

Budget

2017–2018

Opportunities for Growth



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Introduction

Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to stand in this historic chamber to table my second budget as finance minister.

Last year I stood in this chamber and tabled a balanced budget, one with a projected net position of \$17.1 million. We stuck to our plan, and I am pleased to say we are forecasting to close the year with a surplus.

I am privileged to stand here today to table this year's budget, which is also projecting a positive net position of \$25.9 million.

That's back-to-back surpluses for the first time in nearly a decade.

We are one of only a few provinces in Canada to be in such an enviable position.

The path to restored fiscal health was not always easy, but our finances are stronger now than they were four years ago.

We got to this point by focusing on controlling expenses and making smart investments.

Along the road to fiscal health, we made key investments:

- We invested in our high-value apple and wine sectors, and now our agriculture exports are up.
- We worked with tourism operators, and we just posted the best tourism season in our province's history.
- We helped business find new markets for their product and ensured Nova Scotia seafood was sold around the world — our fisheries exports have almost doubled in four years.
- We created a program to help recent graduates get their first job, and now youth unemployment is trending down.
- We pushed to increase immigration, and in 2016 our population reached an all-time high.

We were able to achieve these things because we worked with Nova Scotians — our people and our businesses. We invested in them and in their potential.

Why was the goal of continued surpluses and improved fiscal health so important?

We don't have to look far to see the challenging situation some of our sister provinces face.

The experience elsewhere in our federation shows how vulnerable provinces can be to outside events and the need to manage our finances wisely.

When that doesn't happen, citizens are facing tax hikes and service cuts, and their employees face mass layoffs and wage rollbacks.

We refused to let that happen here. We made smart, strategic investments to grow the economy while providing reasonable and fair wage increases to our employees.

When we came to office, we laid out a clear, strong, and reasonable fiscal plan. We stuck to that plan and are now in a position to invest in new opportunities for growth.

We are in a position to make new investments in infrastructure, provide more supports to youth and young families, invest in new ideas that will create a better economy, and make investments to create healthier and stronger communities.

We have worked hard together as Nova Scotians to reach this point. Now we will work even harder to ensure all Nova Scotians share the benefits.

Infrastructure

For decades, Nova Scotians had concerns about the safety of their 100-series highways. Past governments refused to tackle the issue, but we consulted with Nova Scotians to hear their opinions and we worked with them to develop solutions.

We listened, and now we are investing an additional \$390 million to twin highways around our province. We will do so without the use of tolls.

These investments in our highway infrastructure will make our roads safer and provide work for Nova Scotians. It will mean jobs around the province and more opportunities for people to live and work here.

Over the next seven years, we will

- Twin 38 kilometres of Highway 104 — from Sutherlands River to Antigonish
- Twin 22 kilometres of Highway 103 — from Tantallon to Hubbards
- Twin 9.5 kilometres of Highway 101 — from Three Mile Plains to Falmouth, including the Windsor Causeway; and
- Construct a twinned Burnside expressway

Much of the feedback from Nova Scotians focused on finding ways to improve safety sooner without relying on tolls.

Government is doing just that. As part of the \$390 million investment, \$30 million will be put toward safety measures in un-twinning areas of 100-series highways.

And, as we recently announced, we will remove tolls for Nova Scotian motorists on the Cobequid Pass. This will happen once the bonds are paid off, which is currently expected to be in 2019. A decision on commercial trucks and non-Nova Scotia residents will be made as we move closer to this date.

Investing in improved roads is only part of the infrastructure investment we are making. We are also investing in more social infrastructure — facilities that will support our efforts to make our communities healthier and stronger.

Successive governments knew the QEII redevelopment was necessary. They failed to plan. They failed to act. But our government is making significant progress on this very important project.

The redevelopment involves projects at the Halifax Infirmary, Dartmouth General Hospital, and Hants Community Hospital, and a new community outpatient centre in Bayers Lake in Halifax.

All of these projects are underway, and when complete, the end result will benefit Nova Scotians, province wide.

We are also investing in infrastructure so services can be in the communities that need them most. We are modernizing the South Shore Regional Hospital, building six new dialysis units across the province, investing in new health clinics in New Waterford and Shelburne, and beginning work to replace the hospital in Pugwash.

