

# SOLUTIONS FOR NOVA SCOTIANS



## HOPE FOR HEALTHCARE

The care your family needs, when they need it. A real plan to recruit doctors and speed up surgery wait times.

## DIGNITY FOR OUR SENIORS

- › More beds › More staff
- › More respect

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## BETTER PAY CHEQUE GUARANTEE

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A **compassionate plan** where mental health care is treated like physical health care. No bill.

# TIM HOUSTON

A father of two, an accountant and Nova Scotia's next Premier. Why Houston's '**Solutions**' will jump start our economy and fix a healthcare system in crisis.

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# HOPE FOR HEALTH

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Need**

Listening to Nova Scotians from Glace Bay to Digby, the most common area of concern we hear is with respect to our healthcare system. First among all concerns is the lack of access to care. Access to care, for them, means either having a family physician (or a primary care provider), who is able to see them and provide timely access to the care they need (e.g. surgeries, consultations, etc.) when they need it.

As of April 1, 2021, over 69,000 Nova Scotians were registered on the waitlist for a primary health provider. We understand that there are likely many more who have given up and are not registered in the system.

What's more, waitlists for some specialties have become potentially fatal. As of September 30, 2020, the wait time for a consultation for an amputation in Halifax was 455 days, with an additional wait time of 364 days for the actual surgery, for a total wait of approximately 819 days to receive the necessary treatment.

It takes approximately 269 days for a consultation on a knee replacement in New Glasgow, with an additional wait of 757 days for the actual surgery, totaling 1,026 days to receive the necessary treatment. As we endure the pandemic, these wait times are increasing.

The current wait time for a consultation for brain surgery in Halifax is 192 days. Following the consultation, the average wait is 195 days, resulting in an approximate 387-day waiting period for brain surgery.

We are fortunate to have incredible healthcare providers in Nova Scotia. Once in the system, the care you receive is generally second to none. Unfortunately, those healthcare providers are often overwhelmed, overworked, micromanaged and they lack the resources necessary to ensure more people have access to that top notch care when they need it.

The supports needed range from more staff to the ability to make decisions at a local level, to less administration. We need to improve the freedom to make decisions on a local level, with less bureaucracy and administration interrupting the flow of delivery of healthcare.

### **Access**

As noted, access to timely care is one of the largest barriers in our health system. The research clearly demonstrates the importance of early detection, treatment and continuity of care.

Too frequently, the only option for Nova Scotians is their local Emergency Room ("ER"). ERs have become a venue for treatment of non-emergent issues, from prescription refills to treating the common cold. ER doctors often feel that they are essentially the family doctor to those they treat.



It is necessary to ensure that all Nova Scotians have access to primary care, locally, conveniently and when they need it. Good and timely care will result in savings for the health system. This means offering modernized access to those who don't have it.

Telehealth or virtual care for everyone on the waitlist for a primary health professional is not a replacement for a primary care practitioner but is a placeholder to ensure that every Nova Scotian has immediate access to a form of primary care.

Another aspect of access to care that has been amplified in recent years, is the waitlist for surgeries. Some individuals are living in pain, awaiting surgery to improve their joints, while others worry about the potential exacerbation of conditions as a result of extended delays.

Presently, the hours that Operating Rooms ("ORs") are open are generally limited to business hours, with the exception of emergent surgeries. The only way to address the backlog is to open our ORs to allow surgeons to do their work outside of normal business hours. Once we are making the most efficient use of our ORs, we will start to see significant improvements in the waitlist.

### **Recruitment**

While we need to focus efforts on recruitment and retention of our current health professionals, we have to fix the system if we want to fix the doctor shortage. It is cheaper and easier to keep those we have than it is to recruit new.

To begin to repair the system, we need to make Nova Scotia an innovative place to practice medicine. This means putting the proper resources in place to set doctors up for success. We must empower and motivate them to work here. We can do this by:

- giving them the ability to make decisions on a local level;
- providing more competitive and fair wages and payment models; and
- ensuring a better quality of life, particularly in rural areas, where too often everything falls on their shoulders.

In short, we need to ensure our doctors have a respectful and healthy work environment. Let's decrease the burnout with a focus on respect and modernization and make this a place where people want to be doctors.

Communities know their needs best. Team leads should be appointed in each health region, who are accountable for establishing recruitment and health plans for their respective areas.

Hundreds of Nova Scotia students leave Canada to further their health education. With some medical schools, return to Nova Scotia can be straightforward. However, too many students face barriers such as minimal residency seats for internationally trained students and minimal study supports.

We can never lower the standards expected of our health professionals; however, we can give those students the same supports provided to locally-trained students.



Too many of our students are training and staying in the United States, simply because the cost of entry into the Nova Scotia system can be prohibitive and more supports are in place for those students in the US. Once they enter that system, the salaries are frequently higher, and they begin to build a life there. We shouldn't make it hard for them to come home. Of course, at the same time, these physicians will always have to meet our Canadian standards.

### **Modernization**

Virtual care is here to stay and is the way of the future for medicine. It will also act, in the immediate future, as a temporary mode of access for those who do not currently have any. At the same time, it does not replace all in-person care. While many ailments can be diagnosed over the phone or video, others will always require in-person consultation. We need to establish a concentrated effort on recruiting primary care providers to Nova Scotia to ensure we have the right care, for the right patient at the right time and in the right place.

This also means expanding the current virtual care framework to allow specialists to see patients virtually. Often, a patient may be required to travel from Yarmouth to Halifax for a consultation. When possible, these consultations could move to a virtual venue.

This may allow specialists in areas of the Province with shorter waitlists to assist, assess and consult with more patients much sooner. At a minimum, this will lead to more efficient use of time in situations where, for example, there is a last-minute cancellation. Instead of that spot going unused, a new patient can be slotted in on a moment's notice using technology.

Expanded specialties for Telehealth will assist with post-operative care as well, particularly for individuals who may be less mobile. Having access to a physiotherapist over their phone or computer from their living room will help with patient accountability and monitoring patients' progress.

### **Chronic Illness**

Approximately, 5% of Nova Scotians consume 70% of our health dollars. Much of this spending and care is in relation to chronic illnesses: diabetes, heart disease, COPD, frailty, obesity, arthritis, etc.

Band-aid solutions to our health system do not work. Simply treating the illness, as opposed to working to address the root cause and focus on prevention, is no longer working. Our current healthcare crisis shows that.

Nova Scotians recognize that our health system is not meeting our needs. We are spending \$4.6 billion on health for fewer than one million people. That is more per person than Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, but we are not achieving the results they are achieving. Our administrative costs are 35% higher than the national average and are the highest in the country.

The health system is stressed. To address that congestion, we need to expand in-home care for patients with chronic illness. The INSPIRED program is a proven model that we need more of. INSPIRED focuses on individuals with COPD and means teams of professionals visiting

patients in their homes. For every \$1 invested, this program saved \$21 in the traditional system. Fewer visits to emergency rooms and fewer nights spent in hospital means fewer dollars spent. Better care saves lives. Better care saves money.

We need to examine what is working in Nova Scotia and expand on our successes. Expanding a program like INSPIRED to other chronic illnesses will help to reduce the burden on the primary health system. It will free up family doctors' offices, ERs and hospital beds for those with more acute needs. It will also assist in reducing the progression of these illnesses to a point of acuity.

### **Prevention**

A sturdy foundation is built on strong, long-term health practices. This means having the tools to live a healthy lifestyle.

We must place a heavy focus on early learning about healthy living in our schools. The importance of an active lifestyle must be instilled at a young age and consistently throughout their education. Physical fitness should be mandatory in our schools each year.

Similar to the importance of physical activity, our students should learn about healthy and balanced diets and they should be required to participate in healthy cooking courses prior to graduating from high school.

Learning to eat and exercise properly will help to form the foundation of a healthy lifestyle as our students become adults and start living on their own and making their own decisions.

For adults and seniors, we have to work with our communities to establish more walking/fitness programs. The Province should sponsor healthy cooking programs in conjunction with local grocery stores and restaurants. Ready access to dietitians within communities to give Nova Scotians the ability to address their nutritional needs and questions must be established. This can be accomplished through the expansion of virtual care for more remote and rural communities.

While nutrition-based health concerns have surpassed those health issues related to tobacco, over 20% of Nova Scotians continue to smoke. Tobacco is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Canada. An estimated 45,000 Canadians die each year as a result of smoking. Countless others live with chronic illness. The cessation of smoking is a key ingredient to living a healthy lifestyle, reducing the need for healthcare and saving overall costs on our system.

### **Administration**

One of the biggest problems in our health system is that it is now far too centralized, to the point that the Nova Scotia Health Authority ("NSHA") in Halifax has provided very little autonomy outside of Halifax to our four health zones.

In discussions with health providers, they frequently express frustration with the inability to make appropriate decisions on a local level.

In addition to the problems around centralization, there are too many managers within the system who are practicing stale management tactics.

We need managers with a broader range of expertise, and we need fewer managers. There appear too frequently to be redundancies in the work being done. We need regular financial reporting and human resources metrics. We need an NSHA that measures outputs. We need to establish limitations on position vacancies.

We can establish this by optimizing the administration, based on the needs of the patients and the communities, to recognize different frames of expertise and backgrounds, more diversity and empowering patient-driven decision-making.

The status quo is failing Nova Scotians. Change is needed.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Our goal should be to make Nova Scotia the healthiest province in the country based on the regular health report cards issued by the Conference Board of Canada. It starts with:

- Establishing access to a telehealth/virtual care system for any individual on the waiting list for a primary care health provider;
- Opening our ORs beyond Monday to Friday 9-5, to clear the backlog of surgeries;
- Having a focused recruitment strategy around internationally trained graduates;
- Expanding virtual care to more healthcare providers;
- Focusing on prevention in school and in communities;
- Investing in chronic illness treatment and prevention; and
- Restoring local decision-making by restructuring the administration at the NSHA.

### 1. Improved Access to Primary Health Providers

Our acute care system was not designed – and cannot handle – the needs of Nova Scotians today. Patients are telling us the system must change, doctors are telling us the system must change, families and communities are telling us the system must change.

Nova Scotians deserve more than 19th century tools for 21st century conditions.

A PC government believes that every Nova Scotian should have access to primary care. We recognize that recruiting all the primary care practitioners we need is not something that can happen overnight. However, while we are doing the work to recruit, we must provide care to those in need. This will allow patients to have immediate access to care. It will also help to alleviate some of the pressures on our acute care system.

We are committing to providing those Nova Scotians on the waitlist with immediate access to a virtual care service. We are seeing the growth of programs like “Maple” in the private sector. These services provide online access to primary care practitioners and offer virtual care and prescriptions. They allow subscribers access to care from their own homes via their phone, tablet or computer - anytime, 24/7.

Functionally, the Province would issue a tender for this service, and, within 60 days of issuing that tender, would offer telehealth/virtual care to anyone without a primary health provider while we go about the hard work of redesigning the primary health system to meet the needs and desires of the patients.

### **Costs**

The initial cost of showing up in an ER is approximately \$250. The cost of a visit with a family doctor is approximately \$35-\$60. The cost of a telehealth visit is in the range of \$40-\$50.

With over 50,000 individuals on the waitlist for a primary care practitioner and estimating that half of those individuals would use the telehealth service at least twice per year, the cost to the Province of giving everyone access to primary care would be: \$2,500,000 [25,000 individuals x 2 uses x \$50 per call].

The costs on the system of not receiving the diagnosis and treatment you need when you need it are not quantifiable based on publicly available information. However, based on the data we do have on preventative programs like INSPIRED, there are massive savings in early detection, prevention and treatment.

Giving Nova Scotians timely access will result in better care.

## **2. Addressing Surgical Waittimes**

One reason for our large surgical backlog is a lack of operating room (OR) time and recovery beds, which are too often held by patients who are actually ready for discharge. Presently, our ORs are generally only being used during business hours, Monday through Friday and are used outside of those hours exclusively for emergency surgeries. You would never invest in equipment and then purposely not maximize its use and not use it to full capacity and the health system shouldn't either.

We need to let our surgeons operate.

A PC government will cut out the inefficiencies related to the operation of our ORs and allow them to run outside normal business hours (Monday to Friday, 9-5) until the backlog has been addressed.

We need a goal that is more than just shortening the waitlist. Our goal will be to meet the benchmark standards for wait times, within 18 months of being elected.

To accomplish this goal, work will need to be done to ensure that any new hours are consistent with the terms and conditions of the Collective Agreement with the Nurses' Union and with other support services, such as environmental service providers (cleaners, porters, sterilization).

In an effort to be accountable and transparent to Nova Scotians, they should be able to see how fast the wait list is moving and how efficiently the system is being used. We will commit to establishing a website that tracks, in real time, the number of surgeries taking place in a day, what types of surgeries, and how each day's numbers impact the waitlist.

## **Costs**

The cost of early treatment is much less than the cost of late treatment where diseases progress as a result of not having timely access to care.

The majority of cost to the Province of opening up our ORs will be related to personnel costs. Most surgeons are fee-for-service, and should remain as such, particularly in the Central Zone. Fee-for-service drives efficiency and helps with demand. Outside of the Central Zone, particularly in more rural areas, there may be a need for salaried specialists and surgeons, based on the demand and needs of the community.

For the purposes of costing this service, our considerations are based purely on the fee-for-service model. We have approximately 352 active surgeons in Nova Scotia. The average salary is in the range of \$300,000. This salary is for time spent operating as well as consultations and patient follow up.

We presume that not all surgeons will want to change their hours. Our assumption is that around 40% (being 140 surgeons across different specialties) would be interested in a change of hours. If each of these 140 surgeons were to increase their OR time by 25%, they would see pay increases of approximately \$75,000 annually [ $\$300,000 \times 25\%$ ]. The total cost of increasing physician hours would be in the range of \$9,356,550 [ $\$75,000 \times 140$  less payroll taxes of \$1,143,450].

Similarly, there would be an increase in the cost of staffing the ORs with nurses and other necessary personnel. For each surgeon, we will assume a need of three supporting practitioners, for a total of 420. Assuming average wages of \$75,000 and increased working hours of 25%, the total approximate cost of increased staffing would be \$7,017,413 [25% of \$75,000 (\$18,750)  $\times 420$  less payroll taxes of \$857,587].

Additionally, there is an entire support team related to every surgery. There are porters, cleaners, recovery personnel, ICU staff, anesthesia techs, medical records staff, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, respiratory technicians, as well as countless others. For each surgeon, we will assume the need for 10 support staff, for a total of 1,400. Assuming average wages of \$50,000 at an average increased working hours of 15%, the total approximate cost of increased staffing would be \$9,356,550 [15% of \$50,000 (\$7,500)  $\times 1,400$  less payroll taxes of \$1,143,450].

The total cost of opening up our ORs would be approximately \$25,730,513.

### **3. Recruitment and Retention**

Between the extended waitlist for a primary care practitioner, patient outcomes and long ER wait times, the need for more healthcare professionals - both doctors and other professionals - is undeniable. We need to rebuild our human resources. We also need to ensure that those choosing to give back and work in the health profession are valued.

Like any business, you have to care for your employees, and they have to know it. Unfortunately, whether it is health workers or teachers, there is currently a culture around us of people not feeling respected by their employer - the Province. This has resulted in many health professionals leaving the profession, leaving the Province, or, in the case of many family physicians, leaving their speciality in favour of another.

The culture must change to one of respect and recognition of gratitude. We, as a province, need to take care of the people we are asking to take care of us.

### ***Retention of Family Physicians***

One of the things that has made access to primary care in Nova Scotia more challenging is the imbalance in wages amongst physicians.

In 2017, the Province renegotiated the wages of hospitalists, who are similar to family physicians, but take care of patients in hospitals rather than in offices. Once their patients are discharged from the hospital, their responsibility for treating those patients essentially ends. Family doctors, on the other hand, maintain their patient files in perpetuity.

Both provide incredibly valuable services. However, the renegotiated contract for hospitalists resulted in a pronounced funding disparity between hospitalists and community-based physicians. This divide doesn't even begin to account for the overhead that many family doctors pay for their practices. With that in mind, the difference in pay is in the tens of thousands. This new rate also had an unintended consequence of a culture shift, resulting in less incentive for physicians to practice family medicine.

We all know that practicing medicine is about more than money to most physicians. It's about a number of factors, including lifestyle and work environment. Nova Scotia has a lot to offer and is second to none in terms of places to live. We cannot engage in a bidding war with other provinces and other countries over physicians, but we can and should pay family doctors fair, comparable rates that demonstrate that they are valued. We have to show them that not only can they live in the most spectacular place in the world, but they can earn an excellent living in an environment where their dedication is respected and valued.

The PC government is committing to restoring a positive relationship with family doctors. As a starting point, it is necessary to level the playing field with respect to remuneration and pay family doctors at a rate that is in line with that of hospitalists.

With the increasing burden of care placed on our primary system and its practitioners, we have received much feedback that it can be overwhelming for new graduates who do not feel confident or fully competent to provide comprehensive care. As a result, they are moving to other roles. Overcoming these challenges may be alleviated with mentoring and providing support to these new doctors by experienced practitioners who can guide them as they improve their competence, experience and confidence. Mentoring will also be crucial for rural specialties.

The matching of new graduates and mentors can be addressed in a clinical health services plan and will help in community care succession planning, allowing new practitioners to transition into practice under the tutelage of retiring practitioners. This will improve recruitment and retention and will create a smoother transition of patient load.

In our commitment to restoring the relationship with doctors, we will lift the gag order imposed on those who wish to speak out about physician-related issues. At present, we hear from too many who wish to remain anonymous out of fear for their jobs. Allowing them to speak freely will create a better work environment for our healthcare professionals.

### ***Recruitment at the Local Level***

Historically, some of the most successful recruitment of our health professionals was done at the local level. In addition to provincial-wide recruitment efforts, our PC government will recognize the need for more local involvement and will work with communities to give them the tools for successful recruitment.

The removal of local decision-making has hurt recruitment. The centralization of the NSHA in Halifax resulted in many recruiters working within the NSHA not having a personal relationship with the medical community, resulting in a disconnect that does not produce results. Local physicians and other health professionals must be involved in the planning and delivery of recruitment strategies.

Nova Scotia's current recruitment strategy is a provincial one. It's not practical to think that the same approach used to attract someone to Halifax would work to attract a physician to Neil's Harbour. Our Province is so diverse in our geography, population, physician workforce and in job opportunities for spouses. There is limited local involvement when it comes to recruiting doctors. As is the case in most facets of health – there needs to be more local decision-making capability for local recruitment efforts.

We should have physicians front and centre when it comes to introducing doctors to our communities. This is why every region needs **a clinical health services plan**. This plan would outline what staffing *should* look like in each region, overlapping staffing with the needs of each community. For example, based on the current demands and the waitlist, how many orthopaedic surgeons are needed in a given area?. A full assessment needs to be done comparing the current resources to the needs and demands, recognizing that each area will have different needs. The CBRM may have a higher demand for more oncologists, whereas New Glasgow may need more orthopaedic surgeons.

This clinical health services plan should also include some level of succession planning. It should recognize the age of some physicians and have a sense of when they may expect to retire. In a perfect world, if Amherst had a 65-year-old orthopaedic surgeon who planned on retiring at 70, succession efforts could be underway to seek out a new surgeon. This plan would drive recruiting and residency placements.

Within three months of coming into government, local leadership teams would be empowered in each region to complete their clinical health services plan. A framework would be provided to each team. These teams would be established by the chief of staff at the local regional hospitals (or another person as determined in working with the chief of staff). The chief of staff would have the best understanding of the local needs and demands of the community, as well as a sense of the players on the ground.



While the committee work would be volunteer in nature, the team lead would receive a salary top up of approximately \$50,000 to lead the team and be accountable for results.

Once the clinical plans are established, it will allow those working groups and communities to create their own models of how to attract health professionals. In those models, each community will have access to a dedicated pot of funding for physician recruitment. Recognizing that all efforts and strategies will not look the same, \$2 million will be divided amongst the four health regions to assist in their local recruitment efforts and strategy. This funding can be used in a variety of creative ways by each region.

On a provincial scale, when the NSHA in Halifax sends recruiters to recruitment conferences, physicians and/or other relevant health professionals who work on the ground should also attend - Individuals who could actually speak to the working conditions, the resources available and the community should be supplementing our recruitment efforts.

Relying on Halifax and the central decision-making body is simply not working for Nova Scotians. We can't fix our health professional shortage until we show we are serious about fixing the system.

### ***Pension***

It is unlikely that Nova Scotia will be able to win bidding wars for doctors. However, we do have to be competitive in salary. In addition to more fair salaries for our doctors, our PC government will provide them with a benefit offered by few other jurisdictions - a pension plan.

Three years ago, doctors were shocked when the federal government took away one of their main retirement planning tools in their small business tax regime. The changes severely harmed their ability to save and, in some cases, erased decades of retirement planning.

To address these concerns and as a show of good faith and respect to our doctors, our PC government is prepared to help invest in the retirement of clinical, practicing physicians.

A PC government will establish a retirement fund for full time physicians who practice patient-facing services and will match a portion of their retirement savings contributions. Not only will this help to retain our doctors, it will act as a tool for recruitment as well.

Contributions would be established as follows:

- For physicians practicing for 0-5 years, no contribution is necessary from the new doctor, given that it would likely be harder for them to contribute, the Province will contribute \$5,000 per year.
- For physicians practicing for 5-15 years, the Province will match physician contributions up to \$10,000 per year.
- For physicians practicing more than 15 years, the Province will match contributions up to \$15,000 per year.

Given that this is a taxable benefit, we will negotiate with the Federal Government to allow Nova Scotia to keep the federal portion of this taxable benefit, to be reinvested in health care in our Province.

In order to qualify for this benefit:

- For physicians practicing 0-5 years, the physician would have had to practice full-time in Nova Scotia for the entire five years, plus provide an additional two years of return of service. Upon satisfying this practicing requirement, the savings contribution would be payable to the physician in year seven of their practice.
- All applicable physicians must demonstrate they are FTEs who deliver patient-centred services (e.g. this benefit is not meant for physicians in administration or teaching roles).
- Physicians must show they have invested their portion of the contribution into a retirement savings fund (RRSP, TFSA).

We would work with Doctors Nova Scotia (“DNS”) to refine eligibility criteria and would work with DNS on the administration of this program. We would provide them with a stipend for administration.

Physicians would simply have to submit a one page electronic form and the assigned individual at DNS would process the form. The Department of Health would then deposit the funds to DNS for a transfer to the doctor into the savings plan of their choice. Investments would be at the physician’s discretion and the physician would have to provide proof of the investment.

Logistically, a data sharing agreement would be required between DNS and the Department with reciprocity provisions allowing the two organizations to communicate with one another. Currently, DNS has a hard time accessing Department/MSI data.

### ***Foreign-Trained Doctors***

There is real recruitment potential in Nova Scotians who have studied medicine abroad and want to return home, but face barriers to entry. While some medical school graduates are able to easily transition into medical practice in Nova Scotia, the road is more challenging for others.

In bringing these graduates and practicing physicians into Nova Scotia, we absolutely have to recognize that our province has among the highest standards in the world for our physicians, and we will not sacrifice quality.

When discussing foreign-trained physicians, there are two groups to consider:

1. Students who have graduated from a foreign medical school and wish to do their residency (and ideally practice medicine) in Nova Scotia; and
2. Accredited physicians who are practicing in other countries who wish to practice medicine in Nova Scotia.

There are approximately 100 Nova Scotians annually obtaining their medical education in other countries. For recent graduates wishing to practice in Nova Scotia, there are a limited number of residency seats available, as Canadian-trained medical students have a priority on these placements. Seats that are essentially left over after the first round of matches are then opened to Canadian graduates AND all of the internationally trained graduates.

An increase in residency seats, targeted to areas of specialty and need across the Province, is absolutely essential to our recruitment. It will provide additional opportunities for foreign-trained graduates.

There are also thousands of physicians across the world who were trained, accredited and practicing in foreign countries in which we may not recognize their training. When these physicians come to Nova Scotia, they have to pass the Royal College exams. While Canadian-trained physicians receive supports from Dalhousie to assist them in preparing for these exams, foreign physicians receive little to no support from either the government or Dalhousie.

These exams are extremely intense. For example, in a five-year anesthesiology residency, the fifth year of the program is largely spent in preparation for the Royal College exams.

Our PC government would ensure foreign physicians, wishing to practice medicine in Nova Scotia, are given an opportunity to do so under a clinical associate program. These foreign-trained and practicing physicians could provide service to an area and assist physicians who are currently practicing. They would receive mentorship in conjunction with improving their skills to Canadian standards. The program would facilitate training and preparation for the Royal College exams and would include a return-of-service requirement after they pass the exam.

A clinical associate program would facilitate retention in the longer term as the candidate is already familiar with and incorporated into the community. Our PC government would work with the College of Physicians and Surgeons to establish this program, as it would require a specific class of license and supporting structure.

## **Costs**

More healthcare providers will result in more access to care, and thus better care for Nova Scotians. If we invest more in our recruitment efforts, resulting in more health providers, we will see our outcomes improve.

With respect to matching the pay of family doctors to hospitalists, the exact numbers of practitioners is not readily available. We use estimates to determine our costs.

There are approximately 500 full time family physicians practicing in Nova Scotia, earning an average daily rate of \$800. There are approximately 60 hospitalists, earning an average daily rate of \$1,300. There is an average difference between the two of \$500. To meet the hospitalist rate for 440 family physicians, the cost would be approximately \$55,000,000 [430 x \$500 x an average of 250 shifts per year]. Of this amount, the province would recuperate approximately \$5,853,375 in personal income tax, for a total cost of this initiative of \$47,896,625.

The fee-for-service model will continue but, to determine the cost, our estimate is based on an average family physician's daily rate as compared to the average daily rate of a hospitalist. This will likely mean an increase in the rate of many billing codes to account for the increase in salary.

A pension plan for physicians who practice patient-centred care will show a much needed sign of respect to doctors that not only is their service valued, but they are wanted here.

We estimate approximately 2,000 patient-facing physicians in the province who would qualify for this program. Assuming 80% (1,600) of those physicians participated and contributed the maximum (for the purpose of costing, we will assume a \$5,000 contribution by everyone), the cost would be in the range of \$8 million annually [1,600 x \$5,000]. Additionally, an administrative stipend in the range of \$40,000 would be provided to DNS.

Because this is a taxable benefit, the Province would receive in the range of \$2 million back in personal income tax. The Federal Government would be entitled to a similar share in federal income tax. We would negotiate with the Federal Government to have this additional \$2 million in tax revenue directed back to Nova Scotia for healthcare.

The total cost of the physician pension plan (without the federal share) would be approximately \$6,040,000.

Increasing our recruitment efforts will ensure we not only understand the needs of our different communities, but are able to address them. In addition to a \$1.5 million fund to be shared amongst the regional groups, we will also incur the cost of a top up for the team leads. The top up will cost approximately \$311,111 [\$50,000 per team lead x 7 team leads less payroll tax of \$5,556].

Establishing a pre-residency program will draw on many of the resources we already have in place. The largest cost associated with this new program will be in insuring these medical students. The average cost of annual insurance for residency students is approximately \$1,524. If 100 international students were to participate, the cost to the Province would be approximately \$152,400.

The total cost estimate for recruitment under a PC government is approximately \$55,900,136.

#### **4. Expanding Telehealth/Virtual Care**

The future of healthcare is obvious. Virtual care can offer a new means of seeing a doctor for many Nova Scotians. By finally fully embracing technology, we will reduce wait times.

Within weeks of COVID landing in Nova Scotia, virtual care was embraced by all, particularly patients. The lockdown demonstrated that virtual medicine is a viable means of health delivery. It limited travel and exposure to waiting rooms for both the patient and physician and just made sense.

There are still many issues requiring in-person assessments and we have skilled health providers able to make the determination as to when a patient should be seen in person. We need to permanently embrace the obvious technological advances in healthcare delivery and make necessary changes to the doctor fee codes that commit to, and expand, virtual care.

Enabling existing practicing physicians to more easily “see” patients virtually, may allow those physicians to see more patients in a day and potentially take on more patients, which would further reduce the waitlist. At present, a vast majority of these consultations are occurring over the phone. A PC government would enhance the virtual care service to include the option for video conferencing capabilities, meaning health providers could literally see their patients via phone, computer, tablet, etc., for issues that justify video conferencing consultations.

Offering the opportunity to practice medicine from home, expanded virtual care will be attractive to retired physicians and some physicians on maternity/paternity leave who may want to practice with a more flexible schedule.

For the past few months, many doctors and patients were part of our Province's pilot run of virtual care. COVID-19 forced the government to begrudgingly embrace virtual care advances that the rest of the world has enjoyed for years. Now it has been proven once and for all that the status quo is no longer acceptable or necessary in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia offers health advice from a Registered Nurse through the 8-1-1 phone system in addition to virtual care, which connects patients with health providers from the NSHA and IWK Health Centre. There is a reduction in services when compared to other provinces. For example, virtual care in Nova Scotia is only available to those with existing health providers, whereas British Columbia has "Virtual Doctor of the Day" to assist those who may not otherwise be able to access care.

As previously discussed, our plan would see virtual care options expanded to those individuals without a primary care practitioner. Similarly, we have previously laid out a plan for the delivery of mental health services virtually.

Looking at other jurisdictions, Manitoba has had success with virtual programs such as Dial-a-Dietician and smoking/vaping cessation programs. With an aging population, having a focus on dementia advice, as is available in Alberta, should also be considered as a priority expansion of service.

Nova Scotia has only scratched the surface on what is possible. A PC government would further increase virtual care to include some primary consultations with specialists, which could increase the efficiency of the system and would reduce wait times. For example, in a system in which virtual care was properly organized and supported, a significant amount of orthopaedic triage could be done virtually with a physiotherapist and occupational therapist. Some patients have limitations on their number of steps, meaning going to assessment clinics can be challenging. Virtual care is one way of assessing those patients in a manner that can potentially reduce further strain.

A full consultation will be completed within our first three months in government, in conjunction with Doctors Nova Scotia, to determine what specialties and health providers can expand the scope of their practice to telemedicine. Proper billing codes will be established to support those services.

Certainly, paramedics, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, along with nurse practitioners, would be included in the plan for expanded services. Primary care will need to leverage their skills in a new model of care delivery, where collaboration with virtual care will assure that any Nova Scotian needing medical attention gets it.

We can't talk about modernizing our system without referencing One Patient One Record ("OPOR"). The current seven-year timeline for OPOR is too long. This is not demonstrative of an innovative environment. Physicians need to be given the choice of the best option for them in order to truly provide patient-centric care. We need to adjust the scope and delivery time and

change the steering committee for the current process to increase the speed of innovation and deliver the best possible service for patient care.

### **Costs**

We must invest in technology now to make sure our health system is ready for the future. Other jurisdictions are starting to take incremental approaches to virtual care. There is no reason why we can't learn from their successes and surpass them to have the most advanced and progressive virtual care model in the country.

Many of these personnel costs would be included in current salaries (for example, dietitians, physiotherapists and occupational therapists). For others, billing codes must be updated.

