Provincial Department of Justice, Public Safety Division

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My placement was with the Nova Scotia Provincial Department of Justice (DOJ) in the Public Safety Division. The offices of the Public Safety Division are located downtown in the Joseph Howe building at 1690 Hollis Street. The Public Safety Division is divided into two main areas: Policing Strategy and Public Safety Investigations. Together, the services offered by the Public Safety Division work towards reducing crime and its negative effects to create safe communities throughout Nova Scotia.

Myself and the other POLI 4390 student placed at the DOJ were fortunate to be able to spend our 7 weekly hours in the office, split between Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9am to 12:30pm. We were given the option to either work in the office or online. Together, the other student and I were able to agree on a schedule that worked for us. Our workspaces were in close proximity to our supervisor(s), which was helpful if we ever needed to ask a quick question. My time at this placement was primarily spent examining recommendations regarding the *Intimate Images and Cyber-Protection Act* (*IICPA*) and researching how these recommendations could be implemented. This report will first provide background information on the *IICPA* and CyberScan Unit before discussing the projects I worked on during my placement.

The first week of my placement was spent familiarizing myself with the *Cyber-Safety Act* (*CSA*), the *IICPA*, and the Report on the Review of the *IICPA*. The *CSA* was the original legislation addressing cyberbullying in Nova Scotia and it was the first Act of its kind in Canada. In 2013, the *CSA* established the CyberScan unit within the Public Safety Division at the Nova Scotia Department of Justice. The roles and responsibilities of the CyberScan Unit include:

- Providing public information and education about damaging online conduct;

- Advising public bodies on policies for online safety and conduct;

- Providing support and assistance to victims of cyberbullying and non-consensual intimate image distribution;

- Providing information to victims of cyberbullying and non-consensual intimate image distribution about contacting police;

- Providing voluntary dispute-resolution service, including advice, negotiation, mediation, and restorative justice approaches; and

- Providing other services and performing other duties as prescribed by regulations.

The *CSA* was struck down in 2015 by the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia in *Crouch v Snell*, 2015 NSSC 340 on the grounds of being procedurally unfair and using overly-broad language that allowed the legislation to infringe upon individuals Constitutional rights. In 2018 the *IICPA* was created to replace the *CSA*. While the *CSA* focused primarily on cyberbullying, the *IICPA* expanded its parameters to address the issue of the non-consensual distribution of intimate images in addition to cyberbullying. The *IICPA* has three main goals:

1. Discourage, prevent, and respond to the harms of non-consensual sharing of intimate images and cyberbullying;

2. Uphold and protect the fundamental freedoms of thought, belief, opinion, and expression, including freedom of the press and communication media; and

3. Help Nova Scotians respond to the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and cyberbullying.

In 2022 the Nova Scotia Department of Justice conducted a review of the *IICPA* and put forward twelve recommendations. These recommendations centered on improving public knowledge of the *IICPA* and increasing the efficacy of services offered by the CyberScan Unit. After reading through the *CSA*, *IICPA*, and the Report on the Review of the *IICPA*, I grouped and ranked the twelve recommendations based on priority. This task determined what recommendations I researched throughout the rest of the term. The two recommendations I focused on were Recommendation 4 and Recommendation 5.

- Recommendation 4: Clarify CyberScan access points by developing and publicizing clear parameters, including hours of operation, services offered, and communication timelines while ensuring CyberScan services are accessible.

- Recommendation 5: Require CyberScan staff to complete training on trauma-informed and restorative approaches when working with victims.

The first project I undertook aimed to address Recommendation 5. Cyberbullying and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images may both be traumatizing events in an individual's life. Consequently, it is important that CyberScan employees understand what trauma is and how they can adjust their practices to become trauma-informed in order to provide the best service to their clients. Researching how to implement Recommendation 5 involved looking into a number of areas. All of my research was taken from public sources available on the internet. Firstly, I had to define what trauma is and provide general information regarding traumatic experiences, types of trauma, and acute and chronic symptoms of trauma. After gaining a solid background on what trauma is, I then researched what a trauma-informed workplace looks like and what steps other organizations have taken towards becoming trauma-informed.

The majority of this project revolved around researching trauma-informed training options available to the CyberScan Unit and evaluating how other Governments and organizations had implemented trauma-informed practices into their workplace. I found that because the effects of trauma are becoming widely acknowledged across the globe, there are an increasing number of organizations and businesses aiming to provide trauma-specific resources. One of the most sought after services is trauma-informed training. I then shifted my focus to examine types of trauma-informed training. This research firstly centered around looking at services offered in Nova Scotia before expanding more widely to evaluate trauma-informed training options offered in other Canadian provinces as well as in other countries.

