

**HEARING
& SPEECH**
NOVA SCOTIA



2025 2026

ANNUAL REPORT

www.hearingandspeech.ca

Board approval

Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia's annual report for the year ending March 31, 2026, was prepared under the direction of the Board of Directors. We considered all known economic, environmental, and financial impacts while preparing this report.

The annual report was approved by the Board of Directors on June 25, 2026.

Land acknowledgement

Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia respectfully acknowledges that we live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This land is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship," which were first signed between the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati Peoples and the British Crown in the 1700s.

We recognize that these treaties did not involve the surrender of land and continue to be living agreements that guide our relationships today.

As a province-wide organization, we're committed to listening, learning, and working in partnership with Indigenous communities to support respectful, culturally safe, and accessible services across Mi'kma'ki.

We honour the Mi'kmaq People and their enduring connection to the land, water, and culture, and we commit to reconciliation through action.

We also recognize that African Nova Scotians are distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

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Message from Board Chair and CEO

Achievement, momentum, and a new chapter ahead

This year at Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) reflects a sustained focus on quality, partnership, and continuous improvement. Across governance, clinical practice, and community engagement, our work has been guided by a shared commitment to strengthen care for Nova Scotians today while building a stronger foundation for tomorrow.

In 2025, HSNS completed a rigorous on-site survey by Accreditation Canada and was awarded Accredited with Exemplary Standing. This recognition reflects the discipline, integrity, and accountability embedded in our work. Conducted every four years, this independent assessment is one of the most respected measures of health care quality and safety in Canada, examining governance, patient safety, equity, and clinical standards.

With governance carrying significant weight in this cycle, we're especially proud of the Board's leadership in meeting enhanced standards. Accreditors commended HSNS for advancing patient



Mark Landy, *Board Chair*
Anne Mason-Browne, *CEO*

safety, strengthening continuous quality improvement, and taking meaningful action to address systemic racism and Indigenous-specific racism.

Of note was the commitment and breadth of participation from clients and families in decision making across all levels of the organization, reflecting the shared effort of our Board, staff, and partners. Explore the full report to learn more about this work.

Across the province, partnerships continue to deepen our reach and impact, including our longstanding collaborations with the Department of Health and Wellness, Nova Scotia Health (NSH), the IWK, and the Dalhousie School of Communication Sciences and Disorders (SCSD).

As SCSD celebrates its 50th anniversary, we honour a remarkable legacy of education, mentorship, and service. For five decades, our organizations have worked side by side to prepare clinicians who now serve Nova Scotians in communities across the province, many within HSNS itself.

We're also grateful to the QEII Foundation for facilitating a private donation that supported speech-language services at the NSH Oncology Clinic, helping ensure patients receiving cancer care have access to the communication support they need.

Building on these strong foundations, we've continued to expand partnerships that shape how care is delivered and experienced.

The Board's commitment to reconciliation and anti-systemic racism led to the adoption of a Reconciliation Action Plan

developed in partnership with Balsam, Indigenous Reconciliation Education & Advisory. Grounded in listening, relationship-building, and accountability, this work strengthens our ability to provide culturally safe and equitable services.

Across HSNS, staff continue to be central partners in advancing quality and identifying opportunities to improve how care is experienced by clients and families. This includes introducing assistive listening devices in clinic waiting areas to support communication access from the moment clients arrive, and developing specific procedures to support informed consent from clients with communication challenges.

Staff and clients also worked together to help shape the design of the new Halifax Community Clinic on Mumford Road. The new site reflects shared priorities: a location central to many Halifax clients, accessible transit and parking, welcoming and efficient design, and a space that reflects modern models of care.

HSNS staff also partner with colleagues at Nova Scotia Health (NSH) and the IWK, ensuring clinical care is integrated across the province.

Building on last year's Health Standards Organization Workforce Wellness and Safety Survey, we've advanced this work by developing and implementing an Engagement Plan shaped directly by staff feedback. This ongoing effort strengthens recruitment, retention, and organizational health, recognizing that high-quality care depends on a well-supported and engaged team.

Our community partnerships continue to extend our reach across Nova Scotia. Through our Industrial & Community Audiology Program, HSNS works with employers to promote hearing health and prevent occupational hearing loss. We've also strengthened collaboration within the Provincial Preschool Autism Service, and with the support of iPads generously donated by GEO Nova Scotia, we expanded communication access for children who rely on speech-generating technology.

Additionally, we've contributed to province-wide research initiatives integrating Mi'kmaw knowledge into wellness solutions, reinforcing our commitment to Indigenous engagement and culturally informed practice.

As this report is released, HSNS enters a new chapter of leadership. Anne Mason-Browne retires after a distinguished tenure as CEO, having guided the organization through growth, innovation, and a strengthened focus on equity and quality. She leaves with deep gratitude for the dedication of staff and Board members, and for the opportunity to serve Nova Scotians while seeing patients and families play an increasingly active role in shaping their care.

The Board in turn wishes to thank Anne for the exemplary leadership she has provided over the years, and her steadfast devotion

to the organization. She will be very much missed.

We're also pleased to welcome Lindsay Peach as our new Chief Executive Officer. Building on the progress and momentum achieved under Anne's leadership, HSNS enters its next chapter with confidence and continued purpose.

Together with our partners, staff, clients, and communities, we carry this work forward united in our vision: Every person deserves a voice. Every voice deserves to be heard.



