ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

SIRT | SERIOUS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM

TRUST-CONFIDENCE-INTEGRITY-INDEPENDENCE



Message from the Civilian Director of SIRT

It is a pleasure to present the Serious Incident Response (SiRT) Team's Annual Report for the 2024-25 fiscal year. Having completed my first full year as the Director of SIRT I am excited to share details about the work the team has achieved.

Throughout 2024-25, SiRT experienced its busiest year to date. With the expansion of our jurisdiction to officially include New Brunswick we saw the complexity of investigations increase, along with the expansion of the geographic area to be covered by our team. The New Brunswick office was fully staffed, and we have worked together to instill confidence in our work in both provinces. I continue to be impressed and humbled by the professionalism, dedication, and expertise of our team. Our investigators ensure that SiRT investigations are thorough, impartial, and conducted to a standard of excellence.

SiRT provides civilian oversight of police. Understandably, most of the public's attention is on our investigations, however, there is a great deal of important work that happens behind the scenes. As Director I have worked with the team on several important projects over the last year that are helping us to modernize the way we work, improve our communication with diverse communities, become more efficient and accountable, and address resource concerns.

In December 2024 we hired SiRT's first Manager of Strategic Communication & Special Projects. This position monitors and coordinates responses to media inquiries, develops internal and public-facing communications, manages the SiRT website, coordinates community liaison work, assists with policy development and navigating resources available to those affected by serious incidents, as well as overseeing other projects for SiRT.

SiRT engaged an external service provider and made significant progress on the development of our new website, which is bilingual and went live in May 2025. This website will enable greater transparency and searchability, and will permit citizens to access all resources and materials in both French and English.

SiRT recently launched a modern case management software program that has improved and modernized the tracking and management of SiRT investigations.

SiRT has revived the Nova Scotia Community Liaison Committee, which has goals to help with the progression of the community liaison program, assist SiRT in removing communication barriers during investigations, as well as provide cultural, historical and community background and advice that will help SiRT interact with and understand the needs of the people impacted. The committee has representation from the African-Nova Scotian, Indigenous, Muslim, and newcomer communities, and hopes to expand its membership. SiRT is also in the process of developing a similar committee in New Brunswick. For the first time, SiRT engaged community liaisons in a New Brunswick file.

As Director, I am committed to ongoing professional development and ensuring our team is up-to-date on developments in the law and investigative best practices. To that end, 2024-25 saw SiRT's first annual professional development conference, where topics such as sexual assault investigations, judicial authorizations, and mental health and wellness were covered, among others. Training was also taken by investigators on use of force investigations, anti-corruption investigations, and sexual violence. Training is planned for this coming year in areas of cultural competence, intimate partner violence, Taser data interpretation, and more.

Finally, we signed a lease and oversaw the renovations of a new and improved office space that the team moved into June 2025. This new location will increase operational efficiencies.

As Director, I look forward to progressing the work of our team and remain committed to building public confidence in the oversight of police in all communities of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Thank you,

Erin Nauss

Director, Serious Incident Response Team (SiRT)

Table of Contents

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Executive Summary	3
About SiRT	4
<u>Mandate</u>	4
<u>Mission</u>	4
How SiRT Receives Cases	5
Investigative Process	6
Investigations & Statistics	7-9
Mass Cassuality Commission	10-14
Glen Assoun Investigation	15
The SiRT Team	16

Executive Summary

The Serious Incident Response Team, most commonly referred to as SiRT, is the civilian oversight agency responsible for investigating the conduct of police officers in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick when that conduct results in death, serious injury, an allegation of sexual assault or intimate partner violence, or other matters that the Director determines are in the public interest to be investigated.

Throughout the 2025-24 fiscal year, SiRT received 142 notifications from the police and public and conducted 43 investigations.

