



healthy minds  
COOPERATIVE

# CHANGING YOUR NAME IN NOVA SCOTIA

Paperwork, Patience, and Self-Advocacy



# Acknowledgements

This guide was written by Jaden Silva, with the support of Healthy Minds Cooperative (HMC). The words, experiences, and knowledge are his, and HMC is grateful to Jaden for his initiative and the work put into creating this guide.

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# Introduction

So, you've decided to legally change your name. Congratulations! This is a huge step for those who decide to take it and, as you might imagine, it can be more complicated than it might seem on the surface. Often you will find that organizations may not have much experience in assisting someone through the name change process; I had to teach more than one person how it worked while they were helping me. This is the info I learned while going through the process – I hope it can help you along your journey!

## **To change your name in Nova Scotia, you must:**

- Be born in Nova Scotia, or**
- Have lived here for at least three months before the application.**
- Have written parental consent if you are under 16.**
- Not appear on the National Sex Offender Registry.**



*I'd like to add some things based on my personal experience, starting with the fact that you don't ever have to legally change your name. I debated it myself at the beginning when I was still in high school, but eventually I realized I was living as Jaden everywhere anyway so I might as well take the plunge. It didn't end up happening as fast as I originally planned, due to safety issues, which is another thing to keep in mind: there is no one timeline. Everybody's transition is different and the same rule applies to stuff like getting your name/sex marker changed. I ended up changing my F to M ages before my name change was complete. It's smart to have a plan, but it's wise to recognize that life probably won't go according to it, and that's okay.*

# CONTACTING VITAL STATISTICS

If you are **only** changing your sex indicator (M, F, X) then you can download and fill out the relevant form here:

## 16 Years or Older

<https://beta.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2-573/change-sex-indicator-16-years-age-or-older-en.pdf>

## 15 Years or Younger

<https://beta.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2-573/change-sex-indicator-16-years-age-or-older-en.pdf>

If you are changing your sex indicator and your name, or only your name, you must contact Vital Statistics and request the application form you require. You can request it by email or receive a physical copy in the mail; simply contact them and tell them you would like to legally change your name. Along with the application itself, you will receive instructions on how to submit and pay for your application.

Phone: 902-424-4381

Toll-free: 1-877-848-2578

Fax: 902-450-7313

vstat@novascotia.ca Maritime Centre, 5th Floor South  
1505 Barrington Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

Mailing address: PO Box 157, Halifax, NS, B3J 2M9

*When I emailed Vital Statistics (because of course I wasn't making a phone call when I was a teenager) it was only a few lines. I explained that I was transitioning and that I wanted the name change application form. You don't need to disclose personal information like that, but I chose to do so because it made it feel more real to me at the time (I was freshly hatched at that point). Within a few business days they emailed me back with the form attached as a PDF. I printed it off, filled it out, and the rest is history!*



# Fingerprints

If you are over 12, you must be fingerprinted as part of the name change process. This can be done at an RCMP station, Commissionaires Nova Scotia, or municipal police department, typically by appointment. Ask if there will be a fee before you go; they may only take cash. You will need to bring photo ID as well.

If you are under 19, you must send the fingerprints back to Vital Statistics yourself. The name change application will contain instructions on how to do this. If you are over 19, it is the responsibility of the organization who took the fingerprints to send them in. **BRING THE “FINGERPRINTING” PAGE(S) OF THE APPLICATION WITH YOU** in case those who took your fingerprints are not familiar with the process.

*I got my fingerprints done at the RCMP detachment in Bridgetown, NS. I made an appointment over the phone and was told to bring \$25 in cash because they didn't accept cards. The days of rolling fingers in ink are over, or at least they are in Bridgetown; they had a machine that scanned my fingers all at once. Basically a giant version of the sensor that unlocks a smart phone. It sounds high tech but if you have sweaty-palmed social anxiety get ready to do it a few times before it'll get a good enough scan. I had to remind them a couple times that, because I was over 19, they had to send my prints away for me. They would have mailed them to my house, which would not have been ideal, especially if the wrong name happened to appear on the envelope. Be vigilant with things like that if your safety is at risk*



# Cost

Fees associated directly with the name change application and additional documentation can be found in detail here:

<https://beta.novascotia.ca/change-your-name-or-name-your-spouse-or-child>

The minimum you can expect to pay to have your name changed is estimated below:

<b>Name change application</b>	\$165.70 (this includes one new birth certificate)
<b>Fingerprinting</b>	\$25.00
<b>Driver's License</b>	\$25.10
<b>Postage/Printing</b>	\$5.00 (Vital Statistics, CRS, NSLSC, etc.)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$220.80</b>

# Completion of Name Change

Once the application is sent off, it may take three months or longer before you hear back. Don't be afraid to contact Vital Statistics and request an update on their progress; sometimes things fall through the cracks and they are happy to help.