Mark Landy, Board Chair
Anne Mason-Browne, CEO






Our Mission

To improve the lives of Nova Scotians by delivering quality audiology and speech-language pathology services.

Our Vision

Every person deserves a voice. Every voice deserves to be heard.

Our Values

Foundational to HSNS core values is our commitment to honour the cultural heritage and diversity of our communities, always doing our best to promote equity, accessibility, and inclusion in all that we do.



Accomplishments in 2025–26

Accessibility – goals

- Sites, services, and information meet provincial accessibility and patient safety standards.
- Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) Patient and Family-Centred Care (PFCC) is guided by principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, reconciliation, and accessibility.
- IT systems are enhanced to support accessible administrative processes and resources.
- Safety (physical and psychological) is demonstrated as a core value of the organization.

This year, HSNS:

- ✓ Completed the relocation of the Halifax Community Clinic.
- ✓ Rolled out assistive listening devices to all HSNS sites and completed staff training.
- ✓ Connected 118 clients with speech-generating devices through our partnership with GEO NS.

Communication – goals

- Expand communication strategies (including social media) and the breadth of content for internal and external partners.
- Clients, patients, families, staff, and partners share their experiences and stories.
- Promote HSNS as a household name across all communication, services, activities, and products.

This year, HSNS:

- ✓ Implemented the audiology appointment reminders project in the remaining Eastern Zone site and in the Northern Zone.
- ✓ Continued implementation of data analytics and visualization for risk and safety data.



Engagement – goals

- Build on professional development and leadership development opportunities for all staff.
- Use collaborative decision-making and engagement with clients, HSNS staff, and external partners.
- Promote recruitment, retention, and an inclusive and supportive workplace culture.



Strategic planning in 2026–27

HSNS will begin developing a new strategic plan that reflects the evolving needs of clients, families, staff, and communities across Nova Scotia. This work will be guided by collaboration and engagement with staff, partners, clients, caregivers, and community members to help guide the future direction of the organization.

Improving accessibility and language access

This year, HSNS introduced new website tools to improve access to care, including online self-referral information and a dedicated form for people who use ASL or a language other than English. HSNS also began translating materials into additional languages, including Mi'kmaw, with more translations planned based on feedback from clients, families, and staff to support more accessible, culturally relevant, and informed care.

Improving access, one reminder at a time

For busy families, older adults, and clients juggling appointments, a reminder can go a long way. At Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS), it's also helping improve access to care.

Over the past year, HSNS expanded appointment reminders across nearly all community audiology sites in Nova Scotia after a successful initial rollout in Sydney, Sydney Mines, and Eskasoni in late 2024.

The reminders, delivered through email, text, or automated phone calls depending on client preference and accessibility needs, have quickly become an important support for both clients and staff.

"Families are so busy and often count on reminders," says Angela Ryan, Manager at HSNS. "Appointment reminders are so common now that they've almost come to be expected, and we're happy to provide that extra layer of support."



Even in the early stages, the results of the Audiology Wait Times (AWT) project have been encouraging. Across the three original pilot sites, no-show rates for reminder-eligible appointments dropped from 9% in 2024–25 to 7% in 2025–26. The reminders are also helping clinics rebook cancelled appointments, with one in three cancelled appointments now being filled by another client.

"Our hope is that clients feel more comfortable letting us know when they can't attend an appointment," Angela explains. "By creating a more consistent approach to filling cancellations, we can get someone else off the waitlist and into care sooner, particularly those with more urgent concerns."

Beyond improving scheduling, the project has strengthened collaboration across HSNS teams. Audiologists, clinical administrative assistants, managers, and training staff all played a role in designing how the process works day-to-day within clinics.

"This project has highlighted the adaptability, collaboration, and problem-solving skills of staff across HSNS," says Angela. "Staff provided meaningful feedback throughout the rollout, and that collaboration has been front and centre from the beginning."

As the project grew, HSNS developed in-house training and tailored workflows to support staff through implementation and help clinics make better use of available appointments.

"Seeing the impact appointment reminders have had on filling cancelled appointments over the past year has been incredible for Nova Scotians waiting for services," says Vanda Russell, HSNS Training and Data Assistant.

Clients have shared positive feedback about the new system as well.

"The appointment reminders are terrific," says Robin Hurst, a client at HSNS. "They include the address we need to go to, which is really helpful."

As appointment reminders continue expanding across audiology services, HSNS is exploring how similar approaches could support other areas of care in the future, including speech-language pathology and outpatient newborn hearing screening appointments.

