources to address recurring and emerging business challenges.
- **Exploring New Service Models:** Innovating ways to meet client needs while preserving a personalized approach.
- **Strengthening System Fixes:** Using insights from client interactions to improve regulatory processes and reduce barriers for businesses.

WHAT BUSINESS NAVIGATION CLIENTS SAY



Left to right: Ma Jannalett Mercado, Lorenzo Aguilar, and Hon. Timothy Halman

“As a first-time business owner, it was a real challenge to find a location and make sense of all the requirements. Our Business Navigator was amazing—when things weren’t clear, she sent us step-by-step instructions that really helped set us up for success.”

Lorenzo Aguilar, Owner, Chick N’ Chill Restaurant, Darmouth



Left to right: Sarah Koelen, Ryan Bertler, and Hon. Timothy Halman

“When we were first getting our business off the ground, the Business Navigation Service was honestly a lifesaver. They were quick to respond at a time when getting answers anywhere else felt like it took forever. They were clear, concise, and responsive. Even now, we still go back to the materials they gave us—they’ve continued to be such a helpful resource for us.”

Sarah Koelen, Owner, Plato’s Closet, Cole Harbour

“My experience with the Business Navigator from the Office of Service Efficiency has been very positive. The advice was accessible, efficient, and tailored to the realities of operating a local business. That early engagement reinforced the value of having responsive government support, and it remains a resource we would readily engage with again as our business evolves.”

Darcy Shannon, CEO & Co-Founder, Drumlin Plasma, Halifax

USING TECHNOLOGY TO REDUCE RED TAPE

The Office of Service Efficiency is adopting a **digital-first approach** and leveraging emerging technologies to expand and deepen regulatory review and reform, reduce red tape and support mutual recognition.

2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

Utilizing technology to:

- Analyze records to quickly identify trends for system improvement opportunities.
- Start to inventory all publicly available consolidated statutes and regulations to enable cross-jurisdictional comparisons and searching capabilities.
- Enable legislative and regulatory search functions to help uncover areas for modernization.
- Automate internal processes related to tracking and counting regulatory requirements.

WHAT'S NEXT

- Expand the ability to compare regulations to support mutual recognition of regulatory approaches between Canadian jurisdictions.
- Continue building and enhancing machine-readable datasets to improve analysis speed and reliability.
- Develop capabilities to better analyze and communicate opportunities to improve internal efficiencies.

APPENDIX A: 2025 IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

The following are the 2025 regulatory initiatives evaluated and estimated by the Office of Service Efficiency, which included business impact. The Office will continue to evolve its work in this area.

Department	Initiative	Estimated Impact
Agriculture	Improvements to the Farm Loan Board and Timber Loan Board	\$4,000
Fisheries and Aquaculture	Improvements to the Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board	\$18,000
	New Fish Buyers and Fish Processors Regulations	\$10,000
	Repeal and Replace the Aquaculture Licence and Lease Regulations	\$15,000
Environment and Climate Change	Improving the Industrial Approval Process for Metal Mining	\$18,000
	Environmental Assessment Modernization	\$183,000
	Streamlining Temporary Event Permitting	\$57,000
	Moving Temporary Events Permits to Notification	\$34,000
	Removing Approval Requirements for Some Low-Risk Activities	\$11,000
	Changing Definition of Public Drinking Water Supply	\$556,000
Labour, Skills and Immigration	Amendments to the General Labour Standards Code Regulations - Paid Domestic Violence Leave	-\$624,000
Service Nova Scotia	Removing Requirement for Independent Assessment of Film Classifications	\$330,000
	Elimination of Collector License and Debt Management Agent License	\$136,000
2025 Total Net Costs / Savings of Initiatives Reviewed by Office		\$748,000

In 2025, 104 regulatory initiatives were reviewed for business impact; 14 had associated costs or savings.

In 2025, Workplace Harassment Regulations were put in place, with an estimated annual cost of \$18,000,000.

- Nova Scotia was the only Canadian jurisdiction without workplace-specific harassment rules, leaving gaps in protection for non-criminal harassment.
- The Office assessed the regulatory change and found it to align with the Charter of Governing Principles for Regulatory and Service Efficiency; significant efforts were made to reduce burden and it was supported by businesses.
- The regulations are not captured in the net costs/savings as the Office maintains a practice not to include regulatory initiatives in its net costs/savings report where:
- Economic benefits far outweigh the cost
- Initiatives beyond the direct control of the province but required to meet national or international standards or agreements
- Initiatives required to meet unforeseen or urgent public policy needs




NOVA SCOTIA

REDUCING RED TAPE TO GROW THE ECONOMY | **2025**