

Back to Balance

All Nova Scotians shared in the challenge of returning our province to balance. They will begin to see the rewards as the HST is reduced by one percentage point in 2014 and another in 2015. Our province is now on a more solid, stable foundation. From here we can look forward to a more prosperous future and begin to capitalize on the unprecedented opportunities ahead.

We have balanced the budget by:

- saving \$14.8 million in government and school board procurement
- holding salary increases below previous levels and saving \$200 million
- ending March Madness and end-of-year spending
- putting the 2010–2011 surplus toward the province's net debt
- encouraging innovation and savings across government
- reducing the size of the civil service
- reining in growing health-care spending and reducing administrative costs by merging services
- working with school boards and universities to reduce administrative costs

Better Care Sooner

Not long ago, Nova Scotia's health-care system was in a place where emergency room closures and long waits were the norm. Families were waiting too long to see a doctor. Seniors had little support to stay at home. People living with mental illness lacked support. Not enough attention was being paid to helping people stay healthy. Our Better Care Sooner plan is making major improvements in all of these areas and Nova Scotians are beginning to get the support they need to enjoy happy, healthy, and productive lives.

Highlights of the Better Care Sooner plan for the year ahead include:

- expanding dental coverage for children
- funding insulin pumps and supplies for youth up to age 19 and supplies for insulin pumps for people under the age of 25

- addressing childhood obesity through continued investment in Thrive!
- opening Collaborative Emergency Centres in more Nova Scotian communities this year
- expanding newborn screening to include cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia, and eight additional conditions
- supporting programs that help seniors live independently in their homes and continuing emphasis on lowering costs for generic drugs
- funding Nova Scotia's first ever mental health and addictions strategy, Together We Can, and co-locating children's mental health residential and daytime services
- creating a joint IWK-Capital Health eating disorders program
- supporting Nova Scotians with addictions so they can receive treatment closer to home
- increasing funding for tobacco cessation

Creating good jobs

Nova Scotians want to live and work at home in a province they love. They want their kids to have even better opportunities right here at home.

jobsHere is helping hundreds of small businesses get started, expand into new markets, make productivity upgrades, and train employees for jobs now and in the future. Opportunities like shipbuilding, the Maritime Link, unprecedented offshore exploration commitments, and a renewed, innovative forestry sector are helping Nova Scotia turn the corner toward a brighter future.

In 2012, Nova Scotia reached record high employment levels. By making smart, strategic investments in 2013–2014, we will continue to create good jobs and grow Nova Scotia's economy.

Highlights of the jobsHere plan for the year ahead include:

- reducing tax rates for the majority of small businesses for the fourth consecutive year, to the lowest level in 20 years
- cutting red tape and bureaucracy for small business by introducing single-window, streamlined access to programs

- funding for new equipment, clean technology, software, and hardware for businesses
- providing support for 6,300 jobs by investing in roads, schools, and hospitals
- holding Nova Scotia's first Innovation Summit
- investing in opportunities in shipbuilding, forestry, fisheries, and manufacturing
- continuing to match unemployed Nova Scotians with employers and jobs
- supporting businesses to invest in training, skills development, certifications, and hiring students
- supporting apprentices through in-class and online training opportunities
- investing in trade and international competitiveness programs
- investing to help more seniors stay in their homes
- increasing the maximum property tax rebate by \$200
- continuing the Affordable Living Tax and Poverty Reduction credits
- investing more in the Graduate Retention Rebate Program and student assistance, and maintaining Nova Scotia's student bursary program to keep tuition at or below the national average
- supporting vulnerable communities to reduce the risk of flood damage
- providing more Nova Scotians with safe, affordable housing options

Making life more affordable for Nova Scotians

Nova Scotians all shared in the challenge of getting the province back to balance. Our plan for 2013 will put more money back into the hands of families, seniors, low-income Nova Scotians, and students. Fiscal discipline will allow government to reduce the HST by one percentage point in 2014 and another in 2015.

Highlights of the coming year include:

- funding insulin pumps and supplies for youth and expanding dental coverage for children
- establishing children's centres so families can access support services for young kids
- waiving ambulance fees for Nova Scotia's most vulnerable citizens
- exempting children's clothing, children's diapers, children's footwear, books, and feminine hygiene products from HST
- ensuring that seniors continue to pay less for generic drugs, and protecting them against increases in Pharmacare premiums and co-payments
- exempting more of the province's low-income seniors from paying provincial income tax, and returning a greater portion of income tax to more seniors

Kids & Learning First

Nova Scotia children deserve an education system that puts kids and learning first. Kids & Learning First is the province's plan to help students succeed. It will continue to provide proper support for teachers, parents, school boards, communities, and children.

In the coming year we will increase our focus on the essential early years, the basics and building safer, better schools. As well as reduce class sizes and provide more support for special education.

Highlights of the Kids & Learning First plan for the coming year include:

- increasing per student funding to \$10,762, the highest level in a generation
- putting 170 new teachers into classrooms, ensuring that no permanent teachers lose their jobs, and enabling school boards to hire 25 new program support staff
- establishing children's centres and giving children and families more opportunities for after-school recreational, educational, and cultural programs
- capping class sizes for grades primary to three at 25 students
- building new schools in Amherst, New Glasgow, south Dartmouth, Bible Hill, Bedford, and Liverpool, modernizing schools in dozens of communities across the province, and protecting funding in areas most affected by declining enrolment

- tripling the number of students in small and rural communities who can participate in courses through online virtual classrooms
- helping students succeed in math through curriculum improvements
- doubling the number of schools offering skilled trades, and introducing a new course, Manufacturing Trades 11, that will help prepare students for upcoming shipbuilding jobs
- creating a safer environment for students who are victims of bullying
- expanding the ability of teachers to assess the developmental health of their students
- increasing the maximum property tax rebate by \$200 to help low-income seniors stay in their homes
- investing an additional \$6 million in the Graduate Retention Rebate Program for new graduates
- helping people purchase their first home and put down roots through the First Time New Home Buyers Rebate
- continuing support for the Film Industry Tax Credit

Putting more money back in the pockets of Nova Scotians

All Nova Scotians have worked hard to get our province back to balance. They deserve to see rewards. Tax measures for 2013–2014 are designed to put more money back in the pocket of the average Nova Scotian; support low-income earners, young people, and new graduates; and help seniors, families, and small businesses.

Highlights of the tax changes for the year ahead include:

- providing almost \$132 million in HST rebates for children’s clothing, children’s footwear, and children’s diapers, as well as books and home energy, to help families make ends meet
- returning \$73.7 million to low-income families through the Affordable Living Tax and Poverty Reduction credits
- reducing tax rates for the majority of small businesses for the fourth consecutive year, to a 20-year low
- exempting more low-income seniors from paying provincial income tax, and returning a greater portion of income tax to more seniors

Conclusion

Nova Scotians have worked hard to improve the finances of our province. Our government has worked to ensure that support is maintained for priority areas, including better health care, education, good jobs, and growth in the economy. Nova Scotians rightly expect government to live within its means and want to see life made more affordable for families. With these priorities in mind, Nova Scotia is positioned for not only a successful year, but a successful future.