A voice made possible through access and support

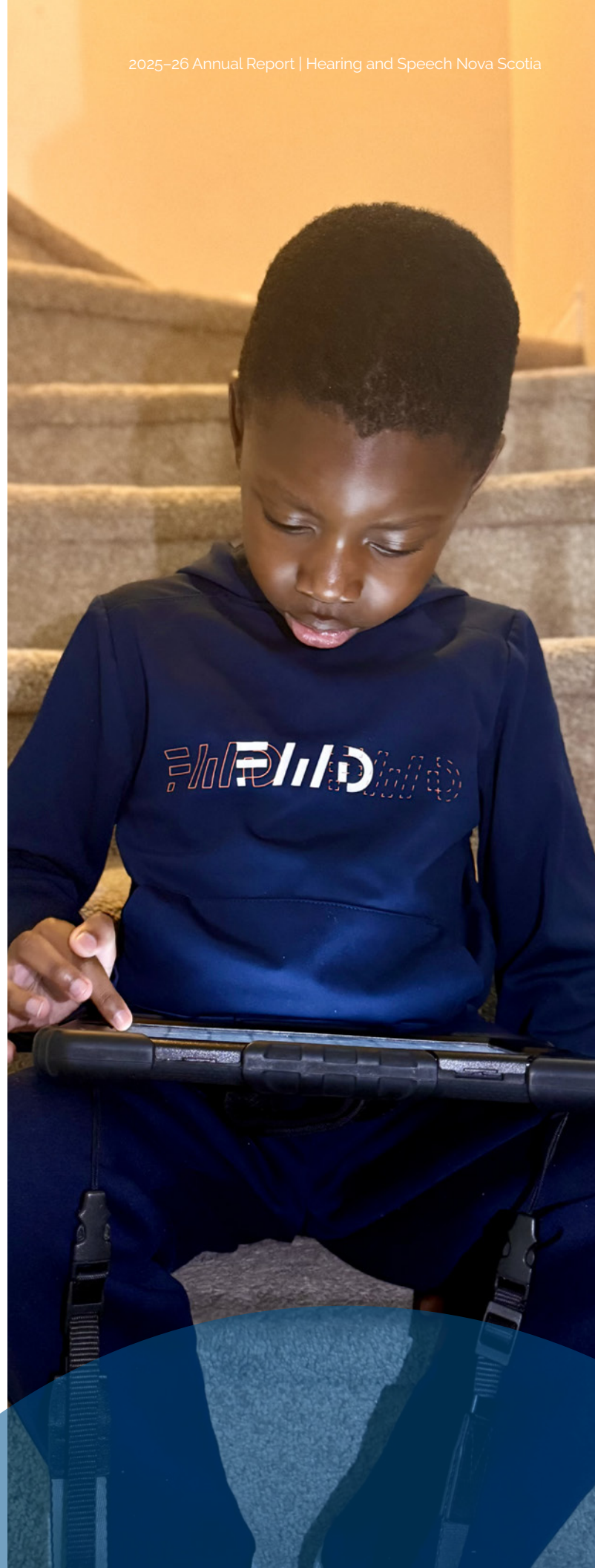
For CJ, a Mother's Day gift made at daycare became an opportunity to express himself in ways that weren't possible before. With support from an iPad and a speech-generating app, he answered questions about his mom by choosing images for her favourite food, where she works, and even what he loves most about her.

Moments like this are becoming more common through a partnership between Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) and GEO Nova Scotia—an organization that works to improve digital inclusion by providing affordable internet access, devices, and the skills people need to get online.

Together, they're helping remove one of the most significant barriers to accessing communication devices: cost.

"Many people simply can't afford the technology needed for a speech-generating device," says Myrto Brandeker, Manager at HSNS. "With GEO Nova Scotia's support, we're able to connect children and adults with iPads and apps much sooner."

For many, it also means gaining access to a device they need to communicate that they wouldn't have had otherwise. In the 2025–2026 fiscal year alone, 118 iPads and communication apps donated by GEO Nova Scotia were provided to clients.



For children who communicate using minimal spoken or non-spoken ways, supporting their communication can change their daily lives in meaningful ways. With these augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, they can use images and symbols to express needs, make choices, and share experiences.

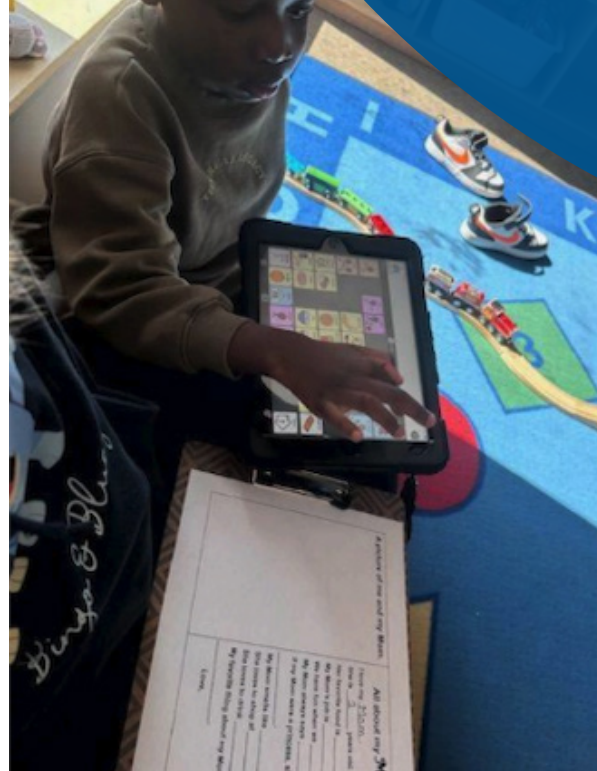
To support this, speech-language pathologists at HSNS work closely with families to introduce the technology and build it into everyday communication. Over time, this can reduce frustration for children and help them build stronger connections with the people around them.

"It gives children a voice," says Myrto. "They can tell you what they want, what they don't want, and take part in everyday moments that matter to them. It really opens up the possibilities for children and their communication partners."

In early childhood, access to communication tools can make a significant difference.

"Research tells us that all children have something to say and have the ability to learn to share their thoughts, feelings, and desires," says Anna Gores, a Speech-Language Pathologist at HSNS. "Providing young children with early access to a robust AAC system makes a world of difference in their communication, social, and emotional development."

