

Voluntary Planning

Business Plan 2004-2005



**VOLUNTARY
PLANNING**

A Citizens' Policy Forum

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Message from Minister and Chair, Voluntary Planning

Voluntary Planning is maturing well, as an organization, in its recently restructured role as Nova Scotia's Citizens' Policy Forum. A newly functioning Board of Directors and a complement of one hundred highly contributory volunteers are steadily "raising the bar" in the role of developing and providing policy advice to Government.

As an arms-length entity attached to the Provincial Government, Voluntary Planning stands ready to apply its unique and successful consultation and recommendation development process to major policy subjects at any time. Consistently informed by Sector Committees, knowledgeable of the grassroots issues and priorities of Nova Scotians, the Board of Voluntary Planning is continuously aware of what matters to citizens.

Through an on-going dialogue between Cabinet and the Voluntary Planning Board of Directors, major projects are undertaken regularly. These projects involve the elements of public input, world-wide research, expert and stakeholder testimony, and consensus deliberation by task forces of carefully chosen volunteers.

Voluntary Planning is proud of its unique ability to engage Nova Scotians in helping shape the future of our society.

David Bellefontaine
Chair, Voluntary Planning

Minister Michael Baker

Business Plan for Voluntary Planning 2004—2005

Mission

To measurably improve the social, economic and environmental well being of all Nova Scotians by providing the Premier and Cabinet with valuable volunteer and citizen-based advice on relevant policy issues for today and for the future.

Planning Context

Many of the issues of importance to society are long-term and directional in nature. Many citizens wish to play a part in shaping the strategic directions of the future, which may extend into 10-20 year time frames and well beyond electoral mandates.

The business of government is carried on and delivered, to a great extent, by the departmental organizations. This arrangement, by its nature, tends to focus largely on implementing legislated or otherwise mandated department business. Many issues, both existing and emerging, being cross-societal or horizontal in nature, range across departmental boundary lines.

A major strength of Voluntary Planning is to help with these two areas of horizontality and long-term planning. Voluntary Planning, through its excellent cadre of volunteer citizen leaders and experts, can readily address matters of strategic importance to the province and provide sound advice on policy options to government decision-makers.

Government is striving to be more open, transparent, and accountable. If successful in these efforts, tremendous benefits can be achieved through increased confidence and trust among citizens, stakeholders, politicians, and government leaders. An exceptional approach to making this happen involves citizen participation and collaborative policy development, a strength of Voluntary Planning.

Involvement of the private or non-governmental sectors and citizens at the outset of any thinking on new policies results in better understanding, consensus, buy-in, decision-making, lower implementation costs, trust, credibility and confidence. Over time, and if applied consistently, this way of doing business will improve democracy and consistently attract strong candidates for public office.

Voluntary Planning's system of consulting, researching, and engaging great people on the complex issues of the day offers a highly attractive, cost-effective approach to policy development. In the recent past, we have tackled Fiscal Management, Non-Resident Land Ownership and Off-Highway Vehicles, as major projects. Major project undertakings are arrived at through ongoing dialogue between the Voluntary Planning Board of Directors and top level Government officials.

For 2004/05, the Voluntary Planning Board of Directors has proposed a number of specific major project subject areas, for Cabinet consideration.

It is also recognized that requests or suggestions for various subjects for review could emanate, throughout the year, from Government to Voluntary Planning.

The Voluntary Planning leadership entity is its Board of Directors, which relies heavily on regular input from Sector Committees. These six Sector groups are designed to cover the full spectrum of Nova Scotia society and are comprised of almost one hundred highly committed volunteers. These Sector Committees are:

- Education and Life Long Learning
- Health and Social Well-being
- Economic Growth and Competitiveness
- Natural Resources
- Environmental Quality and Stewardship
- Fiscal Management Policy

Resourcing levels are important to the viability and success of Voluntary Planning. Insufficient funding may present a threat by limiting the work that can be undertaken. Voluntary Planning also depends exclusively on funding outside its core budget for major task force initiatives. Partnership possibilities, particularly with the federal government, may lessen this resource concern over time, and is a potential which we will continue to investigate.

One contextual factor of note, in terms of business planning for Voluntary Planning, is that some of the project requests we receive from Government are of an unexpected nature, and may arrive at any time of year. This is an accepted circumstance, which results in this organization participating in business planning both formally, on an annual basis, and informally, throughout the year. Occasionally, as a result, considerable flexibility is required.

