



**BUILDING NOVA SCOTIA,  
*FASTER***

*BUDGET 2024-25*

**Government Business Plan**

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Budget 2024-25: Government Business Plan  
Finance and Treasury Board  
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## Introduction

Nova Scotia's strategic plan for 2024-2025 builds on the accomplishments of the last two years. It strengthens the foundations on which we can realize the benefits and address the challenges created by growth and global economics as we transform healthcare, sustainably grow, and become more resilient - faster.

Budget 2024-25 makes significant and essential investments in healthcare and the components of wellbeing including housing and homelessness and its causes, better and more equitable economic opportunities and the cost of living, our environment and climate change, and safety and belonging in our communities.

Government feels the urgency to do more and do it quickly. This year we will strategically invest in healthcare, growing our skilled workforce, a stronger economy, and a myriad of programs and initiatives that make life better for working families, seniors, children and vulnerable Nova Scotians who need our empathy and help. Investments and work in 2024-25 will position our province for successful, sustainable growth and a healthier future faster.

Healthcare transformation remains in focus in 2024-25. Action for Health is Nova Scotia's roadmap to a world-class healthcare system that provides more care, faster. We have made significant investments in the right places and put the people, programs, beds, buildings, equipment, data and systems in place to deliver the care Nova Scotians want and need. The work is difficult, but improvements are tangible.

Over the last year, Nova Scotians have faced the consequences of climate change, higher costs brought on by global inflation, and the benefits and challenges of rapid population growth. As the economy continues to expand, we will move fast to contribute to the right economic and wellbeing conditions. Infrastructure builds from homes and hospitals to roads and schools will support the economy, meet the needs of a growing population, and address the realities of more frequent and severe weather events. We will continue to expand our skilled workforce and ensure more Nova Scotians are prepared to capitalize on better opportunities that earn a higher standard of living. Support for strategic sectors, local entrepreneurs and businesses will enable them to drive job growth, higher productivity and economic expansion.

Budget 2024-25 reinforces the quality-of-life Nova Scotians enjoy. Investments that offset increases in the cost of living will help individuals, families, children and seniors. By addressing the social determinants of health and the root causes of complex challenges, protecting our environment, and preparing for the impacts of climate change, we will make ourselves and our communities more resilient and well positioned to build Nova Scotia faster.

## Healthcare

Transformation of the health system in Nova Scotia remains a top priority for this government. We are taking a whole-of-government approach to deliver on the commitments in Action for Health, a multi-year (2022-26) roadmap to world-class healthcare. We are doing more and going faster. All commitments outlined in Action for Health are underway and making progress through integrated, system-wide solutions and investments that are changing the trajectory of our health system.

We are getting Nova Scotians the care they need faster when and where they need it. More than 60,000 new primary care appointments are available each month because of enhanced ways to access care. Mobile care, Urgent Treatment Centres, Urgent Care Centres, Community Pharmacy Primary Care Clinics, and Pharmacy+ have created new paths to care. New digital solutions, including YourHealthNS, are making it easy, convenient and faster for Nova Scotians to find resources, care and their own health information. Coverage of sensor-based glucose monitors and expansion of the insulin pump program in 2024-25 will improve care for those with diabetes. Budget 2024-25 also continues to invest in virtual care, expand the services Nova Scotians need most and launch innovative approaches. Digital solutions, state of the art equipment and the construction of leading-edge healthcare facilities will improve care and make receiving it faster and safer.

## Better Health

All Nova Scotians have the right to good health and better outcomes. Sustained and co-ordinated action will make the biggest difference and we are partnering with communities to empower Nova Scotians to improve our collective health and wellness.

Government is creating conditions that support wellbeing, raising the bar on equity, and making primary care available in more ways so Nova Scotians have less need for emergency and acute care. By reducing the cost of healthy foods, increasing childhood physical activity, focusing on early years education, addressing addictions and mental health, closing the gap on health inequities, adding more community-based services, and empowering independence for seniors we are building healthier, more resilient communities.

The Health Equity Framework, the first of its kind in Canada is being implemented as part of the Nova Scotia Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy. The framework contains actions to make healthcare more equitable, improve cultural awareness among the healthcare workforce and to enhance access to care and patient experiences.