Through this partnership, HSNS is also strengthening collaboration across services, including work connected to the Provincial Preschool Autism Service, helping ensure children who rely on speech-generating technology can access the support they need early and fully participate in care.



While many of these supports begin in early childhood, the impact extends across the lifespan. One clinician described supporting an adult with aphasia following a stroke. When the client used her device to write "Thanks," it was a powerful reminder of how access to communication can restore connection and dignity.

Stories like this are not uncommon, but they haven't always been possible.

"Time and time again, cost restraints have prevented clients from accessing speech-generating devices," says Emma Balodis, a Speech-Language Pathologist at HSNS. "Access to iPads and apps through GEO Nova Scotia is life changing."

At HSNS, our vision is that every person deserves a voice; every voice deserves to be heard. For some, that means taking part in a daycare activity and connecting with their mom. For others, it's the ability to express gratitude.

Access to communication opens the door to more moments like these and brings connection, expression, and understanding within reach.



Left to right: Paige Lauwerijssen, Isabel Aboud, Stacie Ranta-Diegel, and Karen Barnett from HSNS.

Expanding support for people living with aphasia

For people living with aphasia, a communication disorder that can affect speech and language, staying connected after hospital care can be one of the biggest challenges. Addressing this gap is a priority for Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS).

First introduced through the HSNS Innovations Fund, the Life After Stroke project was designed to support people with communication challenges during the often-isolating period between hospital discharge and outpatient services. Over the past year, that idea has grown into the newly named Aphasia Innovation Project.

Through the fall and winter, the focus was on building a strong foundation. Speech-Language Pathologist Molly Young worked closely with HSNS clinicians and teams across the organization to design the program, develop volunteer processes, and plan how success will be measured.

First brought forward by Patient Advisor Ferne Mardlin-Smith, the project continues to be guided by her lived experience through her ongoing involvement.



Ferne Mardlin-Smith

One of the biggest areas of progress has been volunteer recruitment. Interest has been strong, with Dalhousie University School of Communication Sciences and Disorders students and experienced professionals stepping forward to get involved. Many are now completing onboarding and training, including learning how to support communication using approaches developed by the Aphasia Institute.

As the project took shape, its reach expanded. It will now support people with aphasia from a range of causes, not just stroke, and will include virtual options to better serve people in rural and remote communities.

When it launches, the project will offer weekly communication groups, one-on-one client support, and education for both clients and communication partners. Together, these services are designed to reduce barriers, create connection, and improve equitable access to care across the province.

With volunteers nearing the end of their training, the project is ready to begin—an exciting next step in bringing a thoughtful, community-informed model of care to people who need it most.

A more accessible and welcoming start to every appointment



For many people with hearing challenges, the effort to hear clearly can begin at the reception desk.

"In any public setting, someone who is hard of hearing might experience barriers to hearing well," says Laura Hart, an Audiologist at Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS). "Background noise, plexiglass, and ventilation systems that most of us don't think about can make communication more challenging right from the beginning."

To help reduce those barriers, HSNS has introduced assistive listening devices in clinic waiting areas and care settings. The technology helps bring a speaker's voice directly to the person listening, reducing the strain that many clients experience when trying to follow conversations in busy environments.

At reception desks, clients can pick up a small handset that brings the administrator's voice directly to their ear, cutting through the sounds of a busy waiting room. For those who use hearing aids with telecoil settings, the system can also send the sound straight to their device. During appointments, portable microphones and headsets allow a clinician's voice to come through clearly while filtering out background noise.

But hearing loss isn't the only reason someone might struggle to follow conversations in busy environments. People recovering from strokes, concussions, or other conditions that affect how the brain processes sound can face similar challenges. For many clients, tools like these can turn a tiring experience into a more manageable one.

"For some people, listening takes a lot of effort," Laura says. "When you're in a healthcare appointment, you're trying to learn something about your health and take in new or complex information. If most of your energy is going into just trying to hear, what you take away from that appointment isn't as valuable as it could be."

Reducing that listening effort can make appointments easier to navigate while also allowing staff to speak at a normal volume, which helps maintain privacy in shared clinical spaces.

"We've had people try the system and say they left the appointment feeling less tired," Laura says. "It's one less thing they have to concentrate on."

For Laura, the initiative represents something larger than the technology itself.

"It comes back to having a space where people feel they belong," Laura says. "If we can build accessibility into the environment so people don't have to ask for help, that's always the goal."

By introducing assistive listening technology in clinic spaces, HSNS is helping ensure that from the moment clients arrive, communication is easier and appointments feel more comfortable.

"We want people to feel like they're not only allowed in the space, but truly welcomed," Laura says. "Even just having the equipment there sends a message that the clinic is meant for them."

How staff wellness strengthens client care

At Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS), staff wellness is central to delivering high-quality care. Over the past year, that commitment has been put into action through continued progress on the Talent Management Plan and insights from the Health Standards Organization (HSO) Workforce Wellness and Safety Survey.

Together, these efforts reflect a more holistic approach to workforce wellbeing, encompassing the full employee experience across recruitment, onboarding, retention, and growth.

Feedback from the HSO survey continues to play a significant role in guiding this work. Staff insights have informed a two-year Workforce Action Plan focused on psychological safety, transparency, and wellbeing, while also enabling more responsive, employee-centred improvements across the organization.

"From an HR perspective, how people feel at work is really important," says Erin Whynot, People and Culture Manager at HSNS. "When staff feel supported, safe, and valued, it strengthens our culture and our ability to retain and recruit. That has a direct impact on the quality of care we provide to clients."

