

MORE HEALTHCARE, *FASTER*



Government Business Plan

Budget 2023-24


NOVA SCOTIA

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Budget 2023-24: Government Business Plan
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Introduction

The government's plan revolves around meaningful impact and purposeful change in three main areas: Actions for Healthcare; a Healthy Economy; and Healthy Communities. Solutions in these areas will lead to well-being and sustainable prosperity for all Nova Scotians. To deliver them, we are thinking differently and acting boldly. We must predict, plan for and capitalize on global trends bringing change, volatility and opportunities. Growth is necessary. Systems must shift to accommodate change and new technology, and successfully deliver services that meet today's needs. The economy must expand through higher productivity and prosperity to realize the quality of life we want. Innovation and increasing the size of our labour force are critical.

Healthcare and paying for healthcare are top priorities. We will focus on the health and well-being of Nova Scotians through access to primary care, rural healthcare and emergency room stabilization, and solutions that reduce wait times and improve patient access and flow, mental health and long-term care. In order to pay for healthcare, we need more people trained to deliver the skills needed in our Province. Nova Scotia will increase the population, particularly with workers in in-demand fields like healthcare. The More Opportunities for Skilled Trades program, which eliminates the provincial portion of income tax on the first \$50,000 of earnings for skilled workers under 30 years of age, will also attract much-needed trades to our area and bring young people home.

A better future requires shifting sectors, higher productivity and the infrastructure society needs today and for the digital age. More than that, we must distribute the benefits of growth amongst Nova Scotians. We will find significant opportunities by capitalizing on our advantages in the green economy, encouraging small business development and increasing local consumption and trade of local products. Public infrastructure like hospitals, schools and housing clearly need modernization and adaptation. In the fourth industrial revolution, we need digital infrastructure to keep pace and compete internationally.

Growth, however, is only good if it happens sustainably. The Province must also maintain, and wherever possible, enhance its assets rather than deplete or degrade them. We must balance health, well-being and opportunity with the integrity of our environment and a safe, supportive society. In the end, everything is interconnected, and our actions will create the future for all Nova Scotians.

Actions for Healthcare

Our number one priority is the health of Nova Scotians. The healthcare system is a significant component and healthcare reform is at the centre of our plans. The government will not rest until Nova Scotians have the care they need and deserve, and healthcare workers feel supported and respected. We have a real plan to produce immediate improvements while working on widespread, systemic course corrections that fundamentally alter the system to meet our current and future needs. Data, the voices of Nova Scotians and our healthcare providers drive our plans.

Action for Health is Nova Scotia's multi-year roadmap to world-class healthcare. It includes six core solutions to create an efficient, modern, equitable and respectful health ecosystem. To deliver the plan, we are taking a whole-of-government approach. Integrated, system-wide solutions and investments will change the trajectory of our health system and make an impact in the short and long term.

We are doing more and going faster to tackle core issues, including recruitment and retention, access to care, outdated infrastructure and other long-standing and more recent problems in our hospitals. We are also making much-needed investments in long-term care and addictions and mental health.

In 2023-24, priority actions include improvements in the following:

- Primary healthcare and virtual care.
- Emergency health services.
- Workforce strategies.
- Surgical access.
- Cancer care.
- Patient flow.
- Access to addictions and mental health care services.
- Home and community care.
- Long-term care.

We are addressing shortages and launching efforts to take better care of healthcare workers and encourage retention. Our provincial strategy guides future spending decisions on healthcare infrastructure and equipment as we continue to make generational investments. Emphasis is on health equity as we strive for greater access, diversity and inclusion. Digital solutions will modernize the patient experience and enable the expansion of new forms of care.

A Healthy Economy

Our plan for economic growth is built on the fact that the global economy is constantly shifting. Population and productivity are key factors. People drive economies.

The transformation of Nova Scotia's economic system starts with a larger, more diverse workforce, more young people and those with the right skills to meet our needs. We are greeting more newcomers and creating welcoming communities to help fill labour needs, create new businesses and add to the vibrancy of our province. Talent scarcity is an emerging issue, and we are working to narrow the skills gap. Job polarization and digitalization are changing the in-demand skills. With a focus on healthcare, Nova Scotia is training, recruiting, and retaining the workforce our province needs and preparing for the emerging economy.

This year, we will invest more in immigration programs and settlement supports and see the implementation of the new More Opportunity for Skilled Workers tax rebate program to attract and retain young, skilled trades workers in key sectors.