A breakdown includes:

- 113 police notifications received
- · 29 public notifications received
- 43 investigations conducted: 24 in Nova Scotia, 19 in New Brunswick
- 18 review files^[1] opened: 8 in Nova Scotia, 10 in New Brunswick
- 11 police officers charged with one or more criminal offence
 - 7 in Nova Scotia and 4 in New Brunswick
 - These charges stem from investigations that took place in the 2024-25 fiscal year, with the exception of one charge from an investigation that commenced in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

About SiRT

The Serious Incident Response Team (SiRT) is a civilian led police oversight agency that is responsible for conducting investigations into incidents that involve death, serious injury, sexual assault, intimate partner violence or any matter of public interest that are a result of the actions of a police officer, on or off duty, in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

A serious injury includes:

- fractures to limbs, ribs, head or spine
- burns, cuts, or lacerations which are serious or affect a major portion of the body
- loss of any portion of the body
- · serious internal injuries
- any injury caused by gunshot
- · significant number of stitches
- admission to hospital because of the injury (not including outpatient care followed by release).

When an investigation is complete, the SiRT Director decides if criminal charges should be laid against the officer. A public summary of the investigation outlining the reasons for the decision is completed and posted on the SiRT webpage. When a charge is laid, the case is referred to the appropriate prosecution service.

Mandate

To investigate all matters that involve death, serious injury, sexual assault and intimate partner violence or other matters of public interest that may have arisen from the actions of any municipal police officer or RCMP officer, on or off duty, in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

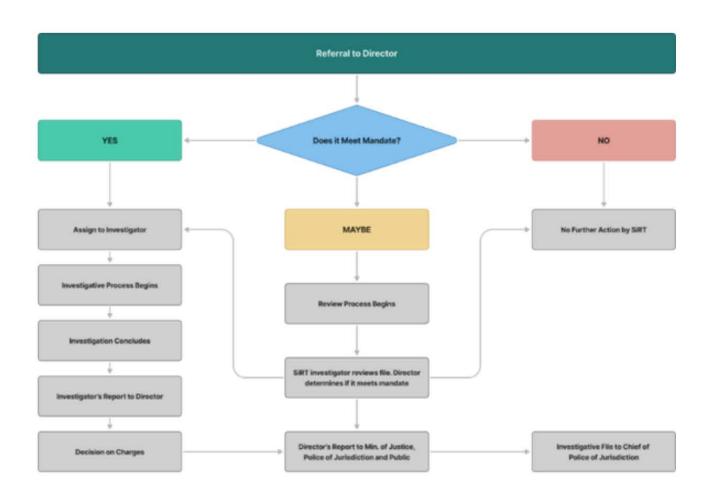
Mission

To ensure the citizens we serve have the utmost trust and confidence in the investigation of serious incidents involving police.

How SiRT Receives Cases

The Chiefs of all municipal police agencies and the head of the RCMP, in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, are required by law to refer all serious incidents to SiRT. Members of the public can make referrals for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick by contacting SiRT directly by calling 1-855-450-2010 (toll free) or emailing sirt@novascotia.ca. SiRT can also launch or take over an investigation on its own or be referred a matter by the Minister of Justice (NS)/Minister of Public Safety (NB).

In every case, it is up to the SiRT Director to determine whether the incident meets the criteria for a SiRT investigation. Incidents can meet the requirements even though there is no allegation of wrongdoing on behalf of the police.



Investigative Process

When an incident is reported to SiRT, the Director determines if it meets the requirements to be investigated by SiRT. More information could be required to make this decision, and an investigator will be assigned to gather necessary details.

Police agencies are required to report incidents to SiRT as soon as they become aware, however, incidents can also be reported by members of the public.

An investigation only takes place if the case fit's the specific criteria for a SiRT investigation. When appropriate, the police agency or members of the public who made the report are notified with the decision.

If an incident meets the mandate for SiRT's involvement, a thorough investigation is immediately started. This can include interviews, gathering evidence, reviewing medical reports, communicating with other agencies, and appointing a community liaison where appropriate.

When the investigation is complete, the SiRT investigator provides a report to the SiRT Director. The Director reviews the report and makes an independent decision if charges should be laid. The Director then issues a public report, and the decision is communicated to the Affected Party and the Subject Officer(s), police agency and the Minister of Justice (NS) or Minister of Public Safety (NB).

If a charge is laid, SiRT turns the case over to the appropriate prosecution service.

News releases are issued for all new investigations, with the exception of those that involve sexual assault, intimate partner violence, or those where it would impact the integrity of the investigation. A news release is issued at the conclusion of every investigation. This information will now all be clearly available and searchable on the SiRT website.

