

# Nova Scotia Alternative Budget 2023: Leave No One Behind

Christine Saulnier, and James Sawler, with the  
Nova Scotia Alternative Budget Working Group





**CCPA**

CANADIAN CENTRE  
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
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**COVER & LAYOUT** ALL CAPS Design, Emily Davidson. Designed by  ED:CFU

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Please see the Appendix A for a full list of the Nova Scotia Alternative Budget Working Group.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We acknowledge that the CCPA-NS office is located in Kijipuktuk in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded, unsurrendered ancestral land of the Mi'kmaq people. We recognize that we are all treaty people and have responsibilities to each other and this land. We also recognize the 400+ years of history of communities of African descent and the 50 African Nova Scotian communities throughout the region today. We commit to actions that will move the work of truth, reconciliation, justice and equity forward.

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# Preamble

FOR 15 YEARS, the Nova Scotia office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives produced annual provincial alternative budgets.<sup>1</sup> One year, the office also delivered an Alternative Municipal Budget for Halifax.<sup>2</sup> An alternative budget aims to make a persuasive case for using the power of taxation and public expenditure to create social, economic, and climate justice.

The Nova Scotia Alternative Budget is collaborative, involving stakeholders from many sectors of our province, including front-line service organizations, other non-profit organizations, and academics with diverse expertise (this year's working group members are listed in Appendix A). As such, alternative budgets provide a collective, broad-based approach to budget-making and a process for building and strengthening links between and within sectors and communities. Thanks to all the members of the Nova Scotia Alternative Budget Working Group for their input and feedback. We also appreciate the endorsements of all of the supporting organizations (see Appendix B). A special thanks to the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour for providing financial assistance for this project.

The Alternative Budget plays many roles. It raises public awareness and sparks debate about the implications of government budgetary choices. We

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<sup>1</sup> All the Nova Scotia alternative budgets can be found here: <https://policyalternatives.ca/projects/nova-scotia-alternative-budget>

<sup>2</sup> CCPA-NS. (2012). *A Sustainable Vision for Our Community: Alternative Municipal Budget for the Halifax Regional Municipality*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/sustainable-vision-our-community>

should critically weigh governments' priorities and hold them accountable for decisions about allocating resources. The Alternative Budget sheds light on who benefits and who pays for government budgetary decisions.

The Alternative Budget is also an advocacy tool providing organizations and individuals with evidence about the implications of budget decisions for them, their families and their communities. The Alternative Budget is designed to hold the government accountable for their choices by showing people what is possible.

The Alternative Budget includes a set of fiscal policy measures in a workable budget that considers the province's fiscal, social, environmental, and economic realities. It is framed to ensure that the choices do not just benefit the few, but are in the best interest of the public and the many. It ensures that costs are fairly shared through a progressive tax system based on the ability to pay.

### **Dedication:**

This alternative budget is our first since the loss of one of the fathers of alternative budgeting in Canada. This budget is dedicated to John Loxley, who died on July 28, 2020. As he wrote, “alternative budgets have proven invaluable to raising economic literacy and in providing credibility to alternative policy stances.”<sup>3</sup> We thank him for his contribution and for inspiring this work.

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3 Loxley, J. (2003). *Alternative Budgets, Budgeting as if People Mattered*. Fernwood Publishing. <https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/alternative-budgets>

# Economic and Fiscal Background

IN MANY WAYS, Nova Scotia's economy and fiscal situation are better than they have been in years.

The economy has bounced back from the pandemic with significant employment growth and lower unemployment than pre-pandemic levels. Nova Scotia's unemployment rate decreased from 6.2% in December 2022 to 5.0% in January 2023.<sup>4</sup> While this is the lowest unemployment rate since at least 1976, employment challenges persist. The youth unemployment rate remains at 12.5%. Unemployment varies by region—4.7% rate in Halifax and 6.8% for the rest of Nova Scotia. The highest unemployment rate was 10.3%, in Cape Breton.<sup>5</sup>

Nova Scotia's seasonally adjusted employment increased by 9,400 (+1.9%) in 2022. This is a significant employment gain, which includes an increase in full-time jobs (+4,500) and part-time jobs (+4,800). Women's employment increased more than men's over the past year (though women's starting point was lower given their higher pandemic job losses). However, women's employment rate remains lower than men's, 59.5% compared to 64.6%. Nova Scotia's employment rate is also lower than the Canadian average (58.9% compared to 62.5%).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> NS Department of Finance and Statistics, Daily Statistics. (February 10, 2023). *Labour Market Trends, January 2023*. [https://novascotia.ca/finance/statistics/archive\\_news.asp?Id=18580&dg=&df=&dto=0&dti=3](https://novascotia.ca/finance/statistics/archive_news.asp?Id=18580&dg=&df=&dto=0&dti=3)

<sup>5</sup> NS Department of Finance and Statistics, Daily Statistics. (February 10, 2023). Op. cit.

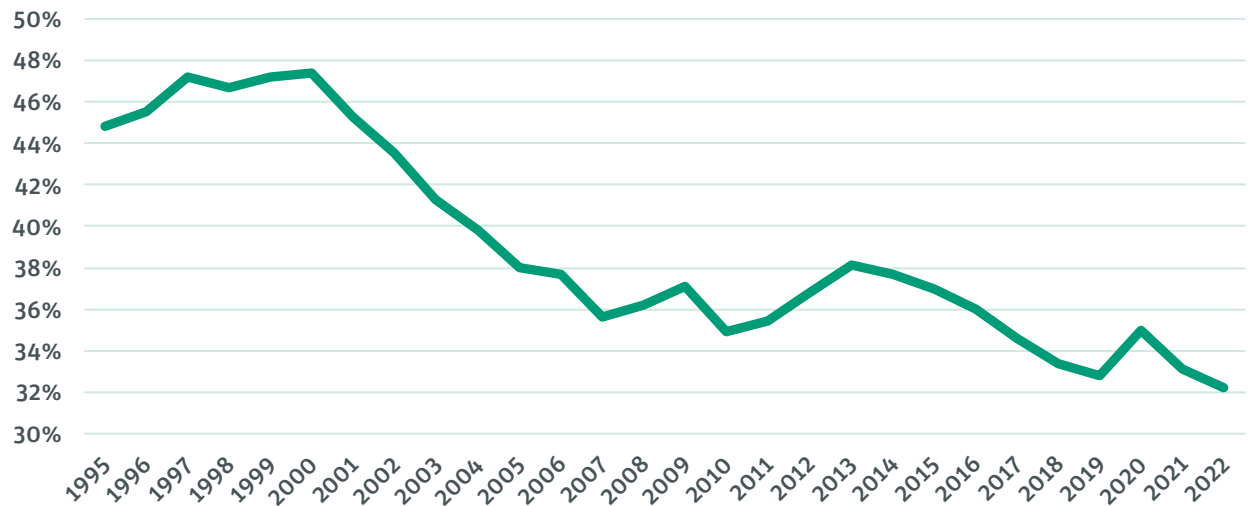
<sup>6</sup> NS Department of Finance and Statistics. Daily Statistics. (February 10, 2023). Op. cit.