We are also ensuring students across the province will have access to new facilities by building schools in Spryfield, Tatamagouche, Bridgetown, Bible Hill, Sheet Harbour, Eastern Passage, Dartmouth, Halifax, and Yarmouth. It's not just new builds, there are substantial renovations taking place at schools in Sydney, Sutherlands River, River Hebert, Bridgewater, and Wolfville.

Our infrastructure investments include \$5 million over two years to expand Skilled Trades Centres. This will add seven new skilled trades centres to schools around the province.

We are committing to developing a five-year capital plan for school infrastructure, as the auditor general recommended. It will bring predictability and stability to a school-focused capital plan.

Housing is another priority area for Nova Scotians. This year, \$38 million will be invested across the province to increase access to and improve affordable housing. It means creating new affordable housing units, offering more in rent supplements, and investing in home repair and adaptation programs to assist low-income home owners.

New and improved health care facilities, schools, and affordable housing will make our communities stronger and healthier.

Youth and Young Families

Each budget we tabled invested more in education – we hired more teachers, capped primary to six class sizes, and reinstated Reading Recovery.

There's more work to do.

That's why we invested \$10 million this year as part of a two-year commitment to support the work of the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions. Teachers make up the majority of this council, and it gives frontline teachers a chance to be part of making real and meaningful change to the classroom.

We've acted quickly to accept and implement many of the recommendations received from the council. We look forward to their first report tomorrow and are committed to keep working with teachers to create stronger classrooms across Nova Scotia.

In addition to the funds for the council's recommendations, the budget also invests \$2.1 million to continue to expand the Reading Recovery program and double the investment in coding and computer skills.

In the Throne Speech, we said we don't want any child to go to school hungry. This budget invests \$1.1 million to provide a healthy breakfast for every student in the province, through an expansion of the school breakfast program that is delivered by Nourish Nova Scotia.

To ensure better access to school psychologists and speech language pathologists, we will invest \$1.4 million. We will invest an additional \$1.8 million to connect more children and youth with community and mental health supports, for a total investment in SchoolsPlus of \$8.2 million. This is one more step in our plan to make SchoolsPlus available in every school across the province.

That is on top of the recent investment with Mount St. Vincent University of more than \$900,000, dedicated to addressing the current backlog of student psychological assessments.

These investments are important, but we also know ensuring children are ready for school starts well before grade primary. Young Nova Scotians need better access to affordable child care and better access to early childhood educators.

We will build on the success of the Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention program by investing an additional \$800,000 to support young Nova Scotians with autism. These funds will help Autism Nova Scotia implement the Social ABCs program. This program will provide supports to children who have not yet entered the EIBI program. It will also let us partner with Autism Nova Scotia to support families through regional autism resource centres around the province.

With more funding in our last budget, families were able to access more money toward child care, and we will continue heavily investing in this important public service.

This year, I am very proud to announce that we will start phasing in access to fully funded pre-primary programming around the province.

It begins with this budget. Over the next year, we will invest \$3.7 million for 30 new pre-primary sites. This will see four-year-old Nova Scotians getting access to play-based early learning programming, delivered by our province's highly qualified early childhood educators.

Our plan will expand this program province wide within four years.

Improved spending on child care and pre-primary programs helps all our children start on a more level playing field by ensuring they get the support they need and deserve. We already see the positive impacts of early learning programming at our current eight Early Years sites – students are more prepared entering grade primary, making for a more productive learning environment for teachers and students.

When we are finished, every four-year-old in Nova Scotia will have access to this important resource.

This is not only helping our children get the start they need, but it will help make lives more affordable for young families.

Providing the fully funded pre-primary program could save families with children in the program up to \$10,000 per year, per child.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, we are committed to taking steps that will make life more affordable for Nova Scotians.

Another significant step we can take, is to reduce taxes for the middle class and those who need it most.

That's exactly what this budget is doing.

In 2014, we received a tax report that recommended raising the basic personal exemption. We said we would start reforming our tax system once we could afford it, and we are now at that point.

We are cutting income taxes by increasing the tax-free basic personal amount by up to \$3,000 for those with taxable incomes under \$75,000.

Mr. Speaker, once this tax measure is in place, more than 500,000 Nova Scotians will save \$85 million a year. What's most important is that 60,000 people will no longer pay any provincial tax at all.

This is more money staying in the pockets of recent graduates, low income and retired Nova Scotians, single parents, and working families.

More for those who need it most.

In the last two years, our youth programs helped more than 4,500 young people stay and work here in Nova Scotia. In this budget, we will continue to invest so we can keep our young people here.