For retired physicians and physicians on leave, we estimate to have in the range of 150 participants in this program. Their payments would depend on their time spent. Assuming an average of four shifts per month, for a total of 48 shifts per year at an approximate rate of \$1,000 per shift (\$48,000), the annual cost for personnel for this expanded service would be approximately \$6,415,920 [\$48,000 x 150 less payroll taxes of \$784,080].

The cost of the technology is more challenging to assess as we do not have all of the relevant information from the current provincial government. However, we are estimating start up and operating costs of the program to be in the range of \$10,000,000.

Our total estimate for expanding virtual care (excluding offering telehealth to everyone who is on the waitlist for a primary health provider), is approximately \$16,415,920.

## **5. Chronic Illness**

Approximately 5% of Nova Scotians consume 70% of the health dollars. Most are dealing with chronic conditions. Nova Scotians have among the highest rates of chronic disease and disability in the country. Every year, over 5,000 Nova Scotians die of four types of chronic diseases: cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes.

Two-thirds of deaths in Nova Scotia are attributable to these diseases.

While there are many health concerns related to chronic diseases, instead of simply treating the illnesses as we have been, we need to determine why our chronic illnesses are so pronounced, address the root cause and talk about a redistribution of the workload. We have to ask why we've been treating chronic conditions with acute strategies when it's not working. Our system should place more of an emphasis on providing *health* care so as to lessen the need for *sick* care.

Although chronic diseases are among the most common and costly health problems, they are often also among the most preventable, making a focus on preventive care crucial in addressing the challenges of our health system.

Some of the plans we have established for the expansion of virtual care services would work by encouraging the adoption of healthy behaviours, such as more accessible contact with health

providers; access to dieticians to provide guidance on eating nutritious foods; and smoking and tobacco cessation programs, can prevent or control the effects of these diseases.

### ***Treatment and Prevention Program***

In addition to our focus on the expansion of telemedicine, a PC government will establish a new Chronic Illness Treatment and Prevention Program that focuses funding on an in-home treatment model for patients with chronic illnesses, based on the INSPIRED model for COPD patients.

Our plan means experts coming to the patient - into their homes to monitor and enhance their care so they can prevent their COPD or chronic illness from getting bad enough that they would need to sit in an ER for hours or even be hospitalized. If you are not affected by chronic illness, this program will still help free up capacity for family doctors. Fewer individuals needing our ERs will make access to healthcare easier for everyone.

The INSPIRED program means more self-management of chronic illnesses. It is a proven model that saves \$21 for every \$1 invested.

Frequently, it is patients with chronic illnesses who are making repeated doctors' visits to monitor their conditions. They are also regularly making trips to the ER.

Chronic illness patients will determine, in conjunction with their primary care provider, if a program like this makes sense for them. Largely, the program will be virtual, with healthcare providers checking in via digital devices. When necessary, house calls will be made.

To staff this program, all resources will come from the NSHA in Halifax. Once the number of patients for the program is established and their needs determined, pursuant to the clinical health plans for each region, staffing adjustments will be made based on that need. However, a respiratory therapist treating a COPD patient does not necessarily need to live in the same community if the treatment is coming via telehealth.

It is likely additional hires will be needed to satisfy the demand of the program and an initial investment will be required in staffing.

### ***Costs***

We are currently spending as much as a billion dollars of our \$4.6 billion health budget on chronic conditions. We need to ensure these dollars are being spent for maximum efficiency and best possible outcomes.

Looking at the results of the INSPIRED program, we can see there is a model that already exists and is excelling at improving health outcomes. The program came about as a response to huge gaps in care identified via an earlier research program involving patients and families with COPD. It has been incredibly successful. With every \$1 invested, \$21 has been saved in emergency room visits, hospital stays, and more. Patients who participate have demonstrated a:



- 58% reduction in ED visits (resulting in savings of approximately \$2.3 million in ER costs);
- 62% reduction in hospital visits (resulted in savings of approximately \$19 million in hospital costs);
- 60% reduction in hospital bed days; and
- The average number of hospital bed days for participating INSPIRED patients decreased from 10.6 to 7.3.

There is significant benefit in expanding upon the success of this program to support Nova Scotians with other chronic conditions. This program shows we need a focused spending plan.

The cost to run the INSPIRED program is about \$1,000/year per COPD patient, with projected net savings in health spending of \$20 million.

The Department of Health has estimated that two-thirds of Nova Scotian adults live with some form of chronic illness. Assuming there are approximately 600,000 adults in Nova Scotia, there are as many as 400,000 Nova Scotians who experience chronic illness.

With respect to COPD, Nova Scotia has the highest rate in the country for this disease, with it impacting 5.9% of the population or approximately 53,000 individuals. Fifteen hundred patients have been enrolled in and benefited from the INSPIRED program, meaning there is uptake of about 3% of patients.

For the purposes of our costing, we will assume uptake of 3% of those 400,000 living with chronic illness, totalling 12,000 individuals. With an annual cost of \$1,000 per patient, the approximate cost of the program per year would be \$12,000,000 [12,000 individuals x \$1,000]. This does not begin to take into account the savings spread across the healthcare system.

Our total estimated spend on chronic illness treatment and prevention is approximately \$12,000,000.

## **6. Prevention**

### ***In-School Programming***

At present, grades 7-9 students participate in a physical education program at least three days per week for a total of 150 minutes. High schools have one compulsory credit (between grades 10-12) for a physical education class.

High quality physical activity among youth has shown that those students demonstrate better attention in class, achieve better grades, better physical and mental health and better health outcomes across their lifespans.

“Quality Daily Physical Education” is a standard through Physical and Health Education Canada of a planned school program of compulsory physical education that provides for a minimum of 30 minutes of activity each day to all students from grades Primary to 12 throughout the school year. This programming places an emphasis on fun, enjoyment, success, fair play, self-fulfillment and personal health and includes activities that enhance cardiovascular systems, muscular strength, endurance and flexibility. While this would ideally run as an intramural

program encouraging high levels of participation, uptake for supervisors would depend on each school and each centre for education.

A PC government will work with the regional centres for education in conjunction with the Teachers' Union to determine what is possible to expand personal fitness opportunities for all students. However, in an effort to encourage physical education and make it a mainstay for students and instill active living choices at a young age, students will be afforded the opportunity to earn school credits for physical activity outside the classroom.

Another component of healthy living is healthy eating. While the Canada Food Guide is taught in schools, many students graduate without seeing the Food Guide's recommendations being put to use. Many move on from school without knowing the basics of nutrition and healthy meal preparation. These are skills, if taught at a young age, will guide them throughout their lives.

Studies have demonstrated that hands-on cooking education has a very positive impact on behaviours and attitudes toward healthy eating, such as increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, improved food safety behaviours, higher frequency of cooking, increased nutrition knowledge, higher self-efficacy and less money spent on food. Findings suggest cooking programs positively influence children's food-related preferences, attitudes, self-efficacy, dietary intakes and behaviors.

A PC government will make it a priority to educate high school students about healthy eating and cooking. We will be guided by programs like the one being offered by the YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia and SchoolsPlus. It offers to assist youth entering grades 9-12 and youth preparing for college, university or independent living.

It is a two-day program covering topics that include basic food safety; budgeting tips; how to use leftovers and stretch meals; cooking shortcuts and simple meals on a budget; nutrition; healthier cooking; what you need in your pantry; and organic versus conventional foods.

All groceries, program materials and a pantry supply kit were provided. Each participant received a complimentary cookbook and two meal cooking packages to try at home. SchoolsPlus is in almost every school in HRCE and is all across Nova Scotia. They act as a service provider and liaison for programs and services.

Similarly, the New Glasgow-based organization Pictou County Roots for Youth Society offers programs to support rural youth homelessness in Nova Scotia. For the past two years, they have had a chef volunteer to teach youth how to prepare accessible meals. In 2019, this program received full funding through the Pictou West and Central and East Pictou Community Health Board (CHB) Wellness Fund.

Our government would work with SchoolsPlus to find local partners within the community and would provide financial support to each regional centre to be allocated specifically for healthy eating programming.

This education could come in the form of a "PD Day" for grade 12 students prior to graduating.

No legislative changes would be necessary for either the increase of the physical education component of the curriculum or the healthy eating programming. Amendments to the Ministerial Regulations under the *Education Act* would enact these changes.

We also acknowledge the barriers in cost to eating healthy and will examine policies and programs to reduce costs of healthy foods for consumers.

### ***Tax Credit for Sports and Arts***

The benefits of physical activity at any age are well documented. Living an active lifestyle can go a long way in keeping individuals healthy and preventing illness.

The PC Party wants to make sports (for physical well-being) and the arts (for mental well-being) more accessible, so more children can lead active lifestyles that will continue throughout their lives. As such, we will offer an annual tax credit to parents of \$500 per child. The credit will be for enrollment and registration fees for sports and the arts. For example, it can cover some of the cost of hockey registration or the cost of music, painting or French lessons.

### ***Smoking Cessation Program***

As of 2017, 17.8% of Nova Scotians smoked tobacco. Nova Scotia has the highest rate of smoking in the country. The health risks of smoking are well-known. There are more than 20 diseases and conditions associated with smoking (including cancers, respiratory diseases and cardiovascular illnesses). Second-hand smoke can also be fatal, as more than 200 Nova Scotians die annually from exposure to second-hand smoke.

Smoking cessation programs improve health outcomes and can impact individuals more likely to experience disparities.

Previous PC governments have demonstrated a commitment to smoking cessation. In 2004, the Office of Health Promotion launched the “Sick of Smoke” workplace program. In 2005, the PC government of the day introduced amendments to the *Smoke-Free Places Act* that banned smoking in all indoor public areas, workplaces and eating and drinking establishments in Nova Scotia.

It is our goal to expand upon our Party’s previous commitments to battling tobacco use.

Programs like our Chronic Illness Treatment and Prevention Plan will help address some of the side effects and impacts of smoking. However, given the high percentage of Nova Scotians who smoke, more must be done to encourage those individuals to stop smoking.

Our PC government will offer a virtual care program to anyone wishing to stop or cut back on their tobacco use (including the use of e-cigarettes). Similar to the programming we will offer to anyone without a family physician, we will establish an anti-tobacco virtual care service whereby anyone seeking guidance on how to quit, supports throughout the process or general information, can login at any time to receive the support they need.

This program will be heavily advertised in schools to target youth and provide additional support to help students stop smoking at a younger age. Information about this program will be provided in health classes across all schools in Nova Scotia.

## **Costs**

It is challenging to quantify the savings of teaching healthy living and instilling active values at a young age. However, the research is clear that learning a healthy lifestyle at a young age will have health benefits (and minimize health concerns) over a lifetime. It may take decades to truly see the benefit, but, in time, we will see statistics, like the number of Nova Scotians living with chronic conditions, decrease significantly.

We also know that healthier people are often more productive at work and in society. So not only will this investment result in reduced costs, but it will also very likely improve our economy.

Additional physical education teachers may be needed to meet the demands of the expanded physical education curriculum. A true accounting of the needs must be done with the centres of education.

For the purpose of estimating the cost of this initiative, we assume that of the approximately 53 high schools across the province, at least two thirds would require an additional physical education teacher. Assuming that 35 new teachers would be hired at an average salary of \$56,782 (less payroll taxes of \$216,425), the cost of this initiative would be approximately \$1,770,945.

With respect to funding for the healthy eating initiative, there are approximately 7,263 grade 12 students across the province. We estimate the cost of this program, per student, to be approximately \$50. The total cost would be in the range of \$363,150 [7,263 students x \$50]. These funds would be allocated to each of the seven regional centres for education to be used in conjunction with community organizations to provide this program.

In an effort to promote more activities that benefit the physical and mental health of our youth, we are offering a \$500 tax credit per child. For costing purposes, there are approximately 238,900 children 18 and under in Nova Scotia. Research suggests that there would be uptake in this type of programming of about 45%, meaning of the 238,900 children, there would be approximately 107,505 claimants [238,900 x 45%].

At a cost of \$500 per child, this tax credit would save Nova Scotians approximately \$4,730,220 [107,505 x \$500 x 8.8%].

There are currently several resources available that work to address smoking cessation. However, we feel it would be most efficient to consolidate our resources in a one-stop shop. There is a Secure Chat with a Counselor program available through the Tobacco Free Nova Scotia website that allows for online chats with counsellors. Similarly, Tobacco Free will send out information packages on smoking to those who request them.

As opposed to counsellors operating solely on an online chat function, these counsellors would be moved to the other end of the virtual care program so that they can be called or available for video chat, etc. This represents a more personalized approach to coaching and counselling those individuals trying to quit.

While the cost of the counsellors on the Tobacco Free website is not information that is readily available, we estimate start-up costs of this program to be in the range of \$2 million. This virtual

care program would initially be staffed with five counsellors. Our estimate on these salaries with operational costs would be approximately \$350,000 annually.

Our estimated total spending on prevention, enhanced education and smoking cessation supports is approximately: \$9,214,315.

## **7. Fertility**

One in six Canadian couples face infertility. There is no comprehensive, national coverage for assisted fertility treatments. Treatments can cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per cycle, making it inaccessible to most individuals.

A PC government will recognize the struggle that hopeful parents face in becoming parents. Not only are infertility challenges extraordinarily stressful, but the cost of attempting to address those challenges is prohibitive. As such, our government will offer a tax credit equal to 40% of the cost of fertility treatments provided by a Nova Scotian licensed medical practitioner or infertility treatment clinic.

There is no limit on the number of treatments an individual can claim, but the maximum they are eligible to claim in total is \$20,000 in eligible costs, up to a maximum yearly fertility treatment tax credit of \$8,000.

### **Costs**

According to Statistics Canada, there are approximately 161,464 female Nova Scotians between the ages of 18 and 44.

Statistics on the number of women who experience infertility and wish to seek fertility treatments are difficult to find. For the purposes of costing this initiative, we have extrapolated data from the Ontario program.

Ontario funds about 5,000 IVF cycles per year. One specialist pegged the anticipated need of the program at about 16,500 cycles per year for a population of 13.6 million. If we derive those numbers based on a population of one million, the need would be about 1,200 per year for Nova Scotia.

At a cost of approximately \$8,000 annually for approximately 1,200 parents, this program would have an annual cost of \$9.600,000.

## **8. Presumptive Coverage for Firefighters**

We hear daily from Nova Scotians expressing concerns over the cost of some life saving and life sustaining medications. Our commitment to Nova Scotians when we form government, is that we will conduct a full review of the formulary that decides what drugs are covered and which are not. We need to make sure that the formulary meets the needs of Nova Scotians.

One change that is needed immediately however, pertains to firefighters, who put their lives on the line every day for our safety. Firefighters perform a valuable service to their communities that unfortunately puts their health at risk. We want to ensure they have the best possible insurance and health coverage available.

Studies show that firefighters are more likely to develop cancer from exposure to certain chemicals in fires. In 2019, the average Canadian has a 44% lifetime risk of developing cancer. That number jumps to 53% if that Canadian happens to be, or has been, a firefighter.

The PC Party has a strong history of recognizing the potential health consequences of being a firefighter. In 2003, the PC government introduced and passed the *Firefighters Compensation Act*, which provided Workers Compensation benefits to firefighters who contract certain types of cancers, making Nova Scotia the first province to include firefighters in this kind of coverage.

The PC Party wants to expand on this initiative and ensure our firefighters receive the coverage they need to cover treatment of diseases linked to their work. Currently, only six forms of cancer are covered (brain, bladder, kidney, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, leukemia and colorectal cancer). There is data that supports the connection between many more types of cancer and firefighters. For example, female firefighters have higher rates of reproductive cancers as compared to non-firefighters.

In government, we will extend prescription benefit coverage for firefighters to cover the following additional forms of cancer linked to firefighting: ureter, penile, testicular, breast, esophageal, prostate, skin, digestive tract, multiple myeloma, pancreatic, ovarian and cervical cancers.

### **Costs**

The costs associated with updating the formulary are to be determined based on our consultations in government.

With respect to the extended coverage for firefighters, we have in the range of 6,000 firefighters in Nova Scotia .

Assuming, 53% of those firefighters (6,000) are diagnosed with one of the listed categories of cancer, approximately 3,180 firefighters would be impacted  $[6,000 \times 53\%]$ . Many would already have private health insurance coverage that would cover these medications. Approximately 61% of our population in Nova Scotia has private coverage. Extrapolating this percentage onto the projected number of firefighters to be diagnosed with cancer would mean that approximately 1,240 would require coverage  $[3,180 \times 39\%]$ .

The annual average cost of many cancer drugs is in the range of \$60,000. As such, the cost of this program would be approximately \$74,400,000.

## **9. Administration**

We know that healthcare deteriorated when the government removed local decision-making from local communities. Government must listen to the people they represent. Local doctors and other health professionals understand local challenges and potential solutions much better than

someone sitting in an office tower in Halifax. Even moreso, our patients understand their needs and wants better than anyone.

Our health professionals are doing an incredible job, but they need more authority to address concerns and find solutions on a local level, which is why we need a focus in Nova Scotia on patient-driven decision-making.

Our doctors and other health professionals are holding our broken system together, but they are maxed out. Providing more autonomy on a local level, based on the needs of the patients within each community, is a strong signal that we respect their expertise and contributions.

Despite the inspiring efforts of our health professionals, the health system is in chaos and has been since the formation of this new health authority. There is a real opportunity here for a reoptimization that would give more power back to our communities and potentially improve access to care for Nova Scotians.

Health professionals across the province are our greatest asset to combat the growing crisis in healthcare. Health professionals are reaching out with ideas based on the needs of their patients. We need to harness those good ideas and give them a real voice at the table.

### ***Patient-Driven Decision Making***

Function follows structure.

Governments continually focus too much on structure and organize health operations from the top down. This has not served patients. We need to start with the individual, allow them to choose the care they want and from there, build up the organization in a way that makes sense, based on patient and community needs.

A PC government will start with the individual and allow them to choose the care they want. Part of returning local decision-making, is personal decision-making. We need to let patients and communities make decisions for themselves about what works.

As a starting point to get a sense of the needs of the patients in each region, we will convert the current waitlist to allow patients to choose from one of three options to best suit their needs:

1. A family doctor for in-person care only;
2. A family doctor who provides both in-person and virtual care; or
3. A nurse practitioner.

By identifying the options on this list, we recognize that different patients have different preferences. Some want a more traditional approach to medicine whereby they attend in person at their physician's office. Some will want a more modern approach by accessing their care provider virtually, while others may prefer the model of having a nurse practitioner who is able to spend more time with the patient per visit.

Our PC government will also establish a website for anyone who currently has a primary care practitioner with the same options noted above. The purpose of this website will be to gather regional data in an effort to give us a greater understanding of the needs of as many Nova Scotians as possible. More information will lead to better care.



By starting with the individual and allowing them to choose the care they want, this change to the waitlist model will help to give us a better understanding of what each community needs based on the individual. Although we have a demographic profile as a province, the needs of each region and each community within are very different. We will also see that these consistent personal decisions in geographical areas will align with what we need for long-term community health.

The demands of each region will likely be consistent to the point that 60% of a community will want the same thing. It is a recognition that part of local decision-making is personal decision-making.

### ***Structural Reoptimization***

Recognizing the preferences and different needs of individuals will start to demonstrate trends in communities. These trends and preferences will drive demand and will begin to build the new structure of organization.

At present, the health zones have very little autonomy. They are limited in their ability to make decisions impacting their regions. Many of the problems within the system will be addressed with a reoptimization of the administration and allowing for more local decision-making.

Our PC government will take the trends identified by individuals and their communities. Within 12 to 18 months, a new organizational structure will be established for healthcare in Nova Scotia. This new structure will be driven by patient decisions and behaviour. It starts with the individual picking the care they want and from there, building the structure in a way that makes sense.

Before we can establish a new structure, we recognize that there is too much administration in the system. There are too many managers using stale management tactics. There are few accountability measures in place, including the lack of measuring outputs and a requirement for reporting regular finance and human resources metrics. For example, there are no limits on the duration of time between position vacancy and hiring.

Nova Scotia has approximately 35% more administration in its health system per capita, as compared to the rest of Canada. Our health outcomes are certainly not reflective of this being a beneficial use of our health dollars. We will reduce the duplication within the system and consolidate the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority to save the administrative burden that is pulling resources away from patient care. Extra administration is taking away from patient service providers.

Unfortunately, the NSHA appears to view governance only from a structural or organizational perspective. There does not appear to be any continuous improvement built into the current model. There are no natural constraints in place. We need to establish and share what the benchmarks of a healthy system are and encourage our own system to aspire to meet them. This includes reducing duplication and redundancy in administration and management.

Many of our health workers go to work every day in a toxic environment. Most have no conflict resolution process available to them. Our PC government will change this and establish conflict resolution policies.

We accept that change is necessary. We want to ensure that changes are implemented with reasonable, evidence-based and fully costed decision criteria. For example, the collaborative care model is being implemented without a clear understanding of the total cost per patient visit or the long-term benefits to the patient.

We will optimize the structure of our health organization and administration by putting the patient first and being guided by the patient's needs. We will stop the government interference in the process that is getting between Nova Scotians and the health system. We recognize that one size does not fit all patients or health providers. Patients and communities need to be involved and make choices, within an approved budget, about their own health investments.

Decisions should be made as close as possible to the patient.

### ***Healthcare Auditor***

A PC government would establish a culture of continuous improvement by implementing a Healthcare Auditor. This individual would be a new Officer of the Legislature, whose purpose would be to collect feedback from public use of the system, conduct performance audits and risk analysis of any new innovation or change planned for the health system. They would measure, monitor and adjust the model regularly based on both inputs (costs) and outputs (results).

We need to develop this robust tool for patients and families to offer feedback on health system performance.

The role would be an arm's length mechanism to collect both patient and provider feedback for oversight of health system performance.

The Office of the Healthcare Auditor would have access to all data measurements and patient/family/provider feedback to oversee performance and financial accountability of the health system.

### ***Costs***

The current total cost of the administration of healthcare in Nova Scotia is approximately \$171,046,000. That makes nearly 4% of our \$4.6 billion health budget.

These administrative costs are driven primarily by:

- Duplication between the NSHA in Halifax and DHW.
- Poor governance. The NSHA board needs to be made up of at least 30% physicians. The model, as established, has proven to be ineffective and not aligned with best practices in medical governance.
- Poor benchmarks and standards.

With respect to the establishment of the Office of the Healthcare Auditor, we anticipate the costs to be in the range of \$1.2 million. This costing is based on one quarter of the cost of the Office of the Auditor General of Nova Scotia, whose mandate is to oversee the finances of all departments.

## CONCLUSION

Our health system is paramount to the functioning of all aspects of society: from our economy to our education system. Without a strong, well-oiled health system, we are constantly putting the rest of our society at risk.

We can no longer settle for the status quo - which has proven to be far from adequate.

We need to strive for excellence. We have the talent in our system. We just need to give it the tools and support and remove the politics for true patient-centred healthcare.

The commitments outlined in this plan will benefit everyone from those without a primary healthcare provider to those waiting over 1,000 days for a knee replacement to individuals waiting hours at the ER. Our plan will:

1. Ensure that everyone on the waitlist has ready access to a primary care provider.
2. Decrease wait times for surgeries.
3. Modernize the delivery of our health services.
4. Demonstrate respect and show value for our healthcare providers.
5. Attract new healthcare providers to Nova Scotia.
6. Focus on preventative care, beginning with early education and extending to patients suffering with chronic illnesses.
7. Restore local decision-making.

Proposed investments:

Telehealth for everyone on waitlist	\$2,500,000
Opening ORs	\$25,730,513
Recruitment	\$55,900,136
Expanding Virtual Care Service	\$16,415,920
Chronic Illness Treatment and Prevention	\$12,000,000
Health Prevention Programming	\$9,214,315
Fertility	\$9,600,000
Pharmaceuticals	\$74,400,000
Local Decision-Making	\$1,200,000

Total Costs: **\$206,960,884**

For our system to excel, we need to share a common vision for healthcare, a common destination, philosophy and desired end state.

This requires the leadership and vision of the PC Party.

# UNIVERSAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Need**

It's okay to not be okay.

Access to mental health care is a right, not a privilege. Mental health care is health care, access should not be exclusive to those who are fortunate enough to have insurance coverage or who can afford private care; access should be truly universal.

We have incredibly dedicated front-line mental health professionals in Nova Scotia who work in both the private and public system. They dedicate their lives to the betterment of others.

We all need support at some time in some way. Statistics suggest that annually, one in five individuals experience mental illness. Experts suggest that by the time a person reaches age 40, that number increases to one in two Canadians.

Thousands of Nova Scotians, both young and old, struggle with mental health conditions that are likely manageable if they had access to the appropriate supports. These individuals are being unfairly penalized by bad government policy. They have the right to expect access to the regular, reliable, publicly-funded mental health and addictions treatments that will improve and promote their well-being and ensure that they are productive members of society.

The five pillars of the Canada Health Act are public administration, accessibility, comprehensiveness, universality and portability. Nova Scotia is failing to uphold these five pillars in almost every way.

The result? Too often, illness simply goes untreated or even to the extent that treatment is available, much of the burden of managing mental health services falls to family physicians and ER doctors. Time spent managing ailments for which they do not specialize - or are not comfortable - exacerbates the shortage of family doctors in the Province, putting more pressure on a stressed system and contributing to the inability to take on new or more patients.

Similarly, when the only option available is the emergency room, the result can be ineffective long-term treatment and further overcrowding in an already overburdened system. Without a family physician, some patients may be discharged without adequate long-term supports and the necessary follow-up care and the cycle continues. Meanwhile, individuals with complex and severe illnesses don't receive the necessary, regular support or access to an appropriate team of professionals.

As a province, we need to do a lot better meeting the need.

### **Youth**

Not only is it our moral responsibility, there are huge societal benefits to getting this right. A recent study on the treatment of depression estimated that every dollar spent on publicly-funded mental health services would result in a savings of two dollars for the rest of the healthcare system. A study in the UK found supporting evidence suggesting that investment in youth

mental health programming would pay significant dividends. In fact, it found that having preventative and moderate behavioural programming in place for children, can result in a return in lifetime health costs of approximately \$150,000 per child.

The evidence is clear: we must invest in Nova Scotians and any opportunity to support our youth is critical. By age 25, 75% or more of all mental disorders can be diagnosed; and yet where is the focus? It is impossible for many to access the appropriate resources to receive a diagnosis let alone the best evidence-informed care.

Without the necessary supports in place, these youth are more likely to develop behavioural problems and struggle in school. These consequences can negatively impact a child's transition to adulthood.

### **Addictions**

You can't talk about mental health without discussing addictions. Not always, but often, they are intertwined. Recent reporting suggests that **every other day in Nova Scotia, paramedics and first responders use Naloxone to reverse opioid overdoses**. We are in an opioid crisis. The crisis stems from any number of factors that need to be addressed, but, today, where can those who are experiencing this pain and addiction turn?

Too often, there is inadequate access to the appropriate and effective addictions services that are necessary for recovery. In fact, in many communities, appropriate (or any) addictions services are simply not available.

Further, despite no evidence to support reducing this service, the Nova Scotia Health Authority has been limiting the services and availability of our addictions programs in certain rural areas. They have been cutting back supports at the very time they should be adding them. Why? Not only does this harm individuals in need, but it furthers the stigma of addiction.

Someone needs to take account of the inventory of what we have with respect to addictions treatment options and an analysis of those with addictions across the Province to determine the appropriate locations for additional resources.

Those suffering should not have to travel extended distances, wait on long waitlists or pay privately for timely access. These barriers to treatment make positive outcomes less likely.

Additionally, given the prevalence of addictions in our society, we should ensure that learning about addictions and the harms of drugs is prominent within our education system.

### **Stigma**

Remarkably, one of the greatest challenges facing the mental health system is the stigma that is attached. Too many Nova Scotians and Canadians are suffering in silence. Even today, the stigma can sometimes result in individuals opting not to seek the services they need.

Now imagine overcoming the stigma and reaching out for help only to find that it simply isn't available or if available, is 360 days away. This is not acceptable.

The underfunding of mental health and addictions services contributes to the stigmatization of mental illness. We can only fully mitigate the stigma by ensuring the system is adequately prepared and supports are readily available.

There is much work to be done to get to where we need to be.

### **Provincial Budget**

Meeting the five pillars of the *Canada Health Act* means much more than government allocating money and calling it a job done. It means managing and targeting the investment to ensure improving health outcomes.

Everyone knows that caring for both our mental and physical health is paramount to our well-being. Unfortunately, efforts to improve health outcomes have been predominantly focused on treating (rather than preventing) physical health conditions. Sadly, when it comes specifically to mental health, there has been a failure of treatment and prevention. The provincial budget tells the story.

Of the nearly \$5 billion dedicated in the Nova Scotia provincial budget to health spending, only 7%, or \$344,185,000, is allocated to mental health care. There are few illnesses that touch as many individuals, yet - by burying treatment and prevention - accountability, responsibility and investment within the larger health budget, it has not been given the attention it deserves.

The cost of not investing and dedicating a strategy towards the betterment of Nova Scotians mental health, is too high to continue to ignore and the days of government saying that enough is being invested, without proper consideration as to how it is being invested, must end. The status quo is failing Nova Scotians. Change is needed.

### **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

Our Province can be the national leader in supporting the needs of Nova Scotians living with mental illness. Our goal must be leadership and the mental well-being of Nova Scotians. We can do that by:

- Establishing a department dedicated to addictions and mental health;
- Investing in universal mental health care; and
- Establishing recruitment tools to attract mental health professionals to Nova Scotia.

#### **1. Department of Addictions and Mental Health**

First, government must signal its commitment to improving access to mental health care in Nova Scotia, overcoming the stigma associated with the illness and restoring quality of life to those in need. The government must establish a dedicated department whose sole responsibility is to focus on addictions and mental health.

This Minister will have one focus, be responsible for working with individuals, communities and community organizations to make sure that every resource is on the same page, striving for the same goal - overall community wellness. There are many effective community organizations that should be supported. Where appropriate, the Minister will have the ability to establish long-term, core funding that empowers these organizations to focus on doing what they do best.

We are currently spending \$344,185,000 on mental health services. Based on the most recent provincial budget, if separated as a department, addictions and mental health would be the seventh largest government department in terms of budget size, behind only Community Services, Education, Health, Justice, Labour and Advanced Education and Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Yet, the current wait time in some areas of the province is nearly 300 days. This doesn't make sense. It is imperative that we have someone at the highest level of government accountable for ensuring the investment is effective in making services available. This will require advocacy and leadership at the highest level of government - the Cabinet table. A **new Department of Addictions and Mental Health** with a dedicated Minister taking ownership and serving as a quarterback of service delivery is imperative.

Mental health has significant interactions with our education system, justice system, community services network and, in many ways, has an impact on nearly every department of government. For example, persons with mental health concerns are twice as likely to have involvement in the criminal justice system.

Today, who in the elected government feels responsible for prioritizing and collaborating across these various services and sectors? The answer is no one, which is exactly why a dedicated minister is required. No more, "not my department" when it comes to the mental health of Nova Scotians.

