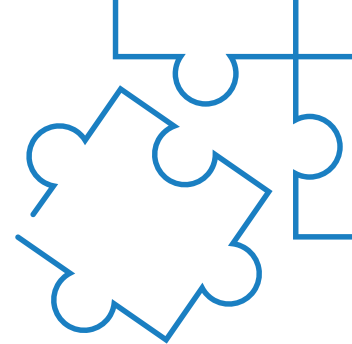




# 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT





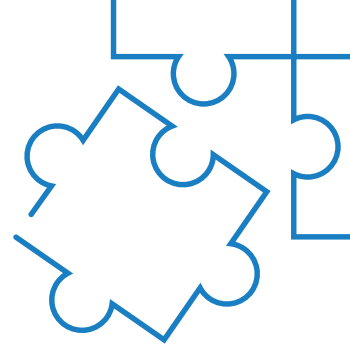


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# FROM OUR CHAIR

## REFLECTING ON A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY



**Trent Sohlt**  
Chair of the Board  
(2017-2020, 2020-2024)

Fellow Members,

As many of you know, today marks the end of my term as Chair of the Board. It's with a mix of emotions that I step down (or rather step into the Past Chair role) with immense pride in what we have achieved together and heartfelt excitement for the future this organization holds.

Looking back, I'm truly humbled by the incredible journey we've shared. When I first took on this role, we had great passion and ideas to help Nova Scotia prosper, but limited resources. Yet, through your dedication, creativity, and unwavering commitment, we not only overcame those hurdles but thrived. We crafted our first Strategic Plan and launched our first website. We built our relationship with our provincial partners by

demonstrating the significant influence we have in our sectors. With their backing, we forged a determined organization with staff and launched multiple steering committees and working groups that have accomplished priority projects that had been on our wish list for years (videos, training tools, and so much more).

We survived a pandemic, a 180° change in the labour market, and natural disasters, and still, we power through. It is a testament to the vision of each and every one of you to strengthen employers and employees across our province. Together, we have tackled complex challenges, embraced innovative solutions, and consistently pushed the boundaries of what's possible. For that, I offer my deepest gratitude.

This organization is woven into the fabric of our respective organization's work, and I look forward to remaining actively involved. In my new role as Past Chair, my support remains focused on our collective goals and objectives. I will coach our new Chair along as needed, stay active in our collaborative projects, and always be a champion for AISC.

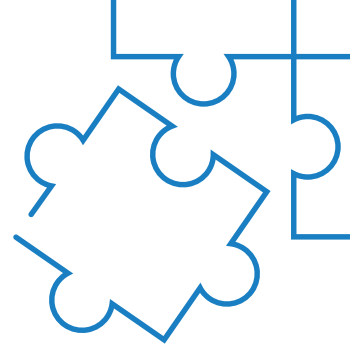
As we move forward together, I urge you to share that you and your organization are proud members of the Association. We have a strong foundation in place, and with your continued passion and collaborative spirit, there's no limit to what we can achieve. A new Chair and Executive Committee will bring deep experience and a refreshing perspective. I encourage you to lend them your support and continued dedication to our shared goals in the years ahead.

In closing, I am proud of every one of you. You've not only shaped the success of this organization but also inspired me personally. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this extraordinary journey.

With warmest regards,

# FROM OUR GENERAL MANAGER

## A YEAR FOR BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS



**Cassandra Baccardax**  
General Manager

Dear Valued Members,

The past few years have been a whirlwind of exciting growth for AISC. We've expanded our reach, achieved impressive milestones, and worked toward establishing ourselves as a leader in Nova Scotia's workforce development ecosystem. It's a testament to the hard work and dedication of each of you – our dedicated Directors, who always entwine the success of your Sector Councils with building a stronger collective. I also want to acknowledge our loyal partner, the Province of Nova Scotia (Skills and Learning Branch).

As we entered this fiscal year, our focus shifted from rapid expansion to shoring up our foundation. We have spent this past year prioritizing initiatives that strengthen our governance structure and ensure long-term stability, while simultaneously delivering on projects to address attraction and retention priorities. As we look to the new fiscal year, both employee retention for Nova Scotia's employers and our sustainability are continuing themes. This includes strengthening internal processes, documenting frameworks, and being of service to employers across our province through you, our members.

While our growth was exhilarating, it has been equally important to pause and ensure we have the infrastructure in place to support that growth over the long term. By taking some time to refine our core functions and establish best practices, we pave the way for even greater collaborative support to Sector Councils in the years to come. One year into our three-year strategic plan, I'm excited to measure our progress to date and take stock of the remaining "to-do" list.

I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the dedicated Executive Committee and Board of Directors. Your invaluable guidance and unwavering support have been instrumental in navigating first our growth trajectory and then our new foundations. A special thank you goes to our outgoing Chair, Trent Soholt. Trent's leadership and strategic vision have been instrumental in shaping AISC's path to success.