## Transforming the Health System

Over the past two years we have opened more training seats, welcomed professionals who want to move here, and offered incentives that encourage practitioners to work longer and expand their healthcare practices. We will continue this work while treating patients and practitioners with respect.

More health care professionals mean better care, faster. New agreements with better compensation and benefits for physicians, paramedics and nurses, and our commitment to hire nursing graduates will help attract and retain the providers our province needs. In 2024-25, the government will implement a provincial workforce strategy based on a coordinated approach to health human resources, more training seats and innovative training solutions. Since 2021, we have added approximately 400 nursing seats across the province and established a Physician Assistant program at Dalhousie University. Moving forward, we will increase recruitment efforts in target markets. Improved compensation and incentives, less administrative burden, and the integration of internationally educated healthcare providers into our communities are initiatives that will spearhead our approach.

In cancer care, additional community oncology appointments are helping patients receive chemotherapy and supportive care closer to home. Nova Scotia is the first place in the world to have access to new radiation therapy machines with enhanced precision. The new Lung Screening Program will save lives by preventing lung cancer and finding it earlier. A province-wide digital Cancer Information System will connect all centers and disciplines and transform oncology. With these investments, Nova Scotians can expect streamlined care, shorter wait times and improved outcomes.

Digital-era solutions deliver care to patients in more convenient ways and empower healthcare providers to work more efficiently. One Person One Record (OPOR) will create a patient-centered health system with seamless access to information regardless of where patients receive care. Healthcare services, resources and information are now more publicly accessible via the new YourHealthNS mobile application, which helps users navigate the healthcare system.

## Access to Care

Innovative approaches to care are leading to new builds and renovations and changing how hospitals and long-term care spaces help people. Healthcare facility builds are well underway and will expedite world-class care. New investments in long-term care beds, spaces and staff continue in 2024-25, while we dedicate more funding to programming that helps seniors stay in their communities longer.

Primary Care is the foundation of the health system. We are committed to getting Nova Scotians the care they need faster and closer to home by adding, and strengthening, collaborative practice teams.

Budget 2024-25 makes investments in and expands emergency services. To use the right resource at the right time, we have added new roles such as Physician Assistants and Clinical Associates in emergency departments. We are hiring more Nurse Practitioners and adding Waiting Room Care Providers and Patient Advocates. A new Emergency Medical Responder role will free ambulance capacity, reduce wait times and allow paramedics to focus on emergency calls. Non-emergency transport vehicles are ensuring local ambulances are available for emergency responses and a new EHS LifeFlight airplane is reducing travel time and keeping ambulances in communities. Beyond the emergency department, technology and streamlined processes are helping the entire hospital system run smoothly.

Our commitment to getting people the surgeries they need faster carries into 2024-25. Nova Scotia surgeons have performed more operations than ever before resulting in 25 per cent shorter wait lists. New hospital equipment and centralized booking systems are improving access to diagnostics and surgery as digital referrals reduce wait times and administrative burden.

Two years ago, the government made a commitment to Nova Scotians – to provide universal access to mental health and addictions. As we work towards this commitment, we are expanding and enhancing the services that exist today and tapping into the skills and expertise in our communities, the private sector, and universities and colleges. Service integration is matching people to the care they need from the right provider at the right time.

## Economy

Population growth means more people to make goods and deliver the services that Nova Scotians and the world need. Our economy is growing, and we are moving faster to build homes, hospitals and schools, grow our skilled workforce, and create conditions in which businesses thrive.

### Housing Faster

Nova Scotians are experiencing a tight housing market and higher costs. We need more housing now. Over the last few years and into 2024-25, the government is making historic investments in public and student housing and clearing the way for the private sector to build more homes faster.

Government is implementing the Provincial Housing Plan - Our Homes, Action for Housing. We will build more housing faster and innovate with programs like the Secondary and Backyard Suite Incentive Program and through community partnerships. To alleviate pressure created by higher costs, government is offering rent supplements and more non-market housing to low-income households. Nova Scotians of all incomes will have an affordable place to call home.