We will continue increasing our investment in the Graduate to Opportunity program so recent graduates can find work here. This year's budget brings the total funding to \$4.9 million.

We will also launch a new program this year. An investment of \$1.7 million will fund a new Innovate to Opportunity program for employers to hire recent masters and PhD graduates for research and innovation-focused jobs. This investment not only helps to keep our youth living and working in Nova Scotia, it helps expand our knowledge economy, which will pay dividends into the future.

Efforts to help recent grads find their first jobs will be complemented by our recently announced expansion of the Connector Program, which helps recent graduates network with established professionals and find mentors throughout the province. Previously, it was available in HRM, but now it's expanded to the western part of the province and Cape Breton.

We also want to help apprentices stay and work here.

To do that, through the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, we will invest \$1.3 million to eliminate the tuition apprentices pay for technical training. We will also provide funds to expand apprenticeship opportunities for young Nova Scotians so they can pursue a career in the skilled trades here in Nova Scotia.

To help apprentices and employers, we are increasing the budget of the Apprenticeship START program by \$2 million. This program provides incentives that encourage small to medium-sized enterprises to hire Nova Scotian apprentices from underrepresented groups or in rural areas. It helps people get their foot in the door and creates more opportunities for young Nova Scotians to live and work here.

To help prepare students for the workforce, we will invest an additional \$379,000 to create 94 additional internships through the Mitacs Accelerate program.

Keeping more young Nova Scotians here also means we need to take further steps to improve the affordability of post-secondary education. We will expand student assistance support with higher weekly loan allowances and, as requested by Students Nova Scotia, extend loan forgiveness to students who complete their undergraduate programs in five years, from four. That means more Nova Scotian students will be eligible to have their entire provincial loan forgiven.

To keep more young people here, we also need to help them lay down roots in Nova Scotia.

Buying a first home is still hard for too many Nova Scotians. Saving up for a down payment remains one of the main hurdles for people wanting to purchase their first home. For those hoping to become home owners, but can't save for a down payment, government will be there to help them by providing an interest-free, repayable loan.

This will help many modest-income families achieve their dream of owning a home.

When we help families, we strengthen our communities and our province.

More support for young families, more support for middle-class Nova Scotians, and more jobs for recent grads. That's how we help those who need it most — that's how we keep young Nova Scotians and young families here.

New Ideas for a Better Economy

When we work together to create the conditions for economic growth, individuals, entrepreneurs, and businesses can achieve greater success starting new businesses, applying new ideas to traditional sectors, and going global with home-grown products and services.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and we want to help them grow and hire more people. So we are reducing their taxes by \$13.9 million by increasing the small business tax threshold to \$500,000 from \$350,000. This means small businesses will be able to grow and earn more income before getting placed in a higher tax bracket.

It's also why we have set a bold target to reduce red tape by \$25 million. This will build on the success of the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness that is making government more responsive to the needs of business.

In just 18 months, we cut red tape to help restaurants, local wineries, farmers, apprentices, and more.

We also launched a new service — the first of its kind in Canada — to help businesses navigate what can be a complex regulatory environment. We have people dedicated to answering questions and providing advice to help businesses.

Improving rural Internet is a priority for our government because it helps our rural businesses grow and hire more Nova Scotians.

Recently, we announced 22 new, community-based projects that will improve access to high-speed Internet throughout rural Nova Scotia. All combined, the projects will reach up to 5,400 homes and 420 businesses.

We will keep building on this success by investing \$14.5 million to further improve access to high-speed Internet around the province.

When we work together to create new ideas or find new markets, it means more jobs here in Nova Scotia. That is why we are focused on increasing our exports and increasing funding to support research.

We are investing \$1.3 million to help more small businesses find customers outside of Nova Scotia.

This funding will create a new export accelerator program, it will double the support for Nova Scotian businesses traveling to foreign markets, and it will invest in trade programs under the Atlantic Growth Strategy.

One of our biggest export success stories comes from our fisheries sector.

Since 2012, our fisheries exports have nearly doubled to \$1.8 billion. This budget will invest more to further develop our province's seafood markets in Asia, Europe, and the United States.

It also invests \$2.8 million to develop our aquaculture sector, and that support will mean a total investment of \$12.2 million by 2019–2020.