When your name change application is accepted and approved, you will receive a letter and a Certificate of Change from Vital Statistics, along with a new birth certificate and any other additional requested documents. Keep these certificates in a safe place and get ready to make some copies!



*Yes, I actually made a phone call. I know! The Vital Statistics website had said that they were experiencing delays for quite some time, but in general a name change application should not take more than a few months to process. I had waited almost six before I got irked enough to call them, and it turned out they had just switched to a different data system and my application had gotten put in the wrong folder. The person on the phone was very apologetic and put me in a priority folder instead, and within a couple weeks I had an official envelope in the mail. So, if you feel that you've been waiting too long, don't be afraid to check for an update. You're not nagging!*



# CRA

Official info on changing your name with the CRA can be found here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/about-your-tax-return/should-you-tell-cra-about-your-change-name.html>.

The Canada Revenue Agency must be notified of your completed name change. You will need to get "certified true copies" of your Certificate of Change and your new birth certificate. This basically means that someone official made the copies and stamped/signed them to confirm they are genuine. Bring the originals to a commissioner of oaths (a person appointed by the Minister of Justice to administer oaths), lawyer, or notary public to get certified true copies made of them. Legal aid offices and law firms offer these services and this can also be done at Service Canada. Some do not require an appointment but it doesn't hurt to call ahead and check. Bring photo ID.

Once you have the copies, send them along with a brief letter you have written to the CRA containing your old and new names, your SIN, and your signature to the following address:

Sudbury Tax Centre  
Post Office Box 20000, Station A  
Sudbury ON P3A 5C1

*I had this done at the Service Canada office in Yarmouth, NS. This one would have been straightforward if I had just brought the originals with me the first time, but I thought I'd make life easier for them and bring copies I had made at home. Don't do this. **They need the original documents so they can certify that they, and the copies being made, are genuine.** So I had to go home and get the originals and come back. At least they were apologetic about the formality!*



# Driver's License

To change your name (and sex indicator) on your driver's license, visit a Registry of Motor Vehicles or Access Nova Scotia. Since you need to fill out a form, you may want to make an appointment to ensure you have time. Bring your Certificate of Change and your new birth certificate (they will make copies of both for your file). There is a fee of \$25.10 that can be paid in cash, cheque, or card. Your new license will be sent to you in the mail.

If you have a car registered in your name, bring your registration with you as well; you may or may not be required to update it along with your license.

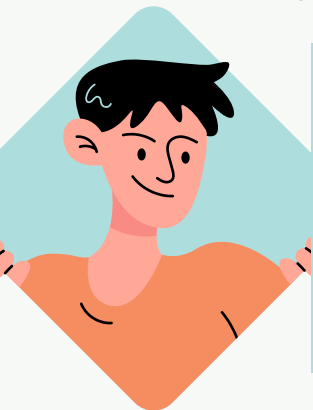
*This was no issue at all, I was in and out of the RMV within twenty minutes. They did have to confer with each other about how to change my name on the computer, but they figured it out eventually and were very good sports. When I received the letter about my registration running out, I updated it online and received my new registration (with my new legal name on it) with no extra work required. Nice when things go smoothly for a change.*



# Health Card

To update your health card, call the MSI Registration and Inquiry Office at 1-800-563-8880 (toll free within Canada) and explain you have changed your personal information. They will give you an email address to send copies of your Certificate of Change and birth certificate to, or a physical address if you prefer paper mail, as well as your health card number to identify you. You will receive your new NS health card in the mail. Note that this does not necessarily change your info with private health clinics as they likely use a different system than Nova Scotia Health.

*This one was kind of weird, because I emailed them first (trying to limit phone calls, as always) with my information and attached copies of my documents but received no response for a week. So, I called them and they told me to do just what I had already done, i.e. email them my health card number and proof of my name change. I essentially responded to my own email saying "as per our phone call, here is my stuff" and they responded promptly telling me I would receive my new health card in a few weeks.*



# Social Insurance Number

You can update your SIN online, in person, or by mail. To do it online, have your certificates and photo ID ready and follow the steps on this website:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/sin/apply.html>

To do it by mail, make copies of the required documents and send them to the following address:

Service Canada  
Social Insurance Registration Office  
PO Box 7000  
Bathurst NB E2A 4T1  
Canada

To do it in person, visit your nearest Service Canada Centre. You may want to make an appointment beforehand, which can be done online. If you have all the appropriate documents, you may be able to complete your SIN update then and there. If not, or if you use the other methods, you will receive a letter in the mail stating that your SIN is now associated with your new name. The number itself will remain the same.

# Banking

Every bank is different, but they will want to make copies of your Certificate of Change and new birth certificate. You will likely need to sign a form to change the names associated with your account(s) and card(s). A teller can provide this for you, so you don't need an appointment, but you will need to be in person to sign the form(s).

In my personal experience, the bank has been the most difficult part, so this may take multiple trips and signings before the name is actually updated. Be stubborn – you have the right to your name!