More broadly, in December, the government estimated real growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2022 at 2.9% (and nominal growth at 6.8%).<sup>7</sup> These are both significantly larger than the budget forecasts last March. Real and nominal GDP growth for 2023 was projected to be only 0.5% and 4%, respectively.<sup>8</sup> There is no consensus on whether there might be a slight recession because of the Bank of Canada’s interest rate increases. No matter what happens, investments will still be required, and the government will still be in an excellent position to make them.

**Nova Scotia’s fiscal strength should not be underestimated.**

Those opposed to our government making the investments required to improve Nova Scotians’ well-being typically argue that our provincial debt is too high. The data, however, reveal the opposite. As seen in *Figure 1*,<sup>9</sup> the debt to GDP ratio in 2022 was its lowest in years at 32.2%, having fallen from 47.4% in 2000. This ratio is the critical measure of a government’s ability to handle debt, with no consensus on the ideal percentage, only that it should not grow exponentially.

**FIGURE 1** NS DEBT TO GDP, 1995-2022

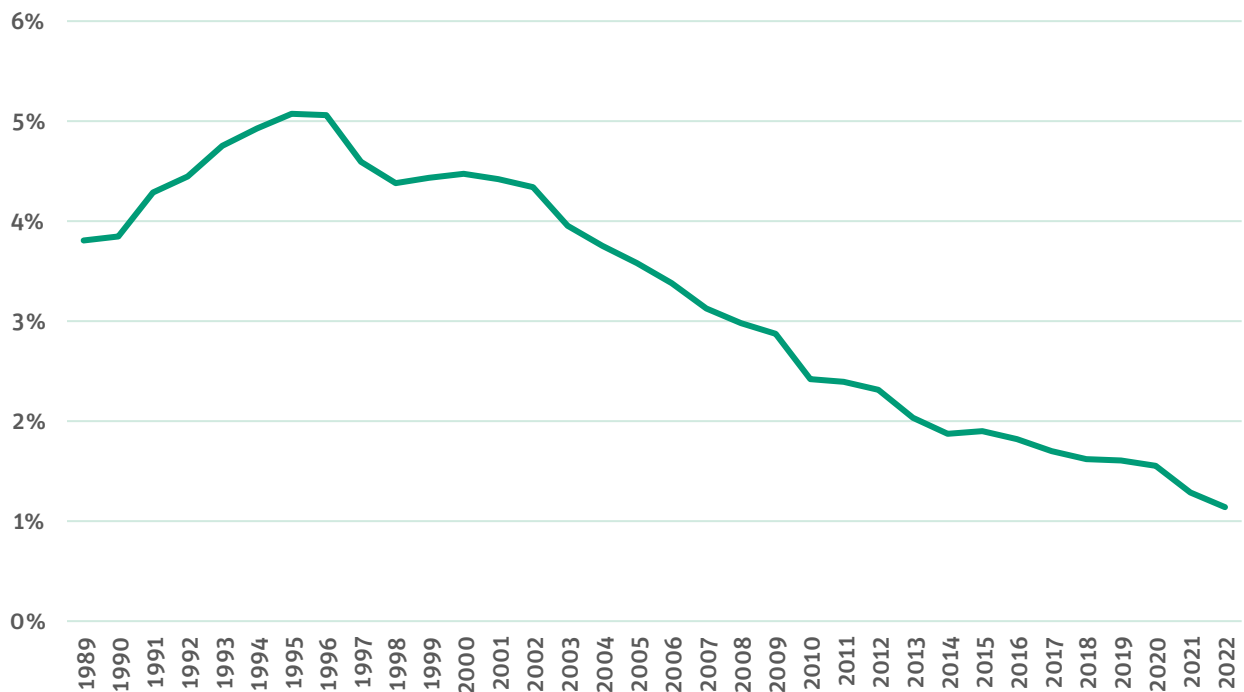


Source: Nova Scotia Public Accounts

- 7 NS Department of Finance and Treasury Board. December 2022 Forecast Update. Op. Cit.
- 8 NS Department of Finance and Treasury Board. (December 20, 2022). *Budget Forecast Update*. <https://notices.novascotia.ca/files/budget-forecast-notices/budget-forecast-update-december-2022.pdf>
- 9 Public Accounts. (2022). *Volume 1, Consolidated Financial Statements, For the fiscal year ended March 31, 2022*. <https://notices.novascotia.ca/files/public-accounts/2022/pa-volume-1-financial-statements-2022.pdf>.

Furthermore, *Figure 2* shows debt servicing costs continue to fall and are less than 5% of expenditures. They are less than 1.25% of GDP.<sup>10</sup> Since inflation is expected to drop rapidly over the next year or so (and remain low), the high-interest rates imposed by the Bank of Canada are expected to be short-lived. Consequently, the long-term interest rates at which the NS government borrows are still very low. The government can finance deficits with low debt servicing costs.

**FIGURE 2** NOVA SCOTIA DEBT CHARGES AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP, 1969-2022



Source: Nova Scotia Public Accounts, 2022 and Statistics Canada, Table 36-0222-01

In its December Forecast Update, the NS Finance Department predicts that revenues for the 2022-23 fiscal year will come in at just over \$14 billion, more than 10% higher than projected in the budget. Consequently, whereas the budget predicted an annual deficit of \$506.2 million, this is now expected to fall to \$102.6 million.<sup>11</sup> Note also that the 2021-22 budget projected a deficit of \$586 million, whereas the actual results from the public accounts revealed a

<sup>10</sup> Public Accounts. (2022). Op. Cit.

<sup>11</sup> NS Department of Finance and Treasury Board. (December 20, 2022). *Budget Forecast Update*. <https://notices.novascotia.ca/files/budget-forecast-notices/budget-forecast-update-december-2022.pdf>



\$351 million surplus.<sup>12</sup> Such underestimation of Nova Scotia’s fiscal strength is common and problematic when used to justify spending restraints or hide what is possible, thus lowering expectations.

The Nova Scotia government’s revenue windfall is being driven by economic growth, but mainly by inflation. Though troubling for households, inflation benefits government budgets, as higher prices and wages lead to greater consumption and income taxes. While inflation is expected to decline over the next year, it is still anticipated to be higher than the Bank of Canada’s artificial target of 2%. This, combined with anticipated population and employment growth,<sup>13</sup> should lead to another substantial revenue increase for 2023-24.