2024-25 Investigations & Statistics

Referrals and Investigations

During the 2024-25 fiscal year, SiRT received 142 incident notifications

- 113 from the police
- 29 from the public

Of those notifications:

- 43 became investigations
 - 24 Nova Scotia
 - 19 New Brunswick
- 18 were classified as review files
 - 8 Nova Scotia
 - 10 New Brunswick
- 53 police referrals did not meet the SiRT mandate for an investigation
 - 30 Nova Scotia
 - 23 New Brunswick
- 28 public referrals did not meet the SiRT mandate for an investigation
 - 18 Nova Scotia
 - 10 New Brunswick

Charges

In 2024-25 a total of 11 officers were charged with one or more offences: 7 in Nova Scotia and 4 in New Brunswick. These charges stem from investigations that took place in the 2024-25 fiscal year, with the exception of one charge from an investigation that commenced in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

SiRT takes every measure possible to complete investigations in a timely manner. However, some investigations are more complex or have extenuating circumstances that result in a longer investigative period.

As of May 13, 2025 there were:

- 10 investigations were active/open from the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- 8 investigations terminated^[2] from the 2024-25 fiscal year.

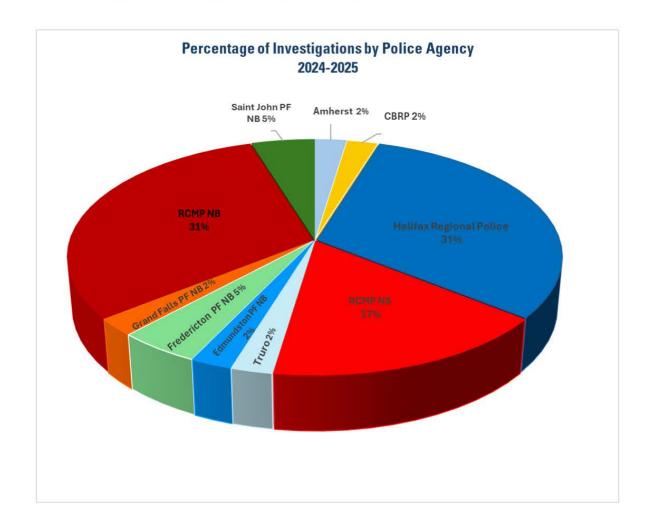
Nature of Investigations & Charges

- Serious injury (14 investigations with 1 ongoing) (NS: 10 NB: 4)
 - 1 officer charged in New Brunswick
 - Aggravated assault
- Death^[3] (6 investigations with 3 ongoing) (NS: 4 NB: 2)
 - 0 charges
- Sexual assault (5 investigations with 3 ongoing) (NS: 3 NB: 2)
 - 1 officer charged in Nova Scotia
 - Sexual assault and choking
- Intimate partner violence^[4] (8 investigations with 1 ongoing) (NS: 5 NB: 3)
 - · 4 officers charged in Nova Scotia
 - 2 assault
 - 1 criminal harassment
 - 1 break and enter and mischief
- Matters of public interest (10 investigations with 2 ongoing) (NS: 2 NB: 8)
 - · 2 Officers charged in Nova Scotia
 - lassault
 - 1 firearms offence
 - 3 officers charged in New Brunswick
 - 1 child internet exploitation and child pornography offences
 - 1 breach of trust and theft
 - 1 voyeurism and child pornography

Intimate Partner Violence

In Fall 2024, the Government of Nova Scotia recognized that intimate partner violence (IPV) is an epidemic in the Province and passed the Nova Scotia Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act. SiRT's mandate includes a requirement to investigate allegations of IPV involving police officers, whether the conduct occurred on or off duty. SiRT takes this part of its mandate seriously. The SiRT team is committed to ongoing training in this area and will be consistently updating is policies and practices as appropriate.

Percentage of Investigations by Police Agency



Mass Cassuality Commission

On March 30, 2023, the Mass Casualty Commission released its Final Report – <u>Turning the Tide Together</u>. Of the 130 recommendations provided, eight recommendations were related to SiRT and they have all been addressed. Areas related to victim resources and SiRT human resources will be assessed and addressed on an ongoing basis.