Agriculture exports have also grown — in large part due to the growth in popularity of our Honeycrisp and other high-value apple varieties. We can point to many successes across this sector and know there is room to keep growing in areas like vineyards to support our award-winning Nova Scotian wines.

We previously launched a \$13 million, five-year Vineyard and Wineries Investment Program, and last year, created the wine lab at Acadia University. This budget will continue to invest in this success story and create more jobs throughout rural Nova Scotia.

We want to work with farmers and fishers over the coming year so that, by next year, we can create the Building Tomorrow Fund. It will provide funds to these key sectors to create new products and enter new markets to further drive export growth.

Over the next year, we will work with the mining industry to create a co-funded mineral resource development bank to increase prospecting and mine development, invest in mineral research, and improve cooperative education opportunities. And to provide support to the sector, we will create a rebate for the tax on fuel used by the mining and bedrock quarry industries.

A successful and sustainable forestry industry is important to our success as a province.

We want to work with our businesses in the forestry sector to ensure their long-term success. This will help them deal with changing markets and consumer demand. That is why we are investing an additional \$250,000 to foster forestry innovation, bringing our total investment to \$1.2 million.

Government will also appoint an independent expert to review our forestry practices to ensure we strike the right balance for our forests. This review will get underway as soon as possible, starting first in the western region. No future long-term timber harvesting licences will be awarded on Crown land until the work is complete.

These investments will help businesses in our traditional fisheries, forestry, mining, and agriculture sectors capitalize on new ideas and find new markets for their products.

While our fisheries and agricultural sectors sent more products abroad, our tourism sector attracted more people here. The last tourism season was the best in our province's history.

We want another record-breaking tourism season.

We will invest \$2 million to upgrade key tourism sites across the province and \$500,000 to attract more tourists from China.

And, for the first time, we are treating our culture as the competitive advantage it is. Through the Culture Action Plan and an investment of \$2.1 million this year, we will celebrate, expand, and export our cultural resources, driving growth in our communities and people.

We want to keep funding creativity, keep fueling entrepreneurs, and find new ways to create a better economy.

That's why we are investing \$10.7 million in the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship.

COVE, as we've come to call it, is a centre focused on finding new ways to capitalize on our closeness to the ocean. It is a place where experts in ocean tech and ocean sciences can come together to find new opportunities to create jobs and businesses here in Nova Scotia. This will continue to build on and take advantage of Nova Scotia's global opportunities in the oceans sector.

We recently approved funds to support innovation hubs and districts around the province – collaborative spaces like Volta in Halifax, Navigate Start-up House in Cape Breton, or CO3 in Bridgewater, and virtual incubators like the one created for social enterprises. We want them to be strong, and we want to build upon their success.

Since 2013, Volta has been home to over 40 tech companies. Most are still going strong, collectively raising more than \$32 million in equity financing and employing over 200 people.

We recently invested \$8.4 million to build upon the great work that is already underway. It will help create innovation districts in our urban centers of Halifax and Sydney, and encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in rural communities.

The budget also contains funds to invest in social innovation and to help social entrepreneurs across the province. By providing funds and working with the Social Enterprise Network of Nova Scotia, we will help more social enterprises start and expand, so that they may be able to provide jobs and invest their profits in social improvements in their communities.

With this budget, we will continue to pursue and develop new ideas for a better economy by investing \$4 million to support innovation initiatives, including more support for business start-ups through incubators and accelerators and a new rebate program.

This new innovation rebate will help businesses invest in capital projects that support the development of products and value-added products. The rebate will be set at 15 per cent and project costs must be between \$3 million and \$15 million.

New ideas come from the brightest minds, and we want to keep our best and brightest. We also want to attract the world's top researchers here to Nova Scotia. That's the goal of Research Nova Scotia, which will be in place this year.

Government is reinforcing its commitment to develop a strong research and development environment in Nova Scotia, having recently created a new \$25-million Research Nova Scotia trust. The trust will help create a research environment that leverages federal and industry funding and partnerships, and attracts and retains highly qualified talent.

One of the areas Research Nova Scotia will focus on is health innovation. We are already advancing creative solutions in healthcare, like MyHealthNS and a vaccination registry, but we want to support the creation of other new ideas in healthcare that will help make people healthier, reduce wait times, and create jobs.

Our businesses cannot grow unless they have access to the workers they need. This budget invests to better connect more people to the workforce.