Given Nova Scotia’s strong economic and fiscal position, this NSAB demonstrates that the government can address the most pressing problems facing our province while maintaining a fiscally responsible approach.

That’s the good news. Unfortunately, there is no lack of bad news.

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<sup>12</sup> Public Accounts. (2022). Op. Cit.

<sup>13</sup> Public Accounts. (2022). Op. Cit.

# Investments Urgently Needed

MANY NOVA SCOTIANS face tremendous insecurity related to their health, housing, food, income, jobs, retirement, and daily living. Unfortunately, too much risk and responsibility are downloaded onto individuals. Choosing a career in art, becoming a farmer, taking leave to care for young children or elderly parents, furthering your education or going back to school to retrain, pose economic risks of such severity that we are pressed to avoid them. Yet, these are all things that contribute to our collective well-being. Even public health care during a pandemic was primarily downloaded with instructions for individuals to wear masks and stay home when sick, without the system's support to achieve the desired outcomes.

Many of our public services and programs show the negative impact of underinvestment: insufficient funding for hiring and compensating those providing the services and underfunding the programs that train them results in understaffing and limits access to services.

Take health care. Many predicted that we would reach this crisis point unless there were changes. Decades ago, there were warnings about severe understaffing, especially by front-line professionals. NSGEU nurses even went on strike in 2014, warning the government that staffing levels were too low and asking that the nurse-to-patient ratios be mandated and adequately

funded.<sup>14</sup> Child care is similar—with the loss of Early Childhood Educators comes the loss of child care spaces.<sup>15</sup> Child Protection workers. Teachers. There is a long list of public sector workers leaving because they experience being undervalued (not just in terms of wages), overworked, and unable to do their job to the best of their ability, while not being listened to when they offer solutions.

As if all that were not enough. In the Fall of 2022, Hurricane Fiona was the costliest extreme weather event to hit Atlantic Canada and was in the top ten in Canada. Measured by insurance claims, five of Canada’s ten most expensive natural disasters happened within the last five years.<sup>16</sup> Insurance didn’t even cover much of the damage. And we can expect more frequent extreme weather events!

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**14** Gillis, H. (January 17, 2023). *Nova Scotia health-care crisis arrived with plenty of warning*. Saltwire Commentary. <https://www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/opinion/commentary-nova-scotia-health-care-crisis-arrived-with-plenty-of-warning-100814680/>

**15** Armstrong, L. (August, 2022). *N.S. daycare operators say sector in crisis because of staff shortages, rising costs*. CBC Nova Scotia. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/ns-daycare-operators-sector-crisis-because-staff-shortages-1.6554519>

**16** The Canadian Press. (October 19, 2022). *Post-tropical storm Fiona most costly weather event to ever hit Atlantic Canada, new estimate says*. CBC Nova Scotia. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/fiona-atlantic-canada-insured-damages-660-million-1.6621583>

# Alternative Vision Forward: Leave No One Behind

IMAGINE IF THE Nova Scotia budget incorporated the principles outlined in Nova Scotia’s Social Policy Framework (SPF) and aligned with a vision to create a province that “leaves no one behind, that builds a green economy and prioritizes climate justice and investments in taking care of each other, so we can all live in security, enjoy good health, and participate fully in society?”<sup>17</sup> The Nova Scotia Alternative Budget helps us pragmatically implement that vision using the principle of fiscal fairness while applying an evidence-based and intersectional lens.

The Nova Scotia Alternative Budget 2023 makes a very significant investment, over and above current program spending. This level of investment is justified and imperative.

The NSAB starts with revenues and expenditure estimates from the Finance Department’s December Forecast Update (*Table 1*), the most recent data available. In addition to proposed new tax measures, revenue is assumed to expand in accordance with nominal GDP growth.

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17 Findlay, T., Saulnier, C., & Stratford, A. (2020). *Are you with us? COVID-19 confirms the need to transform Nova Scotia’s social safety net*. CCPA-NS. See also the Social Policy Framework workbook: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/facts-infographics/social-policy-framework-nova-scotia>

**TABLE 1** NOVA SCOTIA'S DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE BASE CASE (FROM 2022-23 BUDGET) (OOOS \$)

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Revenue	12,661,900	12,910,500	13,263,800	13,662,000
Program Spending	12,616,100	12,626,800	12,908,100	13,216,500
Debt Service Cost	676,400	704,000	734,100	739,900
Budget Balance (Deficit)/Surplus	(506,200)	(418,800)	(377,300)	(293,700)
Debt to GDP (%)	34.9	36.9	39.2	40.0

Source: Based on estimated and projections from: Nova Scotia Finance and Treasury Board, Budget 2022-23.

In *Table 2*, the NSAB includes new program spending, and estimates are adjusted upwards in line with inflation to ensure that the wages and salaries of government employees cover the effects of rising prices. While we project deficits for the next three years, the debt-to-GDP ratio remains sustainable. These are lower than the ratios forecast in the 2022-23 Nova Scotia government Budget.<sup>18</sup>

**TABLE 2** NOVA SCOTIA ALTERNATIVE BUDGET SUMMARY (THOUSANDS \$)

Revenues	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Revenues Base (from the Dec, 2022 Fiscal Update)	14,009,731		
NSAB Taxation Measures	509,979	529,358	547,886
Add Revenue Due to Nominal Growth	14,502,136	15,299,631	16,397,611
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,012,115</b>	<b>15,828,989</b>	<b>16,945,497</b>
Expenditures			
Spending Base (from the Dec, 2022 Fiscal Update)	14,258,871		
Spending Adjusted for Inflation	14,658,119	15,394,505	16,945,497
Net APB Program Measures	1,497,198	1,531,634	1,562,266
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,155,317</b>	<b>16,926,139</b>	<b>18,507,763</b>
<b>Budget Balance (Deficit)/Surplus</b>	<b>(1,143,203)</b>	<b>(1,097,148)</b>	<b>(975,153)</b>
<b>Debt to GDP</b>	<b>34.14%</b>	<b>33.74%</b>	<b>33.42%</b>
<b>Projected Real Growth Rate</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
<b>Projected Inflation Rate</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>

<sup>18</sup> Projections of revenues and expenditures are based on the forecasts of real GDP growth and inflation presented in the table. These were calculated by averaging the most recent projections off the Canadian banks. Estimates of the debt-to-GDP ratio include the APB's recommended increase in capital expenditure of \$698.28 million.