Major capital investments in hospitals, schools, roads and bridges, and broadband and cellular service will give communities across the province the infrastructure needed to grow sustainably. Budget 2024-25 includes the elimination of the 10 per cent provincial HST on new construction of multi-unit housing. This change will increase rental housing options and contribute to affordability and economic growth.

### Work & Affordability

To build our province and help more Nova Scotians access higher wages, the government is making it easier to enter the skilled workforce. Training in new fields, more direct paths, financial and learning support, lower barriers, accelerated training and inclusion will get more people working in the needed skilled labour fields faster. We will fill gaps by approving more Provincial Nominee Program and Atlantic Immigration Program applicants and promoting recruitment and labour mobility for healthcare professionals in key occupations as well as encouraging more diverse participation in these fields. Since 2022, for example, the More Opportunity for Skilled Trades (MOST) provincial income tax refund has returned the provincial income tax paid on the first \$50,000 of income earned by younger workers in eligible skilled trade.

Government will build safe, fair, diverse, and welcoming workplaces faster. Worker protections, ensuring businesses can find or re-skill the right employees, and guiding those trained outside of our province as they find their place in the labour force are areas of attention.

## Strategic Sectors

High productivity sectors offer Nova Scotian workers fulfilling opportunities and higher wages, as well as stronger economic growth potential for the province. Nova Scotia's access to substantial amounts of low-cost, clean wind power that producers can transform into green hydrogen poises our province to become a world leader. Government is targeting offshore wind energy leases that together produce five gigawatts of wind energy by 2030. Greater access to renewable energy will make life more affordable over time and keep Nova Scotia a healthy, vibrant place to live.

Government's work to foster other strategic sectors like ecological forestry, life sciences, information technology, ocean and marine sectors, agriculture and fisheries and aquaculture as well as attract investment from leading companies continues in 2024-25. In agrifoods, we will also encourage consumption of local food and assist local businesses as they expand their operations and extend the growing season.

Supporting these and all our sectors and industries as they mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change is at the forefront of our work.

## Competitiveness & Productivity

Innovation, productivity, entrepreneurship and international competitiveness are also essential drivers of economic growth. In 2024-25 we will identify new opportunities and initiatives to boost productivity in all sectors. Government has made significant investments in connectivity to support these goals. Today, broadband and cellular services are stronger. Expansion continues in Budget 2024-25.



In collaboration with private sector partners, Nova Scotia is building a strong entrepreneurial culture supported by the infrastructure and conditions businesses need to grow and create jobs. We will welcome more newcomer entrepreneurs who will help build the culture as existing business owners retire and sell. Government will also encourage innovation by attracting greater private sector capital investment through, for example, the Capital Investment Tax Credit, the Innovation Equity Tax Credit and the efforts of Invest NS. Through the Community Economic Development Fund, the promotion of local producers and manufacturers, and a consistent approach to development, the province will grow international competitiveness in all sectors and areas of our province.

## Communities

Nova Scotians in all occupations and walks of life are finding it harder to purchase goods and services – some essential – without financial hardship. Higher costs put extra pressure on households and on the health of our communities. Nova Scotians also experienced the devastating impacts of climate change in 2023.

In 2024-25 we will continue to build vibrant and healthy communities that enjoy a high quality of life and a shared sense of belonging faster. Budget 2024-25 offers solutions to Nova Scotia's most complex challenges. We are taking action to ease cost-of-living pressures, improve safety, protect our environment and our wellbeing and make our communities more resilient. Significant investments over the last two years, and new commitments, will make a positive impact on the lives of Nova Scotians.

## Cost-of-Living

In addition to training our workforce for higher paying jobs and helping students cover the cost of post-secondary education, the government will help all Nova Scotians stretch their household budgets and support seniors and low-income earners with living costs.

Budget 2024-25 introduces indexation of tax brackets and credits such as the basic personal amount. This adjustment will protect Nova Scotians from inflation which can push their income into higher tax brackets and increase their taxes. Indexation will keep more income in the pockets of Nova Scotians. The tax savings almost all Nova Scotians see from indexation will become larger every year from 2025 on. This will be the largest tax break in the province's history – and will save Nova Scotians about \$150-\$160-million in taxes – by 2028.