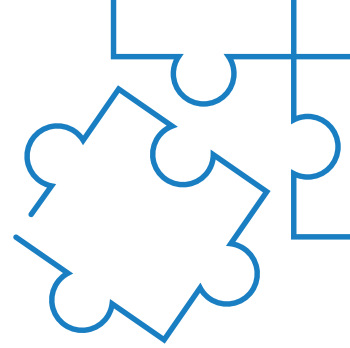
Looking ahead, we remain committed to our core values and guiding principles. We continue to be inspired to deliver on our mission statement of supporting our members to grow and strengthen a diverse and competitive Nova Scotia workforce through sector council leadership and collaboration; and we aim to provide exceptional service and secure a prosperous future for all sector councils, AISC, and Nova Scotia.

With sincere appreciation,



# BOARD MEMBERS

## OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



**Trent Sohlt**  
Chair, NSCSC ICI



**Shannon Trites**  
Vice-Chair, ASC



**Kelly Henderson**  
Past-Chair, THRSC



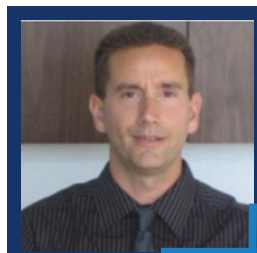
**Lisa Fitzgerald**  
Treasurer, NSFSC



**Jan Fullerton**  
Secretary, NSBA



**Michael Montgomery**  
AHRSC



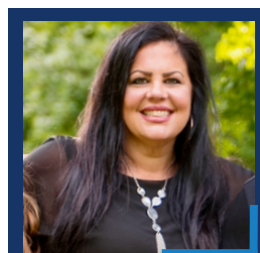
**Mitch Raymond**  
CME



**Owen Sagness**  
DNS



**Heather Boyd**  
FSC



**Stephanie Girard**  
HCCWSC



**Annika Voltan**  
IONS



**Carolyn Van Den Heuvel**  
NSFA



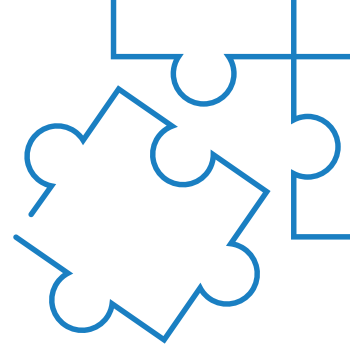
**Lisa Dahr**  
NSTHRC



**Chris Bourque**  
OTCNS

# OUR TEAM

## COLLABORATIVE MINDS



We collaborate daily while valuing one another's unique strengths that contribute to our shared successes. With diverse expertise, we work together seamlessly to tackle challenges head-on.

Our commitment to excellence drives our progress and fosters growth guiding us towards achieving AISC's goals. We truly value the dedication and skills of every team member, understanding that our triumphs are the result of our combined efforts. Together, we navigate challenges, overcome obstacles, and achieve success.

With a solid foundation, we can't wait for the continued evolution of AISC!



### CASSANDRA BACCARDAX

Our exceptional manager and the first-ever AISC staff member, prioritizing her team's growth and success with unwavering support and dedication.



### FAITH BOWYER

AISC's project-guru setting the gold standard with her unmatched attention to detail and organizational superpowers that help keep us all on track.



### ALLY MANNETTE

An event planning magician, who thrives under pressure, plans unforgettable events, and has an uncanny ability to solve any problem thrown her way.



### ZAINAB AZHAR

Our Sherlock Holmes of labour market, a data analysis expert guiding our ISCs to informed decisions, who's favourite emoji (🌸) always brightens our days.



### ELLE STEPHENS

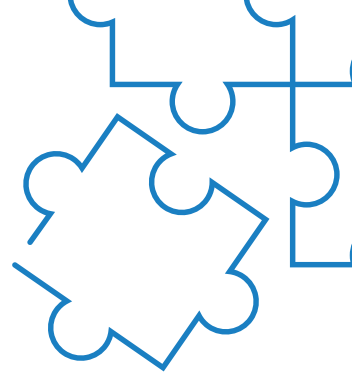
The master of versatility, with a wealth of experience, effortlessly adapting to any challenge, while uplifting team spirits with Bunnyville updates.



### JAYNE HAWKINS

The latest addition to the AISC team, constantly seeking opportunities to learn and grow while embracing each challenge with enthusiasm.

# FOUNDATION OF IMPACT OUR ORGANIZATIONAL CORE



## MISSION & GUIDING PRINCIPLE

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AISC's original values, mission, and guiding principle continue to serve the organization well. Slight wording edits during the process of developing a new strategic plan clarify that it is AISC's role to *support our members* to strengthen the Nova Scotia workforce. Purpose, focus, and integrity result from having consensus on these important foundations for our organization and we will continue to allow for these elements to lead us moving forward in the work that we do.