The NSAB tackles income and wealth inequality. It begins addressing distributional differences in market income and wealth by improving progressive taxation (ensuring everyone pays their fair share). As summarized in *Table 3*, **this alternative budget broadens the tax base by taking the principle that a dollar is a dollar and applying the capital gains tax to 100% of the gains, not 50%. NSAB 2023 also increases the top marginal rate by 4%. The most significant change is to shift federal tax deductions to provincial tax credits (which has the added benefit of making it easier to fill out your income tax form).**

These measures make the Nova Scotia tax framework more progressive, ensuring the most fortunate among us pay their fair share. We invest the additional income in redistributive measures, like income benefits payable through the tax system. **The NSAB increases the Affordable Living Tax Credit,<sup>19</sup> and the NS Child Benefit, which are nontaxable payments to low-income households.<sup>20</sup>** Using progressive taxation to fund universal public services is critical to tackling inequality. It also invests in pre-distributional measures that address pay inequity and create decent job conditions.

**TABLE 3** NSAB 2023: TAXATION, INCOME TAX CREDITS AND TRANSFERS

Increase highest tax rate by 4% (25% on taxable income that is more than \$150,000)	70.422
Fully tax capital gains (100% income inclusion)	119.72
Shift all federal tax deductions to provincial tax credits	319.84
Cancel Your Energy Rebate Program	-120
Cancel the Children's Sports and Arts Refundable Tax Credit	-4.7
Cancel the More Opportunity for Skilled Trades Tax Refund	-20.25
Increase Affordable Living Tax Credit by 50%, index to inflation increase	47.92
<b>Total New Tax Revenue</b>	<b>509.979</b>

<sup>19</sup> Nova Scotia Government. Affordable Living Tax Credit and Poverty Reduction Credit. <https://www.novascotia.ca/finance/en/home/taxation/tax101/personalincometax/altc-prc.aspx.html>

<sup>20</sup> These programs are described as helping low to modest income individuals and families, but their eligibility income cutoffs are too low to reach any modest income families. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/provincial-territorial-programs/province-nova-scotia.html>

The NSAB invests in reducing poverty and ensuring everybody has housing, energy and food security. It increases funding to quality public services, including early learning and child care, affordable nonmarket housing, improving primary healthcare, and accessible and active transportation. Public services help level the playing field, enabling more people to realize their full potential and participate in their communities.

The NSAB values the work and experiences of people on the ground to improve access to justice and address the barriers that mean too many are unable to contribute fully to the health of our communities. The NSAB also strengthens our ties to share and preserve our diverse stories through investments in artistic expression and heritage work.

**TABLE 4 NOVA SCOTIA ALTERNATIVE BUDGET 2023 PROPOSALS**

Nova Scotia Alternative Budget New Program Expenditures 2023	Cost (millions \$)	Investment Subtotal (millions \$) (net)
<b>Active, Accessible and Sustainable Transportation</b>		15.5
Establish Nova Scotia Transportation Corporation	1	
Improve active transportation (goal of active networks in 65% of NS by 2030)	2.5	
Improve transit and interregional transportation for smaller population centres	4	
Enhance transit in larger centres	4	
Extend and sustain door-to-door accessible transportation	4	
<b>Adult/Continuing Education</b>		13
Increase investment in NS School of Adult Learning and community learning organizations	7	
Reduce financial barriers for attendees	6	
<b>Agriculture and Food</b>		11.4
Preserve existing and develop new agricultural land, prioritizing small farms	5	
Invest in local infrastructure for small and medium-size enterprises (increase local processing, storage and distribution capacity)	2	
Invest in accessible community-based food infrastructure for selling	1	
Support nutrition and food skills education	3.4	
<b>Arts, Culture and Heritage</b>		19
Fund artist-run centres, new programs, and facilities	3	
Increase grants provided by Arts Nova Scotia	1.5	
Funding for festivals	2	

<b>Nova Scotia Alternative Budget New Program Expenditures 2023 (cont.)</b>	<b>Cost (millions \$)</b>	<b>Investment Subtotal (millions \$) (net)</b>
Commit to core operating funding for professional arts organizations (end 17-year freeze)	3	
Invest in operation assistance to cultural organizations	3	
Reinstate Film and Creative Nova Scotia, develop sectoral strategy	0.5	
Invest in libraries, heritage and cultural, facilities and programming	6	
<b>Community Services</b>		<b>274.633</b>
Increase income assistance rates, close poverty gap in three years; increase by 30%, index to inflation	88.263	
Decrease earnings claw-back for ESIA, stop clawing back EI	12	
Enhance Nova Scotia Child Benefit; 30% increase	16.57	
Employment Support Services (10% increase)	4	
increase staffing levels: hire 33 new social workers, and 10 family support workers	3.8	
Increase investment in Disability Support Program; 30% increase	140	
Set-up Child and Youth Commission and include funding for its policy advocacy work	10	
<b>Community Social Infrastructure</b>		<b>23.5</b>
Fully fund non-profits/advocacy organizations for equity groups including women's centres, and organizations serving marginalized people and low income populations	6.5	
Invest to accelerate the accessibility plan for Persons with Disabilities	10	
Implement Incentives, Enforce, Monitor Accessibility Legislation	7	
<b>Early Learning and Child Care</b>		<b>21.67</b>
Develop a workforce retention strategy, provide additional wage support	9	
Develop Early Learning and Child Care Central Agency to over see system-planning, and operational support	3	
Expand licensed child care prioritizing rural, based on need, ensuring diverse options (15 new centres; 500 spaces)	9.67	
<b>Economic Development and Labour</b>		<b>20.78</b>
Reduction in funding for NS Business Inc. (by 50%)	-22.22	
Create Cooperative Investment Corporation prioritizing import replacement, local procurement initiatives	14	
Invest in Rural Community Economic Development Agency	5.1	
Develop a Care Economy Strategic Plan	0.2	
Youth Jobs Strategy	4.5	
Proactive Enforcement staff for Labour Standards, Health and Safety Regulations	5	
Establish the Fair Wages and Decent Jobs Commission, improve enforcement of pay equity and expand its application	2.5	
Labour Market Support for African Nova Scotians	1.5	