Building on this foundation, the Talent Management Plan focuses on strengthening both recruitment and retention. This includes developing stronger pipelines

through partnerships with post-secondary institutions, introducing bursaries to support new graduates, and exploring new ways to attract talent to rural communities.

At the same time, efforts to enhance the employee experience continue through improved onboarding, structured feedback, and ongoing wellness initiatives.

This work is supported by a new People and Culture team, alongside dedicated groups like the Wellness Committee, which promotes available resources and builds connection across the organization.

"We're always working toward being better and more responsive as an organization," says Danielle Doucet, Manager at HSNS. "The HSO survey plays an important role in that by helping us listen to our staff and respond to what they're experiencing, recognizing that needs change and our approach has to evolve with them."

That ability to listen and respond remains core to this work. Year-over-year survey comparisons show encouraging improvements in several areas, alongside new and evolving priorities.

"I think it's important to remember that how we feel shows up in the work that we do," says Robert Kolanko, Director of Finance & Operations at HSNS. "Supporting a healthy workforce is critical to delivering the kind of care our clients rely on."



At HSNS, staff wellness is an ongoing process grounded in listening, learning, and continuous improvement to better care for staff and, ultimately, the people they serve.

32 staff hired in 2025–26

1 Audiologist

11 Speech-Language Pathologists

11 Communication Disorders Assistants

5 Clinical Administrative Assistants

3 Record Support Clerks

1 Data Analyst

New hires across Nova Scotia

RURAL

40.6%

CENTRAL

59.4%

Key focus areas

Recruitment & retention

Staff wellness & psychological safety

Onboarding & employee experience

From factory floors to fishing communities, Paul Kempster has spent decades helping protect hearing



Paul Kempster understands how closely hearing is connected to the experiences people love most. For him, some of life's best moments are tied to the sounds of birds singing in the early morning, waves moving across St. Margarets Bay, and conversations shared at work sites throughout Nova Scotia.

As an avid birdwatcher and sailor, Paul doesn't take those sounds for granted. After more than 35 years with Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS), he's spent much of his career helping Nova Scotians protect their hearing before damage occurs.

Since joining HSNS in 1991, Paul has been part of the Industrial & Community Audiology program, which partners with workplaces and organizations across the province to provide hearing conservation and prevention services.

The program offers on-site hearing testing, noise level assessments,

and hearing protection support for a wide range of industries, including fisheries, manufacturing, sports venues, transportation, construction, natural resources, and more.

Over the course of his career, Paul estimates he's tested more than 16,000 Nova Scotians and completed roughly 57,000 hearing tests travelling to workplaces and communities across Nova Scotia.

"I feel like I've made a difference in people's lives over the years," says Paul. "I've had numerous people come to me on their last hearing test before retirement and say, 'If you hadn't done this, I probably wouldn't still have my hearing.'"

Noise-induced hearing loss remains one of the most common workplace injuries in Canada. Because hearing damage often happens gradually and without pain, it can go unnoticed until hearing loss has already occurred.

"Sometimes people are surprised by how much their hearing has changed," says Paul. "That's why regular testing and protection are so important."

One visit that stayed with him brought him to Pleasant Bay, where he was conducting hearing tests for local fishers in northern Cape Breton. Before long, word spread through the community.

"People started asking if they could bring their mother or grandmother over for a hearing test while I was there," says Paul. "You could tell access to those services wasn't always easy."

After the clinic wrapped up, local fishers invited Paul out whale watching, where he spotted minke whales off the coast, a memorable end to the visit.

The experience reinforced something he's seen throughout his career: people in rural and remote communities often face additional barriers when accessing hearing care. It's one of the reasons HSNS continues exploring new ways to improve access to services, including community partnerships, virtual care, and remote audiology initiatives.

Alongside the lasting relationships he's built with clients, Paul also supports audiologists across HSNS by maintaining and troubleshooting hearing equipment used throughout the organization.

Even after 35 years, Paul says the work continues to keep him curious. Whether he's aboard a vessel on the job or out sailing with his wife, he still finds himself listening closely to the world around him.

Turning commitment into action: progress on EDIRA and reconciliation

Over the past year, Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) has made notable strides in applying its equity and reconciliation work in everyday practice. This includes the continued advancement of both the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Accessibility (EDIRA) Framework and the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

One major milestone has been the formation of the RAP Committee, bringing together staff from across HSNS to guide this work and improve accountability. With strong internal engagement, the committee is now focused on strengthening relationships with Mi'kmaw and other communities across the province.

"We have a lot of ideas, but this work has to be built with communities, not based on our own assumptions. That's what builds trust and helps remove barriers to care," says Greg Noel, Director of Adult & Mi'kmaq Hearing and Speech Services.

At the same time, the EDIRA framework is increasingly embedded in day-to-day operations.

"There's been a real shift from EDIRA as an initiative to something that's part of how we work every day," says Leah MacEachern, Manager at HSNS. "It's becoming part of our

thinking in how we build policies, hire, and support both staff and clients."

Across the organization, it's being integrated into onboarding and staff learning, guiding policy development, and influencing recruitment—including designated positions that better reflect the communities HSNS serves and strengthening patient-centred care. Ongoing education also continues to expand, supporting culturally and psychologically safe workplaces across the province.