We have recently provided \$10 million to the Centre for Employment Innovation to design and deliver a new employment program in cooperation with Nova Scotia Works. The program will provide hiring incentives to employers, as well as training and other supports to Nova Scotians who identify as a member of an underrepresented group. It will also be available to those receiving Employment Support and Income Assistance. We expect the program to launch this summer.

We welcome diversity into our communities and our workplaces, and new immigrants need our support. This year, we will enhance settlement programming and employer liaison supports, and provide funding for the new Atlantic Immigration Pilot.

Support for an Aging Population

Mr. Speaker, diversity of age is also an important consideration when you look at our demographics.

Older Nova Scotians have a lot to offer. That's why we launched SHIFT, our action plan for an aging population.

Budget 2017–2018 supports this action plan.

For example, this year's budget contains more than \$500,000 for initiatives that will support social innovation and digital literacy, and promote entrepreneurship for older Nova Scotians.

To ensure communities are accessible and able to meet the needs of our population, we will increase funding to grant programs, such as the Seniors Safety grant and the Age-Friendly Community grant, by more than \$200,000.

We also recognize that, as our population ages, there is a need for our communities, social programs, and workplaces to adapt.

Part of that means investing so older Nova Scotians can stay in their homes longer.

We are increasing investments in affordable housing that will benefit older Nova Scotians, and we are increasing the budget for the seniors' property tax rebate.

This government made investing in home care a priority. By increasing funding and taking a new approach, we slashed waitlists throughout the province. This budget continues building on our success by increasing our investment in home care by \$5.1 million.

As part of this investment, we are expanding the caregiver benefit program. This program provides eligible Nova Scotians with \$4,800 per year, and we expect this investment will mean more than 2,200 people in total will now have access to this benefit.

We want older Nova Scotians to thrive, stay connected, and feel empowered. We are committed to making that happen.

Supporting our aging population is just one of the things we can do to build stronger communities throughout Nova Scotia.

Healthy People and Communities

This budget invests to ensure more people across the province will have better access to primary healthcare, home care services, mental health services, orthopedic surgeries, and dialysis treatment.

We are focused on reducing health care wait times.

Our investment in collaborative care teams will increase by \$6 million in this budget, and we will continue to increase investment in these teams for years to come. This improves access to family doctors, nurses, and other primary care providers for thousands more Nova Scotians. It builds on the \$3.6 million previously announced for additional family practice nurses and nurse practitioners that will be in place this year.

We want family practice nurses and nurse practitioners to play a central role in healthcare in this province. They also make it easier to recruit and retain doctors. New doctors want to work as part of a team, and they want to work with these specialized practitioners because they tell us it improves patient outcomes.

In addition to building more collaborative care teams, we are spending additional money to recruit and retain more doctors. We are adding \$2.4 million to create 10 new seats in the family medicine residency program and 10 spaces for a new practice-ready assessment program for doctors who were trained internationally and want to come and practice in Nova Scotia.

Because of this investment, we will have more than 50 new family doctors ready to practice in this province every year.

With one province-wide health authority we can also do more with our human resources to fill gaps in service to avoid unnecessary closures. We want to create a new, improved system that makes it easier and more attractive for doctors and nurses to fill emergency room and CEC shifts. Part of that will be to transform our existing locum program.

Doctors and nurses will continue to be part of the conversation and the solutions.

By increasing access to primary care and minimizing closures, we will help Nova Scotians stay healthier and feel more secure.

Over our first three budgets, we increased spending for orthopedic surgeries to complete 2,000 additional surgeries. We will continue investing in this important public service. This budget will add \$3.7 million for more surgeries and better access to pre-habilitation services.

This investment will let us complete as many as 400 additional surgeries per year, and help patients prepare for a successful operation.

We are also investing to cut wait times for mental health services. This will happen because of a \$3.2 million investment. It improves intake, adds supports for community-based mental

health services in Cape Breton, and expands crisis services across the province. These investments fit well with the recommendations put forward by the Mental Health Innovation Advisory Panel chaired by Dr. Stan Kutcher and Starr Dobson.

Over the next year, we will work with the panel to implement more innovations to improve mental wellness in Nova Scotia, including important work to develop a standard model for mental health care offered in our schools through youth health centres and Schools Plus.

An expert panel chaired by Dr. Robert Strang is also working to develop an action plan to combat opioid addiction. We recently announced \$1 million to improve access to safe needle exchange and naloxone to address overdoses. Over the coming months, we expect the working group to make further recommendations for a longer-term solution.