<b>Nova Scotia Alternative Budget Program Expenditures 2023 (cont.)</b>	<b>Cost (millions \$)</b>	<b>Investment Subtotal (millions \$) (net)</b>
Labour Market Support to support Indigenous Organizations	1.5	
Support for Employment Equity (including in apprenticeship)	3.2	
Address workplace sexual harassment	0.5	
Incentives to support workplace accommodations for persons with disabilities	5	
<b>Environment, Energy and Climate Justice</b>		<b>314.595</b>
Improve environmental regulation to protect and restore land and water protection	5	
Tackle energy poverty through Universal Service Program	100	
Consultation to establish a Water Act	0.285	
Establish a fund to increase and maintain public fountains	1.75	
Double the Affordable Multifamily Housing program	4	
Increase investment in Mi'kmaw Home Energy Efficiency Project	1.56	
Fund new Home Energy Efficiency projects for African Nova Scotian communities	4	
Create new Office of Just Transition and Economic Diversification	18	
Develop and invest in a Just Transition Plan (training and income support)	52	
Support Just Transition Partnership and Community Economic Diversification Initiatives	42	
Support Indigenous-owned climate projects and Indigenous-led climate action	4	
Continue to build a clean electricity grid	15	
invest in community renewables procurement model	30	
Investments to phase-out fossil fuel use for homes and buildings	20	
Invest in municipally-owned zero waste recycling	8	
Union Training Skills Development	3	
Youth Green Career Program	4	
Support grassroots initiatives to address the harms of environmental racism including collection of race-based data	2	
<b>Fisheries and Forestry</b>		<b>11.78</b>
Support for post-harvest production	0.82	
Support for marketing and distribution and seafood traceability within Nova Scotia	1.16	
Fund training opportunities under the Fish Harvester Organizations Support Act	2	
Fully implement Doelle-Lahey including increase regulatory capacity	2	
Invest in sustainable forestry	2.8	
Invest in small-scale shellfish and seaweed aquaculture	3	

<b>Nova Scotia Alternative Budget Program Expenditures 2023 (cont.)</b>	<b>Cost (millions \$)</b>	<b>Investment Subtotal (millions \$) (net)</b>
<b>Health Care</b>		<b>488.85</b>
Invest in core support for existing community health centres (6) to stabilize	42	
Expand community health centres to 10 new locations, a long COVID clinic, and two new practice sites staffed by midwives	100	
Invest in long term care (capital: \$33 Million) and staffing, proactive enforcement of national standards	23.8	
Begin to address gaps in mental health care; dedicating a total of 12% of health care funding	80	
Begin phasing-out Pharmacare premiums, fees, and copayments	65	
Universal contraception coverage	12	
Eliminate ambulance fees	13.5	
Increase entry-level ambulance wages to minimum of \$30	13.1	
Increase funding in 2SLGBTQIA+ health including gender-affirming care	3	
Extend public health insurance to refugee claimants, migrant workers and international students, upon arrival	7	
Expansion of home care/home support services	34	
Increase investment in nonclinical administrative tasks in hospital	1	
Hire additional Licensed Practical Nurses	3	
Invest to enhance nurse wages	10.25	
Invest to convert family doctors to salary (BC model) (over 5 years) (\$250,000 per physician)	66	
Invest in community-based harm reduction services and supports including safe supply (of pharmaceutical grade alternatives to unregulated drugs), supervised consumption services, and drug checking services.	2.5	
Invest in voluntary and evidence-based drug treatment programs, including peer support, outreach services, medication assisted treatment, counselling, and residential treatment.	8	
Increase stable core funding for public health; dedicating 5% of total health care funding	2.7	
Increase investment to Universal Healthy School Food Program (Public Health)	2	
<b>Housing and Homelessness</b>		<b>63.36</b>
New Compliance and Enforcement Division for the Residential Tenancy Act	1.96	
Social housing repairs	7.19	
Funding for housing supports (for nonmarket housing providers)	26.79	
Rental Assistance Program (for 10 years)	18.62	
Speed up the land claims settlements for African Nova Scotians	3	
Support for alternative ownership models including resident-run co-ops and community land trusts (CLTs) especially for African Nova Scotians	4	
Funding for tenant associations in each county	1.8	

<b>Nova Scotia Alternative Budget Program Expenditures 2023 (cont.)</b>	<b>Cost (millions \$)</b>	<b>Investment Subtotal (millions \$) (net)</b>
<b>Immigration</b>		15.32
Increase staff and resources of Nova Scotia Office of Immigration	3.7	
Enhance Settlement services	7.9	
Additional Support for Immigration Services (ISANS)	0.2	
Dedicate Funding for Education and Outreach	0.16	
Proactive protection of working and living conditions for Temporary Foreign Workers	0.36	
Increase investment to better meet the needs of Refugees and Refugee Claimants	1.14	
Make Income Assistance available to refugee claimants	0.6	
Invest in housing for refugee claimants, offer access to shelter subsidies	0.86	
Invest in refugee health care	0.15	
Core Funding for the Halifax Refugee Clinic	0.25	
<b>Justice and Crime Prevention</b>		15.25
Expand Drug Treatment Court to 3 other sites	1.5	
Invest in alternative and restorative justice programs	2.5	
Invest in community and prison-based offender reintegration initiatives	2	
Expand Family Violence Court to other sites	1.2	
Increase investment (by 15%) in Legal Aid Services	4.35	
Expand Mental Health Court to other sites	1.2	
Invest in core funding for non-profits providing legal information and support for individuals engaged with the justice system	2.5	
<b>Post-Secondary Education</b>		192.33
Freeze university tuition fees	15.5	
Eliminate NSCC tuition fees	36.53	
Convert Nova Scotia Student Loans to grants	42	
Increase university core funding to cover inflationary increase (10%)	48	
Increase NS Student Assistance Grants by \$150/month	14.2	
Support for Indigenous Learners	3	
Increase support for international students	3	
Create a dedicated Sexual Assault Post-Secondary Support Resource Fund	2	
Stop charging interest on student loans	8.6	
Reinvest from loan forgiveness program	-10.5	
Phase-in elimination of differential fees for international students (\$147.6 million)	30	

<b>Nova Scotia Alternative Budget Program Expenditures 2023 (cont.)</b>	<b>Cost (millions \$)</b>	<b>Investment Subtotal (millions \$) (net)</b>
<b>Public Education (Pre-primary to Grade 12)</b>		<b>83.26</b>
Hire 80 guidance counsellors	7.2	
Hire 40 additional speech language pathologists	3.6	
Hire 40 additional English language support for newcomers and immigrants	2.1	
Invest in classroom supplies (\$500)	4.6	
Hire 250 additional EPA (and increase wages to minimum of \$23.50)	12.5	
Hire 250 additional teachers	16.1	
Enhance wages of substitutes; up to \$6000 per year	12	
Invest in learning aids and expand learning centres	2.7	
Hire 140 additional administrative support (photocopying, calling attendance, data entry, etc.)	7	
Hire 40 additional school psychologists	3.86	
Invest in initiatives to support African Canadian Students	3	
Invest to support Mi'kmaq students	2	
Hire 10 additional French language support for newcomers and immigrants for CSAP	0.6	
Invest in air quality, installing carbon monoxide detectors to monitor air and additional HEPA filters	6	
<b>NSAB New Program Expenditures Total (net)</b>		<b>1584.23</b>