Early actions are already improving accessibility and building trust. One exciting step forward has been the translation of HSNS's first consent document into Mi'kmaw, with more materials to follow in additional languages. This means more clients and families can access information in ways that are accessible, culturally relevant, and aligned with safe, informed care.

These efforts reflect the understanding that equity, reconciliation, and cultural safety aren't checkboxes, but ongoing practices that require learning, adaptation, and evolution over time.

As this work continues, priorities include deepening community engagement, expanding education, and advancing EDIRA and reconciliation across all aspects of care. "As this work becomes part of how we operate every day, we hope staff feel a stronger sense of belonging and psychological safety," says Erin Burke, Speech-Language Pathologist at HSNS. "In turn, it's about clients and communities feeling heard, understood, and respected—building trust and leading to better health outcomes."

Building a board that reflects the communities HSNS serves

For Dr. Anuroop Kaur, community service has always centred around helping people feel supported, included, and heard.

Those values were instilled early in life by her father, who taught her the importance of kindness, compassion, and helping others in whatever way possible. Today, they continue to guide her work in education, leadership, and community involvement, including her role on the Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) Board of Directors.

After beginning her career as an elementary school teacher in 1996, Dr. Kaur went on to complete a Ph.D. in Philosophy before moving into educational leadership as a vice principal and later principal of a K-12 school. Along the way, she developed a strong commitment to supporting community wellbeing and equitable access to services.

"Joining the HSNS Board of Directors felt like a meaningful opportunity to contribute my experience and commitment to community service to an organization that positively impacts the lives of Nova Scotians," says Dr. Kaur.

Having volunteered with HSNS for the past three years, Dr. Kaur says one of the things she values most is the collaborative and supportive nature of the board itself. Along the way, she's also formed meaningful personal connections and friendships through her involvement with the organization.

She currently serves as Chair of the Nominating Committee, where she helps



identify and recruit individuals who can strengthen the board through diverse perspectives, experiences, and leadership skills.

"Building an inclusive board means listening to community needs and ensuring people feel welcomed, respected, and valued at the table," she says. "Representation matters because it allows the organization to better understand the realities and experiences of the communities it serves."

One of Dr. Kaur's favourite parts of serving on the board has been hearing directly from clients and families about the impact of HSNS services.

"Those stories remind us why the organization's work is so important and meaningful," she says.

Outside of HSNS, Dr. Kaur remains deeply involved in community service and lifelong learning, and was recently honoured with an HRM Volunteer Award in recognition of her involvement with various non-profit organizations. She's also a writer with several published books available online.

In her personal time, Dr. Kaur enjoys spending time with her husband and two daughters, writing poetry, and continuing her own learning journey. She's currently completing her third master's degree at St. Francis Xavier University, reflecting her ongoing passion for education and personal growth.

Where care feels more welcoming: Inside the Halifax Community Clinic

Nearly one year after opening, Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia's (HSNS) Halifax Community Clinic is delivering on its promise: a space that's easier to access, more comfortable, and better aligned with how care is delivered today.

Located at 6940 Mumford Road, the clinic was designed with direct input from staff, clients, and families. That feedback is reflected in how the site operates day to day. Its location near the Armdale Rotary makes it easy to get to, and free on-site parking has made visits more convenient.

Inside, the space offers a noticeably different experience. Bright, open, and inviting, it moves away from a traditional clinical feel in favour of something more community-oriented.





“It feels like a community clinic, rather than that traditional medical experience people often expect,” says Danielle Doucet, Manager at HSNS.

That sense of ease extends throughout the environment. Natural light, thoughtful design elements, and flexible spaces have helped create a setting that can respond to different client and family needs.

“What I love about the site is the flexibility it gives us,” says Shae Chapman Doucet, Speech-Language Pathologist at HSNS. “A private space for a caregiver to breastfeed or a sensory room for a child who needs to move can make all the difference for some families.”

Behind the scenes, the new location has also strengthened how teams work together. A mix of clinical spaces, collaborative work areas, a central kitchen, private rooms, and a flexible community room has created more opportunities to share ideas, gather over lunch, and support clients and each other throughout the day.

“From the beginning, staff, leadership, and management were all working together toward the same goal,” says Robert Kolanko, Director of Finance & Operations at HSNS. “That collaboration, along with ongoing input from clients and families, continues to shape the space.”

As the clinic evolves, it’s helping create a more accessible, comfortable, and community-focused way of delivering care.

Strengthening safety, learning, and trust

At Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS), our work begins with people. Every day, our staff provide essential hearing, speech, language, balance, swallowing, and communication health services to Nova Scotians across the province. These services matter deeply, helping people stay connected to their families and communities, participate more fully in daily life, and navigate important moments with greater confidence and independence.

When communication barriers exist, even accessing care, understanding information, or advocating for yourself can become more difficult—affecting safety, wellbeing, and health outcomes.

Behind every appointment and client interaction is a team of skilled professionals committed to the people and communities we serve. Because this work has such a meaningful impact on people's lives, HSNS keeps health, safety, and risk central to how the organization plans, leads, and improves. Risk management helps ensure we can continue providing safe, high-quality care within a changing health system.

Over the past year, HSNS deepened this work through a culture centred on transparency, learning, and accountability.

An important source of insight came through the HSO survey process, where staff expressed a desire for greater engagement in health, safety, quality, and risk processes, while highlighting emerging risks and opportunities for improvement.