*At time of writing this, my name is still not fully changed through my bank even after signing papers twice to do so. It's changed everywhere, I think, except in emails for things like e-transfers and card alerts. So if those are relevant to you, make sure you ask your bank if they are updated with the new name. Also, note that some bank apps allow you to change the "preferred name" that appears when sending money electronically. Always explore the settings!*



# Voter Registration

If you would like to change your name with Elections Canada, contact them to request their name change form. They will send it by email, fax, or paper mail. Fill out the form and send it along with copies of your Certificate of Change, birth certificate, and proof of address (e.g. driver's license). Their methods of contact are listed here:

[www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=cont&document=index&lang=e](http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=cont&document=index&lang=e)



*Note that the CRA may contact Elections Canada about your changed name if you allow the CRA to share demographical information with them. This is something you consent to when you file your income tax. I personally viewed this as the least important part of the list, so if it eases your anxiety to procrastinate one, this is a great candidate as it may very well do itself for you.*

# NSLSC

If you have a student loan, you must send a copy of your Certificate of Change in the mail. If you have an updated piece of photo ID, it doesn't hurt to send that along too. Send these to the following address:

National Student Loans Service Centre  
P.O. Box 4030  
Mississauga ON  
L5A 4M4

You won't receive anything informing you of a successful change, so if you don't hear back from them check your account on the National Student Loans Service Centre website. If it's been a month and it still shows the old name, contact them using one of the means listed on this page:

<https://protege-secure.csnpe-nslsc.canada.ca/en/secure/contact/contact-us>

*I did a lot of these at the same time just to limit trips to the post office (they still got very familiar with me by the end of all this), and this one snuck under the RADAR. I sent it off, almost forgot about it, checked the website, and it was changed. If only they could all be so straightforward, eh?*

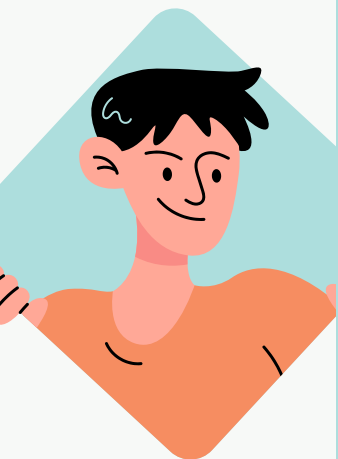


# other

Those are the most important places to change your name, but there are plenty others too. Everyone's list will look a little different, and this is far from exhaustive; you might find that random ones crop up months or even years after your name change is official. That's why it's best to get the big ones out of the way first!

- Work (paystubs, T4, etc.)
- Work benefits/retirement plan
- School
- Pharmacy
- Hospital records
- Dentist/eye doctor
- Insurance (car, health, etc.)
- Service providers (phone, internet, etc.)
- Credit score company
- Will and testament
- Other loans
- Passport
- Public transit pass
- Library card
- Online wallets
- Paypal

# Patience



*In total, it took just over a year from when I sent my name change application off to finally getting everything updated. It may seem overwhelming at first, but just take it one piece at a time and on the other side you'll barely remember the different steps. Someday your Certificate of Change will be forgotten in a safe place (or, hey, frame it and hang it on the wall, why not?) and your name will be as matter-of-fact as any other aspect of your life.*

*I hope this is helpful in some way. Dealing with red tape and paperwork can be frustrating, but know that it's worth it. You are worth it.*

# About the Author

Howdy folks!

Thank you for taking the time to read this all the way to the end. My name is Jaden Silva and I am a queer trans man (he/him) born and raised in Mi'kma'ki. I've only ever lived in rural towns, so I know what it's like to be the only transgender person in the room, the school, the ten-mile radius, etc. If you feel alone in this journey, please know that you are not. There are other small towns with other trans folk who are just as confused as you are, I promise. They don't teach any of this stuff in school!

Navigating these systems can be overwhelming, especially when the people who work inside them don't know how to support you. I live with anxiety and trust me when I say contacting all these different organizations was not something that came easily to me. I absolutely hated making phone calls and nearly broke out in hives if I heard one ring. I had never sent a letter (unless you count to Santa) before starting this process. I had never stepped foot behind the counter of an RCMP office. I had no idea what "certified true copies" were. I didn't know what it meant to get something witnessed, or what the difference was between Access Nova Scotia and Service Canada, or honestly anything else about this stuff. I learned it all as I went along because, short of Googling every individual avenue, there was no one place to find this information. So I hope I've gathered it in a way that makes sense, even if it's far from comprehensive.

I first printed off my name change application in 2018, my final year of high school. I'm still ticking the last boxes as I write this guide, almost six years later. There were big chunks of time in there when I didn't put any effort toward this change at all, when I honestly thought it would never happen. But I'm older now and I've learned that, although some of us are lucky enough to have vocal support systems, at the end of the day we need to speak up for ourselves. I know how to send letters at the post office now, isn't that neat?

I still hate phone calls, though.