<b>NSAB Capital Investments</b>	<b>Cost (millions \$)</b>
Fund procurement of electric school buses (100% phase-in by 2030) (stop contracting out)	19.8
Invest in additional student housing	10
Funding for operating enough small options home for all those persons with disabilities on waitlist	82.48
Build 33,490 Non Market Rental Units (each year for 10 years)	530
Invest in long term care facility construction	33
Capital investments in electric buses (\$350,000 each at 50% funding)	8.5
Improve active transportation infrastructure	4
Improve infrastructure public transit and provincially-owned interregional transportation for smaller population centres	3
Enhance public transit infrastructure in larger centres	6
Extend and sustain door-to-door accessible transportation	1.5
<b>NSAB 2023 Capital Investments Total</b>	<b>698.28</b>

# Applying an Intersectional Lens

THE NOVA SCOTIA government's budget documents should include an intersectional, distributional analysis of its taxation and spending decisions. Applying a feminist intersectional lens<sup>21</sup> to government budgets reminds us that not everyone benefits the same from initiatives that seek to reduce taxes because of the inequities that exist in our society. These inequities primarily result from discrimination based on gender, race, class, ethnicity, immigration status, ability, or sexual orientation. They manifest as pay gaps, occupational segregation, higher poverty rates, higher underemployment or unemployment, low wages, lack of benefits, job insecurity, higher debt, and worse health. The income tax cut for what the government calls skilled trades<sup>22</sup> represents a deduction for jobs almost exclusively held by men. Moreover, there is no evidence that the nearly \$50 million in lost revenue resulting from this cut will have the desired outcome of attracting or retaining these workers in the province. However, investing in quality healthcare or community recreational opportunities could have an impact.

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21 Feminist Intersectionality and GBA+. Canadian Institute for the Advancement of Women. <https://www.criaw-icref.ca/our-work/feminist-intersectionality-and-gba/> See also CCPA-NS, *Nova Scotia Budget Watch 2015: Through a Gender Lens* (Halifax: CCPA-NS, 2015). [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Nova%20Scotia%20Office/2015/04/NS\\_Budget\\_Watch\\_Gender.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Nova%20Scotia%20Office/2015/04/NS_Budget_Watch_Gender.pdf)

22 Gorman M. (June, 2022). *N.S. government rolls out details of tax break for young tradespeople*. *CBC Nova Scotia*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/skilled-trades-provincial-income-tax-tim-houston-1.6481778>

Initiatives like the child arts and sports refundable tax credit introduced last year<sup>23</sup> will only benefit families with the funds to pay for these programs. It does not make these programs more affordable. This credit provides a small benefit (claim a \$500 credit per eligible child, and it will reduce the tax you have to pay and may result in a small refund based on your tax rate. This credit provides a small benefit for higher-income families, while the total cost of the credit represents a significant decrease in tax revenue (\$4.7 million). The government should instead use this revenue to make these programs more affordable upfront or invest it in direct income support for low-to-moderate-income families allowing them to choose how to spend it. The most significant tax rebate that **the NSAB cancels is the Your Energy Rebate costing at least \$120 million a year and benefiting those who consume the most energy. The NSAB invests in a Universal Service program, costing \$100 million to ensure that no one pays more than 6% of their total income on energy, making electricity universally accessible.**<sup>24</sup>

Underinvesting in public services disproportionately harms those who rely more heavily on those services because of different realities related to health and family. For example, underinvestment is more likely to harm persons with disabilities (a higher portion of which are women), or those whose health has been impacted by living in poverty (disproportionately higher poverty rates for racialized persons, lone mothers, etc.). The dominant gendered division of labour in families means women are relied on to fill gaps in these systems, especially in elder and child caregiving. 28 percent of Nova Scotians are unpaid caregivers who spend 221 million hours providing care each year.<sup>25</sup> In addition, many public sector jobs are disproportionately held by women, and underinvesting harms them more as employees in jobs that are more likely to be unionized and offer decent pay.

While not everyone benefits the same from investments in public services, given the inequities that exist, we know that the more universal the service, the more efficient, responsive, and higher the quality, and the more likely it will benefit everyone.<sup>26</sup>

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23 NS Department of Finance and Treasury Board. (February 2023). *News Release, Reminder to Claim Children's Sports, Arts Tax Credit*. <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20230221001>

24 The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs administers the Universal Service Fund in New Jersey. <https://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dhcr/faq/usf.html#q1>

25 Peddle, S. (October 2022). *Project aims to gain information about how to care for caregivers in Nova Scotia*. Saltwire. <https://www.saltwire.com/atlantic-canada/news/project-aims-to-gain-information-about-how-to-care-for-caregivers-in-nova-scotia-100783312/>

26 Findlay, T., Saulnier, C., & Stratford, A. (2020). *Are you with us? COVID-19 confirms the need to transform Nova Scotia's social safety net*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/are-you-us>

# Nova Scotia Alternative Budget 2023 Top Priorities

AS CAN BE seen in *Table 5*, the NSAB's top four broad areas of most significant investment in operational spending are:

1. Dealing with the healthcare crisis (\$488.85 million);
2. Addressing social and economic inequalities (\$454.51 million), which includes spending on Community Services; Community Social Infrastructure; Economic Development and Labour; Housing and Homelessness; Immigration, Income Supports/Poverty Reduction;
3. Transformational climate investments, which includes spending on the Environment, Energy and Climate Justice; Fisheries and Forestry; Active, Accessible and Sustainable Transportation and Agriculture and Food (\$337.78 million); and
4. Investing in the next generation, which includes funding for education—from early learning to adult education (\$310.26 million).

The largest investment in capital is \$530 million to fund affordable, nonmarket (public, non-profit, cooperative) housing. The remaining chapters provide background context and justification for these expenditures.

**TABLE 5** NOVA SCOTIA ALTERNATIVE BUDGET 2023 SPENDING SUMMARY

NSAB Investments Summary	Operating	Capital
<b>Active, Accessible and Sustainable Transportation</b>	15.50	21.5
Agriculture and Food	11.40	
Arts, Culture and Heritage	19.00	
Community Services	274.63	
Community Social Infrastructure	23.50	
Early Learning and Child Care	21.67	
Economic Development and Labour	20.78	
Environment, Energy and Climate Justice	314.60	
Fisheries and Forestry	11.78	
Health Care	488.85	33
Housing and Homelessness	63.36	530
Immigration	15.32	
Justice and Crime Prevention	15.25	
Post-Secondary Education	192.33	
Public Education (Pre-primary to Grade 12)	83.26	19.8

## Dealing with the Healthcare Crisis

Nova Scotia’s Department of Health and Wellness’s mission is “to lead a quality, equitable and sustainable healthcare system that inspires and promotes the health and well-being of all people in Nova Scotia.”<sup>27</sup> We are falling far short.