In 2019, 135 individuals died by suicide in Nova Scotia. In the first six months of 2020, 18 individuals passed away from opioid use. Mental health issues are prevalent in our province, without anyone leading the charge and taking responsibility to support those that reach out for support.

### ***Role of Department***

Times will change and requirements will change but we value the mental wellness of Nova Scotians too much to ignore it. Obvious Department roles as of today would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Ensuring the appropriate programming is in place for Nova Scotians to access the treatment they need, including coordinating with community organizations, and ensuring that access to the appropriate detox support is available;
- Monitoring wait times and being accountable for inappropriate delays;
- Working with organizations inside and outside government to ensure management of standards of care and best practices and model of care;
- Recruiting and engaging mental health professionals, including putting care before all else, by opening access to appropriate resources where the public system is failing; and



- Compiling and analyzing robust data to determine where improvement is needed and where the department is seeing success.

The Department will need to examine the system as a whole and determine where it needs overhauls. For example, most Nova Scotians would likely assume that our psychiatric wards are fully staffed with psychologists, along with a complement of professionals who can deliver the help you need when you need it most. Unfortunately, it appears that in many, if not all, psychiatric units across the Province, the services of psychologists are not provided. We need someone who can identify these deficiencies and remedy them.

In its overview, the Department should place considerable emphasis on addictions programming. It would ensure a proper distribution of services across the Province and ensure an educational component in the curriculum for students to learn the harms associated with drugs and alcohol.

### **Costs**

The Department of Health and Wellness currently spends approximately 7% of its budget on mental health. These funds would roll over to the new Department.

Administrative staff within the Department who are currently working on mental health as a part of their role, would likely transition to the new Department as institutional knowledge and expertise would be considerable assets. The new Department would work closely with the Department of Health and Wellness to ensure there is minimal unintended overlap, but maximum collaboration, in the work being completed. The reality is that minimal, if any, additional administrative investment, would be required, but the improved focus on care would be immediate.

For planning purposes, we are estimating an increased investment in care-related spending in the range of \$102 million. This additional program and service investment (outlined below) will have a profound, positive impact on our province.

It is a certainty that some of this investment will result in savings/avoided spending in healthcare in the future. The evidence to support this is overwhelming. More hospital days are spent on mental health than cancer and heart disease. One detailed study found that increased funding for psychological services, **ensuring coverage of just over \$1,000 worth of services to individuals in need, would yield \$2,000 saved by taxpayers for every \$1,000 invested.**

Why? Because the cost of mental illness does not stop at treatment. The cost of untreated or undertreated mental health illnesses are wide and dramatic across society and certainly our entire health system. ERs alone see increased patient loads, let alone the cost and consequences when individuals are unable to work, or unable to work to their full capacity; students miss school or are unable to obtain the full educational experience they need; individuals in the justice system and the impacts on their family, community and the system itself.

We are already paying the price of failing to invest. It may seem out of sight to many, but it is there, and it is costly. We truly cannot afford not to invest in mental health. The bill has been accruing. Wait times in this province demonstrate a clear need for aid and focus.

## 2. Universal Mental Health Coverage

### *Billing Codes*

The biggest hurdle facing the mental health of Nova Scotians is access to care and access in a timely manner, when it is needed most. To ensure that every Nova Scotian has access to the care they need, **a PC government will introduce true universal addictions and mental coverage.**

We will introduce legislation that guarantees every Nova Scotian access to allied mental health professionals. If you have insurance coverage or are able to pay out of pocket, care exists. But for too many, often our most vulnerable, the care is elusive. Additionally, many face barriers related to stigma, housing, unreliable employment, etc. Each of these factors decreases the likelihood and ability of these individuals to access the appropriate care. They cannot access the care they need when they need it. When financial barriers exist, they must be addressed, and we are prepared to address them.

Approximately 610,000 Nova Scotians have access to private insurance plans that include coverage for mental health services. On average, insurance plans provide coverage for services up to \$1,000 per person. For those individuals with coverage, it means access to clinical psychologists, Registered Counselling Therapists, clinical social workers, addictions services, etc. This is a wonderful benefit.

Everyone should have a similar benefit. It is our intention to **flatten the two-tiered curve and make similar support completely accessible to everyone.**

Ours will be the government that finally treats mental health concerns with the same attention that is provided to physical ailments. We can accomplish this by activating the entire spectrum of private professionals for the benefit of the public good.

This will mean establishing a billing code so that approved mental health professionals are leveraged for the benefit of all. This will enable mental health professionals to serve anyone who seeks the service, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances. True universal access. private practitioners will, of course, still carry on their traditional practices but it will allow them to take on clients knowing that the MSI will pay them a fair rate for services rendered.

There is work to do, but the sentiment is that the Province will establish billing rates for each category within the mental health profession such that any time they wish to take on a new Nova Scotian who wishes to seek their treatment, the practitioner would ultimately bill the province for the service.

For example, a psychologist may charge \$180 an hour for their service privately. They would continue to do so. However, working with industry up front, the Province will agree to a rate that the psychologist is paid under the new billing code for services provided to a Nova Scotian in need.

Doctors don't worry about how or how much they will be paid and Nova Scotians who need help for physical ailments don't factor this into their decision-making process either. Why then should mental health be different? It shouldn't.

**Regardless of where you live or your income: Access to private mental health services for all.**

Those individuals who have access to private coverage will have to exhaust their insurance funding first and we will want industry to maintain their current levels of mental health service. As such, they will be asked to continue to support the mental health of their teams and colleagues just as they already do. If an insurance company and employer offer mental health coverage on the day the bill is passed, the employer and insurance company must continue to offer that coverage. If they discontinue or dramatically increase the cost for that coverage, there will be penalties prescribed in the Regulation.

***What Services are Included?***

The exclusion of many mental health professionals and services from our provincial health plan contributes to high rates of unmet mental health needs; an overall underfunding of mental health services and establishes greater barriers for those individuals who do not have access to private funding for the treatment they require.

It's not fair and it's hurting our Province.

Addressing the problems means engaging additional professionals. We will do just that. We intend to engage with a wide variety of licenced professionals with recognized clinical specialties in mental health, addictions, therapy/counselling, including, but not limited to:

- Registered Psychologists;
- Registered Social Workers; and
- Registered Counselling Therapists.

Regulated professionals who are legally entitled to deliver psychotherapy in Nova Scotia can play a very significant, important role in improving care and we will respect their ability. That said, no matter the category of profession, any professional who wants to support Nova Scotians must meet a certain standard of certification that will be established by the Department.

Existing government-funded mental health services will, of course, remain, and all Nova Scotians will continue to have access to those programs and services. These new billing codes are meant to address the access issue and supplement what is currently available and offer an immediate solution for those in most urgent need.

***Immediate Response***

Evidence has shown that referrals to mental health professionals from family physicians typically results in greater continuity of care. The link between primary and mental care is critical. This is good for those who have a family doctor but not for those tens of thousands of Nova Scotians who do not. As a result, it is absolutely necessary that individuals have access through a proper, stepped system that offers a self-referral mechanism.

The first point of contact that an individual needs is someone who will listen. When a person needs someone to talk to, it must be available. There is a difference between support and therapy. This initial, same-day support may be a conversation with someone trained to, as appropriate, link individuals to the next level of care as (and if) appropriate, which might be therapy. But often, a conversation is what is necessary. This early prevention and coaching is critical to success.

In terms of accessing services that include more intensive psychotherapeutic interventions, a referral would be necessary from an approved mental health professional.

By supporting physicians and physician referrals, but also strengthening and creating immediate response systems, we will reduce barriers to access.

### ***Telehealth & Virtual Health***

The immediate response system must be multi-faceted, including telehealth and virtual care. Evidence is becoming more and more clear that e-mental health is a useful and effective approach to mental health care.

As part of the establishment of a proper, modern full-service telehealth program for Nova Scotians, mental health services will be integrated into this delivery model. It is only common sense that as Nova Scotians have the option of meeting with their doctor over the phone, this same option must be available for mental health services.

Professionals report that those suffering with mental health concerns frequently miss appointments and struggle to keep a regular routine. Having access to help from the comfort of home will remove another barrier to support.

A PC government will establish a 24/7 telehealth counselling service, administered under the regulatory control of the Department of Addictions and Mental Health.

This will be a service in which a team of certified counsellors will be hired to:

- Receive calls or on-line meeting (eg Facetime and Zoom) requests;
- Provide an initial intake assessment and supportive conversation;
- Conduct proper triage of the individuals reaching out; and
- Funnel that individual to the proper channel for the right help.

Sometimes, an individual will simply need an ear to listen. For others, an individual may be in crisis and not know where to turn. The telehealth counsellors will navigate the system and provide the instant, immediate support that is so frequently missing.

### ***Mental Health Crisis Line***

In addition to the new virtual mental health programing, we would champion a three-digit mental health crisis line.

While the Province currently has an intake line, it is a ten-digit number that is only operational Monday through Friday, from 8:30 am-4:30 pm. Mental health concerns don't happen when they are most convenient. Sometimes when a person needs help, they need help in that instant.

Similarly, remembering or searching for a ten-digit number is likely not an option. As such, we should look to other jurisdictions that have taken the lead in setting up 9-8-8. This line would be akin to calling 9-1-1 for a physical health emergency. The line would be equipped 24/7 with mental health professionals trained to help those in crisis and talking to them until they reach a point of being able to move to the virtual line, to meeting with a mental health professional, to any number of options.

This would be an initial point of contact when an individual is at their lowest point.

At this point, the demand is unclear. Once in the Department, we would review the current capacity of the system, the number of calls to 9-1-1 and local police stations related to mental health crises and the number of mental health crisis-related ER visits, to determine appropriate staffing figures based on that data.

## **Cost**

The impact of our mental health has become so predominant across all aspects of society, it can no longer be ignored, and considerable investment must be made to ensure everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential. A UK study estimated the economic cost of depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses to be \$147 billion every year, with a cost to businesses of about \$36 billion. Every day, half a million Canadians miss work due to their mental health.

Appropriate investment will enhance the well-being of Nova Scotians and result in better health outcomes. This investment will offset costs to our overall health system and reduce the strain on acute-care services.

Under our system, mental health service providers would be able to direct bill MSI for set rates of service. Most private insurance plans allocate \$1,000 of coverage. As such, we believe that \$1,000 per person, including youth, is an equitable figure to estimate the average investment in those who reach out.

This change will make the mental health system equitable and accessible to everyone.

Based on the 2017 report that approximately 610,000 Nova Scotians had access to private insurance plans, in an estimated population of 960,000, approximately 350,000 individuals would not have access to private insurance. If we assume that one in five, or 20% of those individuals will require access to an average of \$1,000 of mental health services, an investment of \$70,000,000 would be required [70,000 (20% of 350,000) x \$1,000].

Some of those who have coverage will incur more costs than the \$1,000 covered by their plan. For completeness, we are estimating that 5% of those individuals would exhaust their private coverage and also use an average of an additional \$1,000 of the provincial coverage. This is an additional investment of \$30,500,000, being 5% [30,500] of individuals at a rate of \$1,000 per person totals an additional investment of approximately \$30,500,000.

In total, this coverage will require an investment in the range of \$100,500,000.

With respect to the new mental telehealth system, we are estimating starting with five counsellors on the line at all times. These professionals could work from home, their offices or anywhere of their choosing. The Province would provide them with the necessary technology.

Assuming a rate of \$50 an hour per counsellor, at five individuals being paid this rate 24/7, the cost would be approximately \$2,190,000 [ $\$50 \times 24 \text{ hours} \times 365 \text{ days} \times 5 \text{ counsellors per shift}$ ]. We would also deduct payroll tax in the amount of \$238,491 for a total cost of \$1,951,509.

### **3. Other Opportunities to Mobilize Resources**

By ensuring and respecting the value of all mental health professionals, as the only jurisdiction in Canada that provides equal access to universal care for all, Nova Scotia will become an attractive and leading place to practice.

In addition to the natural attraction of mental health professionals to Nova Scotia with this program, we will further support those who are supporting others:

1. Provide increased training options to health professionals.

We will draw upon the successes of models like British Columbia and programs like Extension of Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO), where mental health training and certification is offered to a wide variety of healthcare professionals, at no cost, to allow them to expand their range of services along with the continuity of care provided to their patients.

These programs are offered to health professionals across the country who take online modules to increase their skill sets. Nova Scotia should be taking advantage of them as well.

ECHO provides training in over 50 areas of specialty, ranging in autism to brain injury rehabilitation to early learning and development. It has proven results in decreased illness rates; better matching of medications by GPs for their patients' needs; and, most importantly, improved health outcomes.

These programs aim to help healthcare providers build capacity in the treatment and management of mental health and addictions. This helps to empower healthcare providers to use evidence-based best practices to reduce the need for specialist visits, improving the quality of care for patients seeking treatment for mental health, addiction and related disorders within Nova Scotia's primary care system.

For any practicing health professional wishing to expand their scope of practice to include mental health care, Nova Scotia will continue to pay their usual rate or salary while taking the course so no income is lost on account of this training. Individuals who participate will be required to provide a return of service for no less than one year in exchange for maintaining their salaries while training.

To encourage family doctors to participate in this programming, to the extent that it is necessary, a new, increased billing code will be established for any patients on which the doctor is able to utilize their new skill set.

## 2. Expanded training for teachers who wish to participate.

Alberta hosts the Transitions Classroom program, which is similar to the above-noted training for health professionals, with the exception that this applies exclusively to teachers.

Our teachers are already overworked and overburdened with responsibilities that are not within the scope of their practice. For those who choose, they would access free, online, mental health programming for any teacher who wishes to participate. This training would assist to expand the scope of their background and knowledge of how to work with students who may be struggling.

This increased knowledge and skill set has been shown to decrease stress levels amongst both students and teachers and decrease the stigma surrounding mental health. It has improved teacher outcomes and, in many cases, improved the mental well-being of some teachers for not only having a better understanding of their students, but having the skills to help to cope and address their needs.

No teacher would be forced or required to take this training. Participation is purely voluntary. Given the statistics that demonstrate that mental health concerns caught and addressed early are often resolvable, if even a few teachers participate, some students, who would have otherwise fallen through the cracks, may have new opportunities to flourish.

## 4. **Animal Supports**

The health benefits of pets, particularly dogs, are undeniable. In recent years, studies have shown that these animals can help their owners battle depression, stress, loneliness, anxiety and can even help improve their owners' physical health through encouraging exercise. Dogs can provide much-needed companionship for some older adults, especially during these times of isolation.

Studies have shown individuals in stressful situations have lower levels of blood pressure than those without pets. One study even found that when those people living with borderline hypertension adopted dogs from a shelter, their blood pressure declined significantly within five months.

It has been demonstrated that playing with a dog can elevate levels of serotonin and dopamine, which can calm and relax.

Generally, dog owners have lower levels of cholesterol and triglyceride (indicators of heart disease) as compared to those without pets. Patients of heart attacks who have dogs, have been shown to survive longer than those without. Dog owners over the age of 65 make 30% fewer visits to their doctor as compared to those without pets.

Dogs are able to help produce these benefits for their owners by keeping them active and giving more structure to their daily routines. They provide companionship, offer comfort and provide sensory stress relief.

As a result of the benefits of dog ownership and the growing number of dogs in need of adoption, a PC government will offer a one time \$500 tax credit to individuals who adopt a dog from a recognized adoption agency. This tax credit may be used towards veterinary expenses.

### **Cost**

At present this tax credit will only be offered for adopted dogs and no other animals, purely because of the clear link between improved mental and physical health in dog ownership.

In their last annual report, the SPCA reported taking in 6,993 animals. Humane Canada reports that approximately 27% (1,888) of those animals are dogs and approximately 47% (887) of those dogs are adopted each year.

There are also breed-specific organizations that rescue dogs and bring them to Nova Scotia. For instance Greyhound Pets of Atlantic Canada (GPAAC) has re-homed 5,000 dogs in the region since 1990 (approximately 166 per year across the region). In addition to the SPCA, there are in the range of eight other shelters recognized across the Province.

Assuming each shelter has rates of adoption similar to GPAAC, the total number of adoptions would be in the range of 1,328 [166 x 8]. Combining this number with the SPCA adoptions of 887, approximately 2,215 dogs would be adopted across Nova Scotia each year.

To determine the cost of this program, we would estimate that seventy percent of these dog owners would use the full \$500 credit, meaning, for costing purposes, it would apply to about 1,550 dogs [2,215 x 70%]. At a rate of \$500 per dog, this investment would cost approximately \$68,222 [1,550 x \$500 x 8.8%].

### **CONCLUSION**

The world is different post COVID-19. While mental health concerns were prevalent prior to the pandemic, they have been even more exposed as a result of job losses, working from home, lack of social interactions, substance abuse, domestic violence, irregular access to food and lack of safe and regular shelter.

We know that the concerns lie in lack of access to the necessary care. We know the benefits of receiving treatment, particularly the benefits on our health and economy. As a province, we must do better to concentrate our efforts and resources where they are needed the most.

The commitments outlined in this plan will benefit everyone from youth, who are experiencing mental health concerns; to those with addictions; to individuals with anxiety, depression, or any other ailment. Our plan will:

1. Reduce wait times for treatment and give Nova Scotians the care they need for better health outcomes.
2. Attract new mental health professionals to Nova Scotia.



3. Remove the stigma associated with mental health concerns and treatment.
4. Save on other costs (health, justice, community services, economic costs).

Proposed (annual) investments:

New billing code	\$100,500,000
Telehealth	\$1,951,509
Animal Supports	\$68,222

Total suggested annual investments: **\$102,519,731**

These are investments in the lives and health of all Nova Scotians, from our most vulnerable to our youth to our seniors.

They are investments that we cannot afford not to make.

# DIGNITY FOR OUR SENIORS

## INTRODUCTION

On June 25, 2020, when speaking about long-term care, Justin Trudeau said:

*"It is a provincial responsibility. So, it is them that...have failed to support our seniors...What this recent report has shown, and quite frankly what this pandemic has shown from the very beginning, is that the job isn't being adequately done in long-term care centres across the country."*

The reality in Nova Scotia is that over the past decade, long-term care operating budgets have been slashed and no new beds have been built. The result: thousands of vulnerable Nova Scotians with mobility and cognitive difficulties stuck on waitlists instead of getting the care they need.

Nova Scotia has the highest rate of poverty in the country for individuals 65 and older. For too many seniors, their financial limitations prevent them from getting some of the assistance they may require while living at home. Alternatively, they spend their money on services like paying to plow their driveway, and forego meals.

Our Province must recognize the needs of seniors. We can do that by:

- Building more single bed rooms.
- Addressing the human resources challenges in our system by normalizing the workload of staff and making training more accessible.
- Supporting seniors living at home to get the assistance they need.

Government needs to not only understand, but appreciate, that our seniors have the right to expect a long-term care system that is exceptional. They shouldn't fear the system, but rather feel a sense of comfort that the government will care for them at their most vulnerable time.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

The PC Party's vision for the future of long-term care recognizes two distinct requirements: Configuring the system for today's needs and Preparing it for the future.

***To adapt for today's needs, we need more beds, more staff and more technology.***

### **1. Create over 2,500 New Single Rooms**

COVID-19 shone a light on the importance of single rooms for long-term care residents, particularly in relation to infection control and slowing the spread of illness within a facility.

Early analysis of the initial outbreak of COVID-19 points to shared accommodations as a significant contributing factor to its spread. We have all heard of residents who tested positive for the virus, continuing to share a room with residents who did not yet have the virus. That's unacceptable.

The ability to isolate and care for residents in private rooms is one of the key enablers to providing self care, maintaining wellness and improving quality of life. Additionally, the acuity of some residents makes it hard to care for individuals in shared rooms. Single rooms are far safer, more comfortable, demonstrate dignity and establish the standard we should be striving toward.

As we examine the government neglect leading up to and what transpired over the course of the pandemic, it is paramount to learn from the experience and implement meaningful change, not only to reduce future risks, but to improve overall outcomes.

**A Progressive Conservative government will insist on a renewed commitment to safe, quality care for the most vulnerable by:**

***Immediately renovating and building over 2,500 new single bed rooms.***

**This must be done. We will do this regardless of whether the Federal Government steps up and supports Nova Scotians or not. However, if the Federal Government is willing to invest in Nova Scotians, working with them - we can do more. We have asked them for a commitment that would allow for an additional 1,000+ new private rooms to the system on top of our go-it-alone commitment for a total of over 3,500 new single bed rooms.**

More and more, single rooms are a necessity for a number of reasons, but first and foremost for the privacy and dignity of residents. Some may have health concerns that they wish to keep private. Some may be living with a roommate who has significantly higher needs and as such, may impact both of their sleeping patterns, peace of mind and quality of life. A roommate with more active tendencies could also put the other roommate at risk of harm, particularly if there is any chance of violence.

That said, of course, nobody should be forced into a single room. Properties will still have some double rooms for residents who prefer the option of a roommate. Couples, in particular, should have access to those rooms. Under a PC government, **no couple who is able to be together will be separated in long-term care.**

Our consultations with family and staff suggest that approximately 20% of residents would prefer to have a roommate. This is balanced in our plan while acknowledging that, going forward, the standard construction must recognize the need for more single rooms than have traditionally been available.

### ***Timeline***

When in government, we will immediately move forward with the investment in new rooms. One of the first priorities of the PC government will be to require NSHA officials to engage with representatives of all 133 long-term care properties. At present, the Liberal government does not appear to have an accounting of how many single rooms exist, let alone how many are needed. That's a sad reflection of their lack of concern for seniors. We are currently doing this work for them and will continue to aggregate information.

There is no time to waste, but it will take time. By the end of our first year of PC government, a plan will be established for the expansion and renovation of existing properties as well as the

development of new accommodations. That plan will include matching needs with current infrastructure and tenders will be issued (within six months of the submission of that plan).

## **Challenges**

It is pertinent that we acknowledge the challenges of addressing the fundamental issues facing our long-term care system. If we are not honest about the barriers to success, this initiative will likely never reach its full potential. As such, we have identified the following areas of concern, some of which we are able to offer solutions now, others will take more time and resources to address but will be addressed and overcome. The status quo is not an option.

Some of the biggest challenges to be addressed are as follows:

- Cost;
- Human Resource needs (increasing staff numbers and training opportunities);
- Obtaining accurate information (what is the current capacity in each region and where are the beds needed);
- Inventorying which properties have space and land capacity for renovations and which regions require alternative accommodation options;
- Forecasting future need;
- Time (to obtain information; establish plan; issue tenders; begin building); and
- Communication to residents, potential residents and their families (on timeline and need).

With one of the highest proportions of seniors (65+) in the country at 18.9%, our prevalence of seniors leads to increased stress on our primary, acute and long-term care sectors. At our current trajectory, the need for long-term care will rise dramatically in the coming years.

**For example, while there is an immediate need for approximately 1,400 to 2,000 additional beds, by 2030, that number is expected to grow to 20,000 beds.**

The need for more beds has been obvious for some time to most, but ignored by government. It can't continue to be ignored and it is incumbent on government to plan and not allow this type of prolonged neglect again.

Our seniors and long-term care residents deserve to maintain dignity. Appropriate staffing levels and single rooms are a key aspect to ensuring quality of life and respect. It will require action not words and we are focused on prioritizing the needs of our seniors and most vulnerable.

## **Costs**

We are committing to the single largest investment in long-term care in a generation. Band aid approaches have let seniors down. An overhaul of the system is required to truly make significant change and we are focused on making it happen.

The costs of new single rooms will vary depending on a number of factors, including the existing setup of a building and the available space. For example, some properties will more easily be

able to renovate while others, with the land capacity, may expand their overall footprint. In some cases, new properties will be required.

We have been provided with estimates that suggest the cost of a renovated bed is approximately: \$25,000 per bed; the approximate cost of adding new beds to an existing, current facility is: \$113,258; and the cost of an entirely new bed in a new facility is approximately: \$350,000. These are rough estimates for order of magnitude only and a competitive tender process will lead to the actual costs.

To extrapolate cost and ballpark the necessary investment, we have prepared calculations based on the following assumptions:

- There are currently 7,930 long-term care beds in Nova Scotia across 133 properties.
- As of June 30, 2020 there were approximately 1,450 individuals on the waitlist for a long-term care bed.
- This suggests an approximate need for 9,380 beds (this is as of writing and this number will fluctuate daily and certainly as demographic shifts occur).
- Our understanding is that approximately 80% of long-term care residents would, given the choice, prefer a single room. That means there is demand for 7,504 single rooms [80% of 9,380].
- Despite the data being unavailable, in discussions with several properties, we have been led to believe that 50% of current beds are in shared rooms, totaling 3,965 multiple occupancy beds [50% of 7,930]. This would mean there are approximately 3,965 single occupancy rooms in Nova Scotia at present. [7,930 - 3,965].

From these assumptions, we can estimate a current need for single occupancy rooms of 3,539 [7,504 that would prefer a single room, less the estimate of an existing 3,965 single rooms].

To estimate the cost of the investment required to meet demand, we estimate that 2,089 of the current (3,965) multiple occupancy rooms would be converted to single units, resulting in half (1,045) the number of original units, but also creating an additional 1,045 single rooms from the space generated by the renovation effort. The overall renovation exercise creates more single rooms but not enough. As such, the remaining need for 1,450 would need to be filled through the construction of new beds.

We understand that the federal government will support the long-term care sector. Given their position that they are willing to invest in shovel ready projects, it is our belief that a 3,500 single bed room project is possible but, we can't completely rely on the timing and commitment of the Federal Government. Sitting and waiting is not an option. As such, a PC government would immediately invest in at least 2,525 of the beds needed, built and costed as follows:

Bed Type	Number of Single Bed rooms	Estimated Investment Per Bed	Total Estimated Investment
Convert existing Shared rooms into Private.	1,045	\$ 25,000	\$26,125,000
Build New Private Beds within Existing Properties (from extra space re renovations)	1,045	\$113,258	\$118,354,610
Construct New Beds in New Properties	435	\$350,000	\$152,250,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,525</b>		<b>\$296,729,610</b>

As Premier, we would invest \$296,729,610 in 2,525 new single bed rooms. The current government has just allocated capital resources for 500 new beds at a cost of \$56,629,000 [500 x \$113,258], which can be deducted from our total, bringing the new cost to \$240,100,610 [\$296,729,610 - \$56,629,000]. Assuming an average cost to the province of \$200/day per bed, the annual operational costs would not increase from the current budget, in a scenario without federal support, as the government has already planned for an additional 500 beds. [2,525 less 500 already allocated by the current government, less 2,090 as the first 2,090 beds are already in the system].

The beds would be built over three years, with approximately 550 beds being built in year one, 1,000 beds in year two and 975 beds in year three. With the commitment already being spent on 500 of the initial beds, our new year one cost for capital investment would be \$5,662,900 [50 beds x \$113,258].

Recognizing this investment, we are asking the Federal government to commit to an investment of \$115 million over three years, which would mean that a total of approximately 3,540 single bed rooms could be achieved.

The Federal government share would be: \$11 million in year one; \$52 million in year two; and \$52 million in year three, being the difference between the committed investment and what is possible with your support.

Obviously only the tender process could produce actual numbers. There is an obvious need to obtain the exact data on beds and rooms from the Department (they have thus far been unwilling to provide this information), however, for the purposes of understanding the value of the commitment we are making, with the shared provincial and federal contributions combined, we estimate **the total capital infrastructure investment in this commitment to be: \$411,729,610.**

Assuming an average cost to the province of \$200/day per bed, the operational costs would increase each year as follows: Year 1: no new operational costs as the first 2,090 beds are already in the system; Year 2: \$72,190,000; and Year 3: \$105,850,000.

We will also encourage the Federal government, once again, to reconsider adjusting the Federal Health Transfer payment to reflect a greater funding model for older seniors, which would help to support the expansion of the number of LTC beds required.

**This investment will produce benefits.**

This significant and required investment will lead to a better quality of life for seniors, while also producing savings in the form of better health outcomes in a number of areas, but certainly by minimizing the spread of infection through more control options and QUALITY OF LIFE.

Healthcare savings benefit everyone, but we want to make one point very clear: profit and health care do not mix. 100% of revenue in Nova Scotia long-term care should be controlled by the government. Funding for resident care will vary based on the resident care needs.

Under a PC government, funding for resident care programs and food will be done through a system of flow-through envelopes. Funds that are not spent for these defined purposes are returned to the government. No profit can be made from this funding. There will be a system of annual reconciliations and third-party audits for each long-term care property that ensures these funds are spent for the intended purposes.

The other funding envelope - the accommodation envelope, will be designed to cover accommodation expenses like administration, utilities, maintenance, etc.

No profit should ever be made providing healthcare in our long-term care properties. As such, all future agreements must separate clinical funding from administration funding and there can be no cross over.

## **2. Staffing**

In order to truly improve the care and lives of those residing in long-term care properties and to support the increased number of residents and rooms, staffing challenges must be addressed. Proper staffing support for our seniors is one of the improvements that will have the most significant direct, positive impact on quality of life of the residents and staff.

The current system was built on a premise that no longer exists. We must modernize it in many ways. The *Homes for Special Care Act* no longer fully meets the needs of Nova Scotians. It is a policy that was developed a generation ago, when the level of frailty of seniors entering long-term care was far lower than those who, today, must wait so long to be admitted to long-term care. In part, this is because people are staying home longer due to home care services. That program has some benefits, but it also has some ramifications. For one, the level of care they need is so much greater than it was in the past.

To dignify these residents and give their families the comfort they deserve, to show that government understands that this truly is “home,” we must ensure that:

- We evaluate and fund the correct staffing ratio based on patient numbers, level of frailty and cognitive condition.

- There are enough staff with the right skill mix to support the changing health and social care needs of residents while also protecting the mental and physical well-being of our staff.
- We treat staff and healthcare professionals with respect to make sure that we don't lose them.
- We establish safe living environments that promote comfort and reduce risks of harm.
- We examine mechanisms of measuring outcomes to ensure that we are meeting our goals.

Workloads for long-term care staff are increasing, which adds additional pressure. The work performed by Registered Nurses ("RNs"), Licenced Practical Nurses ("LPNs") and Continuing Care Assistants ("CCAs") is physically and mentally demanding, and there is little relief for them. They are expected to oversee the care of an increasing number of residents, resulting in less time for each resident.

As the acuity of residents increases, so do the demands. This brings with it more complexity of care, meaning more and different types of required interventions. Government funding has not evolved to meet the complex needs of the residents and properties.

It is critical that Nova Scotia improve staff working conditions. Today, they are frequently overworked and face high levels of violence, stress, illness and injury. This is neither sustainable nor acceptable. The injury rate of long-term care staff is approximately 22%, as compared to a rate of 7% across the rest of industry sectors. Poor working conditions have resulted in high rates of turnover.

Additionally, the long-term care workforce is aging, and the sector faces major challenges in both recruiting and retaining new staff. It's a vicious circle.

To address the current and future increased demands on our system, we must increase the number of staff in our long-term care properties and focus on training more healthcare workers, with a heavy emphasis on CCAs.

Higher staffing levels have been shown to produce better resident outcomes, particularly in their functional ability, and in managing pressure ulcers and weight loss. The PC government will establish accountability measures with respect to staffing. **If a facility has 30% of staff absences for a period of two consecutive months, there must be an effort to understand why and that means the property can be subject to an administrative audit.**

### ***Staffing Ratios and Hours of Care Per Resident***

Safe staff to resident ratios in long-term care properties have been quantified in the range of one staff to every six to eight residents. The current reality in Nova Scotia is that we have an average ratio of one staff to every twelve residents. With staffing shortages, this can often be much higher. This is not good enough.

The recommended minimum staff nursing levels, based on the best available evidence, have been identified as 1.3 hours per resident day of nursing care (.75 RN, .55 LPN), and 2.8 hours (CCA), for a total of 4.1 nursing hours of care per resident day. Presently, we fluctuate from 2.4 (in some) to 3.3 (in others) hours of care per resident.



We support the recommendations of the Nurses' Union and a PC government will amend the *Homes for Special Care Act* to ensure that every long-term care facility must maintain staff care levels of combined RNs, LPNs and CCAs sufficient to satisfy at least 4.1 hours of care per resident.

### ***How to attract and retain 2,000 more professionals***

Firstly, we have to begin by acknowledging the workload of long-term care staff is back breaking and unsustainable at current staffing levels. We must show respect for the challenging work they perform.

At present, there are approximately 9,144 staff working in long-term care across Nova Scotia. **To reach the recommended levels of staffing care, we would require an additional 600 nurses (a combination of RNs and LPNs) and 1,400 CCAs.**

If we ensure that staffing levels are increased to 4.1 hours, then staff will be able to take breaks and vacations. There will be less risk of injury. Workload will be more manageable, which will lead to a happier work environment.

To attract more CCAs, the training has to be accessible. **A PC government would reinstate the CCA training grant that was cancelled in 2013.** This grant funds 50% of the tuition costs of the CCA program (50% of roughly \$9,000). More is required but this will help some people pursue this career without struggling to finance it. The size of the program would be increased to 1,000 students. A two-year commitment to stay in Nova Scotia following the training would be required. The Province would work with the training programs to establish in-facility training as a part of the education to minimize the disconnect between the training and the actual job.

In the past, some long-term care properties were able to host their own accredited training programs. These programs offered free training with a return of service and an experience-based component. Offering free, practical training will increase the number of individuals who train and work in this field. **A PC government would resume appropriate staffed and accredited CCA training programs hosted by long-term care properties.**

The Province would also work with long-term care properties and their respective representatives to minimize the number of staff who have to work at multiple properties just to get by.

In an effort to ensure accountability in long-term care properties, the PC government would amend the *Homes for Special Care Act* so that unaccounted staff absences of 30% or more for a period of two consecutive months, can be subject to review by the inspector. If the absences are related to unsafe working conditions, the facility would be subject to a penalty prescribed by Regulation.

**The PC government would make the CCA registry mandatory.** The Province currently has no way of knowing the number of active CCAs in the Province or where they are located. Government and industry need this data.

Currently, the Canadian Institute for Health Information collects and publishes comparable information about the provinces on the 10-year supply trends, including the number of health care providers per 100,000 population for 30 groups of health care providers. Unfortunately, it collects no statistics on the number of CCAs in Nova Scotia because that information is unknown. It is incumbent on us to establish a mandatory registry whereby anyone practicing as a CCA in Nova Scotia shall be required to register in a provincial database.

### ***Costs and Off-Setting Costs***

Clearly, increasing staffing levels will have associated costs. The cost of 1,400 additional CCAs is approximately: \$52,640,000 (at an average annual salary of \$37,600) and the cost of 600 additional RNs and LPNs is approximately: \$35,522,800 (at an average annual RN salary of \$75,814 and LPN of \$50,900). After payroll tax deductions, the new costs of staffing for CCAs (\$5,732,496 in tax), and RNs/LPNs (\$3,868,433 in tax) totals \$78,561,871. The cost of the CCA grant is \$4,500,000 (1,000 students at a cost of \$4,500 per student).

These investments will produce immediate benefits in preventative care. The benefits of having more staff coverage will lead to overall financial savings to the health care system through better health outcomes. Pressure ulcers and other wounds, for example, affect about 30% of patients in long-term care, and treatment of an ulcer can cost tens of thousands of dollars a year. This investment in increased staff could potentially save millions of dollars by preventing pressure ulcers alone and implementing timely effective treatment when necessary.

Increased resident monitoring and support will lead to fewer slips and falls and other unintended consequences, which will result in fewer trips to the hospital, fewer x-rays, and less associated treatment for those injuries. Ultimately, increased staff will result in better health outcomes. Measuring outcomes is necessary to determine the impact and savings generated by additional staff and that will come in time.

Further, in long-term care, the cost of turnover has been estimated at \$25,000 per health professional given the need to backfill with overtime during the vacancy and decreased productivity in the orientation phase.

Higher stress and higher pressure working conditions often result in higher rates for Workers' Compensation. The 2016 premium rate for the hospital sector is set at \$1.63 per \$100 of payroll, whereas the rate for long-term care is set at \$5.19 – over three times as high. These rates are driven by various types of injuries, including musculoskeletal injuries and violence-related claims which disproportionately affect workers in this sector. Millions of dollars could be saved in this sector if its rate could be driven down by an improved safety record.

Additionally, it is said that 5% of the population consumes 70% of our healthcare budget. That suggests that 5% of people, roughly 50,000 Nova Scotians, consume nearly \$3.2 billion in healthcare spending. Many of these individuals are dealing with chronic illness and many may be seniors. By providing more care and more medical assistance, overall costs can be reduced. If the savings is just 5% of this \$3.2 billion these investments would save \$161 million annually whilst improving quality of life for residents, their family and their healthcare team.

### **3. Measuring Outcomes**

Modern technology will play an increasingly significant role in providing seniors care over the coming decades. We will need to be smarter in how we support, encourage and, in times of increasing health risks, find innovative ways to increase protection and measure outcomes.

Every case of COVID-19 essentially launched a ‘needle in the haystack’ search to determine who that person may have been in contact with and when. The flaws of that system were exposed as the spread hastened. Amazingly, technology already exists that could have addressed this quickly and discreetly. It’s called contact tracing software and in the future, it will provide immediate feedback on things like whether residents took their medication, who they interacted with, at what distance, in what location, and for how long over any time period. This software also has the ability to track health outcomes. It’s the future and it is here. Nova Scotians should be benefiting from these advancements.

This is practical and comforting to family members in “normal” times, but access to this information is crucial in times of pandemic. We can’t undo the mistakes that happened over the past few months, but we can take every precaution to make sure they never happen again.

The PC government will embrace technology and specifically **champion contact tracing technology** for long-term care properties. By using this software to measure outcomes, we will also be better equipped to identify shortfalls in the system and address them. At the same time, we will be able to see where there is success and build upon those successes, all resulting in better outcomes and better care.

#### ***Communication***

Another benefit of this technology is that it will provide better, quicker information to family members, provided the resident consents to sharing that information. With strict visitation restrictions, many families are unable to get answers or responses respecting the status and condition of their family members residing in long-term care and staff just don’t have time to constantly be the main contact. With limited staffing, their first priority must be the safety of their residents. At the same time, it is important that we provide an honest account to family members.

We need the proper lines of communication open to those families. We must listen and respond to the concerns of these families. Contact tracing would dramatically improve the level of information provided.

#### ***Cost***

The present cost of this software ranges from \$34 - \$50 a month per resident for an average annual cost of \$504 per resident. Because this software could lead to early detection of issues and prompt attention during urgent situations, the return on this investment could be significant.

We could explore the option of who bears the cost (family or province) but for now, it must be on the table and part of the discussion.

The total annual cost of this initiative would be between \$3 to \$4 million. Whereas, the government has made a funding commitment of approximately \$3,500,000 to modernizing the technology in our long-term care properties, these costs are already accounted for. Our intention is to ensure they are put to use on our recommended technologies. Therefore, there is no new cost to modernization.

***As our population ages, we need to rethink what options are available to seniors who can no longer remain at home.***

#### **4. Seniors' Care Grant**

More than anything, the most common feedback from seniors is that they want to remain in their homes as long as possible. Unfortunately, as many become more frail and unable to perform some household tasks, their ability to maintain their homes can become increasingly difficult.

To provide our seniors with the support they need to remain in their homes and recognize that some people need a bit of extra help, the PC Party will establish a \$500 **Seniors' Care Grant** for help with household services. Any senior, who lives independently (e.g. not in long-term care for example), would be eligible for this grant provided:

- The property or lease is in their name;
- They are 65 years of age or over; and
- They have an annual income of \$37,500 or less.

The grant could be used for:

- Snow removal
- Home repairs
- Lawn care
- Grocery delivery

Any eligible senior may apply online or by phone, annually. The applicant would submit a request (up to \$500) for expected expenses.

The grant would be subject to audit and therefore, individuals would have to retain receipts and could be called on to submit them to prove their claim. Any funds received through this program cannot be considered income for taxation purposes or for clawing back any benefits.

#### **Costs**

There are approximately 183,820 individuals in Nova Scotia over the age of 65. 58% percent of that population has an income in Nova Scotia under \$40,000 [ $183,820 \times 58\% = 106,616$ ]. For costing purposes, we will assume that approximately sixty percent of those meeting the income threshold would be eligible for the grant.

If 63,970 people are eligible [60% of 106,616], at a cost of \$500 per person, the cost of this program will be \$31,984,800.

## CONCLUSION

The world is different post COVID-19. The virus shone the light on some deficiencies in many government services, long-term care being paramount. During the pandemic, lives were lost, staff felt vulnerable and alone, families were left disconnected and unable to communicate with their loved ones. There was much bravery in the face of fear in our long-term care properties.

When we know better, we must do better. We can do better. As a province, we must respect our essential workers by acknowledging their hurdles, addressing and supporting them with more than just accolades. As a province, we must be more consistent with infection control measures, including making more and more single bed rooms the norm. We need to do everything we can to make sure that home truly is home for our seniors and those providing their care.

The commitments outlined in this plan will begin to restore dignity to our seniors:

1. Improve health outcomes for long-term care residents through more comprehensive infection control measures, additional staff and technology to monitor and measure health outcomes.
2. The additional beds will reduce wait times in high demand areas for long-term care.
3. Improve workplace safety and satisfaction for staff, which will reduce high turnover rates, establish best practices for infection control and ultimately, result in more and better care.
4. Reduce overall demand on the health care system. With residents being more closely monitored and health outcomes improving, there will be less need
5. Establish much needed in-home support for seniors.
6. Minimize impact on the economy. Our economy was largely closed for three months on account of the spread of COVID-19 in our long-term care system. These increased measures will help to keep our residents safe and minimize the impact on both residents and those outside, in the event of future outbreaks.
7. Improve quality of life for residents. We must treat our seniors with the dignity they deserve. This plan establishes a homier and more comfortable environment with increased privacy and more access to care.
8. Reduce the stress of family and caregivers who want the best for a loved one.

Proposed Capital Infrastructure (without Federal support) Year One:

New room construction - investment in single rooms:	<b>\$5,662,900</b>
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Proposed Annual Operational Investments:

Nursing staff	\$78,561,871
CCA grant	\$4,500,000
Seniors' Care Grant	\$31,984,800

Total proposed annual investments (year 1):	<b>\$115,046,671</b>
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Total year one cost:	<b><u>\$120,709,571</u></b>
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These are investments in the dignity of our greatest generation.

They are investments that we cannot afford not to make.

# NOVA SCOTIA LOYAL

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Need**

There are incredible opportunities facing this Province. Yes, we have our challenges in healthcare, in education and in growing our economy, but the opportunities for Nova Scotia have never been better. With the right leadership, we can really fan the flames and change the course of this Province for generations. We can lead the country in economic growth and that means shared prosperity for all.

In spending the past few years travelling the Province, seeing the strengths and understanding the needs of our beautiful communities while listening to people, one thing is clear: everyone wants to experience the same growth as our beautiful capital. Too often, the reality is that while Halifax grows and prospers, the rest of the Province is not keeping pace. We can change that. Our plan will lead to shared prosperity and opportunity.

Nova Scotians know that people drive economies. People are customers. People are workers. People are the engine and the simple fact is that population growth is the key to economic growth.

The more people, the more jobs, the better the jobs, the more money for healthcare, education and social programming. Quite simply, more people means more. It means schools stay open (and more are built). It means more businesses and jobs to support the people and a larger tax base for the province, which means hospitals remain open. It means better roads and ultimately, it will mean a lesser tax burden and better fiscal stability for our grandchildren. We are talking about generational change.

Our *Dignity for Seniors* plan was frank about the investments needed to make sure that Nova Scotians age with dignity. Significant investments are required. Projections show that approximately 20,000 more Nova Scotians are expected to enter our long-term care system in the next decade. There is a tsunami heading toward us. Approximately 5% of Nova Scotians use 64% of the healthcare budget, what will happen when the demographic tsunami hits? There is a very real need now to prepare and that means a plan, today, to tackle our demographic challenges.

Without an aggressive plan to retain and attract youth, the society and tax burden pressure on the working-age population is not sustainable.

Now is the time for a real, targeted plan to attract more people and support this population growth through prudent investments in our infrastructure.

### **Government Loyalty to Nova Scotians**

Imagine a government trusting the potential of Nova Scotians and getting out of the way.

It is possible.

We need a leadership team that takes Nova Scotia to a new level. The level we've settled for is just not good enough. Settling for weak leadership has saddled us with, as of March 2021, the sad distinction as having the lowest GDP per capita in the country. We are not growing. Not growing leaves people behind. It's the reason Nova Scotia has the third highest poverty rate in the country and the highest in Atlantic Canada, with the highest child poverty rate in the country in Cape Breton.

It's a core value of the PC Party that we support and respect personal achievement. Our PC government will always support and encourage entrepreneurship and work with innovators to start here. But we will also stand with and support those that see opportunities to grow here.

Under our plan, when a company or entrepreneur is deciding where to start or where to grow, "Nova Scotia" will jump to mind. That's different from the path we've been on.

### **Support the payment of higher Wages**

Our focus is you. We will return corporate tax revenue collected to the hands of those who did the work to power companies forward: the workers. The majority of new jobs come from scale-ups - the growth of active, existing businesses - and our plan will help them grow. It will power them forward by helping them increase your wages.

Instead of businesses paying the government, they will pay employees instead. It also will help more and more companies to stay grounded in place in Nova Scotia, increase their footprint and not tap out by selling to a larger company and moving away.

This alone will send a strong message that Nova Scotia is open for business. Under this PC initiative, Nova Scotia will be the most desired home for corporations.

### **Attack our Demographics**

**Higher pay, more and better jobs coupled with our real, aggressive population growth strategy will lead to the biggest construction boom Nova Scotia has seen in generations.** This will further expose an existing lingering problem that has been left unaddressed and that is the shortage of skilled trades people. That's why we have focused on keeping and attracting more skilled trades people who will build their lives here while building Nova Scotia. Our targeted approach will appeal to people of all ages but to attack our demographic challenge and make Nova Scotia younger, we need specific public policy. Having more and more younger people establish strong roots in Nova Scotia is a key to long-term prosperity.

### **Support Local in every way**

Another key to long-term prosperity is an actual buy local plan that is more than just words. We have incredible products, innovators and opportunities. Supporting them means more jobs and greater self-reliance, economic diversification and less importing. Nova Scotians already have the mindset and desire to be loyal towards Nova Scotia products. Solid government policy can help them act on this mindset and support it at the cash register.



For too long, the exclusive government focus has been on increasing exports. It's true that it is a big world full of customers and exports are good. But imagine if at the same time, we had government policy that spoke to consuming more locally and importing less. We will always be importers to some degree but we must work toward importing less. Every year, Atlantic Canada imports billions more than it exports. This is called a trade imbalance and in 2018, Nova Scotia had a trade imbalance of \$7 billion. This represents an incredible opportunity.

Your PC government will respect the benefits of strong domestic production and seize the opportunities for expanding micro, small and medium sized businesses because they possess the economic energy required to move us forward. To unleash this energy, we will offer an incentive to prioritize buying local above all.

### **Use every opportunity promote Nova Scotia as a place to visit and live**

In a world where people are going to want to see beautiful places and experience new traditional experiences, Nova Scotia can literally offer it all. Our tourism sector is a key component of direct economic activity (it should be flourishing) but also critical to successful population growth through both migration and immigration efforts. After two years of being shut down on account of the pandemic, the PC message is clear - tourism operators, we need you, we value you and our potential.

Nova Scotia is the crown jewel of tourism in Canada. We have everything anyone could want, from our spectacular beaches, world-class golf courses, our own fine rural wineries, breathtaking landscapes and incredible restaurants and they are only a short drive away. Nova Scotia is simply a special place where people want to be.

With well over two million visitors annually, the hospitality industry has always been one of the financial backbones of Nova Scotia. Often, as residents, we are spoiled by the beauty and opportunities of this great province. Our tourism industry needs the support of Nova Scotians now more than ever.

One way to provide this support, while also showcasing our beauty and amazing, unique experiences, is through our film industry. That industry alone makes a massive contribution to our tourism sector. *The Lighthouse* alone booked 3,000 hotel rooms in Yarmouth during the span of two months while filming in 2019.

Everytime someone sees Nova Scotia on the big screen it's good for our province. Nova Scotia has been the site of some incredible television and movie sets. Piggybacking on the imagery of Nova Scotia that these films and series are showcasing and promoting, is an obvious opportunity that has for the most part been missed by poor public policy. We will pull this lever and synergize with other advertising with one goal: promote Nova Scotia.

The link between film and tourism is so strong that TIANS awarded *The Curse of Oak Island* with its Crystal Award for excellence in tourism. What better way to advertise Nova Scotia than with targeted advertisements of our province offering tourism packages.

Your PC government will work to make Nova Scotia a leader in productions because that will help us lead in other areas. We have world class filmmakers and world class landscapes. It's time to make Nova Scotia into the film mecca it can be.

With global spending on entertainment content soaring, 2021 will prove to be one of Nova Scotia's busiest production years ever. Despite this record-breaking production, Nova Scotia's market share of Canadian production volume has dropped from 2% to 1%.

### **More Nova Scotians**

Higher population is good. It's good that Halifax is growing. It will be better when the population growth is expanded beyond one urban centre. A shining city on the hill is a necessary part of our economic future, but a shining city is only strong when the surrounding communities are strong.

The population in Halifax is currently at an all time high of 403,131 (as of 2019). That is a 310% increase from the population in Halifax in 1950 (130,000) and a 112.3% increase in population from just twenty years ago in 2001 (359,111).

The next step is a government with a plan to grow the entire province. Because there hasn't been a government plan, our province is writing its own tale of two separate and distinct communities, one that is growing and prospering and the rest. The 'rest' deserves better.

Richmond County has seen a 60 percent population decline from its highest population rates. Cumberland County has seen a 27 percent drop. Guysborough is at a 58 percent decline, and since 1986, the population has steadily decreased by between 6.9% to 10.1% each census.

Nova Scotia in fact has, on average, lost in the range 20,000 people per year. Over the past decade alone, that represents a loss of over 200,000 Nova Scotians. Mostly from our rural areas. Imagine if they were still here.

Population loss, at this scale, is dynamic and has widespread impacts. Schools close. Businesses close. Churches close. More people leave. Fewer arrive. The population is aging, with a smaller tax base, meaning the costs of going forward are being borne by fewer people in communities with fewer jobs. The cycle continues. Each turn of the cycle shrinks the tax base and increases the costs of providing necessary services.

It's time for a new cycle of population growth driven by immigrants and migrants, focused on more younger Nova Scotians. More people means more, better infrastructure needs on top of the incredible housing needs that already exist and thus, more people to build and support that construction boom; safe and active transportation; stable and reliable internet service.

### **Infrastructure to Support Nova Scotians**

#### **(a) Internet**

Ensuring that every Nova Scotian has access to proper, modern high speed internet represents the biggest economic development opportunity since the railway. There is no greater investment in our economy than in ensuring the Internet is available to everyone.

The Internet is the great equalizer necessary to narrow the opportunity gap between the urban and rural. It is necessary to remain and become competitive on the global market. It is

necessary to ensure ALL children have access to education. It is necessary to provide access to primary health care. It is essential.

While the need for internet access has been apparent for more than a decade, the pandemic emphasized how crucial it is for our province. Students actually driving around searching for wi-fi signals to connect to so they can write their exams and employees doing the same just to participate in Zoom meetings is not a good look for our province.

During Covid lockdowns, while our roads and highways were nearly empty, the information highway is what allowed many of us to 'get to work' on time. Unless you live in rural parts of the province where our roads were still busy with people searching for wi-fi. Every time someone has to drive around in their car and search for the internet, government has failed them.

With nearly 50,000 households without access to the Internet, this failure here has been a failure of will, a failure of vision and a failure of commitment.

For Nova Scotia to capitalize on global opportunities and leverage our second to none work-life balance, we need to equip all communities with the best of internet services so we can compete from anywhere.

## **(b) Housing**

We can't begin to realize the potential of this province without tackling our housing needs head-on. From a shortage of affordable rental units to increasing home prices, there are significant challenges.

Halifax, alone, has seen an increase in its homeless population, doubling over the past year. The vacancy rate in the province is 1.9 percent of housing stock, and, prior to Covid, many rents were increasing, some dramatically.

This is an issue of supply - there is not enough supply. When you have a supply problem, rent control is not the answer. It impacts supply in a negative way at a time when the solution is more supply. If you're not adding supply, you're not fixing the problem.

At the same time, we are also experiencing a real estate boom in Nova Scotia that is pricing some out of the market, including many first time home buyers. In fact, home prices have increased by as much as 30%. This is the single largest increase in Canada.

Many of these properties are being purchased, sight-unseen, by individuals who do not pay income tax in Nova Scotia. In 2018, Statistics Canada estimated the rate of non-resident ownership in Nova Scotia to be 3.9%. Higher than both British Columbia (3.8%) and Ontario (2.2%).

Our is a plan to take steps to make stable, affordable housing a part of Nova Scotia's landscape.

## **(c) Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Strategy**

Tip O'Neill's famous words that "All politics are local" remain true and in Nova Scotia, it is also true that there is nothing more local than the road that you drive everyday. Good roads and good transportation options are part of the fabric of strong, liveable communities.

Good roads are vitally important for community growth and development. They not only provide access to employment, health services, education, social needs and much more but are critical in the support of more people and more jobs.

And yet our roads, particularly our rural roads, are too often neglected. A backlog of outstanding maintenance causes irreparable damage and deterioration of our roads. If insufficient maintenance is not carried out, it can lead to safety risks along with roads needing replacing or major repairs in fairly short turnaround times, resulting in soaring costs for repairs.

Our plan addresses this need with a transportation fund, focused on making Nova Scotia more accessible and safe via our rural roads, air travel and removal of tolls because these are key to our comprehensive approach in supporting more jobs and more people.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Our plan will propel Nova Scotia forward and make us a true, national leader in economic growth. Our plan is interconnected with each pillar supporting another and everything points to population growth. The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney said that Canada should be striving for 100 million Canadians by the turn of the century. We agree. The Mulroney goal is equivalent to 2.7 million Nova Scotians by 2100. Our goal is even more ambitious: Two million Nova Scotians by 2060 and three million by 2100.

It is achievable but only with a thriving economy that's why our plan focuses on:

- Higher earning for those working and living here - **more and higher paying jobs** by restructuring the system away from a corporate tax regime to what is essentially a large employee profit share program that uses the corporate tax collection system to determine how much is returned to businesses on the condition that they use it to reward their employees;
- **Attacking our demographic challenges** by focusing on attracting and retaining workers under 30 that can put down roots here while powering our construction boom;
- Standing behind local, Nova Scotia companies with **a buy local initiative that is more powerful than the empty slogans of politicians** and truly encourages Nova Scotians to step-up particularly in agricultural and food production; and
- **Focusing on investing in the necessary infrastructure** to support a booming economy through transportation, internet and housing.

### 1. Nova Scotia Loyal: More Jobs / Better Jobs

#### *Employee Loyalty*

As a province, we need to start investing more in ourselves. We have capable and talented people and organizations. All Nova Scotians win when we invest in ourselves.

At the same time, everyone wants higher pay and every employer would love to be able to pay their team more.

Our solution is an innovative, made in Nova Scotia solution that will meet both of these goals. This is a key component of the “can do” attitude Nova Scotians will see from your PC government. Your PC government will give your boss a choice: leave the money they paid as corporate tax in the hands of the government or ask for it back on the condition that they distribute those same dollars to their team.

That’s an easy decision and it will mean more money in the hands of those that earned it: you.

Whatever is paid in provincial corporate tax, as a five year pilot program, the province will return 50% of it to the corporation the next year as a subsidy, provided it is paid to their employees. Every corporation is eligible, simply by paying corporate tax. Pay corporate tax, get it returned on condition it goes to the staff.

This means higher pay and more jobs. Since it is based on the amount of corporate tax paid, the corresponding rebate is unique to the individual company and capped at the dollar value of corporate taxes paid, as determined by the Canada Revenue Agency following its assessment of their tax return.

For example, if a business paid corporate tax to the province in the amount of \$50,000, the following year, that business is eligible for a wage subsidy in the amount of \$25,000 on the condition that it is paid to its employees. How it is actually distributed, and who gets what, is at the discretion of the employer but the choices are:

- bonus or raises to all, or some, employees;
- by hiring more staff and growing the business; or
- through some combination of increased wages and more staff.

This will be the biggest government initiative to increase wages in Nova Scotia in generations.

### **Under a PC government, employees will make more**

This program will also be an incredible business attraction tool. The 2014 Nova Scotia Tax and Regulatory Review made the following conclusions: “...*the province needs to focus hard on its corporate tax structure. Having the highest provincial corporate tax rate in Canada puts Nova Scotia at a distinct competitive disadvantage*”.

We have the highest corporate taxes in the country and that has held us back. It is important psychologically that the corporate tax rate is lowered so the gap between other places is significantly reduced. Already, too many companies gravitate toward lower cost provinces. We are not willing to look the other way any longer. We will aggressively create the best growth environment in the country. An environment where the government not only gets out of the way of their growth, but paves its way.

The potential of more and better jobs will help to attract more talent to Nova Scotia and will establish a new level of loyalty between the province, the employer and everyone working for a tax paying corporation.

Manufacturers and distributors will choose Nova Scotia. Existing businesses that have been building and pounding away for years will be respected and rewarded.

This plan means:

- (1) More money in the hands of workers;
- (2) Job growth and even more corporate level and headquarter jobs; and, most importantly, it will
- (3) Send the message that Nova Scotia is open for business.

### ***No Tax Under 30***

As we set public policy around corporate taxes to create jobs, we also need public policy to fill them. At the same time, our demographic challenges can no longer be ignored.

Initially, we are focusing on the construction industry and establishing a plan to fill jobs with younger Nova Scotians to attack our demographics and right size them. There is currently a desperate need for trades workers across the province, with over 7,000 unfilled jobs. All across this province we see companies that could do more, take on more customers, if they had more people. No area is immune. Be it boat builders in Cape Breton or Argyle; construction-related companies in any part of the province, plumbers, roofers, you name it they are all in need of workers.

How can we address the housing shortage when we don't have people to build? As our population grows, without a plan, the issues will get worse. We need more and more young people grounded in place in Nova Scotia.

To power the people-driven construction boom that our policy will generate, we need the workers to get things done. We want those jobs filled and, as much as possible, we want them filled with younger workers. The PC message to young people is that **we want you here**.

But more must be done to attract other young talent in other industries. That's the reasoning behind our no provincial personal income tax on the first \$50,000 of earnings for anyone working in the construction industry who is under the age of 30.

Qualifying construction industry jobs include, but will not be limited to: agriculture technicians, boat builders, cabinet makers, carpenters, electricians, heavy equipment operators, ironworkers, metal fabricators, plumbers, roofers, welders. This list is not exclusive and will grow as our needs are identified and expanded.

Nobody has to leave Nova Scotia when their initial school training is complete. Stay here and be part of moving our economy forward. This is an up front investment in youth that will lead to long term gain.

### ***"Nova Scotia Loyal"***

With more people here, earning more and building stronger communities, we want the money flowing around the economy to stay here. Money spent locally, particularly in local companies, leads to stronger domestic manufacturing and production and benefits all Nova Scotia.

The more of our locally-produced and harvested food (seafood, fruit, vegetables, etc.) that is consumed here, the more we will see more production of value-added goods. As we get more money flowing through our economy, we build more vibrant, more sustainable companies and communities.

The PC goal is a 10% shift in demand towards Nova Scotia products. These are goods that no longer need to be imported so the money stays here. This 10% would grow the GDP of Nova Scotia by roughly \$1.4 billion, which itself would lead to thousands of jobs.

With global markets, most retail products in Nova Scotia (as elsewhere) compete on price. What is cheapest? Competing on quality is (and will remain) a niche market. For example, Bessie's Blueberry Jam, produced in Oxford, might be the best quality jam, but Sobeys sells a hundred times more of the US-produced Smuckers jam as they do Bessie's. Smuckers may not be the same quality level as Bessie's and may not support local jobs, but it's half the price.

Our plan will incentivize Nova Scotians to buy our domestic products and inspire them at the same time. This puts a positive focus on companies that are grounded in place here in Nova Scotia. In doing so, we will also correct such lamentable retail imbalances that actually hurt our local producers, as happens with Nova Scotia craft beer producers. Presently, it is absurdly cheaper for a craft brewer in New Brunswick to sell their beer in Nova Scotia, than for a local craft brewer to sell in their own province.

Nova Scotia brewers are currently on unequal footing with our closest competitors in New Brunswick. They are faced with a tariff fee structure that is not charged to our New Brunswick competitors. That is beyond unacceptable.

Our PC government will incentivize the Nova Scotia retail market to prioritize buying Nova Scotia products that are made, manufactured or substantially produced (or processed) in Nova Scotia. To do that, we are establishing the **"Nova Scotia Loyal"** program.

A recent study conducted by Canadian online retail monster, Shopify, found that 66% of customers say that the ability to earn rewards actually changes their spending behaviour and 84% said they're more apt to stick with a brand that offers a loyalty program. 56% were willing to pay more for the product if loyalty points exist.

"Nova Scotia Loyal" is the first of its kind provincially-sponsored rewards program in which Nova Scotia consumers receive loyalty points when they purchase a good that is made, manufactured or substantially produced in Nova Scotia and is identified as a "Nova Scotia Loyal" product. We would rebate the customer directly at the point of sale by the swipe of a card.

Any Nova Scotia resident can sign up for a Loyal card. The card will be app-based on phones with hard copies available upon request. When a Nova Scotian purchases a qualifying product bearing a Loyalty seal (meaning it was substantially manufactured or produced in Nova Scotia), they can swipe their phone and record loyalty points that will be allocated to their points account. Each product bearing the seal will contain a single barcode that will operate for scanning at the point of sale system.

The value of each point for food products would be equivalent to 10% of the before-tax amount paid on that particular product. For example, if you purchase a \$20 basket of blueberries, made by a Nova Scotia vendor sold in Nova Scotia, your points account would be credited \$2 on that

sale. A \$250 order of groceries could result in \$25 directly off at any number of redemption locations. The value of each point for non-food products would be equivalent to 3% of the before-tax amount paid on that particular product.

Points would be redeemable at partner organizations and government offices (for example: Access Nova Scotia). Businesses could apply to become partner organizations to receive these benefits.

To implement and oversee this program, the province will partner with an intermediary company to administer the program. There are several technology companies in Canada that sell customer loyalty systems along with other companies that exist to manage the programs. Tenders would be issued for these services.

Incidentally, the Loyalty seal also becomes a key piece of branding on each qualified good. The Loyal program will be combined with a robust marketing campaign, including the 'Nova Scotia Loyal' logo, seal, standards and other branding initiatives. Radio, social media and print media will accompany marketing efforts.

This 'buy-local' initiative will address the issue of stimulating consumption for local products and reduce the need for an export-at-all-cost economic strategy. In other words, instead of increasing exports, we reduce imports. This strategy can, paradoxically, then create enough economic energy to strengthen Nova Scotia micro, small and medium sized enterprises, who can then turn focus towards exports.

A Nova Scotia-centric economic strategy will contribute to provincial pride. It will drive up demand for locally-made products. It will inspire and invigorate Nova Scotia producers, manufactures and, ultimately, the consumers; the people of Nova Scotia.

### ***Tourism***

Nova Scotians love Nova Scotia. In many ways that is our unique value proposition - the people of Nova Scotia. We need to celebrate that uniqueness and share it with the world. More and more people want to experience what it means to be Nova Scotians.

The product that we have to offer is world class and must be marketed as such. We live in the most beautiful place in the world, we should celebrate and sell that. We have everything a person could want to offer, year-round. We stand out from our competition and should proudly, empathically state it.

In a province as beautiful as Nova Scotia, the tourism sector is a crown jewel and should be nurtured as such. A PC government will develop a province-wide identity program that markets our existing assets, including:

- Our national parks (scenery/landscape)
- Winter sports (skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling)
- Summer sports (world class golf)
- Food and culture (Valley - the Napa Valley of the East; Cape Breton - Celtic Colours)

The essence of successful tourism is found within the culture of destination. We will support tourism operators and stand with them - through experience and funding - as they launch their



own marketing campaigns. There is nothing that is more grounded in place in Nova Scotia than our tourism operators and they are to be treasured and supported.

To ensure the tourism industry thrives, a PC government will **increase the Tourism Nova Scotia marketing budget by \$2 million** that partners with local operators and focuses on homegrown tourism and can be leveraged to other markets as appropriate.

At the industry level, a PC Government will respect the uniqueness of each region and work with local leadership to best market its unique characteristics and offerings. The regions know how to sell themselves better than anyone working in an office tower in Halifax ever will.

Practically speaking, we will allocate community level tourism funding, specifically for tourism, and be guided by the regions on how they can best promote themselves. For example, an area like Yarmouth might ask that any advertising campaign focus on its airport whereas another area might wish to focus on a local airport.

A total of five million dollars from the existing tourism budget will be directed towards this regional funding initiative meaning more of a voice for local communities. The fund will be allocated based on a formula that could take into account population, amenities, needs and per capita considerations.

We are committed to a stronger industry voice. This also means supporting communities and municipalities in their efforts to be responsive to the needs of the market in a responsible manner. Efforts to expedite permits for patio and outdoor dining for food and liquor service come to mind.

At the same time, we are committed to leverage the incredible work that our film industry already does to showcase our beauty and unique experiences.

The film and television industry in Nova Scotia has long been a creator of well paying, high-skill, creative jobs and a consistent economic revenue generator for the province. With demand for entertainment content at an all-time high, the Nova Scotia film and television industry is poised to re-establish itself as one of the 'go-to' production hubs in North America.

Nova Scotia has been blessed as the site of some incredible television and movie sets. These productions highlight beautiful landscapes that can't be replicated anywhere else. The opportunity to support film as they support us is so obvious it's hard to believe that the government hasn't jumped on this. We will.

Government should piggyback on the films and television series that showcase our province. "The Curse of Oak Island" has been one of the highest-rated shows on American and Canadian cable TV. Millions of viewers are gripped by the story, but equally enthralled by the scenic beauty and history of this province. What better way to advertise Nova Scotia than with targeted advertisements of our province and tourism packages during the airings of this show?

We must invest in advertisements promoting travel to our province during this show. There is so much synergy between promoting our film industry and promoting our tourism sector we just need to put that connection to good use.

## **Cost**

This province will run deficits for the next few years. It is important that we invest in people, invest in infrastructure and invest in our future. If we make the right investments, they will pay off in a very significant way that makes future generations proud of our efforts today.

Our PC plans for rejuvenating the Nova Scotia economy puts the employee first while making it easier for businesses to grow. This will mean more jobs and more people.

All of these initiatives are inter-connected and represent the investment that we are willing to make in our local companies and communities in the name of long term prosperity for all.

The total proposed investment in our plan that promotes loyalty to Nova Scotia, to create more and better jobs is determined as follows.

First we looked at the costing of our corporate tax plans for a full breakdown of costs and revenues for the first ten years without collecting corporate taxes.

The province has projected revenues from corporate taxes to be \$413,625,000 for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Our model uses this figure for the purpose of annual costing calculations. If the number turns out to be larger, the positive impact of our modeling is larger so, by using this figure, we are being conservative. The plan returns 50% of this corporate tax to Nova Scotians, to the hands of those that did the work.

This means a wage increase of \$206,713,000 in the hands of Nova Scotians. As this money makes its way into our economy, it creates more jobs. This investment will take time. In fact, it is not until year four that the investment starts to pay off. In the early days, the lost revenue (returned to employees) exceeds the revenue generated. The investment is most significant in the early years and slowly gains positive momentum.

In year one the net impact of this \$206 million investment in working families is \$139,675,927 and the net impact will continue to diminish annually as the policy takes root and begins to really drive economic growth.

Opportunities to offset the impact in the early years, including an evaluation of other economic development initiatives, will be constantly assessed.

As jobs are created, they must be filled. There are approximately 3,914 registered apprentices in Nova Scotia under the age of 30. The average salary of these workers is approximately \$18 per hour, for an annual salary of \$37,440. The provincial portion of income tax on this salary is \$2,616.

We have chosen to target youth in an effort to attack our demographic challenges. If we don't bring in more young people now, we won't be able to maintain (and grow) the level of services provided, particularly in healthcare. Previous governments have looked the other way and forced our seniors to do without. We are not willing to sacrifice Nova Scotians.

For costing purposes, we will assume that we will attract in the range of 2,000 individuals under 30 annually that qualify for this program. Assuming in the range of 6,000 trades workers (made up of the nearly 4,000 currently registered in Nova Scotia with the 2,000 new workers), the cost

of this investment will be approximately \$15,696,000. This figure does not take into account the offset of future personal income tax gains from this group.

Those of us who believe in this beautiful province know that once they are here and see and experience everything Nova Scotia has to offer, they will stay past the age of 30 and make their lives here. Meaning, the province will more than recoup this investment after the age of 30.

The key to driving our economy is keeping more and more of the money left in the hands of Nova Scotians here in Nova Scotia. This is where our 'Nova Scotia Loyal' program is critical and it incentivizes and motivates local spending.

Reaching our goal of a 10% shift in demand towards more local goods and services would have a significant positive impact for Nova Scotia. We estimate that this program alone could mean an increase in local spending of upwards of \$700 million and create 18,000 new jobs and almost a billion dollars in new wages [15,000 x median salary in Nova Scotia of \$52,200]. This, of course, means new tax revenue and we estimate that this program could generate over \$72,120,000 in new tax revenue [15,000 x provincial portion of income tax on median salary \$4,808].

While there are obvious benefits to the 'Nova Scotia Loyal' program, there will be costs. The province will have to reimburse Nova Scotians for the cost of their redemptions (being the points they have earned). In determining the costing, we must first consider the cost of local foods. We purchase approximately \$7.5 billion of food in Nova Scotia at present, of which \$1.1 billion is local food. A reward of 10% for food products would cost the province \$110,000,000. We would assume uptake in this rewards program of 70%, which would cost the province approximately \$77,000,000 [70% of 110,000,000].

With respect to non-food retail products, for costing, retail makes up 6.85% of Nova Scotia's GDP, totalling approximately \$2.5 billion. We will assume that 30% of that product remains in Nova Scotia for sale, totalling \$750 million [30% of \$2.5 billion]. Assuming uptake of 70% in our rewards program, approximately \$525 million worth of products would be sold for rewards. With a reward on non-food products of 3%, our investment in this program would total \$15,750,000.

There will also be administrative costs for both establishing and maintaining this program. While these costs will be up for tender, for the purpose of providing a costing estimate, we will approximate a fee of \$3,000,000 to develop the app, bar codes and roll out of the program with an additional \$1,250,000 assigned annually for the administration. A marketing campaign will run for the first six months of the program to introduce Nova Scotians to this buy local initiative. The estimated cost of the marketing campaign is approximately \$2,000,000.

The total proposed cost of 'Nova Scotia Loyal' is \$12,456,000 [\$77,000,000 + \$15,750,000 + \$2,000,000 + \$3,000,000 + \$1,250,000 less new tax revenue of \$72,120,000].

In an effort to work to attract people to Nova Scotia, to both live and visit, and to provide support for our tourism sector, our PC government will spend approximately \$2,000,000 on an aggressive advertising campaign with an additional investment of \$5,000,000, to be divided among regions for a regional approach to tourism. The total proposed additional investment in tourism for Nova Scotia is \$7,000,000.

All of these initiatives work together to promote Nova Scotia loyalty in one way or another. Our total investment in more and better jobs is: \$189,251,927.

## 2. More People

Population growth is a good thing. Sadly, population decline and rising overall ages have been - and remain - one of the biggest challenges to the region. Progress has been made to reverse some of these trends, but this must now be accelerated to ensure future success.

In fact, Nova Scotia faces a number of challenges that can only be overcome by having the courage to address our demographics and grow our population. If our government continues to bury its head in the sand and ignore the imminent risks, they only get worse and further jeopardize our ability to provide sustainable healthcare and adequate education while supporting those in need. The only alternative is increasing taxes. It's unthinkable. We are choosing action.

Our former Liberal government has claimed success on population growth, but under their version of "success" we continued to get older. In fact, every week in Nova Scotia, approximately 1,000 people turn 65 years old. Statistics Canada projects that in 2043, the best case for our population size will be 1,078,900. **Every scenario of the Statistics Canada model has the population of Nova Scotians under 64 years old shrinking by 2043.** This is scary for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it is well documented that those in this age group have greater healthcare needs.

While we get older, young people, particularly those who came here for school, are leaving. Over the last decade, 100,000 students graduated from Nova Scotia institutions. Half left the province. The point is that countless young people develop some level of roots and affections towards the region that could be translated into more permanent relocation.

In addition to the student leaving, over that same period, 164,265 people moved out of Nova Scotia. In total, that's over 260,000 people that left Nova Scotia. Imagine if they were still here!

The good news is that every one of these people has a connection to the area and most likely fond memories. We want these people back.

There is a huge opportunity to reverse the trend that sees Nova Scotia losing people to out-migration at a much higher rate than the other Atlantic provinces. For reference, during the past decade, PEI has lost only 33,000 people; Newfoundland has lost 82,000 and New Brunswick has lost 122,000.

There is a shortage of workers in numerous industries at both the skilled and unskilled levels. To address this, our PC government **will set a goal of a population of 2,000,000 by 2060.** This means attracting 25,000 people a year.

We will achieve our population target through a combination of migration from other parts of Canada and a strategic immigration plan. In order to attract them we will need a targeted advertisement campaign; a higher allowance of immigrants from the Federal government; an attractive corporate/employment environment; and the infrastructure to support an influx of people to the rural areas of our province.

## ***Migration***

Once anyone sees what Nova Scotia has to offer, people want to live here. We just need to show it to them.

There is a growing appetite for the lifestyle differences in our region and the compact location allowing urban living and rural pleasure. This is slowly being recognized across the country and can lead to further migration.

Our PC government will target *a minimum* of 10,000 to 15,000 new migrants each year from across Canada. We will attract them through:

- (1) An introduction to Nova Scotia with a powerful promotional campaign.
- (2) Ensuring the job opportunities are available for them and/or the climate makes sense for them to start and grow their businesses here.

The marketing campaign will offer Canadians what they're looking for, but didn't know existed or never considered. The campaign will be largely concentrated on digital advertisements, supplemented by television and billboard in targeted areas. We will take advantage of the popularity of tv shows like Oak Island and advertise during commercial breaks, presuming that there may be some synergy in those watching a Nova Scotia-based program.

We will focus on attracting six key groups and attracting them to rural areas of our province:

- Individuals who can work remotely and have flexibility to move.
- Individuals looking for a change and would be attracted to the affordability and lifestyle options of rural Nova Scotia.
- People who grew up in Nova Scotia and would now consider moving home.
- Former students who attended university here and fell in love with the province.
- Individuals who love the outdoors and have always dreamed of living a more laid back lifestyle, close to the ocean.
- People who have visited Nova Scotia as tourists.

Within those groups, we will target a mix of entrepreneurs and youth, in particular. Migrants will need to see quality of life and opportunity to come, especially to rural Nova Scotia.

In an effort to encourage moves to areas outside of Halifax that have been experiencing a decline, our campaign will display beautiful imagery of our small towns and the outdoors. Once you see what we have to offer, it isn't hard to imagine wanting to be here. It will focus on:

- Our national parks;
- Our diverse economy;
- Our corporate tax incentives that make it attractive to start a business here or establish more and better jobs;
- Winter sports (skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling);
- Summer sports (our world class golf);
- Food (making the wineries of the Annapolis Valley the east coast version of Napa Valley);
- Culture (events like Celtic Colours); and
- Low cost of living as compared to most other provinces.

This campaign will engage and leverage our film industry, our tourism sector and our real estate industry, bringing everyone together with a positive message about Nova Scotia.

Because it is a competitive world, our scenery and cultural offerings alone may not be enough if there is no work for the potential migrant. Our corporate tax plan will create an environment that encourages businesses to grow and will help employees to thrive. More jobs will be created and employers will be rewarded for paying their employees higher wages. No longer should we see large companies set up shop in our neighbouring provinces.

We have everything anyone could want. We just need to be a bit less Nova Scotian and boast about ourselves on the national stage.

### ***Immigration***

The province is left at the mercy of the Federal government for immigration programs and the ability to encourage our fair share of immigration, but we are prepared to advance an immigration policy that is bold, decentralized and is focused on immigration as an economic development tool. Despite recent declarations that the population of Nova Scotia is stabilizing or growing, a closer look reveals that the trend being observed is one that is too concentrated in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

This trend – in which Halifax and the regions surrounding it grow and most other regions in the province shrink – is not new. For most regions, the steady loss of population has persisted for more than three decades. Despite the intentions of our current policy, its outcomes are unacceptable. Our regions are not prospering and consequently, our provincial economy is not prospering.

Not only are we falling behind the country in terms of population growth and immigration policy, but we are falling behind within Atlantic Canada. We must create a system with better outcomes for all regions of the province and one that leads to concrete and measurable GDP growth.

The Federal government sets the number of immigrants allowed into Nova Scotia annually. In 2016, we were permitted 3,384 immigrants (this number does not include refugees). In the same year, PEI was allowed 1,966 immigrants. The population of PEI is 142,000 and it is the leading region in Atlantic Canada in population and economic growth. PEI is permitted an immigration quota in its province or approximately 1.5% of its population.

Compare PEI to Cape Breton, with a population of 134,000. Cape Breton has been allocated fewer than 200 immigrants by the province.

Similarly, Manitoba, a province once similar in population size to Nova Scotia, has grown exponentially over the past decade. Manitoba is allowed in the range of 15,000-20,000 immigrants annually by the federal government. This represents between 1.1 to 1.5 percent of Manitoba's population. Whereas Nova Scotia's annual quota varies from .5 to 6 percent.

It is absolutely necessary that we work with the Federal government to establish a provincial immigration program that is fair and allows Nova Scotia to grow at an equitable rate as compared to other provinces.

Under the PC government, we will negotiate for an increase in our federal immigration numbers to 1.5% of our population, being about 15,000 individuals per year.

No advertising will be necessary to attract this group. There are people who want to come to Nova Scotia, but simply don't have the channels at the moment. These individuals are made up of doctors, students, engineers and entrepreneurs. They will be job creators.

Nova Scotia needs a government that will push the federal government on immigration. The PC Party is committed to, and willing to be held accountable for, growing all regions of the province. Each time the tax base shrinks in one of Nova Scotia's regions, costs to the province to provide provincial services in that region go up. It is important to grow the capital, but is not financially responsible or sustainable to focus on this alone. When there are more people living in all of our regions, community vibrancy and capacity grow, and our tax rates and cost of services decrease with the cost of basic services shared among more people.

The Century Initiative – a project led by leading scholars, economists and entrepreneurs in Canada, contends that Canada's future prosperity rests on its ability to significantly increase its annual immigration targets and to grow Canada's population considerably in the next 75 years. Former Prime Minister Mulroney has taken a similar position – the hope for Canada's future success is based on our ability to grow our population. He has set a target of growing the population of Canada to 100,000 people by 2100.

Nova Scotia can easily do its part to meet its share of that growth, provided we start investing in a strategy and in people now.

It is estimated that based on our current trajectory, Canada will have a population of 53.7 million people by 2100. This lacklustre level of growth results in long term economic growth of approximately 1% per year. It would mean Canada dropping to 69th in its world population ranking. Canada would be smaller than many countries, including that of Yemen, Burkina and Ghana, among many others. We can do better and should be guided by Prime Minister Mulroney's sage direction.

Canada must grow its population to grow its economy. Nova Scotia must grow its population to grow its economy. Halifax must grow its population to grow its economy. All regions in Nova Scotia must grow their population to grow their economies.

Our neighbouring province, Prince Edward Island, implemented a focused and ambitious population strategy in 2006. Fifteen years later they are leading the region in population growth and are the leading region in the country in economic growth.

RBC's June 2017 Economic Outlook highlights the value of PEI's population strategy:

*"PEI's economic performance easily stands out in Atlantic Canada. It beat Nova Scotia's 2016 growth forecast of 1.1% handily with Statistics Canada's preliminary estimate implying a rate of 2.4%.*

*We expect the provincial economy to expand further by 1.5% in 2017, which would be the strongest pace in the region for a second-straight year.*

*A wave of immigration generated much of the thrust in the economy of late. The benefits of this wave spread across many sectors, including housing*

*construction and household spending, creating broadly based positive spinoffs.”*

The Atlantic Immigration Pilot (“AIP”), a three-year program introduced in 2016 to try to help Atlantic Canada deal with its demographic crisis, replicates the flaws in our current system. The AIP is employer-driven (not entrepreneurship-driven) and works well for large employers who can offer skilled, full-year, full-time employment. The AIP has not worked well for our non-HRM regions in which this type of employment is not readily available.

A PC government will work with the Federal government to establish a regional nominee program for Nova Scotia. The key elements required in a regional nominee program include: an appropriate scale for the program (number of annual nominees); appropriate minimum duration (in years); and the characteristics of the nominees who are most likely to succeed in and to want to stay in a region like Cape Breton, Guysborough, Yarmouth, etc.

Using the example of Cape Breton, in order to have the population stabilization impact needed and to allow for effective evaluation, the Island needs to target at least 500 nominees each year and this effort is required consistently for a minimum of one decade. This number, placed in context, represents approximately 0.4% of the current population of the region.

Via a regional nominee program, Cape Breton would seek applicants who:

- Have lived in other rural or semi-urban jurisdictions;
- Do not have a connection to other regions of the country; and
- Have the skills and/or education to fill current or anticipated employment positions on the Island.

As a starting point, the proposed regional nominee program would be modelled on elements of provincial nominee programs that exist with success in other regions of Canada. For example, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (“PNP”) consists of two streams under which individuals can apply: Skilled Worker Stream and the Business Immigration Stream. Within the first category, there are two components: a Skilled and Semi-Skilled Worker Stream.

For Temporary Workers: Individuals who are temporary foreign workers working in a skilled or semi- skilled occupation (all occupations) for a Manitoba employer, are eligible if they:

- Have worked full-time for at least six months;
- Have been offered a permanent, full-time job from the same employer; and
- Have proficiency in English or French.

All applicants are asked to submit a settlement plan that explains personal and employment goals and plans for their future in the province.

In the Working Graduates Category: Students who have recently graduated from a Manitoba post- secondary institution are eligible if they:

- Have worked full-time for at least six months as a recent graduate student from a program that was at least one year in length;
- All applicants are asked to submit a settlement plan that explains personal and employment goals and plans for their future in the province.



In the Manitoba Experience Category: Individuals who have studied or worked in Manitoba are eligible if they:

- Have worked full-time for at least six months; or
- Have completed an academic/training course in Manitoba.

Within the Entrepreneur Stream, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program can recruit and nominate qualified business people from around the world who have the intent and ability to move to Manitoba and establish, purchase a business or become partners in an existing business within the first 24 months of arrival in Canada on a temporary work permit. For an individual to be eligible under this stream, they must:

- Make an investment of at least CAD \$250,000 in the Manitoba Capital Region or \$150,000 outside of the Manitoba Capital Region;
- Have at least three years of business ownership and management experience or have at least three years' experience at the executive-level (business owners are given higher points in comparison to senior managers); or
- Have a minimum net worth of CAD \$500,000.

An expression of interest and business plan must be received by the Manitoba provincial government and an invitation to apply received by the applicant to be eligible to apply. An exploratory visit to Manitoba is recommended.

These elements of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program are transferable to a regional experience in Nova Scotia. Required modifications would become apparent as the program evolved; however, these elements offer a practical beginning framework for a regional nominee program in Nova Scotia.

### **Cost**

The costs of attracting 25,000 more individuals to Nova Scotia per year will be divided between our aggressive marketing campaign and additional supports for regional Immigration offices.

We estimate our initial marketing campaign will cost in the range of \$2,500,000, shared between the cost of production and the direct media buys. The Department of Immigration will work with the province's Tourism Department to launch this campaign. The campaign will start within six months of coming into government.

With respect to our plan for increased immigration, more supports will be needed outside of Halifax, in rural communities, so as to help the influx of new immigrants with a smoother transition into their new homes. These offices will help with translation, jobs, housing, etc. and will operate as a one stop shop for obtaining the information and help and immigrant needs. This provides each immigrant with the consistency of dealing with only one government office and developing relationships with the staff.

The smoother the transition, the higher the likelihood of retention. If we don't do everything possible to ground these new residents here in Nova Scotia, we will risk losing them.

A budget of \$3,000,000 will be divided amongst the 17 counties outside of Halifax to establish (or grow) regional Immigration offices. If a particular region already has a resource in place for immigration services, the Province will work with that organization to carry out the province's supports.

This \$5,500,000 investment in immigration will be offset with the personal income tax of those migrating and immigrating to Nova Scotia.

Based on earning a median income of \$52,200 and assuming approximately 60% (15,000) of those arriving in Nova Scotia have earnings in that range, they would pay personal provincial income tax of \$4,808. This would mean an additional \$72,120,000 in revenue for the Province [15,000 x \$4,808], year after year after year.

The total investment in our PC plan would see increased annual revenue in the amount of \$66,620,000 [\$72,120,000 - \$5,500,000].

### **3. Infrastructure to Support the People**

As the private sector flourishes under PC public policy that makes it easy to build more and better jobs and as the population grows - in particular, more people in our rural communities, there will be significant infrastructure needs. To name a few:

- Access to the Internet;
- A stable housing supply;
- Roads and recreational facilities.

Having the necessary infrastructure in place (Internet, housing, roads, etc.) will help to attract and retain people to Nova Scotia. It will encourage migration to rural areas of the province if they have the resources necessary to work from home, access healthcare from home, travel safe roads and have access to housing in safe neighbourhoods and communities.

#### ***Internet***

Where will prosperity over the next 50 years come from? Technology. The problems of communities will increasingly be solved by technology. The challenges of households will increasingly be solved by technology. But in order for us to progress, everyone must have access to technology, regardless of location or economic status.

This is our chance to signal to the world that this is a progressive province.

It should be unacceptable that in 2021 there is anyone in this province who cannot access the Internet. Not only will high speed Internet bring prosperity to rural communities, it is the single most important province-wide infrastructure for our economy.

According to the latest update from Develop Nova Scotia (February 2021), there are approximately 48,200 homes and businesses that still need to be connected to the Internet in order to fulfill the target of 99% coverage in Nova Scotia. Develop NS projects by the end of 2021 they will have 94% coverage, with 23,300 homes and businesses still to be connected.

**A PC government will invest in getting the Internet to every household, not just most, for the simple reason that we see every single household as an economic development opportunity.**

There are certain key investments that will spur further private investment. This is one. Plus, we simply can't build a modern economy without everyone being able to participate. Satellite Internet aims to provide service to Canadian regions that lack high-speed internet. To receive the service, the user must purchase the satellite hardware package at a cost of \$649, which includes a satellite dish. Bell presently charges \$59.95 for their installation fee. The satellite Internet service itself is \$129 per month thereafter. The monthly costs are competitive with Bell Aliant, which offers their fastest internet, Bell Fibe, for the same \$129/month.

For any household Develop Nova Scotia leaves behind, a PC government will subsidize the installation costs of satellite (less what a household would pay to a provider like Bell, if they had access).

This investment will provide every household in the province with access to the Internet should they want it. This investment will modernize the province and increase productivity and it is absolutely necessary to seizing the potential of this province.

Imagine: No more school snow days, no more work snow days. If there is a poor weather day, everyone has the ability to jump on Zoom. If you need to talk to your doctor, your banker, your colleague, your friend, your grandchild, everyone will now be able to do it.

### ***Housing***

We have a housing crisis in this province and more people will increase the need for more housing and press the system even further.

The answer to the housing crisis is more housing. Before housing can be built, the necessary land must be secured. Approximately 30% of land in Nova Scotia is owned by the government. Government apparently owns so much land that it doesn't know what it owns, because no full inventory of provincial owned lands exists.

The PC Party believes that once it is analyzed, there will be land that could be better used - for agricultural purposes, for recreational purposes and for housing purposes, to name a few.

As such, the first direction the PC government will give to Nova Scotia Lands is to work with Housing Nova Scotia to develop a full inventory of lands owned and identify areas that could be used for housing. The inventory must be submitted to the Minister within three months of coming into government so that the province can manage and keep track of the land it owns in a comprehensive accounting manner. This will also allow work to get underway immediately in determining best uses of those lands.

A significant portion of the lands may stay with the government, while other lands could be sold or leased as appropriate. We will also consider where land is available and where there is a need for housing stock: both affordable housing and general residential purchases. We will issue tenders on those appropriate parcels with the condition that a certain portion of the lands must be used for affordable housing developments.

With a requirement for affordable housing developments as a component of these sales/leases, this initiative will begin to build a new housing stock to meet the needs of Nova Scotians. Additionally, as more supply becomes available, the cost of units will stabilize.

With our plan to welcome more people (both Canadians and new Canadian residents), we recognize that many of these individuals will want to purchase homes in Nova Scotia. However, there is currently some legitimate concern that many properties are being purchased by non-residents, who may or may not plan to spend time in those properties.

We have all seen the housing situation that has arisen in Vancouver, making it nearly impossible for young people to purchase a first home in the city.

Our PC government will take action to make housing affordable for those choosing to make their homes in Nova Scotia. We will impose a new tax and property levy for buyers who do not pay income tax in Nova Scotia. These fees will limit purchases from non-Nova Scotia income tax payers and for those who do purchase, will bring in an added regular stream of revenue for the province.

We will implement two new fee streams for buyers who do not pay income tax in Nova Scotia:

- A special deed transfer tax; and
- A property tax levy.

A deed transfer tax is a one-time payment due at the time of closing a property transaction. Standard deed transfer tax rates are set by each municipality. In Nova Scotia, they range from .5% of the purchase price to 1.5% of the purchase price.

For purchasers who do not pay Nova Scotia income tax, our PC government will implement an additional, provincial deed transfer tax of 5% on any Nova Scotia property purchased by individuals who do not pay taxes in Nova Scotia. This tax is in addition to the deed transfer tax set and collected by the respective municipalities. The proceeds from this fund would be a point of consideration during the renegotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Province and the municipalities. Additionally, it would be challenging for municipalities to manage a system of non-Nova Scotian tax paying buyers as they likely would not have the resources necessary for determining beneficial ownership whereas the Province likely would.

In Budget 2021, the Federal government recognized this percolating issue and announced their intention to bring in a new tax that would target owners who do not pay income tax and who leave property sitting empty through a national 1% tax on the value of non-resident, non-Canadian owned residential real estate considered to be vacant or underused. Under this proposal, all owners of residential property in Canada, aside from Canadian citizens and permanent residents, would be required to file a declaration with the CRA detailing each property they own.

This data provides an opportunity for establishing data sharing between the Federal Minister of National Revenue and the Provincial Minister of Finance.

Similarly, another tool to deter non-resident purchases and/or benefit from these purchases, is to impose a tax levy on residential properties owned by individuals who do not pay Nova Scotia income tax. With rising real estate prices across the country, some Canadian jurisdictions have

chosen to implement increased property taxes for individuals who do not pay income tax in our province.

Property taxes vary from municipality to municipality. In Nova Scotia, they range from \$0.67 per \$100 of assessed property value to \$2.215 per \$100. Once again, the challenge for municipalities to collect any levy for specific non-resident property owners, would be their ability to determine beneficial ownership of the properties in question. Whereas, this will be a simpler task for the provincial government.

A PC government will impose a levy on every non-Nova Scotian tax payer held property in Nova Scotia of an additional \$2 per \$100 of assessed property value.

### ***Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal Strategy***

As Nova Scotians, we need to be able to connect with the world and with each other if we are to be successful. Ensuring the continued growth and connectivity of Nova Scotia is a critical point of infrastructure which supports most aspects of this plan.

#### ***Roads***

In order to be a modern province that is able to support our jobs and people, we need to have safe, reliable and efficient transportation in our communities. Community safety is paramount.

To ensure the safety and reliability of our roads, we have to look at areas that are in greatest need of repair - predominantly, our rural communities.

Two budgets that largely impact rural roads that will require further investment:

##### **(a) Gravel Road Reconstruction Program.**

This program was created to capitalize on gravel road work. Local transportation managers needed a budget to rebuild old, neglected roads.

The current budget is \$20,000,000. Our PC government will double this investment to \$40,000,000, which will allow us to do twice the roads, or about 25-30 kilometers of gravel roads each year in each rural constituency. This fund will include ditching, culvert replacement, brush cutting and a reconstruction of the road base with eight inches of gravel.

##### **(b) Rural Impact Mitigation Fund ("RIM").**

This program "buys time" for roads that require work, but the funds are not available to properly fix them. RIM funding can be applied to all non-100 series roads, but primarily focuses on local roads to address improvements needed in rural areas. This funding can help to proactively rebuild roads to improve the structure and drainage, resulting in longer-lasting roads, improved safety and reduced maintenance costs.

There is approximately \$11,000,000 budgeted towards the RIM fund for the current fiscal year.

Our PC government is committed to expanding on this work and recognizing the important need for improving and growing our rural roads. We will update RIM to make it the largest roads plan dedicated towards rural growth that we have had in Nova Scotia. This fund will also be doubled to a total of \$22,000,000 that will be dedicated to rebuilding and repairing roads that have continually been left off the repairs list.

Funding to each constituency will be determined based on the percentage of kilometres of roads and the work needed. Each area will then prioritize roads for each work type, based on maintenance needs and consultation with the local MLA.

In addition to the rural roads funding, the PC Party will honour the road commitments made by the previous government in their five-year plan. Changes in governments too often lead to the stalling of major projects. We do not want that to happen with our government and will respect the projects that our communities have been promised.

Our plan is heavily focused on rural roads as most urban roads fall within municipal purview. However, funding for municipal roads will be an item of discussion while renegotiating the Memorandum of Understanding with the municipalities. While we are revitalizing rural roads, we will gladly examine what funding is available to help support municipalities do the same.

### ***Tolls***

While we are repairing our roads, we cannot neglect an area of our transportation sector that has been ignored: the tolls on the Cobequid Pass.

We do not need further barriers slowing us down and there is a green component to not having traffic tied up. This connection is important to Nova Scotians whether you traverse them daily or not, as goods and services are facilitated through them. We want things moving faster and more efficiently.

Pursuant to the *Highway 104 Western Alignment Act*, tolls were to cease when all costs and liabilities relating to the highway had been repaid. The province's public accounts indicated that the province would be in a position to pay off the bonds by 2019 with the restricted funds held for this bond, as opposed to their maturity date in 2026.

Rather than pay off the debt and remove the tolls, the Liberals have maintained the tolls on this stretch of highway.

Our PC government will remove the tolls on the Cobequid Pass immediately.

Nova Scotians have gone too long paying this toll. Its removal will facilitate a more efficient, improved flow of traffic with less congestion. There will now be no wait and enhanced safety for drivers. Drivers will be less likely to see unexpected lane changes to find shorter toll lines or slow down or brake as they approach the toll booths. This reduces the possibility of accidents. It also makes travel in the area more cost efficient.

Our government will work with the 40 staff working at the toll both to determine appropriate reassignments.

## ***Air Travel***

In improving the efficiency of our transportation system and in working towards building more accessible communities, our PC government recognizes the importance of the airline industry to Nova Scotia.

More and more - airports and airport connections - are our highways. Our government will invest in new and expanded connections to Halifax International Airport from key strategic destinations and new destinations. Where possible, new cargo routes will also be extended with a primary focus on speed to market.

We saw the harmful effects of Covid in closing one of our airports, effectively cutting a region of over 100,000 people off from consistent air travel.

If we don't make it easy to come and go, individuals "from away" may choose not to live here, as this connection is necessary for work and familial connections.

Our PC government commits to working with local air authorities, including Sydney, to develop an integrated airport marketing plan, using an upgraded, world-class Halifax International Airport as the hub.

## ***Survival of Social, Mental and Physical Wellness Centres***

When we think of the infrastructure around our province, one focal point for so many communities are their rinks - our centres of social, mental and physical wellness. They are the lifeblood for so many families. A source of physical fitness and for social gatherings. Recreation facilities and other social opportunities are important to ground people in communities.

There are over 18,000 youth who participate in minor hockey, with an additional 5,000 coaches and referees. There are approximately 4,000 youth across the province who participate in figure skating and speed skating. It is anticipated with our physical fitness tax credit for youth that these numbers will grow.

Our wellness centres are an economic driver for many rural communities, particularly during the tourism off-season, with hockey tournaments accounting for many hotel bookings and restaurant seatings.

With 81 rinks across the province and municipal budgets that are stretched thinner and thinner, there is a need for recognition of the important role played by our community centres of physical activity. In the most recent budget, only one rink received direct funding from the province. The rest were left to municipalities.

We would expect municipalities to continue responsibility for any rinks under their purview, but want to demonstrate the value we place on our rinks. As a result, the PC Party will establish a Rink Survival Fund to support underfunded rinks to pay for long overdue repairs that have been out of reach on account of limited budgets.

We will allocate funding in the amount of \$1,000,000, to be divided amongst the rinks based on a formula that takes into account age, need, state of repair, use, population and number of rinks in the area.

## ***Municipalities***

We cannot talk about roads and rural rink repairs without discussing municipalities. Many of our rural communities are struggling and we need to ensure they are adequately provided for.

For several years, the PC Caucus called on the Liberal government to ask the Auditor General to prepare a report on equalization payments. They did not respond. Our MLAs continued their efforts and wrote directly to the Auditor General and requested that a report be commissioned on the subject of equalization. The answer was no, that the request for the report has to come from the Premier and/or the Minister.

The PC Party feels that municipal equalization should be reviewed and modernized. What form it will take, we won't know until such time as it has been properly assessed by the Auditor General.

As a PC government, it is our intention to double the equalization payment for the first year, until a new Memorandum of Understanding with the municipalities can be reached.

## ***Costs***

Investments in our infrastructure are investments in the economy of our province.

Without the Internet, we will not be able to recruit doctors to our rural communities. We will not be able to grow our rural businesses. Our rural communities will continue to decline if they continue to be forgotten.

In 2022, we will provide a connection to the Internet to anyone who doesn't have one. As noted, Develop Nova Scotia expects this number to be in the range of 23,300 homes and businesses yet to be connected.

The difference in cost between the installation of satellite hardware and the installation costs of a Bell or Eastlink service is approximately \$589.05 [\$649 - \$59.95]. For conservative costing purposes, we will assume 100% uptake in this offering, for a total cost to the province of \$13,724,865 [23,300 x \$589].

Given the mass quantity of hardware that will be purchased by the province for these households, there is great potential to drive down the installation costs of satellite by buying in bulk. Discussions with satellite service providers will begin immediately upon being elected.

Our housing plan will be a source of revenue for the province. Some revenue will be generated through selling and leasing provincial lands. Without having a full inventory, we are not prepared to cost any potential revenue from this development initiative.

With respect to the new deed transfer tax, 5,334 residential properties were sold in the first quarter of 2021, this will be the basis of our costing calculation. This figure would assume annual sales of 21,336 properties. The average price of sales is \$372,534. Assuming 3.9% of these sales are to non-Nova Scotian income tax paying purchases would make up approximately 832 sales annually.



An additional 5% deed transfer tax on the average sale price would result in revenue for the province of \$18,626.70 per sale [ $\$372,534 \times 3.9\%$ ]. Based on 832 qualifying sales, the province would see additional revenue in the amount of \$15,497,414.

Similar to the non-resident deed transfer tax, a new property tax levy will be placed on non-Nova Scotian income tax paying property owners. Once again, assuming an average property value of \$372,534 with a levy of \$2 per \$100 of assessment, each relevant property would provide revenue of approximately \$7,450 [ $\$372,534 / \$100 = \$3,725.34 \times \$2$  (per \$100 of assessment)].

There are approximately 458,568 residential properties in Nova Scotia. 17,884 of those properties would be held by individuals who do not pay income tax in Nova Scotia [ $458,568 \times 3.9\%$ ]. Assuming an average levy of \$7,450 per property, the province would generate additional revenues from these owners in the amount of \$133,235,800.

Our PC government's total investment in housing infrastructure is a revenue positive \$148,733,214.

A key aspect of infrastructure is our roads. We have committed to honouring the ongoing projects and will invest heavily in additional capital projects that enhance the safety and traversability of our beautiful province.

Our government is committing to a focus on revitalizing rural roads by doubling funding to our Gravel Road Reconstruction fund and the RIM \$31 million.

Additionally, we will incur the cost of paying off the bond on the Cobequid Pass to remove the tolls on that highway. It is yet to be determined as to whether or not we pay the bond off immediately or continue to repay the debt at the same time the toll is removed. The Liberal government has not disclosed whether there are penalties for prepayment. Without having a clear picture of the consequences of repaying, we are unable to provide exact details on the repayment schedule.

For the purposes of costing, we can assume an annual loss in revenue from the toll in the amount of \$12,000,000.

We have also allocated \$1,000,000 for our Rink Survival Fund, to help support the ongoing maintenance and repairs of the centre of so many of our communities. Our total new investment in roads and rural infrastructure is \$44 million.

Additionally, your PC government has committed to doubling the transfer payments to municipalities at a total cost of \$32 million.

The total proposed investment in our infrastructure plan that supports more people and more jobs is a revenue positive \$59,008,349.

## CONCLUSION

Each part of our PC Nova Scotia Loyal plan is interconnected. We need our communities to grow in order to support our health, education and community services systems. To grow, we

need more jobs. We also need better jobs. We need people and companies grounded in place here in Nova Scotia. This is why we focus on giving employers the ability to reinvest their tax dollars into their employees and growing their businesses, rather than paying it to government. We will help businesses have the ability to find people - the right people - and we will help to pay them more.

To fill the jobs, we need more people. We need concrete plans for how to attract, support and retain thousands of new Nova Scotians each year.

To sustain those Nova Scotians and to support our growing economy, we need the infrastructure in place that allows people to access work, school or their doctor from home. We need them to have affordable options for housing. They should be able to travel on safe roads.

Government does not help business right now. Our PC government is creating an ecosystem where businesses and families can build a future.

Proposed investments:

**(1) More Jobs / Better Jobs**

Corporate Tax Cut	\$139,675,927	
No Tax Under 30	\$15,696,000	
Nova Scotia Loyal	\$26,880,000	
Tourism	\$7,000,000	
Total Jobs Costs		\$189,251,927

**(2) More People**

Marketing Campaign	\$2,500,000	
Rural Immigration Offices	\$3,000,000	
Tax Revenue (Cash Positive) (\$72,120,000)		
Total Migration/Immigration Costs (Revenue Positive)		(\$66,620,000)

**(3) Infrastructure**

Internet	\$13,724,865	
Housing (Cash Positive)	(\$148,733,214)	
Roads and Infrastructure Support	\$44,000,000	
Municipal Transfers	\$32,000,000	
Total Infrastructure Costs (Revenue Positive)		(\$59,008,349)

**Total Investment in Jobs and People: \$63,623,578**

These are investments into the livelihood of all Nova Scotians. More people and more jobs is the key to not only preventing the decline of our rural communities, but growing them so that they have thriving futures for generations to come.

Our plan will change the landscape of the Nova Scotia economy by focusing on people.

# INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Need**

The future of Nova Scotia is dependent on how well we prepare the next generation. Education is the most powerful tool we have to improve our economy, our health system and social outcomes.

There is a strong link between education and economic growth. Each dollar invested in public education generates approximately \$1.30 in total economic impact. The opposite is, however, frighteningly true. Each dollar removed from education is not saved, it has a tremendous final cost.

The benefits of a strong education system are obvious. Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (“OECD”) data shows that increased education leads to healthier personal lifestyle choices. There are many studies that show a link between higher education and higher life satisfaction rates and lower crime rates and better overall social outcomes.

The need to listen to teachers/administrators and families and focus on doing better for students is clear. There is much room for improvement. The Conference Board of Canada has scored Canadian provinces, along with several countries, on their education systems. Nova Scotia is ranked 12th. We are ranked lower than the Canadian average in literacy, science and math.

We must do better. Nova Scotians, and particularly those working in education, have a right to expect more support for government and a greater focus on providing everyone the opportunity to reach their full potential. A PC government will truly accept the challenge of giving all students the education they deserve and commit to providing students, teachers, school staff and administrators the tools and skill sets they need to thrive in Nova Scotia.

### **Curriculum**

The purpose of our primary to twelve education system is simple: prepare students for the future.

The school environment is not only where we learn literacy, math, science, art, social studies, culture and humanity; it is integral in the development of critical thinking skills; creativity; and the ability to work productively. It is where we strengthen study and work habits and prepare for work or further studies or both.

There should be a regular review of our curriculum and outcome objectives to make sure that, with a world changing so rapidly, our education system keeps pace, stays relevant and prepares students for the future.

We will look for ways to add to the current system as opposed to disrupt it. For example, our primary through grade eight curriculum has been rewritten within the last few years; as has the math curriculum from grades nine to twelve; along with the health and social studies courses in

grade 9. As such, the focus for working with students and curriculum should not be in more curriculum changes at these grade levels but rather, finding ways to fine-tune based on an honest assessment of shortcomings identified through consultations and teacher input with a view to pilot suggestions through early implementation phases.

There are a few areas that fall under the “life skills” umbrella where as a society we should be constantly monitoring and checking that we are doing right by students, these include:

- (1) Personal finance. Approximately 53% of grade 12 students go on to university, college or skilled trades studies after high school. That means that the other 47% of graduating students are likely entering the workforce. For those going on to post-secondary education, learning personal finance education is not something that is generally included in their course load. For those who are immediately entering the workforce, they need to rely on whatever budgeting and money management skills they already have or learn the hard way. No matter the path, personal finance skills are important.
- (2) Democracy. Around the same time most students would be finishing grade 12, they become eligible to vote. In 2017, Nova Scotia set an all-time low for voter turnout, with less than 54% of the population voting. It is incumbent on us to make sure our students are informed on how government works, how it impacts them and why it matters.
- (3) Being good citizens. Teaching our students to be good citizens means educating them about different backgrounds, different perspectives and the importance of being inclusive, empathetic and compassionate. Volunteerism and community activism are critical to our communities. Racism exists and we all have a role when we see it. We are a multicultural province and presently, we could and should be doing more to give teachers the tools to help them communicate, placing a high value on students' languages, cultures and racialized identities.
- (4) Respecting the environment and climate change. We all, including our education system, have a role to play in arming students with the knowledge of the impact of their decisions on the environment and climate change. It also means teaching them lifestyles they will carry on and adapt into their adult lives, like the importance of physical activity and healthy eating.

The goal is to work with teachers/administrators to examine the current curriculum and identify opportunities to enhance the practical life skills development necessary to set our students up for success. It may mean introducing new course options where necessary or revamping existing courses that are due for a refresh, but always with the full engagement of teachers/administrators.

Our teachers know their students' and community needs better than anyone in the government office towers. They must be given the support they need to implement any curriculum changes.

### **Student Supports**

#### **Inclusive Education**

Each of us is unique and so, naturally, every student is unique. Students who present with some exceptionalities naturally have different strengths and requirements.

The reality is, fairness in education means something more than simply treating everyone the same. It means recognizing that some students need additional support to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school life. It was this premise that led to the 2018 *Students First: Report of the Commission on Inclusive Education* (the “Report”).

In Nova Scotia, one-third of parents have indicated they have a child with special educational needs. The diversities include behavioural concerns, autism, ADHD, cognitive struggles and learning or physical disabilities and many more.

Government should never pick and choose which students get the full educational experience and which do not; and yet, families have watched in disbelief as the government has acted on the least expensive and easiest to implement recommendations of the Report while ignoring the overarching spirit of the Report.

We have just lived through two years of uncertainty, isolation and an at-home learning program that worked for some but not all. The pandemic has required teachers to learn how to work from home so we should harness that. Re-imagining how we provide professional development and consultation with stakeholders from across the province opens a vista of opportunity after the ground breaking work and complete paradigm shift our system has undertaken.

Now, more than ever, it is time to be honest about what can be done and for the government to provide clear, competent leadership.

Governing is not about picking the easiest path. It is about following the right path. More needs to be done to support all learners so that everyone has the same opportunities to succeed.

## **Mental Health**

People are struggling. They used to say that one in five would require addictions and mental health support in some form. Now, the percentage is closer to one in three. This increase should not surprise anyone given how our lives have changed with new pressures and stresses on families.

There will always be more to do, but right now there is so much more that can be done to provide appropriate resources and continue the work to eliminate the stigma. As a society, we must invest in Nova Scotians and, of course, it is particularly important that we support our youth given that by age 25, 75% or more of all mental disorders can be diagnosed.

The focus has been missing. The sad reality is that for too many people, it is not possible to access the appropriate resources or receive a diagnosis, let alone receive the best possible evidence-informed care.

Without the necessary support in place, things get worse. As such, it is critically important that we invest in the mental health of our youth. We have outlined a significant investment in mental health in our PC *Universal Mental Health* plan.

## **Vaping**

Presently, in Nova Scotia, approximately 36.8% of students in grades seven to twelve self-report as having tried e-cigarettes. On a national scale, the percentage is a much lower 22.8% of students in the same grades. It's particularly concerning that 49% of students in grades ten to twelve in Nova Scotia have reported using e-cigarettes at least once.

When asked about usage over a thirty-day period, 20.9% of students in grades seven to twelve have used e-cigarettes during that time frame. That national average on the same usage is only 10%.

Vaping has become an epidemic amongst students that could have long-term consequences on their health. We have to work with students to address this harm.

## **Culture of Respect**

The relationship between students/families and teachers is built on respect and trust.

There is another relationship that is often out of sight and out of mind for families and that is the relationship between teachers/administrators and government. The last few years have put a tremendous strain on that relationship, and, as much as teachers/administrators are completely dedicated professionals, the stress of that relationship has and will continue to have unintended consequences.

Teachers, school staff, administrators and everyone else working in the education system are right to have lost trust in the government. Too often they were not consulted on changes and we have seen a "dictate" approach where a "negotiate" one was due.

The relationship deteriorated so badly that a strike happened. It is time to rebuild the relationship with teachers/administrators. For our PC government, that starts with trusting teachers enough to restore autonomy/professional judgment in the classroom. Teachers are best equipped to determine how they teach so that students have the best learning outcomes. They just need to be supported by government.

Similarly, administrators know their schools and community needs better than anyone in an office tower far away. Respecting their professionalism means restoring the freedom and scope to do what is best for their students and staff that existed in the past.

There are many more opportunities to rebuild these relationships and we are ready to do the work, to earn the trust and demonstrate a willingness to respect our teachers/administrators as professionals and the valuable work they do each and every day.

Under the Liberal government's two premiers there has been little stability. Parents and guardians feel the uncertainty and often feel helpless. Worse, the removal of locally elected school boards, made many families feel voiceless. Centralized decision-making, far away, has not led to better outcomes.

The PC Party realizes that the things that make the biggest difference are often the smallest local decision.

## **Skilled Trades**

One of the biggest stressors for parents when your children reach high school is what's next?

To help students find their passion and unleash their potential, they need opportunities to be exposed to different learning opportunities (arts, carpentry, plumbing, etc.).

There is currently a desperate need for trades workers across the province, with over 7,000 unfilled jobs. All across this province we see companies that could do more, take on more customers, if they had more people. No area is immune. Construction-related companies, in particular, in any part of the province, plumbers, roofers, you name it, are all in need of workers.

We currently have significant shortages in skilled workers in carpentry and welding, with demand exceeding over 7,000 jobs for those two roles alone. It is also estimated that the province will require approximately 16,179 new certified tradespeople to meet sector demand requirements over the next ten years.

In a province experiencing an incredible housing crisis, we can't begin to address the shortage without people trained to build.

This only speaks to the construction industry. The reality is that we need to examine the needs of all our communities across all industries and understand the jobs of tomorrow and make sure that we are providing people with the opportunities to understand (a) what is possible; and (b) if it appeals to them. This is not to say that the government should funnel students towards certain careers, but it is to say that students should have the opportunity to find their own passion.

For those students who find their passion in the construction industry and the opportunity to take advantage of the PC policy of "no personal income tax for individuals under 30 working in trades," more and more of our youth will have the chance to make their life here in Nova Scotia instead of leaving and taking their skills elsewhere.

## **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

The PC Party has been very clear about its vision for what is possible in Nova Scotia in terms of fixing our healthcare system and helping Nova Scotians get ahead. We want to be equally as clear about the value we place on education. Personal achievement is a core value of our Party and that is why no party in government has invested more in education than the PC Party.

We respect our dedicated education professionals and the work they do preparing our children for the future. We are not alone in this regard as many families have a new found appreciation for teachers following the pandemic. Juggling working from home, or working in an essential field, all the while having children at home and managing their school time, has made sure that education is always top of mind.

Nova Scotia can provide a world class education. We just need a government that gives it the priority it deserves. This is why our plan focuses on:

- Curriculum that meets our students' needs.
- Ensuring *all* students are supported.

- Rebuilding relationships.
- Allows students to find their passion.

## 1. Curriculum

Our high school curriculum should prepare students for life. While some students benefit from family, coaches and others teaching them about personal finance, politics and other important topics, many do not. It's not the place/role of our education system to teach students everything about everything, but there are certain common sense topics that we can wrap our arms around and take responsibility for. By stepping up in these areas, we ensure students are ready in others. Specifically, we should find ways to teach students:

- Financial Literacy: Basic personal finances and bill management.
- Civics: How government works; how laws are made; who makes those laws; how they are selected; and the importance of voting.
- Environmental Stewardship: The impact of their decisions on the environment and climate change and what they can do as individuals to preserve our planet.
- Physical Activity and Healthy Living: The importance of healthy living through physical activity and healthy eating - knowledge that will prepare them for healthier traits as they grow up.
- Diversity: The knowledge of the different cultures around us and respect for the value of diversity in our communities, including education on Residential Schools.

Some of this happens now to varying degrees. Our goal is to work with teachers to make sure it becomes a part of our students' education. None of this will be possible without supporting teachers. To be clear, we have no desire to simply push down curriculum changes and will always respect the Union and our Regional Centres. That is the only way to make the best improvements, particularly for each specific region. We will work with everyone to get to the best place for our students.

We also see Professional Development ("PD") options as a valuable tool in the consultation of possible changes but also, ultimately, the execution of changes. Our PC government will provide the resources and PD necessary to properly maximize outcomes, including exploratories and/or workshops where appropriate. There is lots of room to be creative in how PD is offered. For example, some may be interested in summertime PD in exchange for time off later. This may be of interest to someone who is also a parent and wants to bank buffer time for their own parenting needs.

We will work with Regional Centres to find new ways to provide PD in ways that help mitigate any substitute shortage. If we are innovative and work together, we can get the maximum benefit for students.

### ***Financial Literacy***



Truly being prepared for the future not only means being prepared for university or your first job, it means being prepared to be an adult and live on your own.

Regardless of when a students' formal education ends, they will need to know how to manage their daily living expenses. High school is the most logical place to teach them this skill.

Our PC government would work with teachers to include mandatory financial literacy education in the high school experience. This material may be covered to some degree in an existing course, or a new course may be established but, either way, we will work with teachers and the Regional Centres to determine the best way to deliver this knowledge.

Done properly, everyone leaving high school will be better prepared to budget their money; understand the impact of debt (student and other loans, including credit cards and interest rates); and know the importance of saving.

So many of the critical decisions we make are impacted by a financial element, including post secondary education, one job or another, all purchasing decisions - from the comparison of living arrangements to decisions at the grocery store. The more people understand financial decision making, the better prepared they are to make decisions.

## ***Civics***

Voting matters. Making informed voting decisions matters. Democratic societies function best with informed citizens. In order for that to happen, individuals, in this case our youth, need to understand their role and rights as a citizen.

In order to promote civic engagement, students should understand the impact government has on their lives. From the taxes they pay, to their tuition, to the roads they drive on, to where they can access healthcare, to how long their bus ride to school is and everything in between. Many students graduate from high school not realizing how these decisions are made, by who and why. They also don't realize that they can have an influence on the direction of the province.

A solid education in civics teaches students the basic functions of how government works. This education begins with the three branches of government, their roles and duties, how the three branches interact and act as a series of checks and balances on one another; and why they must work together to establish and enforce our laws.

Everyone leaving high school should know how a law is made. Without this understanding, our students won't know how to advocate for changes to laws or make a difference in the eyes of government. A solid foundation in civic values will instill an appreciation for free speech, civil discourse and engaging with those whose perspectives differ from their own (healthy debate).

Learning these important lessons will teach students how to work with systems of power to make change. Ultimately, this is the difference between encouraging someone to vote and them *wanting* to vote.

There are a number of ways to make this happen. It has been suggested that a full Civics course could be established as a mandatory course in place of one elective for grade 12 students. We won't presuppose the "how." If a Regional Centre proposes an alternative option,

like including this material in another course or offering several day-long sessions on Civics education, we will respect their guidance.

Our goal is simple: arm students with the knowledge and understanding of the power of their own voice and their vote.

### ***Environmental Stewardship***

When we think about school curriculum, the first subjects that typically come to mind are reading, writing, math and science. As previously discussed, our teachers go well beyond teaching the basics to teaching the foundations of responsible decision-making that will last a lifetime.

When you know better, you do better. Now more than ever, this means “doing better” in terms of the environment and climate change. Our PC government will ensure that part of the science curriculum includes a focus on the environment and climate change.

Nova Scotian students must understand climate change impacts. They need to know the long-term risks and how our own activities contribute.

Our students should be armed with the knowledge of:

- How their actions affect the environment and climate change;
- How changes in the environment affect others;
- Why they should care about recycling and sustainability; and
- How they can do their part.

This background and education will help to form attitudes, practices and will adjust behaviour so each student understands the part they can play and carry that responsibility with them as they venture on to adulthood.

### ***Physical Activity and Healthy Living***

Most people simply accept the importance of high-quality physical activity in terms of our overall mental and physical health. The data also supports that physical activity leads to better attention in class, often better grades and better physical and mental health outcomes across their lifespans.

Our PC *Hope for Health* plan is clear that our PC government will work with the Regional Centres in conjunction with the Teachers’ Union to determine what is possible to expand personal fitness opportunities for all students. However, in an effort to encourage physical education and make it a mainstay for students and instill active living choices at a young age, we will open opportunities to earn school credits for physical activity outside the classroom.

There already exists a rarely used set of “Personal Development” credits in our schools that can be adapted to include physical activity opportunities. These credits already cover learning through Cadets, Royal Conservatory of Music and others but are currently limited to only grade

10 credits. This doesn't help grade 11 and 12 students (because you can only count so many grade 10 credits towards graduation).

Our PC government will find ways to establish physical activity 11 and 12 credits wherein students receive credits if they documented 80 to 110 hours of physical activity outside of their high school credits (ex: minor hockey, high school sports teams, working out at the gym, recreational volleyball, renting snowshoes through the library).

We want to do everything possible to promote physical activity outside of school.

We will make funding and resources available to schools to provide opportunities for physical activity that increase the likelihood that young people will be active and remain active as adults. Some funding will be made available through our *Hope for Health* plan; however, our PC government will also establish a Healthy Living Grant for every public school in Nova Scotia. Each school will be allocated an amount on the condition that it demonstrates the funding has been put towards healthy living initiatives.

Funding can be used to hire substitute teachers, purchase equipment and/or free up existing staff to provide physical activities that are a good fit for their school environment (ex: canoeing for schools near bodies of water; school trips to nearby facilities that offer skilling, rock climbing, trampoline activities). We will be guided by teachers/administrators on the "what" and the "when." They might take place during existing physical education classes, as experiential learning in other courses, during field trip days or even outside of school hours as determined by the school and staff.

Another component of healthy living is healthy eating. We also speak to this in our PC *Hope for Health* plan. While the Canada Food Guide is taught in schools, many students graduate without seeing the Food Guide's recommendations put to use. For example, many move on from school without knowing the basics of nutrition and healthy cooking. These are skills, if taught at a young age, that can guide them throughout their lives. Coupled with the skills taught in the proposed personal finance course, people can learn the skills to purchase healthy foods. It doesn't have to be more expensive.

Studies have demonstrated that hands-on cooking education has a very positive impact on behaviours and attitudes toward healthy eating, such as increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, improved food safety behaviours, higher frequency of cooking, increased nutrition knowledge, higher self-efficacy and less money spent on food. Findings suggest cooking programs positively influence children's food-related preferences, attitudes, self-efficacy, dietary intakes and behaviors.

A PC government will make it a priority to educate high school students about healthy eating and cooking. We will be guided by programs like the one being offered by the YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia and those through SchoolsPlus. The goal is to teach the appropriate skills and a love of food to students in grades 9 through 12.

There are many versions of the course that could meet the objective. One version we have seen that is tried and true is a two-day program covering topics that include basic food safety, budgeting tips, how to use leftovers and stretch meals, cooking shortcuts and simple meals on a budget, nutrition, healthier cooking, what you need in your pantry and organic versus conventional foods.

In that case all groceries, program materials and a pantry supply kit will be provided. Each participant receives a complimentary cookbook and two meal cooking packages to try at home. SchoolsPlus is in almost every school in HRCE and is all across Nova Scotia. They act as a service provider and liaison for programs and services.

Similarly, the New Glasgow-based organization Pictou County Roots for Youth Society that offers programs to support rural youth homelessness in Nova Scotia, also offers a well designed course. For the past two years, they have had a chef volunteer teach youth how to prepare accessible meals. In 2019, this program received full funding through the Pictou West and Central and East Pictou Community Health Board (CHB) Wellness Fund.

Our government will work with SchoolsPlus to find local partners within the community, many of whom have shown a willingness to provide financial support in the past, for healthy eating programming.

No legislative changes would be necessary for either the increase of the physical education component of the curriculum or the healthy eating programming. Amendments to the Ministerial Regulations under the *Education Act* would enact these changes.

### ***Diversity***

Simply saying we are diverse and asking that we celebrate our diversity and differences isn't enough. Diversity must truly be embraced as the asset it is. We are stronger together.

For starters, this means, where possible, ensuring that the social studies curriculum properly relays the rich, multi-generational, vibrant, dynamic and unique cultures of Mi'kmaq people, Acadians, African Nova Scotians and African Canadians.

It also means enhancing the governing structure of the education system and ensuring the Council on Mi'kmaq Education and the Council on African Canadian Education are in regular contact with the Minister of Education to ensure their voices are heard.

A truly inclusive education experience stresses equity and makes it a focus of the learning process. Students must learn from a young age that diversity and equality in education for *all* students is a human right. Diverse schools celebrate differences in ethnicity, socio-economic class, religion, reading level, athletic ability, background, gender, personality and much more. Strong education programs value the unique aspects of what makes each student different and helps them embrace those differences in the classroom.

We will support those teachers working to establish a culturally responsive environment where students learn to be respectful and understanding of cultures different from their own. Those students are typically more willing to listen respectfully to different viewpoints, rather than mock or fear the unfamiliar.

Our world is getting smaller. Teaching each other to value and respect diversity empowers students to be more open to other perspectives and opinions beyond those they've already formed. This is the essence of critical thinking.

Our PC government will work with teachers/administrators and stakeholders to examine the curriculum to determine where diverse learning can be incorporated.

At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fact that learning about one's own culture is just as important as learning about others'.

### **Costs**

The biggest cost in updating curriculum is in upgrading teaching materials and the corresponding PD for teachers.

There are approximately 9,674 full time teachers across Nova Scotia. As noted, each will participate in diversity PD. With the embracing of virtual PD days and the elimination of some travel costs, the overall investment in PD is not the same as what it was just two years ago. PD is funded through the Regional Centres' budgets. To accommodate the extra diversity training contemplated in this plan, an additional \$200,000 will be allocated to the PD budget for the districts, allotted based on per capita teachers to fund this additional diversity PD.

In addition, our plan necessitates other, new PD related to financial literacy, civics and climate change. There are approximately 93 schools across Nova Scotia that offer high school. It is estimated that an average of two teachers per school will participate in this new PD [2 teachers x 3 new courses x 93 schools = 558 teachers]. The cost of these PD will be approximately \$111,600 [\$200 cost per PD day x 558].

For the purposes of costing this platform, we will also assume that some upgrades in materials will be required and, as such, budget an additional \$200,000 for updated materials.

This makes the cost of this new diversity and course load PD approximately \$511,600.

Finally, while the majority of the cost of healthy living changes has previously been costed and is accounted for in your PC *Hope for Health* plan, there are still new costs to the education system. However, we will establish a Healthy Living Grant of \$5,000 per school plus one dollar for each student, for a total investment of \$1,971,600 [\$5,000 x 370 schools + \$1 x 121,600 students].

In summary, the total cost of curriculum-related enhancements is approximately \$2,483,200.

## **2. Student Supports**

### ***Inclusion***

There is no doubt that a properly resourced, inclusive education leads to positive, long and meaningful outcomes for those students with complex learning needs. Proper inclusive programming truly puts students first. This means teaching tailored to the learner and more inclusive in every sense.

The province has in its hands a comprehensive 2018 Report that details recommendations for both short and long-term improvements. It also speaks to the necessary, immediate changes where waiting for long-term change is simply not an option.

At its core, true inclusion creates higher expectations for all students, which ultimately encourages the learner to achieve more, gain confidence and independence and develop a stronger sense of self. (e.g. better outcomes through enhanced skill acquisition.

The 2018 Report was largely seen by the diverse learning community as a good report, despite what many felt as a significant lack of input from the community itself.

When the Report got to government, the ball was dropped. At that stage, an arms-length “implementation” panel could have been established to map the way forward. It wasn’t and as a result, government did not implement the intensive treatment programs recommended in Sydney and Halifax and a critical recommendation for more psychologists in schools went unfilled.

Your PC government will revisit/revive/resurrect/recommit to the Report - with proper input from the disabled community - and implement the recommendations with an eye on the “wholeness” of the document. Our government will not cherry pick from these recommendations and falsely claim action.

We will also implement the remaining inclusion recommendations. Section 8 of this *Students’ First Report* states:

*“To build successes, break down barriers, and implement the new model of inclusive education in a timely and evidence-based manner, multiple actions must be taken in the coordinated and sequential way over the next five years. The timeline presented below does not contain all of the specific actions described in Sections One through Seven, but instead provides a schedule for key steps in each of the five stages of implementation. The schedule and actions provide benchmarks for planning, implementation, and evaluation.”*

Implementation is broken down into five stages spread out from August of 2018 to August of 2022. By August of this year, a total of 64 recommendations were to have been implemented. Without an eye on the Report and effective accountability, we are left to self-assess the status of the recommendations.

Under our review, sadly, we are aware of only ten recommendations having been implemented to date and another eight that have only been partially implemented. Fourteen recommendations have not been implemented and there remain 32 recommendations for which we have no way of knowing their status because the Department has not disclosed this information.

The recommendations that appear to **have not been implemented** are:

Stage	Timeline	Action
1	Apr. - Aug. 2018	Establish Nova Scotia Institute for Inclusive Education (NSIIE).
		Strike Interagency Professional Development Committee in NSIIE.

		Appoint parents of students with special needs to Provincial Advisory Council, Regional Advisory Councils, School Advisory Councils and NSIEE governing body.
		Appoint Executive Director of Inclusive Education in the DEECD.
		Develop Cape Breton and Halifax Intensive Treatment programs.
2	Sept. 2018	Launch Cape Breton and Halifax Intensive Treatment programs.
	Sept. 2018 - Feb. 2019	Align MTSS and the revised Public School Program.
	Feb. 2019 - Aug. 2019	NSIEE to develop tracking, reporting and accountability procedures.
		NSIEE to provide first annual report to the public.
4	Sept. 2019 - Aug. 2020	Conduct audit of inclusive education costs to revise funding model.
		Continue to develop and implement paraprofessional and professional development.
		NSIEE to provide third annual report to the public.
		NSIEE to conduct formal evaluation of the implementation of inclusive education/MTSS, including the student results achieved.
		NSIEE to provide fourth annual report to the public on implementation.

The recommendations that appear to have ***only partially been implemented*** are:

Stage	Timeline	Action
1	Apr. - Aug. 2018	Develop an Inclusive Education Policy Framework that includes new behaviour, mental health and autism strategies and guidelines.
		Recruit additional education specialists for September 2018.
2	Sept. 2018	Fund 400 school psychology and 200 speech-language pathology student assessments.
		Fill specialist positions with qualified personnel only, including learning support teachers and guidance counselling positions.
	Sept. 2018 -	Complete development of the Inclusive Education Policy Framework, including all of the components.

	Feb. 2019	
	Feb. 2019 - Aug. 2019	Provide staff with intensive professional development in the new support policy framework and MTSS to support September 2019 launch.
		Strengthen Tier 1 supports.
3	Sept. 2019 - Aug. 2020	Begin implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy Framework and MTSS including new behaviour, mental health and autism strategies and interagency programs.

The recommendations for which we have ***no status*** update are:

Stage	Timeline	Action
1	Apr. - Aug. 2018	Appoint representative of the disability community to Provincial Advisory Committee.
		Department of Health and Wellness allocates funding and resources for healthcare services in schools.
		Enact funding agreements with other government departments. Incorporate inclusive education in teaching and leadership standards.
		Commence research into evidence-based practices for MTSS in Nova Scotia.
2	Sept. 2018	Hire more specialists through the phased-in implementation of the revised staffing ratios, including 30 behaviour support teachers; 12 school psychologists; 12 regional school health nurses.
		Add 12 alternative programs in middle/junior high schools and high schools.
		Add \$5 million to address complex classroom needs.
		Fund and launch a behaviour intervention training program for teachers.
		Maintain the Tuition Support Program.
	Sept. 2018 - Feb. 2019	Explore alignment of the fiscal and school budget years.
		Streamline funding procedures and paperwork for inclusive education.
		Consolidate targeted grants with core special education funding.
		Explore the addition of educational audiologists for Nova Scotia schools.



		Professional Development Committee to develop paraprofessional and professional development activities and leadership modules for inclusive education.
		Senior Partnership Committee to finalize Interministerial Service Model Policy, including all components.
		Senior Partnership Committee to develop programs for students with extraordinary care needs.
		Increase supports for partnership between home and school and parent participation in educational programming.
	Feb. 2019 - Aug. 2019	Implement leadership modules for inclusive education/MTSS.
		Align SchoolsPlus model with inclusive education/MTSS.
3	Sept. 2019 - Aug. 2020	Continue to develop and implement paraprofessional and professional development.
		B.Ed. programs to provide all students with enhanced coursework and practicums in inclusive education.
		NSCC to launch new program for preparing communication disorder assistants to work in Nova Scotia schools.
		NSCC to launch new teacher assistant education and continuing education programs.
		Professional Development Committee expands professional and paraprofessional learning options.
		Fund financial incentives for the recruitment and retention of education specialists.
		Department of Community Services and DEECD jointly fund enhanced high school transition supports.
4	Sept. 2020 - Aug. 2021	Hire additional specialists through the phased-in implementation of the revised staffing ratios.
		Launch new specialized professional programs in Nova Scotia universities.
		Review class caps.
		Review the Tuition Support Program.
		Review inclusive education infrastructure as described in this report.
		Evaluate and report on SchoolsPlus.

These dates have clearly been missed, or have occurred with so little transparency that Nova Scotians don't know what's happening with their education dollars. Our PC government commits to following through on the recommendations outlined in the Report and, just as importantly, to provide public accounting of our progress by the eight-month mark of coming into government. The implementation of this Report will mean greater accountability within the inclusion model to ensure students have the appropriate supports and programming.

### ***Mental Health***

Every Nova Scotian should have access to the care they need. Presently, too many (including many, many children) don't have access. Wait times for access to child and adolescent mental health care of over 240 days tell the story. It's not right.

We are committed to improving access. This is why our PC *Universal Mental Health* plan establishes a mental health system that mobilizes all of the resources of the province - including those within the Health Authority and those working in private practice - for the benefit of Nova Scotians.

Our PC government will "open" billing codes to all properly qualified mental health professionals so that, just like a family doctor does for primary care, they can bill the government for seeing a patient. This means more resources to help and less waiting: better access for everyone - including students - when they need it.

Without having proper access for students, our teachers, who are already overworked and overburdened with many responsibilities that are not within the scope of their practice, are often faced with having to be the front line go-to for the mental health struggles of their students. That's not fair.

First, to support these teachers - for those who choose - our PC government would provide access to free, online, mental health programming. This voluntary training would help them identify, and to some degree help, those students who may be struggling.

This skill set has been shown to decrease stress levels amongst both students and teachers and decrease the stigma surrounding mental health. It has improved teacher outcomes and, in many cases, improved the mental well-being of some teachers for not only having a better understanding of their students, but having the skills to help to cope and address their needs.

No teacher would be forced or required to participate in this program. Participation is purely voluntary. Given the statistics that demonstrate that mental health concerns caught and addressed early are often resolvable, if even some teachers participate, some students, who would have otherwise fallen through the cracks, will have new opportunities to flourish.

Presently every class has a small first aid kit (typically, a dollar store offering of band aids etc.). This is important but there is an opportunity to recognize that mental health needs are as real as physical health needs. One way to do this is through a mental wellness kit in the classroom. The kits include things like:

- Stress-relieving devices such as stress balls or fidget spinners;

- Contact information for mental health services;
- Small heating and cooling packs; and
- Any other items a mental health professional employed by an education entity deems appropriate.

Our PC government will commit to placing mental wellness kits in every classroom in Nova Scotia. The items in this kit can be used to help students when they feel anxiety or may be in crisis.

### ***Vaping***

There is too much vaping happening in and around our schools. Most schools have attempted education on the harms of e-smoking, but the programming is often not enough. Too many times, if the support exists, a “cold turkey” stop is nearly impossible.

Pre-Covid, some schools had begun a trial Vaping Focus Group that was seeing real progress, just by listening to the students. This is a good initiative. Our PC government will establish a Youth Vaping Focus Group that will meet with health professionals to establish best practices for vaping cessation programs provincially.

The province needs to ensure that virtual and in-person vaping cessation programs are available to students through SchoolsPlus and Youth Centres to acknowledge and address the very real addiction and withdrawal issues students face.

Previous PC governments led the way on the commitment to smoking cessation programs. In 2004, the Office of Health Promotion launched the “Sick of Smoke” workplace program. In 2005, the PC government of the day introduced amendments to the *Smoke-Free Places Act* that banned smoking in all indoor public areas, workplaces and eating and drinking establishments in Nova Scotia.

It is our goal to expand upon this legacy.

Programs like our Chronic Illness Treatment and Prevention Plan will help address some of the side effects and impacts of smoking. However, given the high percentage of Nova Scotians who smoke, more must be done to encourage those individuals to stop smoking.

Our PC government will offer a virtual care program to anyone wishing to stop or cut back on their tobacco use (including the use of e-cigarettes). Similar to the programming we will offer to anyone without a family physician, we will establish an anti-tobacco virtual care service whereby anyone seeking guidance on how to quit, support throughout the quitting process or even general information, can login at any time to receive the support they need.

This program will be heavily advertised in schools to target youth and provide additional support to help students stop smoking at a younger age. Information about this program will be provided in health classes across all schools in Nova Scotia.

### ***International Baccalaureate Program***

The International Baccalaureate (“IB”) Program is offered at 13 schools across Nova Scotia. IB offers students advanced programming in preparation for university and future careers. The program:

- Encourages students to think critically and solve complex problems;
- Drive their own learning;
- Often results in early acceptance at universities; and
- Offers travel opportunities.

We want to encourage our students to excel. The IB program provides students with additional learning opportunities that should be encouraged. Since this program cannot be offered at every school, government should support families of those students who wish to participate, but need to travel to another school to do so.

Approximately 5% of students enrolled in IB are out of the school catchment and must figure out their own transportation, often at significant expense to their families. Our PC government will provide an education travel tax credit of up to \$500 annually per household for families who have to travel outside of their bussing and school districts to attend the IB program.

Nova Scotian IB students have a record of outperforming other IB students from around the world. We will encourage and enable students’ participation in IB.

### **Costs**

If you think providing students with an education is expensive, consider the alternative.

The investment required in inclusive education is not new, it’s just new to see a political party acknowledge it. We will all be better for making this investment. That said, it’s difficult to properly cost the investment. The sad reality is that the lack of transparency from the current government on the actual, current implementation status of the Report, makes it almost impossible to reliably cost the remaining recommendations because we just don’t know what needs to be done.

For the purpose of this platform, we will assume that 40% of the recommendations we have classified as “partially” in progress and 40% of the recommendations for which the Department has provided no information, have at least already had some budget resources allocated in the provincial budget.

The recommendations that have **not been** completed are largely in the form of reports and audits. We estimate the cost of these 14 recommendations to be in the range of \$7 million dollars.

The largest costs associated with the recommendations that have been partially completed are for salaries of psychologists and speech pathologists. We estimate the cost of these positions to be in the range of \$48,500,000. We will assume that approximately 40% of these roles have been filled [\$29,100,000] and we believe that approximately 20% of the psychologists will have actually been provided under our *Universal Mental Health* plan [savings of approximately \$6,100,000], in which access to mental health services will be provided to all students under our Department of Addictions and Mental Health budget. We estimate the cost of these staffing recommendations to be in the range of \$11,851,630 [\$48,500,000 - \$29,100,000 - \$6,100,000 less payroll taxes of \$1,448,370].

With respect to the recommendations for which we **do not know their status**, there is a \$5 million commitment for programming, in addition to more staffing resources. For costing purposes, we will assume that 40% has already been allocated [60% of \$5,000,000 = \$3,000,000]. We estimate the cost of the additional staffing resources to be approximately \$2,520,000 and for the purposes of costing, we will assume that 40% of these resources have already been implemented [60% of \$2,520,000 = \$1,512,000].

We also estimate an additional \$5 million will be required to carry out the reports and other recommendations listed. We will, once again, assume that 40% of this cost has been implemented [60% of \$5,000,000 = \$3,000,000]. We estimate the cost of implementing these recommendations to be approximately \$7,512,000 [\$3,000,000 + \$1,512,000 + \$3,000,000].

The total estimated investment in inclusion is \$26,363,630.

A recent study on the treatment of depression estimated that every dollar spent on publicly funded mental health services would result in a savings of two dollars for the rest of the healthcare system. A study in the UK found supporting evidence suggesting that investment in youth mental health programming would pay significant dividends. In fact, it found that having preventative and moderate behavioural programming in place for children can result in a return of approximately \$150,000 per child in lifetime health costs.

Offering free, universal mental health services to any child in need is accounted for and fully costed in our PC *Universal Mental Health* plan and will form a part of our Department of Addictions and Mental Health budget. Similarly, the investment in the vaping cessation program is covered under our Department of Health budget in our PC *Hope for Health* plan.

Voluntary mental health training for teachers is currently being offered at no cost through the Transitions Classroom program in Alberta.

There are approximately 4,450 classrooms across Nova Scotia. We estimate the cost of wellness kits being in the range of \$20 per class, for a total cost of \$89,000 for the first year and would decrease to \$66,750 in subsequent years (a cost of \$15 per kit) to replenish certain items.

With approximately 34 students enrolled in IB [680 students x 5%] living outside of their IB district, and an estimated 20 more potential students with this tax credit [680 x 3% proposed new students], a total of 54 households would be eligible for the PC education transportation tax credit. Based on mileage/distance outside their community, a household could receive up to \$405 based on total annual kilometres travelled of 13,650 [39 (weeks of school) x 350 (average km/week)]. Annual mileage costs total approximately \$6,142.50 per household [\$0.45 per km x 13,650 km]. The total cost to the province of this travel credit is approximately \$21,892 [75% eligible = 4,606.88 x 8.8%].

Our total new investment in student supports is \$26,474,522.

### **3. Repairing Relationships**

The rebuilding of trust between the government and teachers, students, parents, school staff and administrators is crucial to any meaningful improvements in the education system overall.

This starts with setting an example from the top down and engaging in respectful negotiations with our teachers/administrators.

### ***Negotiations***

Your PC government is committed to fair and open negotiations. We will engage in meaningful negotiations with unions. We may not always agree, but we will be at the table, listening and participating - Engaged.

With honesty about our approaches, where we are coming from and an actual willingness to come to the table, we will demonstrate that we are a government committed to fair and open negotiations with relationships and trust established through our culture of listening.

### ***A Culture of Action based on Listening***

Recognizing and respecting professional judgment is the starting point in rebuilding a broken relationship.

That said, we believe that teachers know how best to teach, what resources and materials are best and how their students will respond. It is on government to listen to teachers to ensure they have the resources they need.

In an effort to repair the relationship and establish a culture of open communication, the Minister of Education in your PC government will regularly spend time in schools and classrooms across the province and have regular meetings with the NSTU.

The Minister will also meet more directly and regularly with a broader base of teachers; specifically, local NSTU executive groups to get a more local sense of the issues. It is now possible to hold these meetings virtually, making the Minister and government more accessible to teachers across the province.

The Minister will also work closely with schools across the province and sit in on at least one school staff meeting per week, virtually, to hear on the ground concerns that teachers face each day.

We have a long way to go to re-establish trust with teachers. Respect doesn't have to come with a big price tag, it can come from dedicating time and being a listening ear. The only way to improve the system is to truly understand the issues within it.

It is not only the relationship with teachers that needs to be repaired. School administrators are also in the trenches of our education system, often feeling unsupported. There has been a Principals' in Focus group that meets regularly. While Department officials have attended on occasion, it is important that your PC government has more active participation in this group to forge the lines of communication.

The frayed relationship is evident in the number of teachers who are retiring earlier. It is evident in our substitute shortage. This likely stems from teachers feeling under-appreciated and overworked. In the not-too-distant past, there was an excitement about entering the profession

of teaching. No government should ever take away the excitement of a career the way they have done with teaching.

To pinpoint the retention issues we are seeing with teachers, your PC government will conduct exit interviews with teachers who are retiring early or otherwise leaving the system prematurely.

Our teachers/administrators are community leaders. Where the old government has worked to undermine the important role they play, our government will work to restore honour to the profession. Ideally, this will go a long way in encouraging students to *enter* the profession.

### ***School Boards***

A local voice is critical, no matter the issue. When you lose your local voice, you lose a lot, and that is what happened when school boards were axed.

The result of that poor decision: minimal local decision-making where there should be. School Advisory Councils (“SACs”) are not empowered with budgets and other key tools to have any effective input into the way schools are run and this shows up in the fact that, particularly in rural areas, many positions are difficult to fill. The SACs have never been empowered, have not been provided with a clear mandate and do not have oversight of the budget.

Parents and guardians are frustrated.

Abolishing school boards abolished a critical check and balance in the system. As such, your PC government will return school boards.

We will consult with a variety of groups, including parents from across the province, teachers, administrators, program assistants, representatives from the African Nova Scotian, First Nations, and disability communities, to determine the makeup of the school boards. These consultations will take place within the first three months of our government, with a recommendation of how many school boards and how many elected members to be put forward within three months of the initial meeting.

School boards enable local decision making based on local needs. The members of our school boards have their finger on the pulse of the students, schools and communities and they provide a critical public link to our schools.

School boards look out for students above all else. Education is not a line item on their agenda, it is the only item. They prioritize our students and ensure they get the best education possible.

We would empower our school board to improve student achievement. To make this happen, they would be responsible for:

- Addressing conflicts within the system;
- Acting as a conduit between parents, students and the education system and government;
- Developing and amending policies;
- Establishing the budget; and
- Overseeing facilities issues.

Local communities know their schools and their schools' needs the best and deserve a say in their futures.

### **Costs**

The contract negotiations are not costed within this Platform. The contract will be negotiated no matter who governs and what we speak to in this document is the approach we will take into that process.

That said, we have offered a vision on how things will be enhanced: improvements to the relationship and the investment in local decision-making. Meeting with and engaging in discussions with those on the front lines of our education system are things that don't cost money but only happen in a culture of respect.

At the same time, some discretionary funding needs to be put in place to act on changes that are required and noted as a result of these meetings. For the purpose of this Platform, we will assume an investment in discretionary funding in the amount of \$750,000.

The costs allocated to returning school boards will cover the remuneration for board members and ancillary costs for meeting and incidental expenses. This will return a level of focus that previously existed but is gone. We estimate the costs of returning school boards to be approximately \$2 million.

The total PC investment in repairing and improving the relationship with teachers/administrators is \$2,750,000.

## **4. Skilled Trades**

### ***More Seats***

Skilled trades courses are the starting point for high school students to explore trades as a possible career path. These courses immerse students in the realities of skilled trades work.

An early start and exposure provides students more options. Many of those who find they enjoy a skilled trade will go on to the Nova Scotia Community College ("NSCC") to further their education. Others leverage initial exposure in high school and walk into entry level trades jobs, where a variety of skill sets can be used as they begin their careers.

The idea is that a properly prepared student has choices. The PC Party has long been an advocate of the skilled trades. It was a PC government that established the first vocational schools in the province. Successive governments moved away from a focus on opening trades-based doors for students but slowly, the province is starting to see the value that the PC Party always has.

By 2022, 31 high schools across the province will offer skilled trades studies. This is positive but there is much more to do. There is currently a high demand for trades across the province and there is an opportunity to set students on their way.



To do that, your PC government will increase opportunities for students to begin learning a trade in high school.

Firstly, we need to do this by informing students that this option is available to them. At a junior high level, all students should receive a presentation before entering high school on the option for taking a skilled trade and what training and labour opportunities are available for them with that skill.

If more students are aware of the option for participating in skilled trades and the jobs that are available in these fields, more students will participate in this programming. Aside from the availability of jobs, our government will have additional incentives for students pursuing a career path in the trades. Specifically, anyone under the age of thirty, working in the trades, will not pay the provincial portion of their income tax.

Currently, there are approximately 1,000 students enrolled in skilled trades across the province. Our goal would be to double that.

Infrastructure and increased class sizes will be needed to accommodate this demand. We will work with the 31 existing skilled trades centres across the province to determine what programs currently have the capacity to increase their class sizes and what centres require additional capital investment to meet the needs of their communities.

Your PC government will invest in both capital expenditures for upgrades to our skilled trades programming as well as a significant increase in operational costs allocated to support skilled trades students.

### ***Apprenticeship***

A key aspect of skilled trades is the practical application of the skills learned. Within the skilled trades program, we need to increase the options for students to gain work experience and mentorship through apprenticeships that will help prepare them to be “on the job” ready.

To ensure young Nova Scotians who take trades training have the opportunity to participate in an apprenticeship during the course of their studies, your PC government will work with businesses and the labour sector to modernize our apprenticeship programs.

Going forward, on all government tenders that require skilled trades, a component of the tender application will consider whether bidders employ and participate in apprenticeships with students. This will help to increase training opportunities for students.

Recognizing the importance of this practical training, your PC government will also work with the NSCC on a program design whereby students’ participation in certain, accredited apprenticeships, will count towards program credits when furthering their education.

### ***Encouraging More Women and Diversity in Trades***

Across Canada, women account for only 14.2% of registrations in the trades. We see similar shortages in representation in the trades by African Nova Scotians, First Nations and individuals with disabilities.

This is a problem for many reasons, not the least of which being the growing shortage of skilled workers. The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum projected that it will be necessary to attract 167,739 new apprentices over the next five years to keep pace with the demands across the country. Our current pool of talent is not sustainable without sincere efforts to bring in populations that are severely underrepresented.

One of the most predominant barriers to entry is the fact that there is not enough awareness around the opportunities for skilled trades careers, starting in our high schools. In conjunction with our promotion of trades to junior high-aged students, a concerted effort of that campaign must be designed to promote more diverse enrollment. For example, having a female tradeswoman speak to students about opportunities for girls in trades, speaking from a personal perspective.

This type of promotion is not new. Every girl who wants to try a trade, should be able to do so. Trades schools in Ontario host “Jill of All Trades” events for teen girls, where students can attend a full day of hands-on workshops and connect with women who are currently working in the trades. Your PC government will bring this model to Nova Scotia by working with the NSCC and partner organizations through our apprenticeship program.

Additionally, in investing in new capital to expand our trades programs, consideration must be given to communities that have higher representation of diverse populations and ensuring there are more opportunities for students in those underrepresented backgrounds entering the trades.

Your PC government will set a measurable goal of having forty percent diverse enrollment in high school trades programming by year four of our first mandate, working with schools to find creative ways to encourage girls and other diverse learners to consider skilled trades.

### **Costs**

To support the necessary upgrades to infrastructure to meet the increased demand of our skilled trades programs in our high schools, we commit to investing \$15 million in these centres, to be allocated following a review of the inventory and the needs.

An additional one thousand students will lead to increased operational costs running the skilled trades programs. These students use major equipment, tools, etc. and require the guidance of educators who have job stability. Despite repeated requests of the Department of Education to learn the cost of funding our skilled trades programs, we have not received this costing information. As a result, we are basing our costing analysis off the Ontario budget.

Ontario spends \$288.2 million annually on its skilled trades programs, with 54,000 students participating. This results in costs of approximately \$5,337.04 per student. Applying this analysis to Nova Scotia, an additional one thousand students would result in new operational expenditures in the amount of \$5,337,040 [ $\$5,337.04 \times 1,000$ ].

We have set a goal of increasing the diversity in trades training in our high schools. We will provide the NSCC with \$42,000 (an average of \$3,000 per each of their 14 campuses) to offer transportation and accommodation and put on one-day training sessions for girls considering a career path in the trades.

Our total proposed investment in increasing capacity in our skilled trades programs is \$20,379,040.

## CONCLUSION

All teachers and students want to do their best. Our focus is on ensuring students have the opportunity to achieve their very best and that teachers are supported in reaching their potential.

It is all about preparing students for the future, via a relevant curriculum and appropriate supports. We also need to recognize that students have different goals. Some can't wait to start work. Some dream about university. Many others just don't know - yet, our education system has a big job. We ask a lot of it. We ask it to prepare each of our students for their future.

It's about putting the supports in place that give our students the best chance for success, whether through mental health, additional staffing and resources to meet their evolving needs.

Our education plan cannot be successful without teachers. So this is about supporting them with the necessary people, supplies, autonomy, discretion and materials they need to do what they are passionate about: educating our students.

Teachers motivate our children, encourage them to be successful and have their best interests at heart. They are to be applauded and recognized. That starts at the Minister's boardroom table and that is what can be expected from your PC government.

Investing in education is an investment in human capital that will pay off over a lifetime.

Proposed investments:

### (1) Curriculum

Teachers/administrators Training	\$511,600
Healthy Living Grant	\$1,971,600
Total Updated Curriculum Costs	\$2,483,200

### (2) Student Supports

Inclusive Education	\$26,363,630
Mental Health Wellness Kits	\$89,000
IB	\$21,892
Total Updated Student Supports Costs	\$26,474,522

### (3) Relationship

Relationship Building	\$750,000
School Boards	\$2,000,000
Total Relationship Costs	\$ 2,750,000

### (4) Skilled Trades

Increasing Seats (Capital)	\$15,000,000
Increasing Seats (Operational)	\$5,337,040
Girls in Trades Program	\$42,000
Total Skilled Trades Costs (Revenue Positive)	\$20,379,040

**Total Costs:****\$52,086,762**

These are investments into the future of all Nova Scotians - more students receiving an education that meets their needs *and* the needs of the communities. Our plan means more students staying in Nova Scotia, working in Nova Scotia and contributing to our economy and one day, raising their own families in the most beautiful place in the world.

Our education plan will support changing the landscape of the Nova Scotia economy by focusing on people.

# SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY: BECOMING A WORLD LEADER IN THE GREEN ECONOMY

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Need**

We are facing a climate emergency and human activities are the main cause, producing Greenhouse Gases (“GHGs”) into the atmosphere with no signs of slowing down.

The last four years, globally, were recorded as being the hottest on record, demonstrating clear evidence of rising temperatures associated with GHG emissions. Based on current projections, if global emissions continue at their current levels, temperatures could rise to above three degrees Celsius by 2100, which would result in irreversible damage to our ecosystems.

Climate change affects everyone.

Global warming impacts our food and water security, with climate change being a direct cause of soil degradation. For those Nova Scotians who live on waterfront properties, many can see the harm of climate change in the erosion of their properties.

**There is no need to fight over whether climate change *needs* to be addressed. The debate must now be over *HOW* it is addressed.**

Efforts must be made at an individual, community and corporate level to combat climate change. However, it is first important that the public understands the dire harms that will come with climate change. We need to be aware of the impact of our actions and decisions, so that we can change them in favour of cultivating the environment for future generations.

Nova Scotia’s GHG emissions are in the range of 15.6 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. The largest emitting sectors in Nova Scotia are electricity generation (42 percent of emissions), transportation (31 percent), and both residential and commercial buildings (14 percent). Approximately 70 percent of our biggest emitter, electricity, comes from non-renewable sources.

Your PC government’s plan for sustainable prosperity will strive to address these three sectors and set ambitious goals for making Nova Scotia a leader on the environment.

This focus on the environment starts at the top. Government must lead by example. Government must be courageous in their goals and arm the public with the tools necessary so that Nova Scotia not only does it’s part for the environment - but *exceeds* it.

### **Renewed Leadership**

The PC Party has a rich history of leading the way on environmental stewardship. It was a PC government that led Nova Scotia to be a leader in Canada on its approach to preserving the environment.

Our PC Party understands that a healthy environment contributes to a healthy economy and to our long-term prosperity. “Environment” and “economy” are not mutually exclusive.

In 2007, it was a PC government that introduced the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* (“EGSPA”), an ambitious and unique piece of environmental legislation that made Nova Scotia a leader across Canada in its approach to the environment by improving government performance in promoting sustainable prosperity through the process of setting legislative goals and enhancing accountability. EGSPA set out more than twenty targets to help Nova Scotia become cleaner and more sustainable.

EGSPA was recently discarded and watered down by the Liberals, with key components that would have brought Nova Scotia international pride and world-leading sustainability being removed.

Your PC government recognizes that everyone must do their part in the fight against climate change. Aggressive legislation that establishes goals and measuring sticks is required to reclaim our position as leaders in protecting the environment. This can be done through local food initiatives, increasing land protection and ending a reliance on coal.

### **Education**

If we teach our students at a young age the impact of their decisions on the environment and climate change, they will make more environmentally conscious decisions as they grow.

When students are armed with this information, they become stewards of the environment. As they leave school and onto their careers, that knowledge base will grow roots and spread amongst our corporate entities and will eventually result in an entirely new culture towards how we collectively view the environment.

### **Department of Environment**

The mandate of the Department of Environment (the “Department”) must include goals to minimize and (wherever possible) eliminate threats to the environment. To properly execute on this mandate, the public must have confidence in the Department.

It is the Department that reviews, analyzes and ultimately determines the environmental viability of any projects put forward.

Some projects cause much stress for different communities across the province. This is partially because they don’t always trust the Department to put proposed projects through rigorous scrutiny before concluding that the risk of potential harm to the environment is minimal. They worry that appropriate checks and balances are not in place. The opposite is true as well, where people worry that the process is not clearly defined.

To give our respective communities that confidence, which has sometimes been lacking in economic decisions that impact our environment, we need to instill a level of faith and conviction, which only comes with good will and actions in our Department of Environment.

### **Litter Bug Laws**

One of the most enticing parts of attracting people to both live in and visit Nova Scotia is the beauty of our landscapes and coastlines. It is a shame to detract from that beauty with litter.

Litter is unsightly and takes away from the natural beauty of our province. Aside from being an eyesore, it poses health risks, affects water quality and is often mistaken as food by wildlife. Litter can hurt, and sometimes kill, our wildlife and wreak significant damage on our ecosystems.

People continue to litter, with little to no consequences for their actions.

Every year, thousands of volunteers are required to clean up litter across our neighbourhoods, parks, trails and our over 13,000 kilometres of coastlines.

This should not be necessary.

Nevertheless, last year alone, there were 67 registered coastline cleanups in Nova Scotia with over 1,895 volunteers cleaning up 94 kilometres of shoreline. In total, 5,286 kg of litter was removed. 288 trash bags and 73 recycling bags were filled. The most common items littered were cigarette butts (over 6,000 were picked up), plastic and foam, food wrappers, coffee cups and bottles.

Consequently, after a clean-up, our province benefits in many different ways. The province's appearance improves, the environment and our waterways receive the help they need, tourism is strengthened and harm to our wildlife is reduced.

Sadly, the sheer number of volunteers that are required to participate in these cleanups along with the volume of garbage they collect, are cause for concern. We need to do more to maintain the natural beauty of our province and protect our ecosystems.

We need initiatives in place to reduce, prevent and divert litter away from our natural spaces.

### **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

One of the core values of the PC Party is environmental stewardship. We need to present a vision for the future of this province that gives Nova Scotians confidence that its government understands the importance of focusing on the environment and addressing climate change.

The fixes can't simply be soundbites or small "one-offs" in nature. They must demonstrate that there is a plan that contemplates the bigger picture that will yield results for generations to come and put the environment and climate change front of mind.

It is our obligation to pass on a natural environment to future generations that is the same, or better than, the one we inherited.

Your PC government commits to doing just that.

Nova Scotia can be a leader on the environment. We just need a government that gives it the priority it deserves. This is why our plan focuses on:

- Renewed environmental leadership, setting ambitious, but achievable goal;
- Establishing positive initiatives to demonstrate a tangible focus on the environment to Nova Scotians;
- Rebuilding the environmental assessment process to ensure higher levels of expertise and scrutiny on complex projects; and
- Protecting the beauty of our coastline and landscapes.

## **1. New Enviro-Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act**

In 2007, the Progressive Conservative government realized that for a sustainable and prosperous future for Nova Scotians, economic capital and natural capital could no longer be viewed separately. The health of each source of capital depended upon, and affected, the other. As a result of this vision, an innovative bill - “Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act” (EGSPA) - was drafted and passed with the unanimous consent of the Legislature.

This was a progressive and visionary piece of legislation that recognized that a prosperous economy and a healthy environment are not incompatible and must be linked together.

What made EGSPA so innovative in 2007 is that it combined environmental and economic well-being in one bill and set out measurable and challenging, but still achievable, goals. It also established a progress reporting mechanism.

This bill became a trendsetting bill across Canada and beyond and helped to cement the reputation of Nova Scotia as a leader in the burgeoning “Green Economy.” An example of this leadership was the solid waste management program which had grown into a \$400 million business, much of it export business, that brought needed money into the Nova Scotian economy rather than merely recirculating money.

As a result of the success of the EGSPA, the government began the process of bringing social capital into the equation and looked at ways to improve the economic well being of vulnerable Nova Scotians. This work was never finished due to the change in government.

We will build on the work commenced in the EGSPA and focus on the long-term objective of fully integrating economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, human betterment and growth and social well-being. This will allow us, as a province, to:

- Provide support for rewarding work and improve the province’s economic strength;
- Support industry through encouraging innovation and funding necessary infrastructure for such growth;
- Strengthen energy efficiency programs and vigorously promote affordable clean energy;
- Support the greening of agriculture, forestry and fisheries to promote sustainable economic growth;
- Protect water resources both on land and offshore;
- Support appropriate climate action and mitigation;
- Strengthen our education systems by providing a quality education equal to or better than any other in Canada and accessible to all Nova Scotians;
- Strengthen our communities and our cities by encouraging policies that support sustainability, cultural diversity and livability; and



- Partner with the federal government, other provinces, Nova Scotia municipalities, First Nations, business and industry, community groups and non-profit organizations towards the fulfillment of these goals

To achieve these objectives, **during its first Legislative sitting, your PC government will introduce new environmental legislation - the *Enviro-Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act* (“EGCCRA”)** - which will guide Nova Scotia towards a cleaner and healthier environment in the coming decade (and beyond) and will further encourage growth of the green economy and the greening of traditional industries.

EGCCRA will not only re-establish Nova Scotia as a world leader in protecting the environment, but a focus on green energy will ensure that sustainable jobs are created and both our existing and future businesses thrive with minimal environmental impact.

This new roadmap for guiding our province on our environmental goals is based on the following principles:

- (a) The health of the economy, the health of the environment and the health of the people of the province are interconnected;
- (b) Environmentally sustainable economic development that recognizes the economic value of the province's environmental assets is essential to the long-term prosperity of the province;
- (c) The environment and the economy of the province are a shared responsibility of all levels of government, the private sector and all people of Nova Scotia;
- (d) The environment and economy must be managed for the benefit of present and future generations;
- (e) Innovative solutions are necessary to mutually reinforce the environment and the economy;
- (f) A long-term approach to planning and decision-making is necessary to harmonize the province's goals of economic prosperity and environmental sustainability;and
- (g) The management of goals for sustainable prosperity, such as emission reduction, energy efficiency programs and increasing the amount of legally protected land will preserve and improve the province's environment and economy for future generations.

To achieve these long-term objectives, our new, robust legislation will set the following environmental and economic goals:

1. The province will implement the Independent Review of Forestry Practices (the “Lahey Report”).

In opposition, our PC Caucus accepted the principles outlined in the Lahey Report. As government, we are committed to act on all recommendations of the Report and work towards finding a balance between industry and environment so that we can make our forestry a strong sector of our economy for generations.

To date, with 45 recommendations, the government's response has been slow to implement. We recognize the need for action.

The triad model of ecological forestry has been generally accepted by stakeholders and needs government leadership for implementation. It suggests many checks and balances within government, along with peer monitoring of the Department of Lands and

Forestry, to re-establish the trust of the stakeholders in the government and its commitment to our forestry sector.

Recognizing competing interests and listening to stakeholders is key to the future of forestry, while understanding the social and economic benefits is also essential. This can only be accomplished by willing parties getting together with future leaders of the province to establish a new roadmap.

2. At least 20% of the total land and water mass of Nova Scotia will be legally protected for nature conservation by 2030. This “Protected Areas” network will now include Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.

Protected areas under the 2007 EGSPA included:

- Nature reserves;
- Wilderness areas;
- Some provincial parks and reserves;
- Conservation easement lands;
- Lands owned by land trust organizations;
- National parks; and
- National wildlife areas.

With approximately 70% of landmass being owned privately, this target is an ambitious one. We will include the same protected areas in the EGCCRA as well as add water mass as a targeted protected area.

We must work hand in glove with the federal government, who have set their own ambitious target of protecting 25% of Canada’s lands and oceans by 2025.

To reach this target, we will engage groups like the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ducks Unlimited. We will have a strategy that includes protecting Crown land, buying and protecting other lands, establishing voluntary conservation easements in conjunction with private landowners who wish to have their land protected and helping land trusts protect private lands.

We will also implement the *Nova Scotia Our Parks and Protected Areas Plan*, wherein approximately 125 identified sites from this plan are awaiting legal protection. At present, all that’s required is an Order-in-Council to ensure protection of these areas.

3. The province will support low-impact, sustainable aquaculture.

There is significant disagreement between the aquaculture industry and the scientific community about the environmental impact of open pen fish farming. In addition to sea lice and the potential for fish to escape, opponents raise concerns of effluent waste produced, while the industry counters that moving operations on land would require the use of recirculating aquaculture systems technology, resulting in the “use of large amounts of land, water and power, thus having a significant environmental footprint, in particular greenhouse gas emissions.”

Licensing is the most effective lever at the disposal of the province. A proper licensing process that places much weight on environmental considerations, would include

provincial regulation for potential environmental impacts, animal welfare, fish health and/or pest control product sale and use.

In 2014, the Doelle-Lahey Panel laid out some common sense, science-based options to build confidence in the industry and safeguard our coastal waters. Unfortunately, the government chose not to implement important recommendations in the Report.

One of the core recommendations of the Report was the creation of a classification system under which coastal areas would be rated as Green, Yellow or Red based on their suitability for fin-fish aquaculture. Under that system, the classification of a coastal area would determine how applications for a fin-fish licence would be evaluated and the likelihood of an application for such a licence being approved. It would also play a central role in determining the terms and conditions under which licenses would be issued.

This system would take decisions out of the Minister's hands and give coastal communities important information. The amount of influence and power the Minister has in the approval process has been a long-term concern of the PC Party.

Recently, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans ("DFO") has made a decision to phase out salmon farms in parts of British Columbia. Since that decision, DFO has installed a new aquaculture engagement process that is highly probable to become a feature of the Federal Aquaculture Act, meaning that a transition away from open pen aquaculture in Nova Scotia may be inevitable.

Despite that, we need to engage the stakeholders to determine whether we proactively establish a moratorium on open pen aquaculture licensing or whether we revamp the licensing process to prioritize onshore aquaculture rather than further expansion of open pen operations. This could be paired with preferential electricity rates to ease the transition for the industry.

4. The province will update its environmental impact assessment process to consider the cumulative impacts of any development that would potentially affect wetlands, rivers, lakes or other aquatic environments.

This initiative can be undertaken by an amendment to the *Environmental Assessment Regulations*.

5. Local food consumption will be supported and encouraged, with the goal of 20% of the money spent on food by Nova Scotians being spent on locally produced food by 2030.

Presently, only about 15% of money spent on food by Nova Scotians is on locally-produced food.

First, to set a target, we make local food a priority. In determining how to reach our new target, we need to look at policies and infrastructure that support getting more local, healthy food into our public institutions. Those institutions can then be real models and advocates for how we can start to drive change. Our health and education sectors can lead.

We already have examples to work from. Dalhousie's Agriculture campus has a .45 hectare, student-led garden that provides fresh produce to students and staff. In 2016, 7,700 kg of fruits and vegetables from the garden were served at Dal's Truro and Halifax campuses.

Acadia set its own target of 20% local consumption in 2012. Not only did they achieve it, but now they're exceeding it.

One role for government is to facilitate the relationship between agriculture and these types of large institutions. Another is to set policies that encourage local consumption by the public. Our *Nova Scotia Loyal* plan for the economy establishes a plan that would see a dramatic increase in the consumption of local foods as a result of participation in a loyalty rewards program.

The more of our locally-produced and harvested food (seafood, fruit, vegetables, etc.) that is consumed here, the more we will see additional production of value-added goods. As we get more money flowing through our economy, we build more vibrant, more sustainable companies and communities.

6. The province will update its existing environmental decision-making process to include diversity, inclusion and equity.

Working with racial and community groups we can help guide projects forward. Our environmental assessment legislation should be amended to give voice to under-represented communities.

There are examples across the province of less desirable projects being placed in under-represented communities.

Our PC government will include a mind and eye to ensure fairness for those communities in decision-making.

7. The province will build climate change adaptive capacity and resilience by prioritizing climate adaptation across every government department and ensuring that all Nova Scotia municipalities have sufficient resources to take immediate and long-term action on their adaptation priorities.

This will largely be administrative in nature and adapting the mindset of every government department. During the enactment of EGSPA, all Deputy Ministers were brought into the process for buy-in, to understand the importance and provide their own departmental input. The same process will take place for EGCCRA, led by the Premier's Deputy Minister.

Too often, each department is siloed - and sometimes, territorial. The best way to overcome this is through engagement at the Deputy level.

8. The province will commit to 80% of its electricity needs being supplied by renewable energy by 2030.

The effect of this target will mean eliminating Nova Scotia's reliance on coal nearly ten years earlier than our current target of 2040. As a result, the goal for our energy production breakdown is estimated to be as follows:

Energy Source	GWh	%
Coal	-	0%
Natural Gas	1,100	10%
Domestic Hydro	1,300	11%
Biomass	500	4%
Wind	4,600	40%
Maritime Link	1,000	9%
Maritime Link non firm market	1,800	16%
Hydro Import	1,200	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>11,500</u></b>	<b><u>100%</u></b>

Nova Scotia Power has effectively dealt with electricity production and the elimination of coal in its November 2020 Integrated Resource Plan ("IRP"). The December 2020 carbon price announced by the Federal government (\$170/tonne by 2030) will have the result of a phasing out of coal by the early 2030s, as opposed to the previous target of 2040.

Establishing a plan now with the above-noted sources of energy, will allow the time for the industry to adjust and prepare.

9. The province will work with the auto and gas service industries to sell 30% zero-emission vehicles by 2030.

Electric vehicles ("EVs") run solely on electric power. Depending on how that electric power is produced, an EV can be run on 100% sustainable, renewable energy. When an EV is running on electricity, it emits no direct emissions, making EVs significantly more environmentally efficient than conventional gasoline-powered vehicles.

When taking the full picture of emissions into account, EVs emit an average of 4,450 pounds of carbon dioxide equivalent each year. At the same time, gasoline vehicles emit over twice as much in the same time frame. EVs emit fewer GHGs and air pollutants over their lifetimes as compared to gasoline or diesel vehicles.

A survey of Canadians conducted by KPMG in February 2021, showed that 55% of Atlantic Canadians will purchase an electric (or hybrid) vehicle on their next new vehicle purchase within the next five years.

Those individuals included to buy an electric vehicle say they were motivated by environmental concerns, lower operating costs, tax incentives and the prospect of reduced insurance premiums. Tax incentives were the least enticing in terms of purchasing decision, whereas the environmental impact and operating costs were top of mind for consumers.

It is clear that electric vehicles are the way of the future. It is also clear that the public agrees and wants to do their part.

In establishing this goal of increasing electric vehicles on our roads, we will help to increase consumer awareness and demand by making the use of these vehicles more efficient.

During the first year of our PC government, we will offer rebates, up to 50 percent of the installation cost, to service providers on the install of one EV charging station. Increasing the efficiency of access to charging stations will help to increase the demand to meet, and potentially exceed, our target.

10. The province will ensure that new provincial buildings are net-zero and that all major provincial building retrofits will be low-carbon, reducing embodied carbon and ensuring 75% of domestic office floor space (new leases and lease renewals) will be in net-zero carbon climate resilient buildings starting in 2030.

With buildings being one of our largest emitters of GHGs, making up approximately 17% of the province's emissions, the province needs to examine this source of pollution and take active steps to reduce our governmental outputs.

Clearly enshrining in legislation a mandate that all new government buildings and any major renovations must be net-zero, will help to decrease our GHGs over time.

Similarly, we must encourage the private sector to follow our lead.

As an incentive to encourage more environmentally-friendly developments, we will work with property developers to establish grants to reduce the increased cost that may be associated with building net-zero buildings.

11. Develop a provincial active transportation strategy and explore options to help deliver more active transportation options, such as walking trails, cycling paths and other forms of active mobility, which are a complementary tool that can reduce reliance on cars and provide healthy transportation alternatives.

The Department of Environment along with the Departments of Health and Communities, Culture and Heritage will work together to identify mechanisms to enhance active transportation opportunities in each community.

12. Leveraging our recycling efforts in our tourism sector.

We need to incentivize industries to reuse, as we did under our previous PC government with paint, asphalt etc.

Nova Scotia has one of the strongest recycling programs in North America. With the heavy focus on the importance of our environment, there is an opportunity to leverage that mindset to attract visitors, migrants and companies to Nova Scotia, to say they live in or operate business in the most recycle-friendly jurisdiction in North America.

13. The province will actively encourage green businesses to relocate to the province and will provide funding credits for green businesses start ups.

The first element in attracting any businesses to our province is ensuring that they have access to the Internet. No one will start up in a jurisdiction that can't offer stable, reliable Internet access. This issue is largely addressed in our *Nova Scotia Loyal* plan for the economy in which we commit to give every household in Nova Scotia access to the Internet.

Additionally, our plan that allows employers to reinvest in their own companies and pay their corporate taxes to their employees instead of the government, will act as a tool for attracting businesses, including green business, to Nova Scotia.

To focus on green-specific businesses, we would partner with universities and our community college to offer help to commercialize green start ups.

14. Work with small businesses across the province and in all sectors to get their feedback on all potential ways to further support them in taking actions to reduce emissions, including through rebates, targeted investments and other supports.

Your PC government will convene discussions with the province's major industry leaders - agriculture, fishing, forestry, etc. to determine what steps they can take to make more environmentally conscious progress. Government will implement the tangible recommendations from these discussions, either through legislation or incentive-based programs.

15. The province will continue to support and strengthen Efficiency Nova Scotia to meet our identified clean energy goals.

Your PC government commits to using energy better through the identified goals in this plan. Part of being more efficient energy consumers means a commitment to lowering energy bills and making life more affordable for Nova Scotians.

16. The province will actively pursue federal funding programs that enhance environmental and economic sustainability and commit to working in partnership with municipalities, First Nations, businesses, community groups and non profit organizations to continue to position Nova Scotia as a world leader in sustainable development.

Your PC government will employ a funding navigator within the Department of Environment to help support businesses and individuals seeking to apply for federal funding programs. Often the requirements are complex and having the assistance of an individual versed in navigating government programs, may help in making their bid for funding successful. The more Federal funding Nova Scotia projects are able to acquire, the better for greening our entire province.

For example, there are currently several funds that can be explored by Nova Scotians:

- (1) The Atlantic Ecosystems Initiatives aims to improve the health, productivity and long-term sustainability of ecosystems in Atlantic Canada. It supports projects that use an ecosystem-based approach that includes broad partnerships and collaborative action leading to positive environmental results.

Funding is provided for projects that:

- Enhance integrated ecosystem planning and decision-making;
- Increase ecosystem knowledge and science; and
- Undertake actions that impact priority ecosystems in Atlantic Canada to conserve, restore and enhance the health of ecosystems.

Projects will involve water quality conservation, restoration and enhancement as part of an overall strategic plan. Projects must demonstrate an ecosystem-based approach and show how the work is part of an overall strategic plan for the watershed.

- (2) The Environmental Damages Fund aims to restore the environment and conserve wildlife and habitats in a scientifically sound, cost-effective, and technically feasible way. Funds are used to fund projects like

- Restoration;
- Environmental quality improvement;
- Research and development; and
- Education and awareness.

Applications with other funding sources may receive priority. Our government could seek funding through this program to help contribute to projects like remediating our former mine sites.

- (3) The Habitat Stewardship Program provides funding for projects submitted by Canadians that contribute directly to the recovery objectives and population goals of species at risk and that prevent others from becoming a conservation concern. The objectives of this program are to:

- Support habitat projects that benefit species at risk and prevent others from becoming a conservation concern;
- Enable Canadians to become actively involved in stewardship projects for species at risk which will result in tangible and measurable conservation benefits; and
- Improve the scientific, sociological and economic understanding of stewardship as a conservation tool.

These are just a few samples of funding opportunities that can be tapped into on behalf of the province for the government or for individuals or Nova Scotia-based corporations.



## Costs

With the support of government, our goals under EGCCRA are extensive and ambitious, but very much - doable.

With respect to the recommendations of the Lahey Report, there is little to no new cost to implementing this process. Consultations and publications for new regulations can be done with existing departmental spending.

To increase our target for protected land/water mass, we may be eligible to tap into Federal funding for protected offshore areas as well as funding to support private landowners and trusts, like the Natural Heritage Conservation Program. At present, this is a revenue neutral commitment.

The funding to support our commitment of increasing Nova Scotia's local food consumption is established in our *Nova Scotia Loyal* rewards program in our economy platform.

With respect to our PC commitment to reduce coal as a source of electricity by 2030, Nova Scotia Power's November 2020 Integrated Resource Report says the 25-year net present value with end effects in 2030 is \$16.493 billion. Whereas, the net present value if we were to get off coal by 2040 is \$16.312 billion.

While we do not have the nominal amounts, this comparison demonstrates that making this change by 2030 instead of by 2040 is only slightly more expensive. However, those numbers don't embed the Federal government's cost of carbon at \$170/tonne.

The major concern in eliminating our reliance on coal is mitigating any potential increases for ratepayers on account of the new capital expenditure investment. According to the Integrated Resource Report, the effect on rates is not significant. This is partially because the capital expenditure is amortized over the life of the investment and the investment is roughly the same, only incurred ten years earlier.

In an effort to encourage less emissions from vehicles and more towards more electric cars, we have committed to providing financial assistance for the installation of EV stations. We base our costing on the assumption that these stations would be installed at gas stations, but this is not a requirement.

There are presently 350 gas stations across Nova Scotia. We will assume 60 percent participation in this program, meaning 210 vendors  $[350 \times 60\%]$ . We estimate the cost of installation to be approximately \$2,500 per charger and we have committed to funding half of that cost at \$1,250, for a total investment of approximately \$262,500  $[210 \times \$1,250]$

Your PC government has committed to establishing a \$5 million grant to encourage the development of eco-friendly buildings. In order to qualify for the grant, the applicant must meet certain funding criteria to be developed to ensure projects are value-adds for a broad spectrum of their community. For example, an affordable housing development may receive priority funding.

Our funding navigator will also help our communities access Federal programs like the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program. This is a national, merit-based program with the

objective of improving the availability and condition of community buildings in Canadian communities experiencing higher needs and who are currently underserved.

This program, which has over \$860 million in funding available, supports retrofits, repairs or upgrades of existing publicly-accessible community buildings and the construction of new publicly-accessible community buildings that serve underserved and high-needs communities across Canada. The program focuses on publicly accessible community buildings with a recognition that these structures and spaces are at the heart of community vitality. They are the places where Canadians gather, access essential services, etc.

Your PC government has committed to supporting active transportation initiatives. We would envision local decisions about active transportation made in conjunction with each county across the province. As such, we will invest \$100,000 into active transportation in each of our 18 counties for a total of \$1,800,000.

We recognize that understanding different funding options and working through the application process can be a challenge. Your PC government will dedicate a funding navigator for green projects within the Department of Environment. We will invest \$65,000 annually in this role for salary and associated expenses.

Our total investment in renewing Nova Scotia's leadership in environmental stewardship is \$7,127,500.

## **2. Environmental Education**

There is no doubt that we need to take steps to do our part to reduce our impact on the environment. The new *Enviro-Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act* will establish the road map that will, once again, make Nova Scotia a leader in Canada on the environment and addressing climate change.

In addition to the goals established in this new legislation, there are other, *tangible*, initiatives we can undertake at a provincial level that demonstrate a commitment to reducing our footprint on the environment.

Improving the environment and combating climate change begins with a change in mindset, which starts with education and knowledge.

When we think about school curriculum, the first subjects that typically come to mind are reading, writing, math and science. As previously discussed, our educators go well beyond teaching the basics to teaching the foundations of responsible decision-making that will last a lifetime.

When you know better, you do better. Now more than ever, this means “doing better” in terms of the environment and climate change. Our PC government will ensure that part of the science curriculum includes a focus on the environment and climate change.

Nova Scotian students must understand climate change impacts. They need to know the long-term risks and how our own activities contribute.

Our students should be armed with the knowledge of:

- How their actions affect the environment and climate change;
- How changes in the environment affect others;
- Why they should care about recycling and sustainability;
- How they can do their part.

This background and education will help to form attitudes, practices and will adjust behaviour so each student understands the part they can play and carry that responsibility with them as they go on to adulthood.

### **Costs**

The costs of including environment and climate change education in our school curriculum are included in our PC *Investing in the Future* plan for education.

### **3. Department of Environment**

This province has a history of placing more emphasis on our economic development initiatives than the environment. Whereas, the reality is, industrial development and effective environmental stewardship are not and should not be mutually exclusive. In fact, we believe they can actually be supportive of one another in an integrated strategy.

We have seen some of the most polarizing debates in our communities, pitting neighbour against neighbour, in the argument of economy versus the environment.

One reason for this polarization is because people are afraid that the government won't properly assess the projects that come before it with the environmental rigour they feel is needed. Our communities need confidence that the Minister of Environment will show that government is serious about doing its job in protecting Nova Scotians, and will properly, thoroughly and fairly scrutinize and assess any projects that come before it.

The public needs to know that rubber stamps will not be allowed. The community must have confidence in the process and the science.

As a result, your PC government will establish blue ribbon panels of subject matter experts to assess complex applications to ensure our environment is protected with the highest level of scrutiny.

Not every application will require these panels. Many applications fall under the purview of expertise of the Department and will continue to be assessed by the team of experts within the Department. However, we must recognize that not all applications are the same. With some applications there is more complexity in the project than others, requiring more narrow and specific skill sets that may not be readily available within the Department.

For those applications the Minister deems "complex" or for any applicant wishing to self-refer to a blue ribbon panel for additional scrutiny, they may do so.

The panels will be made up of experts in a given field. The experts may be different for each application depending on the initiative. The experts must be independent of both government and the applicant.

With true experts in place, they will be able to provide applicants, from the outset, with a clearer understanding and outline of the actual expectations and requirements of their applications. This establishes a clear, structured process from the beginning, wherein the goal post on what is required will not be moved.

This results in a better, more efficient process for the applicant where they clearly understand the expectations of the process. The Department is not put in a position where it has to continuously change the application parameters because they have been clearly set by individuals who understand a particular project or sector better than anyone. It results in better environmental outcomes. Projects receive higher levels of environmental scrutiny before they can proceed, minimizing the risk of potential harm. The economy benefits from certainty. Finally, communities benefit from the comfort of knowing that independent experts are the ones determining the environmental viability of applications before them.

### **Costs**

In the last five years, there have been a total of 35 completed environmental assessments before the Department, for an average of seven assessments per year. For the purposes of costing, we will assume that average holds, with between 20% to 30% of those assessments requiring our blue ribbon panels.

As noted, the experts for the panel will be independent of government (e.g. not government employees, but rather individuals contracted for the specific purposes of assessing a particular application). The number of experts on each panel will vary from three to five, depending on the complexity and accessibility of the subject-matter.

A form of standing offer list will be prepared, with experts submitting applications to be included on the list. New experts will be added as the complexity of applications broadens (e.g. the list will be constantly expanding and evolving to accommodate different skill sets and knowledge bases).

We will assume a cost of approximately \$100,000 per expert panel to assess one application. Based on our assumption of two “complex” assessments per year, we estimate an investment of \$200,000 in empanelling the experts.

We also estimate an additional \$25,000 per panel in discretionary costs, for a total of \$50,000 [\$25,000 x 2 panels].

Our total investment in establishing blue ribbon panels within the Department is \$250,000.

## **4. Penalize Environmental Offenders**

Your PC government will strive to make Nova Scotia the most environmentally friendly jurisdiction in North America. In addition to our initiatives to reduce our GHG emissions and limit

our carbon footprint, we need to encourage Nova Scotians to ‘walk the walk’ in their daily lives and respect the environment and their communities.

Walking in our parks or looking outside our windows as we drive along our highways, it is always disheartening to see the amount of garbage that detracts from our beauty. The current penalties in place have not served as a deterrent, as such, **your PC government will establish the highest penalties for littering in Canada.**

Currently, our fines for littering range from \$151.25 for a first offence to \$1,502.50 for a third offence.

This doesn’t go far enough.

Your PC government will enact the ***Litterbug Act***, legislation that will establish provincial penalties for littering (as defined under the Environment Act). Under this new law, individuals who litter will receive a ticket in the amount of \$500 for their first offence; escalating to \$2,500 for a second offence and \$10,000 for each subsequent offence.

Since cigarette butts are the largest source of litter, they will be defined as a separate category of litter under the Litterbug Act. A first offence littering a cigarette butt will cost the offender \$1,000; a second offence at a cost of \$5,000; and subsequent offences at a cost of \$10,000. The idea behind this specific category of offence is to deter the biggest offenders.

Corporate offenders littering under this legislation will receive tickets in the amount of \$2,500 for a first offence, \$10,000 for a second offence and \$100,000 for any subsequent offence. Illegal dumping fines are presently in the range of \$700, whereas in provinces like New Brunswick, they range from \$1,000 to \$1,000,000 for corporations. We would therefore increase our illegal dumping fines to \$2,500 for a first offence; \$100,000 for a second and \$1,000,000 for any subsequent offences. Our corporations need to know we are serious about cleaning up our province.

At present, most municipalities set penalties for littering within their communities. They will still be able to do so under their by-laws and those fines will be in addition to any provincial penalties.

Environment Officers and Municipal By-Law Officers will be responsible for issuing tickets.

All revenues from individual offenders will be reinvested in that respective community’s active transportation program. Revenues from corporate offenders will be reinvested in our province’s Green Fund to attract more green businesses to Nova Scotia.

Upon enacting this legislation, we will embark on an advertising campaign to inform Nova Scotians of these new penalties in an effort to mitigate the number of offenders.

This initiative will result in changing the behaviour of Nova Scotians towards the environment. It will also have the benefit of helping to make our province even more beautiful.

## **Costs**

Penalizing those who cause harm to our environment will largely be revenue neutral for budgeting purposes.

As noted, revenues from fines will be reinvested in their respective communities. We do, however, recognize that there may be a need for more enforcement officers, but that will depend on demand once this law is enacted. If more officers are required, that funding will come from this fund. Similarly, our campaign advertising this new law will be a one-time campaign that will be offset by funding from this revenue.

## CONCLUSION

If we want individuals and corporations to change and improve their approach to the environment, government must lead the way. Environmental stewardship starts at the top. If government takes action and sets the example, our people and companies will follow.

Our plan will harness all sources of capital - economic capital, natural capital, social capital, human capital and built capital – for the future well-being and sustainable prosperity of all Nova Scotians.

Your PC government will build on these insights and the experience of EGSPA. We want to firmly give notice to all Nova Scotians that the Party of sustainable prosperity in Nova Scotia is the PC Party.

The long-term environmental and economic objective for Nova Scotia under your PC government is to fully integrate environmental sustainability and economic prosperity and to this end, to demonstrate international leadership by having one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments in the world by the year 2030.

Proposed investments:

### **(1) Renewed Leadership**

EV Charging Stations	\$262,500
Eco-Friendly Building Grant	\$5,000,000
Active Transportation Fund	\$1,800,000
Funding Navigator	\$65,000
Total Renewed Leadership Costs	\$7,127,500

### **(2) Department of Environment**

Expert Panels	\$200,000
Discretionary Funding for Assessments	\$50,000
Total Department Costs	\$250,000

**Total Costs:** **\$7,377,500**

These are investments into the future of all Nova Scotians, our grandchildren and great grandchildren. Our plan means showing the country that we are a leader in the environment and setting a path for everyone else to follow.