## STATEMENT OF INCLUSIVITY, COMMITMENT & VALUES

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AISC drives social and economic growth by supporting a diverse, innovative, and engaged workforce through our member ISCs. We are committed to promoting the values of IDEA – Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility in all aspects of our work. We develop tools and training for and build capacity with, employers in our 14 industry sectors, using strategies and approaches that center IDEA. We believe that this investment is vital to attract, onboard, and retain skilled and progressive workforces. We know that investing in people and building workplaces where employees feel a sense of value and belonging leads to innovative, resilient and, ultimately, successful businesses and organizations. This benefits us all by contributing to thriving, equitable Nova Scotian communities and a robust provincial economy.



# STRENGTHENING NOVA SCOTIA'S WORKFORCE TOGETHER

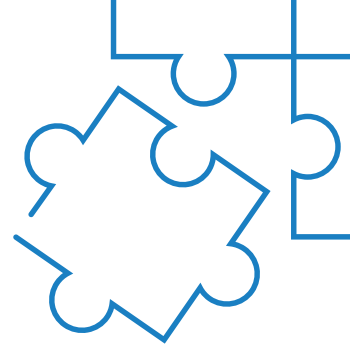
Our Industry Sector Councils have an immensely positive impact on the labour market of Nova Scotia, through strategic initiatives, focused on attraction, training, IDEA, and more.

It is our role to support our Members to strengthen the Nova Scotia workforce. AISC's purpose, focus, and integrity result from having consensus on these important foundations for our organization. As we move forward, we remain steadfast to guiding principles, allowing them to inform and steer our actions as we continue our journey of impactful work in the labour market.



# PROJECTS & AREAS OF FOCUS

## DRIVING IMPACT



### MARKETING/ COMMS/ EVENTS

In the past year, our projects in marketing, communications, and events continued to flourish. Notably, we hosted our largest conference yet, boasting the highest attendance rate and welcoming a record number of speakers. We launched a dynamic new website aimed at showcasing our esteemed Members and their remarkable work. Throughout the year, we provided comprehensive support for all initiatives, offering tailored marketing and communication guidance. We remain committed to strengthening AISC's brand identity, fostering widespread recognition within our ecosystem.

**KEY PROJECTS: 3RD ANNUAL WORKFORWARD CONFERENCE, NEW WEBSITE, INAUGURAL EDITION OF ECOSYSTEM NEWSLETTER**



### INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY

IDEA work continues as a priority, focusing on the highly-endorsed Certificate in Inclusive Leadership (CIL) course. AISC engaged with TRIEC to custom design a CIL Train-the-Trainer course for Nova Scotia industries. Equity-deserving groups were consulted in the design, and then the course was delivered to eight professional trainers, most of them employees of our Member councils. Two pilots were conducted, followed by two sector-specific cohorts. In all, 38 certificates were awarded. Delivery of the CIL continues into 2025 with this Community of Practice.

**KEY PROJECTS: CERTIFICATE IN INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP & CONSULTATION ON NEW WCB ACCESSIBILITY EMPLOYER STANDARDS**



### RETENTION & TRAINING

This year, our training initiatives achieved remarkable success. We wrapped up our Mental Health First Aid training, certifying 112 individuals. Additionally, we hosted two Governance Panels, aimed at providing valuable insights to our members. Our virtual retention panels were well-received and attracted over 200 attendees across two sessions. Furthermore, our in-person Retention Event, featuring an exceptional keynote and an engaging employer panel, was met with great enthusiasm. These accomplishments underscore our commitment to fostering knowledge, engagement, and community within our organization.

**KEY PROJECTS: GOVERNANCE PANELS FOR BOARD MEMBERS, VIRTUAL RETENTION PANELS FOR INDUSTRY**

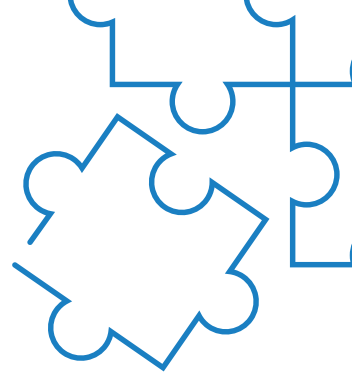


### LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Building on our LMI dashboard launched last year, we facilitated industry-specific primary research projects across all 14 industry sector councils (ISCs). Our expert support guided ISCs through survey design, sample selection, and analysis techniques. Calculating our combined economic impact in Nova Scotia, we collectively represent an estimated 50% of annual GDP, 64% of employers, and 65% of employees in the province. Additionally, AISC diligently monitored and disseminated economic news to our ISCs throughout the fiscal year.