In response, HSNS built on existing internal communication efforts through regular briefing updates and implemented ClearView Connects, an anonymous reporting platform that gives staff a safe way to raise concerns, share observations, and contribute to ongoing improvement without fear of judgment or reprisal.

This learning culture is also reflected in how we support staff, which is part of creating a safe and healthy workplace. Throughout the year, HSNS offered wellness activities designed to encourage connection, balance, and personal wellbeing, while supporting morale, retention, and teamwork.

HSNS also developed a dedicated section on its website to help Nova Scotians learn more about this work. The new resource reflects our commitment to openness and accountability, while providing greater insight into how the organization approaches health, safety, and risk.

These efforts align with the findings of HSNS's [2025 Accreditation Report](#), which highlighted the organization's integrated approach to quality, patient safety, and risk, including its focus on "quality care and safety in all activities."

Looking ahead, HSNS will continue listening to staff, strengthening communication, and using feedback to guide action across the organization.

Health, safety, and risk are foundational to HSNS's mission. By supporting staff and maintaining this focus across the organization, we're better positioned to serve clients, families, and communities across Nova Scotia with consistency, compassion, and excellence.



Staff safety at HSNS

Occupational health and safety is about keeping staff safe, supported, and informed.

Over the 2025-26 reporting period:

- 38** staff safety incidents reported
- 31** related to infrastructure
- 5** related to inappropriate conduct by clients
- 2** falls



Client safety at HSNS

Client safety means delivering care that is timely, respectful, and free from harm. Examples of harmful incidents may include delays in accessing services or concerns related to care delivery or client experience.

Over the 2025-26 reporting period:

- 68** harmful incidents
- 30** no-harm incidents
- 30** near misses
- 128** total client safety incidents

With **61,344 total client visits** during the year, **128 client safety incidents** represented 0.21% of visits, or approximately 2 incidents per 1,000 visits.

Client/patient & family experience survey 2025

Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) is committed to ensuring that clients receive high-quality, safe, and accessible services, and that their perspectives help shape how those services are delivered. One of the ways we gather this feedback is through the annual HSNS client experience survey, which helps us understand client perspectives on the quality, accessibility, and safety of the care they received.

The 2025 survey was open from November to December with 608 responses, representing 2.22% of all HSNS clients seen that year.

While the data reflects some of the ongoing challenges facing healthcare across Nova Scotia, it also highlights where we're making a difference and where we can grow. These insights are helping guide ongoing improvements through a renewed focus on engagement, transparency, and accountability.

Below are some of the 2025 survey highlights.



Clients shared high satisfaction with service delivery and its impact:

100%

of clients reported they were satisfied with the quality of care they received

94%

of clients felt HSNS audiology services helped them better understand their hearing

90%

noticed improved skills through speech-language pathology services

98%

said they learned helpful new skills or knowledge during their visits

97%

felt they received the information they needed about next steps or end of care

HSNS clients continue to report feeling respected and safe throughout their care experience:



Clients also told us they felt listened to and involved in decisions about their care:



Of the 570 comments received, **80% were positive**. Clients described:



Key areas for improvement included:



2025-26 Performance Indicators

Hearing & Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) provides high-quality audiology services to all Nova Scotians and speech-language pathology services to preschool children, home-schooled children and adults. HSNS is accredited by Accreditation Canada and provides services from 37 clinics in 25 communities throughout Nova Scotia. Our Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists, licensed with the provincial regulatory college, received over 29,000 referrals from individuals, families, healthcare providers, educators and other professionals in the past year. Most services are provided at no cost to Nova Scotia residents with a valid health card.

This year, HSNS expanded its internal data and reporting capacity to support clearer, more accessible communication of organizational performance and outcomes.

51%

of patient visits
aged 16 years
and younger

54%

of visits took
place outside
of HRM

439

clients with
cochlear
implants were in
active care

8,042

infants had
their hearing
screened

35%

of visits were
with hospital
inpatients

957

children with
autism were in
active care

28,741

Nova Scotians
received
services

61,344

total patient
visits

4,457

visits were
delivered
virtually





Missing from photo: Ms. Anne Mason-Browne, Ms. Maria Rizzetto, Ms. Rachel Arab, Ms. Miranda Bernard, Ms. Nardeen Nakhla, and Dr. Michael Kiefte.

Dr. Affoo served as interim during Dr. Kiefte's leave (through December 2025).

2025–26 Board of Directors

Mr. Mark Landy
Chair
Riverport, NS

Ms. Maria Rizzetto
Vice-Chair
Coxheath, NS

Ms. Vickie Sullivan
Co-Vice Chair
Halifax, NS

Mr. Matthew Haley
Secretary-Treasurer
Dartmouth, NS

Ms. Anne Mason-Browne
CEO
Halifax, NS

Ms. Rachel Arab
Halifax, NS

Ms. Miranda Bernard
Eskasoni, NS

Mr. Chirag Bhangale
Halifax, NS

Mr. Jon Frost
Halifax, NS

Mr. John Grant
Wolfville, NS

Dr. Anuroop Kaur
Halifax, NS

Dr. Michael Kiefte
Halifax, NS

Mr. Matthew MacLean
Baddeck, NS

Ms. Nardeen Nakhla
Halifax, NS

Ms. Emma Vossen
Halifax, NS

Courtney Douglas
Patient Advisor to the Board

Ferne Mardlin-Smith
Patient Advisor to the Board

We are a volunteer governance Board of Directors and are always looking for new members. If you are interested, please contact us at info@nshsc.nshealth.ca or visit our website at www.hearingandspeech.ca.