Stronger communities come not only from investing in health care, but by helping those who need it most.

The Heating Assistance Rebate Program will be updated to ensure more Nova Scotians can access this valuable program. By increasing the income thresholds, we will help as many as 5,100 new applicants get support with their heating bills.

Because we are committed to helping those who need it most, we are increasing support for foster families. This budget contains a \$1.2 million increase to help foster parents meet the day-to-day needs of the children in their care.

There is also a \$440,000 increase to the Maintenance Enforcement Program so more families get the money owed to them. This money will go towards hiring more permanent positions to help collect on payments that are in arrears.

We are increasing the amount we spend to support Nova Scotians in long-term care facilities by \$3.2 million. This will increase food budgets and provide more recreational opportunities for residents of these facilities.

And we will spend \$1.8 million more this year to increase employment support services for youth at risk, helping them prepare for and connect to the workforce, giving them a much better chance of success.

Over the last two years, the Department of Community Services has engaged in First Voice consultations with over 1,800 clients, staff, and advocates on a simpler, enhanced approach to delivering Income Assistance.

In 2019–2020, Nova Scotia will introduce a transformed Income Assistance structure.

This year, we will start the work needed to introduce a Standard Household Rate that will substantially increase benefits for our clients in all household types and introduce a new work incentive so those who can work can keep more of the money they earn.

There is further progress we can make to reduce poverty in Nova Scotia, and we are willing to invest to do just that. This budget contains \$2 million to fund a plan to address poverty in Nova Scotia.

This \$2 million investment is part of a four-year, \$20 million plan to fund innovative approaches, including projects with community groups, to find new ideas to tackle poverty.

After forming government, we created and launched the province's first Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy. And we've made investments to support the victims of sexual assault – for example, we recently hired two special prosecutors to handle sexual assault cases.

This budget invests to continue combating sexual violence in our province, with \$1.1 million. We will continue to work with community groups and women's organizations throughout the province as they provide important services to support victims of sexual violence.

To support women at risk, we will expand Domestic Violence Courts. We will spend \$836,000 to expand the Domestic Violence Court to the Halifax region and make permanent the court pilot in Sydney.

These programs will make our communities safer and stronger.

An Accessible and Inclusive Nova Scotia

We will also invest to make our communities more accessible and inclusive.

While creating the Accessibility Act, we took new measures to ensure Nova Scotians from all parts of the province had the chance to provide input.

People across the province provided constructive suggestions to improve the act. We listened. This legislation moves us closer to the larger goal of making our province more accessible for all our citizens, and government will do its part, and lead by example.

New funding, this year, will be seen in communities across the province. We will increase ACCESS-Abilities grants by \$1.8 million. This will provide more grants for community buildings and launch a new grant program for small businesses to make their enterprises more accessible.

In addition, we have undergone considerable work to improve the kinds of supports we offer people with disabilities in our communities, to help them live more independently. Now, we are investing an additional \$3.9 million for more small options homes, improved access to day programs, and more independent living options.

These investments will make us a leader in the country.

When we become healthier, more accessible, and more inclusive, we make our communities stronger.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, I stood in this chamber one year ago and said we wanted to work with Nova Scotians to make our province stronger.

And we are stronger than we were last year.

This is the first time in nearly a decade that a government will have tabled back-to-back balanced budgets.

We are coming off the best tourism season in our province's history, our fisheries exports have nearly doubled in four years, and we are actively combating youth unemployment.

There is more work to do.

We have the resources to do it because of the hard work of Nova Scotians.

Our province's finances are now healthy enough to make even more investments in opportunities for growth that will make Nova Scotia more prosperous.

We will invest in infrastructure to create jobs throughout our province.

We are investing in education and working with teachers to improve classroom conditions for our students and teachers.

We are moving toward a fully funded pre-primary program for every four-year-old in Nova Scotia.

We are cutting income taxes for the middle class and those who need it most.

We are expanding youth employment programs to keep more of our sons and daughters here in Nova Scotia.

We are cutting wait times for doctors and nurses, surgeries, and mental health services.

We are investing to create safer, healthier, more inclusive communities.

We are able to do these things because Nova Scotians stood with us. They worked hard over the last three years to restore our province's financial health. They worked with us to build a stronger Nova Scotia.

We will continue working with Nova Scotians, investing in new ideas and creating a better economy that can provide more opportunities for us all.

Thank you.