**KEEP READING FOR IN-DEPTH SAMPLES OF OUR MEMBERS' LABOUR MARKET PROJECTS**

# NAVIGATING THE LABOUR MARKET ACROSS NOVA SCOTIA'S INDUSTRIES



DIGITAL NOVA SCOTIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This survey was sent to <b>468 individuals</b> from <b>286 organizations</b>, investigating the extent of labour shortage and employer perspectives.</li> <li>The digital sector is facing a skilled labour shortage, especially mid-career level.</li> <li>Lack of shared vocabulary between different career levels and occupations.</li> <li>Managerial roles are the most commonly in demand requiring considerable experience.</li> <li>Employers are open to non-traditional education backgrounds.</li> <li>Digital Nova Scotia programs rated <b>3.5 confidence average</b>.</li> <li>Implementation of EDIA policies is rising compared to last year.</li> </ul>	OCEAN TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL OF NOVA SCOTIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project surveyed for-profit and non-profit organizations.</li> <li>Aimed to estimate basic labour market indicators: median business size, employment rates, turnover, retirement rate, job vacancy, wage levels, and net change in workforce size.</li> <li>Invite emails sent to all organizations, survey link posted on social media, newsletters, partner organization channels.</li> <li>Weekly reminder emails, reposts on social media and newsletters (except over Christmas).</li> <li>Faced barriers of low response rate and convenience sampling.</li> <li>Final report details methodology and limitations.</li> </ul>
NOVA SCOTIA CONSTRUCTION SECTOR COUNCIL, ICI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This project included two surveys: one on employers (completed) and one on students/workers.</li> <li>Employers highlighted key hiring issues; shortage of trainees, finding skilled apprentices, and lack of skilled labour, noting fewer people joining trades, and more retiring, creating mentor shortages and vacancies.</li> <li>Positive economic growth is expected due to large projects, rising work volume, and increased government spending.</li> <li>The survey includes recruitment, retention, hiring, retirement, migration, and credential recognition.</li> </ul>	HEALTH + COMMUNITY CARE WORKFORCE SECTOR COUNCIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This survey focused on labour recruitment, retention, and equity policies in the sector, receiving <b>47 unique responses</b>.</li> <li><b>63.8% experienced recruitment challenges</b> including a lack of skilled labour, intra-sector competition, and wage disparities.</li> <li><b>41.3% of organizations struggle with employee retention</b>, citing turnover, wage disparities, variable schedules, and housing.</li> <li><b>71.1% of organizations have policies/practices for equity-deserving groups</b>.</li> <li><b>73.5% reported an increase in wage expenses</b> while <b>26.5% reported no change</b>.</li> </ul>
IMPACT ORGANIZATIONS OF NOVA SCOTIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This project aimed to understand labour challenges within this sector.</li> <li>Two main phases: <b>Analysis and Development of Engaging Content</b> and <b>Collection of New Labour Data</b>, Phase 1 is complete and Phase 2 is ongoing until June 2024.</li> <li>The campaign launch newsletter had a <b>61.3% open rate (3,030 opens)</b> and <b>33.7% click rate</b>.</li> <li>LinkedIn post on reverse reference checks gained 30 likes, and 4 reposts.</li> <li>Phase 2 is designed to collect qualitative data across three main themes: People (Recruitment/Retention/Policies/Processes), HR Policies, and Data (information on Current/Planned Staff, Turnover, etc.).</li> </ul>	ATLANTIC HOME BUILDING AND RENOVATION SECTOR COUNCIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This project analyzed secondary data from the 2021 Census by Statistics Canada.</li> <li>Focuses on labour market indicators for equity-deserving groups in Nova Scotia.</li> <li>Indicators include participation rates, employment rates, and unemployment rates.</li> <li>In-depth analysis of variables influencing dwelling choice that an equity-deserving person would choose to reside in (labour force status, education type, identity, age, family size).</li> <li>An equitable, skilled workforce is needed for accessible housing construction.</li> <li>The second part analyzes housing market data in detail, focusing on developed, metropolitan areas in Nova Scotia.</li> </ul>
NOVA SCOTIA BOATBUILDERS ASSOC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This project included an employee-focused survey and an annual survey.</li> <li>The employee-focused survey aims to understand workforce composition and employee perceptions.</li> <li>Survey distributed via email and social media.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Themes include demographics, job information, satisfaction, workplace and safety culture, etc.</li> <li>The annual survey includes questions on workforce, business activities, and NSBA services.</li> <li>The winter 2024 survey focuses on number of employees, key positions' wages, difficult-to-hire skills, training needs.</li> </ul>

# THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS!



AISC is gratefully funded by the Province of Nova Scotia,  
Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration