



BUDGET **2026-27**

DEFENDING NOVA SCOTIA

Planning for the long term

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Introduction

Nova Scotia can be an economic powerhouse. To get there, we need to make sound investments, to grow our economy and pay for the services Nova Scotians need, like healthcare, highways, education and housing.

We need to defend against global uncertainty, while capitalizing on the opportunity before us to grow and prosper.

We have made strong progress to unlock our potential. In the last year, the Nova Scotia Government has made strategic investments and foundational changes to prepare Nova Scotia for growth and sustainability. But in a world of volatile trade relationships and shifting market conditions - financial stability isn't optional – it's necessary.

Nova Scotia's 2026-27 business plan, *Defending Nova Scotia*, builds on the momentum we've created in the last year. It reflects a comprehensive, responsive, sustainable plan that will convert opportunity into long-term, inclusive prosperity. We have the natural advantages to create a prosperous future - natural resources, skilled people and a bold vision.

Defending Nova Scotia means empowering our people, our businesses and our communities. It means making smart financial decisions and being thoughtful and strategic. It means being more focused and efficient.

Strategic investments will harness our natural assets and diversify our trading partners; enable our people to live a more independent and financially secure life; continue to rebuild how Nova Scotians receive the care they need, when they need it; and ensure we have the right infrastructure as a sound, safe and stable foundation.

Here is how we will continue to make it happen in 2026-27. *Defending our province* and forging a path towards prosperity.

Growing our Economy – Powering our Future

The world needs what we have to offer, whether it is clean energy, critical minerals, high-quality food, or manufactured goods and services.

Creating the right conditions for development is vital to attracting investment in our resource sectors. Nova Scotia has demonstrated national leadership in red tape reduction, strengthening our ability to respond and compete globally in sectors such as critical minerals and clean energy. The *Making Business Easier Act*, passed in fall 2025, prioritizes streamlined processes and regulations for the natural resources sector – particularly mining – to improve efficiency and attract investment while maintaining existing protections for the environment, health and safety.

The *Powering the Offshore Act*, updates legislation related to offshore wind and tidal energy, paving the way for more clean energy projects. We announced a new gold mine in Guysborough, Nova Scotia, expected to create 735 new jobs and contribute \$2.1 billion to our Gross Domestic Product over its lifetime.

We have made great strides.

Wind West - Offshore Wind

Nova Scotia has some of the fastest and most consistent offshore winds in the world. Ontario, Quebec, the northeastern United States and Atlantic Canada will need as much as 100 gigawatts of new electricity capacity by 2050, creating significant demand for large volumes of clean power at stable, long-term prices. Nova Scotia's offshore wind represents one of the world's largest untapped energy resources capable of meeting this demand.

That's why Nova Scotia's Wind West project to transmit this clean energy has been identified by the Government of Canada as a nation-building initiative, with a commitment to advancing its development. The project would deliver long-term benefits and energy security for Nova Scotians while supplying clean electricity to domestic and export markets. Our offshore wind industry could produce enough

energy to meet approximately one-quarter of Canada’s total electricity demand, and combined with Wind West, could attract billions in private investment, and create thousands of jobs for Nova Scotians across rural, coastal, and urban communities.

In 2026-27, the Nova Scotian Government will invest \$2.2 million to support offshore wind research, industry engagement, and supply chain development.

Canada’s first offshore wind development will help set the scale and direction for future growth. For Nova Scotia, it represents an opportunity to build a new clean energy sector that meets long-term provincial power needs while supporting broader markets. Strong, steady winds, relatively shallow waters, and proximity to key markets position Nova Scotia as one of the best locations globally for this type of development.

The first phase would unlock 5,000 megawatts of capacity, producing about 24 terawatt-hours of clean energy annually and driving \$45-\$75 billion in private-sector-led investment. This investment would strengthen Nova Scotia’s economy and meet the growing demand for clean electricity.

In 2026-27, we will support the first call for bids for offshore wind by the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator. We will also continue to work with the Government of Canada to designate Wind West as a project for development under the new federal Major Projects Office.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Nova Scotia has a known discovered reserve of 3.5 trillion cubic feet of offshore natural gas on the Scotian Shelf, with the potential for up to 150 trillion cubic feet. The Province has had successful offshore natural gas projects – the Deep Panuke Offshore Gas Project and Sable Offshore Energy Project – that created hundreds of jobs and brought in billions of dollars that helped build schools, hospitals and roads, fuelling the provincial economy for 20 years.

We can tap into that asset again and are welcoming the opportunity for investment and jobs with a call for bids for offshore oil and gas exploration, with a deadline for interested bidders due spring of 2026.

Onshore Natural Gas

To harness Nova Scotia's natural resources and support long-term economic growth, the Province is investing in research to better understand the potential to responsibly produce natural gas in the province. In 2026-27, Nova Scotia will invest \$25 million, bringing total funding to \$30 million, for the Subsurface Energy Research and Development Investment Program with Dalhousie University to research the nature and location of onshore natural gas deposits and to develop guidelines to ensure exploration and development are done responsibly. The program will help restart the province's onshore natural gas industry after a decade of inactivity, creating good jobs and new government revenue. Developing local energy resources will strengthen Nova Scotia's energy security by reducing reliance on imported fuels, while helping keep heating and power more affordable for Nova Scotians.

Mining and Critical Minerals

Nova Scotia has a long history of mining. Mineral exploration alone brings over \$30 million per year into Nova Scotia communities. Mining brings hundreds of millions more.

Today's mining industry is an innovation driven sector. It currently accounts for at least 2,500 jobs in Nova Scotia that pay an average of \$100,000 a year in wages and benefits. Following the recent announcement of the Goldboro gold mine, set to begin construction in Guysborough County in 2026, we remain confident in our ability to attract additional mining projects in 2026-27. These projects will create new jobs and deliver economic benefits locally and across the province.

Nova Scotia has a vital role to play in Canada's critical mineral supply chain, through mining, processing, manufacturing, and recycling, as the province and the country move into a low-carbon economy and reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. In 2025, the Province published an updated list of twenty critical minerals with strategic importance Nova Scotia. This year we will continue to advance these opportunities by completing a province-wide critical mineral inventory. We are also analyzing the economic opportunities from critical minerals along clean energy, defence and high-tech supply chains such as semiconductors, with an aim to identify feasible and sustainable socioeconomic opportunities.

Safeguarding our Future

Nova Scotia is Canada's leader in defence with world-class expertise and experience in the defence and aerospace sectors available to support North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) goals and national defence spending. Nova Scotia is positioned well to leverage the recently announced federal investments to rebuild, rearm, and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces. As homebase for NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) headquarters, and the Centre for Oceans Ventures and Entrepreneurship (COVE), we are demonstrating to the world that Nova Scotia is a leader in defence and global marine technology. COVE recently secured collaboration agreements with the Government of Canada who announced the establishment of Canada's first Maritime Defence Innovation Secure Hub (DISH) at COVE in Dartmouth.

Nova Scotia has many skilled graduates that are being tapped to deliver next generation defence technologies for Canada's military. Our post-secondary institutions are also providing industry-specific programming, such as Nova Scotia Community College's Automatic Radar Plotting Aid and Global Maritime Distress and Safety System programs.

In 2026-27, we will focus on building a workforce capable of maintaining the next generation of military vessels and equipment. We will continue to enhance supports for the civilian defence workforce, military personnel, and their families to ensure Nova Scotia is the province of choice for the industry. We are creating sustainability in Nova Scotia's defence supply chain by attracting investment from the international defence sector, enhancing productivity and innovation for local defence companies, and scaling up local capacity to meet the future needs of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Expanding our Reach

The global trade environment is shifting. This creates generational opportunities to bring our products to new international markets and help our businesses compete and succeed internationally. We are defending Nova Scotia's interests, expanding and showcasing our world-class goods and services, promoting the purchase of more Nova Scotia and Canadian-made goods, and deepening and diversifying our trade relationships to safeguard against potential trade disruptions.

We have already made great strides to remove interprovincial trade barriers related to the sale of goods, labour mobility, trucking and financial services, which will make Nova Scotia one of the most open markets in Canada. We will continue to work with the Government of Canada and provincial and territorial partners to support federal engagement with the United States Administration to maintain the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) and suspend tariffs on products from Canada.

In 2026-27, we will expand market diversification initiatives to help seafood and agrifood producers and processors build capacity to operate in new markets, including the launch of a new market diversification funding program, a \$4 million investment over three years. This program will include funding for the seafood and agri-food sectors to expand capacity and develop and diversify new export markets and products. Here at home, we will extend the Institutional Development Expansion and Advancement program, with a \$1 million investment. This investment helps make more local food available in hospitals, schools, long-term care facilities, and other public institutions across the province.

We will establish an Innovation Hub for the seafood sector, with a \$1.5 million investment in 2026-27 plus ongoing annual funding. This investment will help accelerate growth and improve productivity in Nova Scotia's seafood sector by providing industry development services and science supports that respond to the needs of industry.

The forestry sector remains as important to Nova Scotia today as it has been throughout our province's history, contributing almost \$2 billion annually to our economy. To ensure it remains important, we are focusing on under-utilized wood resources, such as sawdust, woodchips, bark and other low-grade fibres.

This year, we are enhancing the Low-Grade Forest Products Assistance Program, with an additional \$8 million annual investment for the next three years, to help access new uses and markets for these materials. This initiative not only reduces waste but also supports revenue streams that strengthen the overall economic viability of the forest sector. This work helps build supply chains for biomass energy products like wood pellets and liquid biofuels that are in growing demand in export markets around the world.

Ensuring nothing goes to waste strengthens both sustainable forest management and profitability, while opening new trade opportunities for Nova Scotia wood products.

Investing in Innovation

Nova Scotia is expanding the Innovation Rebate Program (IRP) to accelerate sustainable economic growth in our natural resource, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and defence sectors. The IRP is one of the province's most effective tools for stimulating private sector investment, improving productivity, and strengthening global competitiveness.

The IRP delivers strong economic returns for Nova Scotians. Every provincial dollar invested is matched by at least three dollars in private investment, helping local businesses scale, modernize operations, adopt cleaner and more efficient technologies, and reach new markets. In recent years, the program has helped a wide range of companies across key sectors throughout all regions of the province, with a strong focus on rural communities.

To build on this momentum, the Province is increasing its investment in 2026-27 and ensuring companies in the natural resource and defence sector can access this support. This expansion ensures small and medium sized companies get the support they need to scale up and leverage new opportunities.

Empowering People – Building Futures and Communities

Growing the economy and continuing to rebuild healthcare will provide more opportunities for Nova Scotians. While the world changes around us, we are reminded of what makes Nova Scotia the envy of other places. Owning our uniqueness and strengthening it through initiatives that create safe and resilient communities for all Nova Scotians will be a major focus for us in the year ahead.

Safe and Inclusive Communities

We all expect and deserve to feel safe, respected, and supported in our communities. We are continuing to take a whole-of-government approach to implement the recommendations of the Mass Casualty Commission (MCC) and the Desmond Fatality Inquiry. In 2026-27, the Province will continue to make lasting impacts in the areas of community safety and well-being, health, gender-based and intimate partner violence, and public safety and policing reform. Through initiatives such as the Ministers' Table on Gender Based Violence, government is strengthening coordinated prevention efforts and survivor supports while addressing the root causes of violence.

In 2026-27, Nova Scotia will begin the implementation of a single Records Management System (RMS) for all police agencies. The RMS will allow police agencies across the province to access and share information with each other more easily, supporting better coordination and helping officers respond more quickly with the same up-to-date information. This change supports the MCC recommendations to strengthen interoperability and information sharing among police agencies.

Efforts are being coordinated to enhance community safety by reimagining how we prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies. The Nova Scotia Guard was deployed for the first time in 2025, leveraging local volunteers to support wildfire response and search and rescue efforts. In 2026-27 we will continue to support Nova Scotians during times of crisis.

Regional emergency management organizations across Nova Scotia play a crucial role in emergency planning and providing prompt, co-ordinated responses in their area. They are activated to provide centralized co-ordination when emergencies become too large for local agencies to handle alone.

Across Nova Scotia, firefighters stand ready – around the clock – protecting lives, property, and communities. In 2026-27, we will take action to strengthen fire protection services for all Nova Scotians.

To safeguard our children and youth who are the future of our province, we will establish the Office of Children and Youth in 2026-27. This Office will protect and promote the rights and well-being of children and youth in Nova Scotia.

Improving Access to Housing

Nova Scotians deserve a place to call home where they can choose to raise a family and age independently. We have made significant progress on the five-year Our Homes, Action for Housing plan.

More housing stock continues to be a priority for the Government. A new housing development in Dartmouth's Shannon Park will begin construction in 2026-27 with support from the federal Build Canada Homes fund. A joint federal-provincial investment of \$300 million will support development of 1,430 new homes across the province, including 930 units at Shannon Park. This exciting revitalization includes a mix of homes including market units, affordable units, supportive housing and public housing options.

Government is ahead of schedule to meeting its ambitious target to create 1,616 supportive housing units across Nova Scotia by 2027-28, with nearly 1,200 units completed to-date. Projects like Shannon Park and others will help us meet this target.

In 2025-26, we launched a new pilot program to help make homeownership a reality for Nova Scotians. The First Time Homebuyers Pilot Program provides eligible applicants with the ability to purchase a home with a 2% downpayment, through provincial credit unions.

Making Life More Affordable for Families

We are helping Nova Scotians with affordability – saving the average family more than \$1,400 per year with HST cuts, income tax savings, and rebates on home heating through the Your Energy Rebate Program. The Government of Nova Scotia continues to invest in our early learning and childcare system to increase access to affordable, inclusive and high-quality childcare options. We continue to work with our federal partners to create 9,500 childcare spaces and have already added more than 9,200 spaces. Parent fees have also been reduced, by an average of 50 per cent for children under age 6. Low- and middle-income families receive additional financial support through the Child Care Subsidy Program, which supports over 5,800 children, 2,000 of which pay \$0 per day.

The Nova Scotia School Lunch Program has been an overwhelming success in providing students across the province with nutritious, delicious school lunches. In its first school year (2024-25), the program provided over 4.7 million lunches in 258 elementary schools. The program expanded in 2025-26 to include all schools with middle and junior high grades (reaching an additional 77 schools), and the final phase will launch in fall 2026, expanding access to high school students in the remaining 37 schools.

Keeping electricity rates affordable is a priority. Government has stood with Nova Scotians against unfair rate increases and fought for ratepayers. Following Nova Scotia Power's 2025 cyber breach and billing errors, Government requested the Energy Board launch an investigation to hold the utility accountable. At the same time, we are taking long-term action through the 2030 Clean Power Plan to modernize the electricity system, restructure regulation, and accelerate renewable energy projects to stabilize rates. We are making investments in the province's onshore natural gas industry to reduce reliance on imported fuels and lower costs over time. These actions reflect our commitment to affordability, fairness, and building a sustainable energy future for Nova Scotians.

Human Rights Remedy

We are committed to implementing the Human Rights Remedy to ensure persons with disabilities live meaningfully in their community of choice. As such, Government's priorities in 2026-27 include reducing the number of persons with disabilities living in residential institutions by 87.5% by continuing to increase Home Share placements and offering community-based supports through the Disability Support Program.

Rebuilding Care – For a Healthier Nova Scotia

Government has made generational investments to transform Nova Scotia's healthcare system through the four-year Action for Health plan, 2022-2026.

We have made significant investments to expand access to primary care, introducing virtual services, and community pharmacy clinics. The YourHealthNS app now provides a single, convenient gateway for patients to view health records, locate nearby services such as pharmacies and emergency departments, book appointments, and access resources on mental health, healthy eating, addictions support, and more. In 2025-26, the Province opened the first three of eight Integrated Youth Services sites in Amherst, Halifax, and Sydney, offering young people comprehensive health and social supports. We also fulfilled our commitment to provide the shingles vaccine free of charge to Nova Scotians aged 65 and older.

Improving Access to Primary Care

Nova Scotians should feel empowered to choose the life and the care they need. Helping people access the care and resources they deserve has been the guiding principle of our government.

Building on an already strong foundation of care, we will continue to take action to provide Nova Scotians the care options they need, where they are best served.

This work includes increasing primary care attachment and access in communities across our province by investing in team-based care, which brings doctors, nurse practitioners, and other professionals together in one location. These sites are distributed across urban, suburban, and rural areas, ensuring that all Nova Scotians benefit from having access to a regular primary care provider or team.

Significant progress has been made to grow our healthcare workforce across all professions. The Physician Assessment Centre of Excellence (PACE) clinic is supporting more international medical graduates to become licensed to practise in the province, the Cape Breton Medical Campus is training its first cohort of future doctors, and the Jordan pharmacy licensure project is bringing more needed pharmacists to our province.

In 2026-27, Government will continue to attract, train, and retain healthcare professionals to meet current and future needs. We know that when we train our future healthcare workforce here at home, they are more likely to stay and build their careers in Nova Scotia. In fall 2025, we surpassed enrollment targets for university healthcare programs with approximately 1,900 students in 35 programs across six universities. We will continue taking a strategic approach to aligning education investments with healthcare workforce needs.

Investing in Women's Health

We are enhancing care for women by opening the province's first Menopause Centre of Excellence in 2026, ensuring women in Nova Scotia have access to care dedicated to menopause and mid-life health. There are an estimated 350,000 women in Nova Scotia approaching, experiencing, or living beyond menopause, underscoring the urgent need for accessible and specialized menopause services. That specialized care becomes a reality in 2026, with a dedicated clinic providing specialized care for perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopausal symptoms.

Inclusive Mental Health and Recovery

Nova Scotia was the first province in Canada to commit to universal access to mental health and addictions care. To provide faster, publicly funded mental health care, Government is investing in innovative new models, like the insured services program launched last year. This program increases access to non-urgent mood and anxiety support by publicly funding private sector professionals. Planning for expansion is underway with a new stream expected to launch in 2026-27.

To achieve improved access, earlier intervention, and better outcomes for youth mental health, Government is continuing to invest in integrated youth services sites with three new sites planned to open in 2026-27.

To train more psychologists to meet Nova Scotian's mental health needs, a new doctor of psychology program and training clinic will open at Mount Saint Vincent University. This program will be the first of its kind in Nova Scotia and the training clinic will focus on supporting children and youth. The creation of four new residency positions will nearly double the number of available child-focused residencies in Nova Scotia and is planned to welcome students in fall 2026.

Home Care and Long-Term Care Services

Our investments are ensuring our seniors receive the care they need, when and where they need it. By providing our seniors with the services to maintain their independence at home or providing high quality care through long-term care, we continue to focus on continuing care services to meet the needs of Nova Scotians.

We are working to create efficient, modern and easier-to-navigate home care and long-term care services for Nova Scotians. Ensuring access to homecare is a priority for our government. In 2026-27, an investment of \$5.5 million will support the further development of a provincial technology platform, connecting all publicly funded home care agencies with Nova Scotia Health's Continuing Care program. This commitment will ensure a go-live date in 2027 and will help to provide quality care faster to Nova Scotians.

We are continuing to invest in long-term care facilities and are well on our way to meeting our target of building 5,700 new or replacement long-term care rooms by 2032. As of February 10, 2026, 1,032 beds have been added or replaced. Progress can be monitored through the [Long-Term Care New and Replacement Builds Dashboard](#).

Building a Financially Sustainable and Resilient Province

Government is focused on investments that will build and sustain communities for generations to come. Capital Plan 2026-27 invests more than \$3.5 billion in infrastructure across the province, including healthcare and long-term care facilities, housing projects and other priorities. We are investing in technology, working more efficiently, and focusing the efforts of the public service on strategic priorities that will drive our province forward.

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation helps government work better and deliver services that are faster, easier to use, and more effective for Nova Scotians, while keeping personal information safe. To support this work, the Government is focusing on strengthening cybersecurity and using artificial intelligence (AI) more widely.

Government will establish a new cyber security office and upgrade cyber monitoring, improving how quickly threats are detected and contained. This will reduce the impact of cyber incidents that could disrupt services, expose data, or cause system failures. We're developing AI tools to improve government services for Nova Scotians. These new digital services will make it easier to find information, provide more responsive support, and help people navigate programs faster. This will deliver more accurate, up-to-date information when needed and drive productivity and economic growth across the province.

Expanding Health Infrastructure and Access to Care

The new cancer centre at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital is expected to open in fall 2027. We also continue to make progress on other significant health projects including the construction of a new acute care tower at the Halifax Infirmity, which will add 216 beds, 16 operating rooms, a larger emergency department, and a 48-bed intensive care unit, with major construction through 2028 and an opening targeted for fall 2031.

Transforming Transportation

In August 2025, Nova Scotia launched its first Regional Transportation Plan — a groundbreaking initiative in Atlantic Canada. The plan lays out solutions to meet the challenges of growth and sets a clear path for the future of transportation across the province. Guided by Link Nova Scotia, a provincial crown corporation, it provides a focused, strategic approach to building a stronger, more connected transportation system across the province. The Province is working collaboratively with HRM to tackle congestion issues in the city centre, including exploring adaptive traffic signal technology and undertaking a holistic Peninsula Core Streets review to improve traffic flow and reduce delays.

The five-year Highway Improvement Plan 2026-27 outlines major highway and road projects to repair and maintain 23,000 kilometers of roads, highways and bridges throughout the province. In the coming year, the Province will invest approximately \$465 million to advance more than 160 highway improvement projects, including major upgrades to Highways 101, 102, 103, 104, and 107, new connector routes, bridge replacements and rehabilitation, rural gravel road upgrades, and climate-resilient infrastructure. These investments support the movement of goods, access to services, and the mobility needs of residents and businesses, directly employing over 6,000 Nova Scotians and supporting thousands more across construction, engineering, and materials supply.

These initiatives will help tackle congestion, support housing growth, and enhance connections between communities and economic centres. By focusing on these major areas, Nova Scotia is building a transportation network that delivers lasting benefits for people, businesses, and communities across the province.

Our Commitment to Nova Scotians

Defending Nova Scotia is about action, responsibility, and results. It is about making thoughtful financial decisions to establish a strong foundation for the future and finding innovative ways to deliver services for Nova Scotians while carefully managing the province's finances.

Through the priorities set out in this business plan, the Government of Nova Scotia is making deliberate choices to grow the economy, strengthen public services, and build a province that works better for people today - while preparing for the opportunities of tomorrow.

We will continue to look out for Nova Scotians. Protecting our people, our communities and our businesses—and building a stronger future for all Nova Scotians.