As Nova Scotia takes control of its energy future and implements sustainable solutions, the government has proposed to assume \$117-million of Nova Scotia Power's fuel adjustment mechanism balance. If approved by the UARB, this will spread rate increases over 10 years to reduce the financial burden on Nova Scotians. The Heating Assistance Rebate and upgrade and retrofit programs are protecting our environment and making heating and energy costs more affordable.

Seniors can use the Seniors Care Grant to pay for heating and other household services, while the Property Tax Rebate for Seniors reduces municipal residential property taxes and frees up income for other needs. The new Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE) pilot will pair seniors with experts who identify where in their homes and daily activities they need assistance. Professionals will then help make changes. Programs like these make life more affordable for those on fixed incomes and help them stay in their homes.

The school breakfast program, recent increases in the Nova Scotia Child Benefit and reductions in fertility and surrogacy all ease the financial pressures families feel. To help more, this fall we will begin rolling out a new school lunch program. To date, government has reduced the average cost of fees for licensed and funded child care by 50 per cent. Further implementation of the Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement will make early learning and child care accessible and inclusive. Government will add more child care spaces to licensed, funded early learning and child care centres and family homes and the Nova Scotia Before-and-After School program in 2024-25. Inclusive school programs and services will foster student well-being, academic achievement and life-long success.

In October 2023, Nova Scotia increased the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. In April 2024 it will again increase to \$15.20 per hour. Investments in community transportation including environmentally friendly vehicles, fare assistance, and bigger service areas are helping more people get where they need to go for less. New food network pilots, increases in funding to food banks and food security organizations, and investments in family resource centres providing food and literacy programs are also providing relief.

## Homelessness & Complex Social Issues

There are complex reasons for homelessness and those experiencing it need our empathy and support. In 2024-25 we will work toward our target of 1,085 new supportive housing units to bring the provincial total to 1,516 by 2027-28. Nova Scotia's first tiny home community, winter camping and recreational vehicle and trailer hooks-ups and new 24-hour and temporary shelters will offer options to get out of the cold. To prevent evictions, government will provide monetary assistance, while more housing and support workers help people find and keep housing. In 2024-25 these and other efforts will support individuals and families in crisis and help them transition to permanent housing.

Homelessness is a multi-dimensional issue. Housing is one cause but there are others including poverty, income, lack of health and other kinds of support, domestic violence and personal circumstances such as mental health challenges, addictions and traumatic events. Government and community organizations are working together to provide mobile outreach street health, food and mental health and addictions support. We will continue to invest in harm reduction initiatives like managed alcohol programs, sobering and drop-in centres and overdose preventions sites in 2024-25.

Building on recent work including more support for vulnerable and equity deserving Nova Scotians, Budget 2024-25 makes substantial investments in Transition Houses and Women's Centres. The redesign of the Foster Care system and fewer children in temporary emergency arrangements will help more of the next generation get a good start in life. Updates to Employment Support and Income Assistance, including a new Disability Supplement will create a program better able to meet the needs of clients.

Government is committed to addressing inequity through plans and responses that address racism, ableism, sexism, and gender-based violence including, for example:

- Access by Design 2030
- Accessibility Plan 2022-25
- Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy
- Disability Support Program
- Response to the Human Rights Review and Remedy for the Findings of Systemic Discrimination Against Nova Scotians with Disabilities

- Canada-Nova Scotia Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence
- Standing Together
- Recommendations from the Mass Casualty Commission
- Response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

It is also carefully considering the recommendations from the Desmond Inquiry.

## Resilient Green Communities

As Nova Scotia's climate shifts, we can expect more frequent and severe weather events like the wildfires and floods of 2023. Government's action on climate change is guided by Our Climate, Our Future: Nova Scotia's Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth. We will make more progress on the 68 actions in the plan as we reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect our coast and better prepare for the impacts of climate change. This year, we will continue to work toward the legislated goals in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, make more buildings net zero ready, climate resilient and low carbon, increase energy conservation and efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Governments at all levels will work together and build capacity to better respond to extreme weather events while implementing programs that help those impacted. Government will begin developing Next Generation 911 to improve public emergency communications as well as make capital investments in emergency preparedness, mitigation efforts and infrastructure upgrades.