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2026

	Operating Fund	Fund 1 (Emergency)	Fund 2 (Innovation)	2026	2025
ASSETS					
CURRENT					
Cash	\$ 3,456,144	\$ 1,128	\$ -	\$ 3,457,272	\$ 4,404,263
Accounts receivable	2,409,471	459	471	2,410,401	1,556,249
Interfund receivables	35,108	4,015	8,161	47,284	43,804
Prepaid expenses	122,330	-	-	122,330	85,860
	6,023,053	5,602	8,632	6,037,287	6,090,176
CAPITAL ASSETS	582,221	-	-	582,221	711,111
MARKETABLE SECURITIES	-	919,019	720,265	1,639,284	1,420,465
SPECIAL PURPOSE FUNDS	13,216	-	-	13,216	-
	\$ 6,618,490	\$ 924,621	\$ 728,897	\$ 8,272,008	\$ 8,221,752
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS					
CURRENT					
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 990,273	\$ -	\$ 2,066	\$ 992,339	\$ 658,215
Interfund payables	12,176	35,108	-	47,284	43,804
Deferred revenue	1,957,000	-	-	1,957,000	2,004,000
	2,959,449	35,108	2,066	2,996,623	2,706,019
DEFERRED CONTRIBUTIONS - CAPITAL ASSETS	2,257,718	-	-	2,257,718	2,491,156
SPECIAL PURPOSE FUNDS	-	-	-	-	241,031
	5,217,167	35,108	2,066	5,254,341	5,438,206
FUND BALANCES	1,401,323	889,513	726,831	3,017,667	2,783,546
	\$ 6,618,490	\$ 924,621	\$ 728,897	\$ 8,272,008	\$ 8,221,752

CONTINGENT LIABILITY LEASE COMMITMENTS

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD



Director



Director

Statement of Revenues and Expenditures

Year Ended March 31, 2026

	Operating Fund	Fund 1 (Emergency)	Fund 2 (Innovation)	2026	2025
REVENUE					
Department of Health	\$16,538,439	\$ -	\$ -	\$16,538,439	\$ 15,876,422
Department of Health – EIBI	1,513,879	-	-	1,513,879	1,477,030
IWK-PPAS	1,330,307	-	-	1,330,307	1,102,896
Out of Province	247,417	-	-	247,417	204,165
Investment Income (loss)	-	111,746	102,036	213,782	130,426
Miscellaneous Income	74,756	-	-	74,756	30,107
Recoveries	26,348	-	-	26,348	24,864
Contract revenue	12,492	-	-	12,492	9,357
	19,743,638	111,746	102,036	19,957,420	18,855,267
EXPENDITURES					
Administrative expenses	1,528,024	-	-	1,528,024	2,547,025
Autism program	978,644	-	-	978,644	897,229
Core hearing and speech services	11,650,811	-	-	11,650,811	10,410,003
EIBI	1,513,879	-	-	1,513,879	1,477,030
Investment Fees	-	11,992	7,205	19,197	17,441
Operational	2,431,770	-	-	2,431,770	2,042,240
PPAS	1,329,953	-	-	1,329,953	1,102,546
Scholarships	-	2,277	-	2,277	1,060
	19,433,081	14,269	7,205	19,454,555	18,494,574
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES FROM OPERATIONS					
	310,557	97,477	94,831	502,865	360,693
OTHER EXPENSES					
Amortization of capital assets	268,744	-	-	268,744	248,968
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES					
	\$ 41,813	\$ 97,477	\$ 94,831	\$ 234,121	\$ 111,725

Statement of Changes in Fund Balances

Year Ended March 31, 2026

	Operating Fund	Fund 1 (Emergency)	Fund 2 (Innovation)	2026	2025
FUND BALANCES -					
BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ 1,359,510	\$ 792,036	\$ 632,000	\$ 2,783,546	\$ 2,671,821
Excess of revenue over expenditures	41,813	97,477	94,831	234,121	111,725
NET BALANCES - END OF YEAR	\$1,401,323	\$ 889,513	\$ 726,831	\$ 3,017,667	\$ 2,783,546

Statement of Cash Flows

Year Ended March 31, 2023

	2026	2025
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ 234,121	\$ 111,725
Items not affecting cash:		
Amortization of capital assets	268,744	248,968
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	(233,439)	(205,468)
Realized loss (gain) on sale of marketable securities	27,650	(14,773)
Unrealized loss (gain) on marketable securities	(185,947)	(71,053)
	111,129	69,399
Changes in non-cash working capital:		
Accounts receivable	(854,152)	(88,391)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	334,124	249,399
Deferred revenue	(47,000)	1,434,835
Prepaid expenses	(36,470)	31,132
	(603,498)	1,626,975
Cash flow from (used by) operating activities	(492,369)	1,696,374
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchase of capital assets	(139,854)	(418,508)
Proceeds from sale of marketable securities	307,542	69,558
Purchase of marketable securities	(368,063)	(87,528)
Cash flow used by investing activities	(200,375)	(436,478)
FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Special purpose fund receipts	852,975	1,316,369
Special purpose fund expenses	(1,107,222)	(1,525,618)
Cash flow from (used by) financing activities	(254,247)	(209,249)
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN CASH FLOW	(946,991)	1,050,647
Cash - beginning of year	4,404,263	3,353,616
CASH - END OF YEAR	\$ 3,457,272	\$ 4,404,263



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