SiRT has taken the following actions to implement the recommendations:

- Partnered with the Department of Justice to amend SiRT Regulations
- Created, updated and formalized SiRT policies
- Identified areas for partnership within and outside government
- Worked with police agencies
- Worked with the Department of Justice for additional staffing resources

	MCC Recommendation	SiRT Action
1	P. 27 SiRT Investigators and Specialized Services	Complete
2	P.28 (a) and (b) SiRT Control of Crime Scenes and Evidence	Complete
3	P.30 Providing Support to SiRT Witnesses	Complete/Ongoing
4	P.31(a) RCMP Liaison with the SiRT	Complete
5	P.32 SIRT Protocol for Information Exchange with Police Agencies	Complete
6	P.33 Expert Witnesses Retained by the SiRT	Complete
7	P. 34 SiRT Resources	DOJ responsibility/Ongoing
8	P.35 SiRT Reports	Complete

Recommendations and Actions

1. SiRT Investigators and Specialized Services

The Commission recommends that:

Whenever feasible, SiRT should perform its work using investigators and specialized services from an agency separate from the one that employs the officer who is the subject of the investigation. If this is not feasible, the decision to use investigators or specialized services from the police agency that employs the subject officer should be made by the SiRT's civilian director in writing, and at the time when the decision is made, the SiRT director should document the reasons why using resources from the agency that employs the subject officer is necessary.

SiRT Actions:

- Existing protocols have been formalized as SiRT policy to ensure the investigator and/or specialized service is not employed by the police agency that the subject officer is from. If there are extenuating circumstances in which this cannot be avoided SiRT will provide an explanation in writing in their final summary report.
- SiRT has formalized this practice in updated Memorandums of Understanding^[5] (MOUs) with police agencies in both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.
- SiRT has created an inventory of specialized services (e.g. police dogs, forensic identification services, tech crime) so the team can access this when in the field.

2. SiRT Control of Crime Scenes and Evidence

The Commission recommends that:

- The Police Act and Serious Incident Response Team Regulations be amended to clarify that:
 - SiRT has exclusive control over investigations of serious incidents involving police
 - when SiRT assumes responsibility for an investigation, SiRT will immediately assume command of all activities related to the scene, exhibits, investigation, and direction of resources.
- Where a police agency, including the RCMP, requires access to a crime scene or exhibit in order to pursue a parallel criminal investigation, that access should be managed in accordance with protocols set by the SiRT.
- RCMP H Division Operational Manual Chapter 54.1 should be amended to reflect the Police Act and SiRT Regulations, including the above principles.

SiRT Actions:

- Regulations were approved by the Governor in Council on July 2, 2024, via <u>OIC</u> #2024-263.
- The recommended protocols have been formalized as SiRT policy.

3. Providing Support to SiRT Witnesses (complete and ongoing)

The Commission recommends that:

SiRT establish or revise its procedures to ensure that witnesses and other individuals affected by serious incidents involving the police are provided with updates about the progress of the SiRT investigation and are referred to available support services.

SiRT Actions:

- SiRT investigators work to keep Affected Parties and/or their family and Subject Officers reasonably informed of the status of the investigation.
- SiRT has implemented policy and has met with the Victim Services Division of the
 Dept of Justice and with the Office of Addictions and Mental Health to identify
 where there are supports available. The new webpage will be updated to include a
 list of resources available and direct links to more information about each of them.
- A new Manager of Communications & Special Projects position has been filled to help identify resources.

4. RCMP Liaison with the SiRT

The Commission recommends that:

- RCMP H Division policy should be amended to provide that all RCMP communications and coordination with SiRT regarding an ongoing investigation must occur through a designated RCMP liaison, who must be a commissioned officer and trained in the responsibilities and expectations of this role. SiRT should also implement a corresponding policy requiring its investigators not to communicate about ongoing SiRT investigations with members of the subject police agency besides that agency's designated liaison person.
- The only purpose for which any other RCMP member may communicate directly with SiRT about an ongoing investigation is when giving a statement or witness interview, which must be coordinated through the RCMP Liaison Officer

SiRT Actions:

- SiRT has formalized this into policy.
- SiRT has formalized this practice in updated MOUs with police agencies.