Our public healthcare system has not been meeting population needs for some time. The investment has been insufficient given Nova Scotia’s unique population pressures that make it more expensive to deliver care, including rural needs, population ageing and its chronic disease profile. Population projections have warned that we need to invest to be ready to support our ageing population properly. In 2018, it was predicted that “population aging by itself will drive 20 percent of all healthcare spending growth over the next

27 Canada Department of Health. (2023). *Canada Health Act Annual Report 2021-2022*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/health-system-services/canada-health-act-annual-report-2021-2022.html#c3.3>



10 years.”<sup>28</sup> Nova Scotia has one of the highest rates of chronic disease and the highest rate of disability in Canada. Add to that additional pressure from unprecedented increases in people moving to the province.<sup>29</sup>

The tragic deaths of two women within days of each other were additional red flags. After waiting to be seen in the ER department for seven hours, Catherine Snow left without being seen and died less than an hour later.<sup>30</sup> Allison Holthoff, 37, died in the emergency room after waiting in extreme pain for more than six hours.<sup>31</sup> In 2022, 558 people in Nova Scotia died in emergency departments, up from 505 in 2021 and 393 in 2020.<sup>32</sup> Many are sharing similar tragic stories.<sup>33</sup>

Many hospitals across the province are at 100% capacity (or more) in terms of occupancy of beds.<sup>34</sup> Hospital stays in Nova Scotia are extended an average of 14 days waiting for home care services, with 50% of those waiting being over 80. Manitoba performed the best with only two days of additional waiting.<sup>35</sup> The NSAB invests in providing home care services to take some pressure off moving people out of emergency rooms.

The NSAB invests in more community-based, preventative and primary care. Approximately 130,000 Nova Scotians are without a family doctor.<sup>36</sup> We need to continue to support the retention of current family doctors

- 28 Gibbard, R. (2018). *Meeting the Care Needs of Canada's Aging Population*. The Conference Board of Canada. <https://www.cma.ca/sites/default/files/2018-11/Conference%20Board%20of%20Canada%20-%20Meeting%20the%20Care%20Needs%20of%20Canada%27s%20Aging%20Population%20%281%29.PDF>
- 29 Thompson, A. (December 2021). *Young people flocking to Nova Scotia as population reaches 1 million milestone*. CBC Nova Scotia. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/population-growth-nova-scotia-one-million-people-1.6292823>
- 30 Pottie, E. (January 2023). *Family says Cape Breton woman died after not getting help at emergency ward during 7-hour wait*. CBC Nova Scotia. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/hospital-death-er-cape-breton-healthcare-1.6712171#:~:text=CBC%20News%20Loaded-,Family%20says%20Cape%20Breton%20woman%20died%20after%20not%20getting%20help,jaw%20and%20flu%2Dlike%20symptoms>
- 31 Withers, P. (January, 2023). *Public deserves explanation for woman's death in Amherst ER, says patient safety expert*. CBC Nova Scotia. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/what-the-public-deserved-to-know-about-amherst-er-death-1.6713644>
- 32 Withers, P. (January, 2023). Op. cit.
- 33 Nova Scotia Health Care Crisis. <https://www.nshealthcarecrisis.ca/your-stories>
- 34 Action for Health Public Reporting, by Nova Scotia Health. <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/nova.scotia.health/viz/ActionforHealth-PublicReporting/Overview>
- 35 Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2022). *Hospital Stay Extended Until Home Care Services or Supports Ready 2020-21*. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/indicators/hospital-stay-extended-until-home-care-services-or-supports-ready>
- 36 Finding a Primary Care Provider, in Nova Scotia – January 2023. Nova Scotia Health. [https://www.nshealth.ca/sites/nshealth.ca/files/finding\\_a\\_primary\\_care\\_provider\\_in\\_nova\\_scotia\\_report\\_january\\_2023.pdf](https://www.nshealth.ca/sites/nshealth.ca/files/finding_a_primary_care_provider_in_nova_scotia_report_january_2023.pdf)

while working to recruit others. The NSAB also invests in moving family doctors onto salary, as has been done in British Columbia.<sup>37</sup> The goal in British Columbia is “to not only to stabilize family practice, but to make it sustainable and rewarding.”<sup>38</sup>

All healthcare professionals who can take a lead primary care role must be supported to provide care to their full potential, including nurses<sup>39</sup> and midwives.<sup>40</sup> The NSAB invests in hiring more skilled professionals and increases their wages, including those of the lowest-paid healthcare practitioners, including ambulance attendants and Licensed Practical Nurses. The province has “spent \$45 million on travel nurses to work as RNs, LPNs and CCAs in long-term care facilities,” providing higher wages, housing allowances, and other benefits.<sup>41</sup> The government must divert its budget on travel nurses to improve the working conditions of permanent healthcare providers employed in the public system; otherwise, this strategy could backfire with even more healthcare providers deserting the public system.

The NSAB also invests in community-based, multidisciplinary, collaborative teams by providing additional support to existing community health centres (CHCs), while investing in others. CHCs have a proven track record<sup>42</sup> for supporting collaborative teams of primary care providers, with healthcare providers, allied health professionals, and social service supports, that also address the social determinants of health. CHCs are community centred with community-elected governance structures and integrated community

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37 British Columbia Health. New payment model for physicians means better care for patients. Press Release. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023HLTH0011-000127>

38 Watson, B. (October, 2022). *B.C. launching new payment model for family doctors in 2023 Social Sharing*. CBC British Columbia. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/bc-doctor-supports-announcement-1.6635200>

39 Curry, P., Hiltz, J., Buckle, A. (2019). *Nursing Potential: Optimizing Nursing and Primary Health-care in Nova Scotia*. Nova Scotia Nurses Union. <https://www.nsnu.ca/advocacy-campaigns/nursingpotential>

40 Association of Nova Scotia Midwives. (2021). *Press Release, The Association of Nova Scotia Midwives Celebrates International Day of the Midwife and Calls on the Nova Scotia Government to Invest in Midwives*. <https://www.novascotiamidwives.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Nova-Scotia-Midwives-Press-Release-on-International-Day-of-the-Midwife-May-5th-2021.pdf>

41 Draus, A. (February, 2023). *Nova Scotia spending \$45M on travel nurses to help in long-term care sector*. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/9486667/nova-scotia-funding-travel-nurses-long-term-care/>

