



# Government Business Plan

for the fiscal year 2011–2012

## Message from Premier Darrell Dexter

I am pleased to present the 2011–2012 government business plan. This document outlines year two of our multi-year plan for making life better for Nova Scotia families.

When this government came to office in 2009, the province was on an unsustainable financial path, facing a deficit of \$1.4 billion and a debt of \$16 billion in three years.

Our multi-year plan for change is getting the province back to balance so that we can protect the vital services that Nova Scotians want and rely on.

The plan has four goals:

1. Better health care for you and your family
2. Creating good jobs and growing the economy
3. Helping people make ends meet
4. Ensuring government lives within its means

Our plan is on track, and will secure Nova Scotia's future as a good place to live, work, do business, raise a family, and retire with dignity.

Sincerely,

Darrell Dexter  
Premier of Nova Scotia



## Introduction

Making life better for Nova Scotians begins with a smart, strategic, steady approach that builds on the province's strengths and harnesses its opportunities. Inherent in such an approach is the need to overcome the challenges that impede progress.

Budget 2011–2012 builds on the province's plan for change that makes life better for Nova Scotia families.

Government's Business Plan for 2011–2012 focuses on four main priorities:

- Better health care
- Creating good jobs and growing the economy
- Helping people make ends meet
- Ensuring government lives within its means

The work of government departments will be strategically aligned with these main priorities.



## Better Health Care for You and Your Family



Emergency room problems have plagued Nova Scotia's health-care system for many years. The problems are well known—long waits; emergency room closures; frustrated emergency room doctors, nurses, and paramedics; inadequate treatment of the frail elderly; and a public that has lost confidence in the system. This government made a commitment to address these problems, to keep emergency rooms open, to reduce waits for patients, and to provide better care for families.

Better Care Sooner will:

- improve access to health-care professionals
- make emergency care more streamlined and patient-centred
- improve care for seniors, people with mental illness, and those with other complex needs, and
- increase the use of the 811 nurse line and 911 for emergencies

Highlights of the work that will be undertaken by the Department of Health and Wellness and its partners in the district health authorities include:

- Opening Collaborative Emergency Centres in at least four Nova Scotia communities this year
- Improving health care for seniors
- Supporting hospital and community health-care projects across the province
- Focusing on health promotion and prevention through the creation of a childhood obesity strategy and the renewal of the Tobacco Strategy
- Investing in the 811 nurse line
- Developing a mental health strategy

# Creating Good Jobs and Growing the Economy



Nova Scotians want a province where their children can grow, thrive, and prosper, where young families can stay and settle, and where newcomers from around the world can make a new start.

Improved productivity and competitiveness are key to growing Nova Scotia's economy. jobsHere makes the most of our province's advantages—our people, resources, and geography—through three priorities to improve growth:

1. Learning the right skills for good jobs
2. Growing the economy through innovation
3. Helping businesses be more competitive globally

The jobsHere plan is creating good jobs and growing a strong, more sustainable economy—another way government is making life better for Nova Scotia families.

Many government departments are involved in the implementation of jobsHere because of its importance in reshaping the economy of the province.

Highlights of the work to be undertaken in the year ahead include:

- Encouraging investment in skills development and certification
- Strengthening apprenticeships by modernizing the curriculum, particularly in skilled trades with rapidly evolving technology

- Investing in the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, to help approximately 500 more learners over the next three years
- Expanding the recognition of prior learning
- Helping the voluntary sector to support planning and management, and build human-resource capacity
- Releasing the Natural Resources Strategy
- Continuing work on the 10-year Agriculture Strategy
- Continuing implementation of Nova Scotia's first five-year highway improvement plan

## Helping People Make Ends Meet



Nova Scotians deserve the chance to build a future for themselves and their families that is full of opportunity.

Budget 2011 will build on the province's plan for change by helping families, students, and seniors make ends meet. Key government departments such as Community Services, Health and Wellness, and Labour and Advanced Education will work with partners and stakeholders to deliver on this ambitious agenda.

# Ensure Government Lives Within Its Means

Nova Scotians want their province to have the solid financial footing needed to deliver quality programs and services now and in the future. They also want their government to manage their tax dollars the way they must manage their own household budgets—prudently, and responsibly.

Experience shows that across-the-board cuts—that go too far, too fast—don't work. Instead, a careful, deliberate effort to reduce government spending is the best course for Nova Scotia.

Government-wide spending reductions have resulted in a savings of \$170.0 million for the upcoming year, adding to the \$54.3 million saved last year.

Government's spending-restraint efforts have resulted in two successive years in which departmental spending has been lower than estimate.

This year government will:

- Hold program expenses at 2010–2011 levels. Overall program expenses will be up \$323 million from 2010–2011, entirely due to reinstatement of university funding
- Pave more and pay less by operating chip seal and asphalt programs for road maintenance, which will result in more competition and better prices
- Reduce debt-servicing costs
- Ensure government gets value for money by negotiating better terms in all contracts
- Further streamline its activities to reduce costs and improve services
- Expand the professional services policy, that to date has achieved \$7 million in savings

- Expand the ban on March madness spending, as well as other expenditure controls, to all government agencies and boards
- Implement a change and innovation fund to encourage efficiencies
- Continue to review departmental programs for effectiveness and affordability

## Conclusion

The resources of government are aligned to support the priorities that matter most to Nova Scotians: better health care, creating good jobs and growing the economy, helping people make ends meet and ensuring government lives within its means. In the year ahead, these priorities will provide the overarching framework for the work of government.