5. SiRT Protocol for Information Exchange with Police Agencies

The Commission recommends that:

- SiRT should adopt a protocol that it will not meet with members of the police agency that employs a subject officer to exchange information about an ongoing investigation.
- SiRT should also adopt a protocol that sets out how information will be exchanged when two agencies are engaged in parallel criminal investigations. Any such exchange of information must occur in writing.
- While a SiRT investigation is ongoing, SiRT should not share information with the agency that employs the subject police officer(s) for the purposes of an internal investigation conducted by that agency, including internal conduct or workplace investigations.

SiRT Actions:

- SiRT has formalized this practice in policy, MOUs with police agencies, and a template letter for sharing information has been developed and must be approved and signed by the Director before issuing.
- The Police Act is clear that no information should be shared with the agency that employs the subject(s) of an investigation until the conclusion of the SiRT investigation. SiRT complies with the Police Act.
- SiRT hosted a cross-Canada meeting of similar organizations and a subsequent meeting with the RCMP National Headquarters and "H" and "J" Divisions to ensure its practice in this regard is consistent.

6. Expert Witnesses Retained by the SiRT

The Commission recommends that:

SiRT should adopt written protocols for the identification and retention of experts in its investigations. These protocols should reflect Canadian legal principles with respect to the reliability and independence of expert witnesses.

SiRT Actions:

 A policy has been developed and formalized for the identification and retention of expert witnesses.

7. SiRT Resources (complete and ongoing)

The Commission recommends that:

The Province of Nova Scotia should undertake a review of SiRT's budget and staffing complement to ensure it can fully exercise its investigative responsibilities and perform its public accountability function and maximize its contribution to enhanced confidence in policing in Nova Scotia.

SiRT Actions:

- An FTE was provided, and a Manager of Communications & Special Projects was hired in December 2024.
- SiRT is happy to work with the Department of Justice as it reviews resourcing and is engaged in ongoing communication with sent officials in both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

8. SiRT Reports

The Commission recommends that:

- Section 9 of the SiRT Regulations should be amended to adopt the language set out in section 34 of the Ontario Special Investigations Unit Act. This amendment will ensure that SiRT's public reports in instances where no charges are laid provide sufficient information to allow the public to understand why SiRT has reached its conclusion and to evaluate that outcome.
- Starting immediately, all SiRT reports in which criminal charges are not laid against the subject police officer should be drafted with sufficient detail and analytical transparency to allow the public to understand and evaluate the director's reasoning and conclusions.

SiRT Actions:

- Regulations were amended and approved by the Governor in Council on July 2, 2024, via OIC # 2024-263.
- Before the amended regulations, reports were drafted with additional details.

Glen Assoun Investigation

In 1999, Glen Assoun was wrongfully convicted and sentenced for the murder of his ex-girlfriend, Brenda Lee Anne Way.

A new trial was ordered after the Federal Minister of Justice concluded there was a reasonable basis that a miscarriage of justice occurred. After spending almost 17 years in prison, Mr. Assoun was released from prison. In March 2019, a Nova Scotia court acquitted Mr. Assoun and he received a compensation settlement from the federal and provincial governments.

On September 8, 2020, then Minister of Justice and Attorney General for Nova Scotia, Mark Furey, asked SiRT to investigate whether there was criminal misconduct by the police during the period before the appeal of Glen Assoun's conviction.

In March 2021 SiRT engaged the Independent Investigations Office of British Columbia (IIOBC) to investigate this matter to ensure independence from Nova Scotia. Unfortunately, on April 18, 2023, the IIOBC provided notice that due to significant workload and resource issues it would not be able to continue its investigation.

Since that time SiRT has been actively communicating and working to find an external oversight agency to conduct this investigation.

SiRT recognizes that this is a matter of national importance and an independent, transparent criminal investigation is necessary and important to ensure that the administration of justice is upheld.

Serious Incident Response Team Members

Director

Erin Nauss, located in Nova Scotia. The Director cannot be a current or former police officer.

Assistant Director

Rebecca Butler, located in New Brunswick.

4 Investigators (Full Time)

Each with over 25 years of criminal investigation experience.

3 Investigators (Full-time Seconded)

They only answer to the Director while seconded:

- 2 seconded from RCMP (one in NS and one in NB)
- 1 seconded from Halifax Regional Police

Manager of Business Administration Manager of Communications & Special Projects

Administrative Assistant (VACANT)



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