

October 26, 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

**Re: You are entitled to the information you requested – 2021-01769-HEA**

The Department of Health and Wellness received your application for access to information under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (the Act) on September 27, 2021.

In your application, you requested a copy of the following records:

*Amended September 27, 2021: a copy of any briefing materials provided to Minister Michelle Thompson regarding the backlog in surgeries due to the COVID-19 restrictions. (date range March 1, 2020 to September 24, 2021).*

Pages that do not respond to the impact COVID has had on surgical wait times have been removed from the records package as not responsive. The remainder of the records are enclosed.

You have the right to ask for a review of this decision by the Information Access and Privacy Commissioner (formerly the Review Officer). You have 60 days from the date of this letter to exercise this right. If you wish to ask for a review, you may do so on Form 7, a copy of which is attached. Send the completed form to the Information Access and Privacy Commissioner, P.O. Box 181, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2M4.

Please be advised that a de-identified copy of this disclosure letter and the attached response to your FOIPOP application will be made public after 14 days. The package will be posted online at <https://openinformation.novascotia.ca/>. The letter will not include your name, address, or any other personal information that you have supplied while making your application under FOIPOP.

Please contact Melinda Frelick at 902-424-6920 or by e-mail at [melinda.frelick@novascotia.ca](mailto:melinda.frelick@novascotia.ca), if you need further assistance regarding this application.

Sincerely,



Craig Beaton  
Associate Deputy Minister

Attachment

# Ministerial Briefing

## *Surgical Wait Times*

September 15, 2021

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# Overview and context

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- In 2020, NSHA experienced surgical service reductions to support COVID-19 response efforts, leading to reduced completed case volumes and increased wait times.

Page 04 to/à Page 05

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# Key Issues

- ▶ Resumption of elective surgeries and other procedures due to redirection of resources to COVID response:
  - ▶ 1883 surgeries were cancelled between April – December 2020
  - ▶ 42% cancelled surgeries completed as of February 2021
- ▶ Reintroduction of health services and programs impacted by COVID.
- ▶ Increase in wait times for priority procedures including hip and knee replacement, cataract surgeries, cancer surgeries, MRI and CT scans.
- ▶ Further delay in aligning with national wait time benchmarks related to Hip and Knee replacement; NSHA indicates additional 2 years before able to clear backlog and align.
- ▶ Access and flow, quality and patient safety across the health system.

# Strategic Insights

- ▶ Wait-time reporting for elective surgery in Canada is diverse, and it varies in comprehensiveness across the provinces and territories.
- ▶ In the 2017 Commonwealth Fund Report, Canada was ranked tenth of 11 countries in terms of access to health services, largely because of long wait times for services such as elective surgery.
- ▶ Although there has been some progress in recent years, Canadian wait times for elective surgery are still long.
- ▶ To be successful in sustaining quality improvement in the perioperative environment, surgical teams need access to meaningful, comparable data that can be tracked and trended over time to inform meaningful quality improvement decisions.
  - ▶ Perioperative and Surgical Services Dashboard established as part of tableau
  - ▶ 2021/22 Robotic arm purchase for hip and knee surgeries is anticipated to create capacity; COVID-19 and Access and Flow has created barriers
  - ▶ Hip and Knee Dashboard – completed cases



- ▶ Opportunity for partnerships with private entities to expand public access for surgical services and capitalize on their Health Human Resource (HHR) and infrastructure while developing a longer term HHR strategy.

# Work in Progress and Results to Date

- ▶ *Human Organ and Tissue Donation Act (HOTDA)* in-effect as of January 18, 2021. The number of Nova Scotians who have opted out is below the expectation based on European experiences.
- ▶ NSH Surgical Services has been able to complete 78% of the cancelled surgeries. Remaining surgeries are either re-booked or are to be re-scheduled.
- ▶ \$15m approved in FY20-21 & FY21-22 to increase orthopedic support for hip and knee surgeries and alignment with the national benchmark.
- ▶ Same day joint replacement program is an ongoing initiative that supports partial knee and total joint replacement patients to return home the same day as their surgery.
- ▶ In August 2020, DHW approved a funding grant (\$661,550) to cover a maximum of 1350 cataract surgeries at the Halifax Surgical Vision Centre (HSVC) by March 2021.
- ▶ In February 2021, a 1-year extension (April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022) of the existing contract between NSHA and HSVC was approved (\$478,495) to cover an additional 900 cataract surgeries.

Page 09 to/à Page 11

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# Next Steps

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- Collaborate with NSHA to establish plan to address wait times as province moves to phase five re-opening plan.

# Thank You