Our economic growth plan prioritizes four areas:

1. Increasing productivity: Combining a larger workforce with innovation gains and investments in technology, we will make more products and deliver more services. Education and training, work-integrated learning, apprenticeship modernization and micro-credentialing are crucial to upskill for higher-paying jobs.
2. Growing strategic sectors: Nova Scotia has strengths in specific industries. We will grow our share of high-paying, high-growth, high-productivity sectors, allowing our economy to expand and Nova Scotians to earn more.
3. Nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship: Innovation is the wellspring of economic growth, and entrepreneurs in high-growth firms often drive innovation. Innovation is a key to competitiveness.
4. Increasing local prosperity: Local prosperity means all communities experience growth and prosperity and participation opportunities are geographically equitable. This year we will launch the Nova Scotia Loyal program.

In 2023-24, we are increasing focus on the following:

- Research, development and innovation.
- Work-integrated learning opportunities.
- Micro-credentialing.

The government is also concentrating on available safe and affordable housing, crucial for Nova Scotians' well-being and to attract new residents. To meet the housing crisis head-on, we are:

- Investing and building now.
- Developing a provincial housing strategy.
- Creating a student housing plan.
- Reducing red tape and approving more projects faster.
- Using provincial land and designating particular areas for development.
- Undertaking housing preservation and transformation initiatives.
- Providing tools to municipalities.

Healthy Communities

Population and economic growth are the foundation of thriving communities and a province that benefits everyone. To ensure the benefits are realized, growth must be managed in a sustainable way. Sustainable and inclusive economic and social growth are not trade-offs. They are a deeply intertwined, powerful dynamic that reinforce each other.

To help address aging infrastructure and promote better services and a moving economy, the 2023-24 Capital Plan will be the largest single-year investment in the Province's history. It will advance plans to modernize more healthcare facilities faster, repair and build new schools and improve roads and highways across Nova Scotia. More Nova Scotians will gain better access to high-speed internet this year, as Build Nova Scotia reaches its 97% target by the end of 2023.

Our Climate, Our Future: Nova Scotia's Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth builds on the goals in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act. In 2023-24, and over the next few years, it will guide our work to:

1. Respond to the impacts of climate change: We will increase our capacity to prepare for climate change, restore natural areas and ecosystems to minimize impacts and expand the data available to improve planning.
2. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions: Nova Scotia has the most aggressive targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction in Canada. To achieve them, we will phase out coal and home heating oil, increase renewable energy use, reduce energy demand and create cleaner transportation options. New requirements for carbon pricing will hold industries accountable as we fast-track the transition to net-zero and climate-resilient buildings.
3. Seize opportunities for a clean, sustainable economy: Moving toward a sustainable, circular economy will bring opportunities and better jobs. The government will help Nova Scotians develop the needed skills, help communities act and encourage clean technology. Pursuing green hydrogen generated from offshore energy will position Nova Scotia at the forefront of responding to global demand.

Social sustainability works alongside economic and environmental sustainability. It demands equity of opportunity and better outcomes for everyone. As obstacles impacting marginalized and vulnerable people are removed, participation is enabled, growth is unlocked, and Nova Scotia becomes a more resilient, better place to live.

Early childcare and education systems play influential roles. We are moving toward more affordable and inclusive systems that boost student success and well-being, dismantling long-standing barriers affecting achievement and addressing challenges caused by recent learning interruptions. This fiscal year brings:

- Work to implement \$10 per day (on average) childcare (by 2025-26).
- An Early Learning Curriculum Framework and Educators' Guide.
- An Advanced Practitioners' Program for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and other professional development opportunities.
- Workforce strategies including standardized health and retirement benefits for ECEs.
- An enhanced focus on literacy, reading and writing.
- A physical activity framework.
- Treaty education.
- Professional learning opportunities for teachers.
- More options in skilled trades and other subjects like environmental studies.

Transformation of the systems that help children, women, equity-deserving groups, those seeking justice and those in need is essential as we strive to create an inclusive, equitable, anti-racist and supportive province. Our approaches will be more comprehensive, holistic and integrated, forming the foundation for modern systems that carry us into a better future. Work in 2023-24 includes:

- A supportive housing model.
- Preparation of Indigenous and African Nova Scotian Justice Action Strategies.
- Prevention of human trafficking and domestic and sexual violence.
- Advancement toward an accessible province by 2030.
- An Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy.

Conclusion

There is urgency to dramatically shift our systems to meet today's needs, modernize outdated practices, respond to the increasing frequency of disruptions and end performance challenges. Achieving this kind of transformation is not easy; but we are committed. We have clear priorities and will do whatever it takes to get it done right.