Overall, I found that the implementation of Recommendation 5 is best accomplished through providing trauma-informed training to all CyberScan employees and I suggested two Nova Scotia-based service providers. However, there are a number of valuable online resources that aim to educate about trauma and trauma-informed practices. These online open-access resources demonstrate that there are meaningful steps that can be taken towards creating a trauma-informed workspace prior to undergoing trauma-informed training.

After completing my research I compiled my findings into a word document and submitted this document to my supervisor. I completed this project and handed it in on February 9, 2023. I received feedback from my supervisor that same morning and was then given instructions for my second project. My second project involved evaluating Recommendation 4. Research into the implementation of this recommendation revolved around reviewing online Departmental access points within the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia websites.

Departments within the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia have approached the issue of online accessibility in many ways. Two accessibility measures that are utilized

throughout Departmental webpages are email addresses and general enquiry forms. The CyberScan Unit, however, has neither of these options. Their website provides only a phone number. Evidently, this is an accessibility challenge that must be addressed.

Only providing a phone number may be a barrier to accessing CyberScan services for a number of reasons. Consider an individual who works full-time. They may not have the opportunity to make a phone call during typical work hours. Therefore, they will be unable to contact the CyberScan Unit until they have the opportunity to take time out of their work schedule to make this phone call. This is especially troublesome if the matter is complex in nature and requires discussing sensitive topics. The same accessibility barrier is faced by individuals who are still in school.

Additionally, young individuals may face unique accessibility barriers when attempting to access CyberScan services. Considering the sensitive information the CyberScan Unit handles, it is reasonable to assume that a young person may feel vulnerable when requiring the assistance of the Unit. They may feel too embarrassed, nervous, or ashamed to explain their situation over the phone to an adult. Therefore, they may choose not to access CyberScan services at all.

Lastly, consider how individuals who are hearing or speech impaired might contact the CyberScan Unit. Such individuals may not be able to access CyberScan services without confiding in, and asking the assistance of a hearing individual. This may compromise their safety and force them to involve others in a sensitive situation where they may not feel comfortable doing so. Alternatively, they might choose not to access CyberScan services at all.

All individuals should be able to access CyberSan services with an equal amount of ease and comfort. The contact points the Unit offers should not favor specific groups, such as hearing individuals or those who do not have full-time jobs. It is important that the CyberScan Unit

reflects the importance of the internet in modern society by improving its online access points. In order to do so, the Unit should look to online accessibility models that have been implemented by Departments and Units across the Provincial Government.

My research revealed that the implementation of a general or specific enquiry form as well as an email address for the CyberScan Unit would be the most effective forms of contact. Hand-in-hand with these measures is ensuring the CyberScan website clearly communicates its hours of operation as well as providing an estimated response time after sending an email or filling out an enquiry form. Together, these measures ensure that online communication is accessible and handled in a timely manner. Further consideration should also be given to the implementation of an automated 24-hour phone line that would connect individuals calling outside of office hours to helpful resources, including emergency services. The implementation of these accessibility measures, together with the phone number and toll free phone number already provided by the CyberScan Unit, will ensure that all individuals are able to access CyberScan services.

I presented these findings in the same format as my first project. I sent this document to my supervisor the morning of my last day of placement on March 23, 2023. Along with the longer document I sent three shorter, one-page briefing notes. Each briefing note condensed my findings on one central topic I had researched. The topics of the three briefing notes were trauma-informed training, access points within the Nova Scotia Provincial Government website, and accessibility measures for hearing and speech impaired individuals. My supervisor and I discussed these documents that morning and he provided me with helpful and encouraging feedback.

Overall, the time I spent at the Public Safety Division was overwhelmingly positive. Prior to this experience I was somewhat nervous about graduating and entering the workforce due to the minimal experience I had working in an office setting. This placement opportunity enhanced my comfortability and confidence in working in an office. I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with DOJ employees and seeing what they do on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, I was able to improve my objective writing skills through practicing Government writing and I had the opportunity to create documents that were unlike anything I had done in my undergraduate courses. Of course, one of the most helpful aspects of this placement was the support and direction from my supervisor, Matthew Richie. His continuous help throughout my projects allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the material I was working on and the role this research plays within the Public Safety Division. His assistance allowed me to create documents I felt proud of, which is sometimes not the case in typical undergraduate courses when there are strict due dates and rigid guidelines. I had the freedom to present my findings in a format I felt comfortable with and he let me take as long as I needed to complete my projects. I never felt pressured to hand in a project that was unfinished or that I was not yet happy with. I feel as though I took a number of skills away from this experience that will prove to be useful in the upcoming years, and I highly recommend this placement to anyone who wishes to gain experience working in a fast-paced office setting.