



NOVA SCOTIA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

PO BOX 726

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

B3J 2T3

An Open Letter to the federal leaders:

As the election approaches, and you firm up your final campaign commitments, I wanted to take an opportunity to share Nova Scotia's priorities.

Of course, at the top of the list is healthcare, specifically, access to healthcare. While I recognize that this is predominantly a provincial issue, working together, we can do a lot to improve the current situation, including:

1. Increases and adjustments to the Canada Health transfer.

Quite simply, additional funding is required to deliver the level of care that Canadians have the right to expect. Recently, in Nova Scotia, we were all shocked to learn that an elderly gentleman waited - with a broken hip - in his driveway for over three hours for an ambulance before they could wait no more.

This should not happen in Canada and that fact that it did is evidence enough that the Federal government must step up and increase its share of healthcare costs to 35% of total healthcare spending and maintain this contribution over time.

Further, as adjustments to the Canada Health transfer are made, we implore you to recognize that the health needs of individuals change over their lifetime. Generally, as we age, we will require more care than when we were younger. As a province with one of the oldest populations, Nova Scotia is disproportionately harmed by a funding formula that fails to recognize this simple reality.

As such, we ask that you modernize the health funding formula to respect the unique demographic reality of the individual provinces.

2. Infrastructure funding for long-term care.

What happened to seniors across the country during the pandemic is a tragedy for our generation. We must, collectively, do better.

During our recent election campaign, we were upfront with Nova Scotians about the investment that is required in additional long-term care beds. We will work to address the current shortage of long-term care beds but we need federal support.

I would ask for your commitment to partner in funding the construction of 1,000 new, single room, long-term care beds so that our seniors have a place to age without fear and with dignity.

I can't stress enough that this will not only improve the quality of life for our seniors but will also have a positive impact on our entire healthcare system.

The reality is that a significant part of Nova Scotia's struggles with ambulance availability and response time issues is attributable to the backlog in our emergency departments, which forces ambulances to wait - many hours - until a bed is available for their patient. This bed shortage is linked to the fact that we have seniors living in hospital beds while they wait for a long-term care bed.

This is a sad cycle but working together it can be broken.

3. Increased healthcare staff.

In addition to infrastructure funding support, Nova Scotia needs more healthcare providers - from doctors to nurses to paramedics to continuing care assistants to every role in between. We are eager to train more students for these valuable roles, but there is an immediate need that cannot be overlooked.

As an urgent, shorter-term measure, we are seeking your commitment to shorten the processing time for these urgent applications.

4. Mental health support funding.

With mental health concerns on the rise, our government has made mental health a priority for our agenda. It is my intention to make Nova Scotia the first province with truly universal access to mental health care. Financial support from the federal government will help to expedite this dramatic change in health coverage.

At the same time, we want to provide immediate access to emergency mental health services, recognizing that mental health crises don't happen during bankers' hours and when in crisis, remembering a ten-digit toll-free line is likely impossible. I would appreciate your assistance in expanding our provincial pledge of establishing a 9-8-8 emergency mental health line, into a national program.

As a country, we will be stronger if we make help readily accessible to those in need.

As focused as we are on healthcare, there are many files and issues that we look forward to partnering on in the name of progress. These include, in no particular order:

1. Environment.

Nova Scotia aims to eliminate the use of coal-fired electricity by 2030, ten years earlier than planned. This will dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the province and enable further reductions as home heating and transportation become more electrified. This is the right thing to do but it is not without cost. We look forward to working together to do as much as possible to enable this transition in a way that protects Nova Scotian ratepayers, who already experience some of the highest electricity rates in the country.

Preserving our planet is a Canadian concern that I know we share, and I look forward to your commitment that, just as it did with Newfoundland, the federal government will support Nova Scotians with the necessary funding - which could approach \$2 billion - to meet our shared objective to create the conditions for a low carbon economy in Atlantic Canada.

2. Housing.

This past spring, Nova Scotia commissioned a [report](#) on housing that outlined tangible strategies to address this issue. The report concluded the costs would total \$513 million over the next ten years.

Nova Scotia is seeking the commitment of its federal government that it will be there as a funding partner as we work together to help Nova Scotians urgently find homes. We are prepared to move very fast so that no one is left in the cold.

3. Immigration.

A focus on our population growth has always been a passion of mine. I see so much potential in attracting more people to Nova Scotia. We have already highlighted above our ask for your commitment to increasing the processing time for processing applications of healthcare professionals, but we see the opportunity as much larger.

Nova Scotia has hopes of doubling our population - to two million - by 2060. To achieve this goal, we need your support in bringing new Nova Scotians to our province and focusing on growth.

As such, we are seeking your commitment to increase the number of immigrants permitted to settle in Nova Scotia to 15,000 each year, which is 1.5% of the population.

Additionally, Nova Scotia has immigration program streams that support the recruitment of health care professionals, allowing them to arrive and practice here while awaiting their permanent residency. To support these individuals to remain here, we need improved federal processing times to address the delays in applicants receiving their Permanent Residency.

4. Childcare.

Nova Scotia has reached an agreement with the federal government. This agreement focuses on affordability, access and quality as well as providing the ECE workforce with a compensation package that values the work and provides stability in the sector.

My only ask is that the newly elected government does not take any steps that would leave Nova Scotians worse off than this existing agreement. I am a willing partner for maintaining or improving the framework for affordable, quality and accessible childcare.

I appreciate you taking the time to review Nova Scotia's priorities. I will give everything I have to make life better for Nova Scotians and Canadians and please know that you will have a willing partner in my government.

If we work together - we can make both Nova Scotia and Canada the envy of the world - because there is an opportunity right in front of us to seize a brighter future.

Yours truly,



Tim Houston
Premier, Nova Scotia