

Exploring implementing supported decision-making in Nova Scotia



Exploring legislative, policy, and implementation options to support the rights and autonomy of Nova Scotians required a comprehensive evidence base and meaningful engagement.

Sector:
Disability Rights / Justice

Primary service:
Engagement and Research

Client:
Nova Scotia Department of Justice

Project:
Supported Decision-making in Nova Scotia

17

**Public engagement sessions
across Nova Scotia**

Over 30

**Provincial and international
laws reviewed**



The situation:

The Nova Scotia Department of Justice engaged RPI to help them explore the possibility of implementing supported decision-making in Nova Scotia. Supported decision-making is a legislative model that reflects a philosophical shift from determining whether an adult has capacity to make a decision, to putting in place the right supports so that the adult can make the decision, while maintaining appropriate safeguards. Implementation requires careful consideration of legislation, policy, service systems, and the diverse needs of Nova Scotians. The Department needed credible evidence, cross-government collaboration, and meaningful input from communities to assess opportunities, challenges, and implementation considerations before determining future directions.

Complexities

- Collaborating with six government offices and departments
- Balancing legal, policy, operational, and rights-based considerations
- Providing accessible and meaningful participation for diverse individuals
- Considering the needs, concerns, and perspectives of different groups
- Synthesizing evidence from many Canadian and international jurisdictions, legislative frameworks, and lived experiences



The approach:

RPI worked closely with the Department of Justice and an inter-departmental Working Group to design and implement a **comprehensive evidence-gathering** process. Key project activities included:

- Reviewing nine Nova Scotia acts and civil procedure rules related to adult capacity and decision-making to identify areas of consistency, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.
- Completing a **jurisdictional scan** examining supported decision-making models and best practices for implementation across Canada and internationally, including Ireland and Australia. Methods included literature review, key informant interviews, and policy/ legislation analysis.
- Designing and leading a **province-wide public engagement** process that incorporated accessibility supports, plain-language resources, and trauma-informed facilitation. Methods included 17 virtual and in-person engagement sessions and written submissions with adults who use or may use supported decision-making, family members, lawyers, healthcare professionals, and service providers.

RPI synthesized the findings from all methods into an integrated report. Actionable recommendations informed by the evidence and implementation realities in Nova Scotia were developed in collaboration with the inter-departmental Working Group.



The impact:

The project provided the Department of Justice with a comprehensive evidence base to inform decisions and next steps about implementing supported decision-making in Nova Scotia. By integrating legislative analysis, jurisdictional research, and engagement, the project identified opportunities, challenges, and implementation considerations relevant to Nova Scotia's context. The findings and recommendations provided practical options for future policy and legislative development.



"RPI brought a collaborative, and evidence-based approach to a complex policy issue. Their ability to integrate legal analysis, research, and perspectives from the engagement across diverse communities was essential to this work."

Policy Professional, Department of Justice



The project team:



Clare Levin
Partner



Liam Dunbar
Consultant



Richard Buote
Consultant



About RPI

RPI helps organizations find and identify insights to support decision-making and drive evidence-backed change. The RPI team brings extensive experience in the areas of health, accessibility, education, community services, and other public sector services.

Organizations come to RPI for support when:

- They need credible evidence to support decision-making, especially around funding or program/policy change
- They need help setting direction, planning for, and navigating complex policy, implementation, and system-level changes
- They need support hearing and making sense of diverse perspectives to inform implementation and next steps

Reach out to talk about how RPI can help you.

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