Strategic Goals

- Improve quality of life for Nova Scotians
- Contribute to enhanced government policy and legislation
- Ensure direct citizen participation in policy development
- Address long-term priorities – uniquely
- Provide value and relevance to government and citizens

Core Business Area and Priorities

Voluntary Planning has a single core business, that being to enhance democracy and improve the quality of life for Nova Scotians by engaging knowledgeable volunteers and citizens in the formulation of policy advice to the Premier, Cabinet and Departments.

Operationally, Voluntary Planning does this in three distinct ways:

1. Major Task Forces

In recent years, Voluntary Planning has accepted major projects assigned by the provincial government. Currently, the Off-Highway Vehicle review and, earlier, the Non-Resident Land Ownership Task Force are two examples.

In such cases, Voluntary Planning recruited a committee of knowledgeable volunteers to thoroughly research the subject, give all Nova Scotians an opportunity to provide input and comment, and produce their best advice in the form of recommendations.

This is an extremely effective way to reach sound and broadly accepted strategies on complex public policy issues. The Voluntary Planning process considers the long-term benefit of the entire province and takes full advantage of the opportunity to increase public knowledge and awareness on the issue at hand.

2. Sectors

To fulfill Voluntary Planning's promise as a valuable and influential contributor to policy-making in Nova Scotia, the Board of Directors relies heavily on the advice provided by six teams of volunteers from throughout the Province, known as Sector Committees.

Led by the chairperson, each member contributes to an environmental scanning process and participates in discussions resulting in prioritized policy briefings or proposals. A major emphasis for each sector is a regular presentation to the Board at which time they bring forward their most important and pressing priorities from their societal sphere of interest.

These priorities, depending on mutual discussion between the Voluntary Planning Board and Cabinet, may emerge as major project topics or, may be forwarded as advice to Ministers. Individual Sectors, with Board Agreement, may participate in special projects of their own design while still carrying out their other responsibilities.

3. Direct Advice

On occasion, the Voluntary Planning Board, or other volunteers as assigned, are asked to provide advice directly to the Premier or other senior government representatives. This service normally would not involve consultation beyond the Board members or the set of volunteers engaged for the purpose.

4. Community Outreach

Voluntary Planning has been considering a possible fourth operational arm since 2002. A general model has been developed for applying Voluntary Planning's successful and proven approach of citizen consultation to the community level. This Community Outreach Strategy may be taken further during 2004/05, depending on what emerges from other current and related government initiatives.

Budget Context Chart

Voluntary Planning			
Program and Service Area	2003-2004 Estimate	2003-2004 Forecast	2004-2005 Estimate
	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)	(\$thousands)
Ordinary Revenues	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>
Net Program Expenses			
Major Task Force*	\$125	\$125	\$129
Sectors	\$155	\$155	\$159
Board	\$89	\$89	\$91
Total Net Program Expenses	<u>\$369</u>	<u>\$369</u>	<u>\$379</u>
Provincially Funded Staff (FTEs)	<u>5.0</u>	<u>5.0</u>	<u>5.0</u>

* Voluntary Planning will contribute resources directly to major task force efforts in the form of office administration and support as well as salaries and benefits for applicable Voluntary Planning staff assigned to various projects.

Please Note: All operations funding for major task force initiatives must come from outside of Voluntary Planning's core budget.

Outcome Measures

Core Business Area: Volunteer & Citizen Participation in the Formulation of Policy Advice to Premier, Cabinet & Depts.					
Outcome	Indicator	Measure	Base Year	Target 2004—2005	Strategies to Achieve Target
Raise awareness, education, and participation by citizens on specific pressing issues.	The participation level of those who have thoughtfully considered the issue.	# of informed comments received on issues under consideration.	2004/05	1200 per year	Adopt a higher profile.
	The degree to which the media has been prompted to participate thoughtfully in the discussion of an issue.	# of editorials, articles, radio or TV presentations prompted on issues under consideration.	2004/05	30 per year	Intensive use of IT to solicit public response.
					Negotiate major Task Force work.
					Continue the work of six societal sectors with full membership.

Outcome Measures Template

Core Business Area: Volunteer/Citizen Participation in the Formulation of Public Policy Advice to Premier, Cabinet & Depts.					
Outcome	Indicator	Measure	Base Year	Target 2004—2005	Strategies to Achieve Target
Impact on Public Policy in Nova Scotia	Adoption level of advice provided to Premier & Cabinet	Degree and potential effect of advice adopted by the provincial government	2004/05		Targets and strategies to measure the impact of Voluntary Planning's policy advice to government will be developed during the 2004-2005 year.
	Level to which adopted policy advice has been implemented	Degree and potential effect of adopted policy advice implemented by the provincial government	2004/05		