42 Bhuiya, A., Scallan, E., Alam, S., Sharma, K., & Wilson, M. (2020). *Rapid Synthesis: Identifying the Feature and Impacts of Community Health Centres, 30-day response*. McMaster University, Health Forum. [https://www.mcmasterforum.org/docs/default-source/product-documents/rapid-responses/identifying-the-features-and-impacts-of-community-health-centres.pdf?sfvrsn=234559d5\\_3](https://www.mcmasterforum.org/docs/default-source/product-documents/rapid-responses/identifying-the-features-and-impacts-of-community-health-centres.pdf?sfvrsn=234559d5_3)

partnerships. “CHCs are found to have lower costs of care and provide cost savings to health systems.”<sup>43</sup>

More needs to be invested in public health, which only accounted for 1.5% of healthcare spending in 2020-21; it has been around that percentage for quite a while, only increasing during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>44</sup> “This chronic underfunding is problematic given the high rates of non-communicable diseases in Nova Scotia and health inequities experienced within the population.”<sup>45</sup> In addition, we should have learned lessons from how ill-prepared we were for COVID-19. The target for public health should be at least 5%;<sup>46</sup> to get there, the NSAB invests an additional 3.3%.

The federal government’s funding of healthcare is still below where it was decades ago when it contributed half of the funding; In 2020, 63% of healthcare funding was from the NS government.<sup>47</sup> Nova Scotia could still be doing more. Despite claims to suggest otherwise, Nova Scotia invested very little of its own money to healthcare during COVID—the federal government funded most of what was spent.<sup>48</sup> We must pay close attention to the newest bilateral healthcare agreement, wherein 32% (\$491 million) is not tied to some accountability to the federal government for how the funding is spent.<sup>49</sup> Part of what we should be watching is not only how much is spent on healthcare, but whether any is spent on for-profit care. Our public healthcare system has many gaps. The answer to filling them is not using private for-profit services, which cost more and deliver less, while putting further pressure on the public system.<sup>50</sup>

Our healthcare system also leaves people bearing many out-of-pocket costs, including for prescriptions drug and mental healthcare. The most sig-

<sup>43</sup> Bhuiya, A., Scallan, E., Alam, S., Sharma, K., & Wilson, M. (2020). Op. Cit.

<sup>44</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2022). *National Health expenditure trends*. Op. cit.

<sup>45</sup> Caldwell, H., Scruton, S., Fierlbeck, K., Hajizadeh, M., Dave, S., Sim, S. M., & Kirk, S. (2021). *Fare well to Nova Scotia? Public health investments remain chronically underfunded*. Canadian Journal of Public Health. 112(186-190). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.17269/s41997-021-00478-8>

<sup>46</sup> Caldwell, H., Scruton, S., Fierlbeck, K., Hajizadeh, M., Dave, S., Sim, S. M., Kirk, S. (2021). Op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2020) *Health Expenditure by Source of Finance*. <https://www.cihi.ca/sites/default/files/document/nhex-trends-2020-narrative-report-en.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Macdonald, D. (2022). *Flush With Cash: The provinces are richer than they think*. CCPA National Office. <https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/flush-with-cash>

<sup>49</sup> Macdonald, D. (2023). *No strings attached Canada's health care deal lacks key conditions*. The Monitor Online. <https://monitormag.ca/reports/no-strings-attached/>

<sup>50</sup> Armstrong, P. (2023). *It's Time to Bury the Private Health Care Zombie*. The Tyee. <https://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2023/01/05/Bury-Private-Health-Care-Zombie/>

nificant components of total healthcare spending in Canada remain hospitals, physicians and drugs, accounting for more than 50% of the total.<sup>51</sup> In Nova Scotia, only 6% of public funding for healthcare pays for prescription drugs. Programs like family pharmacare are not universal and are challenging to access because of deductibles. Only 25.6% of current program spending on pharmacare in Nova Scotia goes to the lowest income quintile.<sup>52</sup> The NSAB invests in broadening access to pharmacare and addressing barriers, even for those currently eligible, including copays and premiums. It also funds free, universal, contraception.<sup>53</sup>

In 2022, only 17% of Nova Scotians said that they always or usually had the support necessary to move within and between formal mental health and substance use services in the past year once they accessed services. Support refers to receiving the guidance, assistance or resources needed to navigate these services from a professional.<sup>54</sup> This is the lowest of all provinces and far below the Canadian average of 41%. We know these rates vary and are higher for 2SLGBTQIA, for lower-income individuals and for those with less than a high school diploma. The NSAB invests in mental health and addictions to meet the benchmark of 12% of total healthcare spending.<sup>55</sup> The NSAB invests in voluntary and evidence-based drug treatment programs, including peer support, outreach services, medication-assisted treatment, counselling, and residential treatment. It also invests in a diversity of harm reduction community-based programs to support those with addictions, including safe supply (of pharmaceutical grade alternatives to unregulated drugs), supervised consumption services, drug checking services, and strategies for alcohol use problems, and offering controlled drinking strategies.

51 Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2022). *National Health expenditure trends*. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/national-health-expenditure-trends>

52 Canadian Institute for Health Information. (2022). *Trends in public drug program spending in Canada*. <https://www.cihi.ca/en/trends-in-public-drug-program-spending-in-canada>

53 CBC. (2021, March 31). *NDP bill would cover contraceptive costs for people without health plans in N.S.* CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/birth-control-contraception-ndp-susan-leblanc-iain-rankin-1.5970223>

54 Survey of those 15 and over in the summer of 2022. Canadian Institute for Health Information. Your Health System. [https://yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca/hsp/inbrief?lang=en&\\_gl=1\\*vjn3jz\\*\\_ga\\*\\_MTYyMzM1NjU5Ny4xNjc2NzIzNDc2\\*\\_ga\\_44X3CK377B\\*\\_MTY3NzQyOTM5NS44LjEumTY3NzQzMdk5OS4wLjAuMA..&\\_ga=2.88956891.1718512834.1677425706-1623356597.1676723476#/#/indicators/098/navigation-of-mental-health-and-substance-use-services/#;mapC1;mapLevel2/](https://yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca/hsp/inbrief?lang=en&_gl=1*vjn3jz*_ga*_MTYyMzM1NjU5Ny4xNjc2NzIzNDc2*_ga_44X3CK377B*_MTY3NzQyOTM5NS44LjEumTY3NzQzMdk5OS4wLjAuMA..&_ga=2.88956891.1718512834.1677425706-1623356597.1676723476#/#/indicators/098/navigation-of-mental-health-and-substance-use-services/#;mapC1;mapLevel2/)

55 Canadian Mental Health Association. (2023). *Investments lacking. More needs to be done for Canadians' mental health*. <https://cmha.ca/news/investments-lacking-more-needs-to-be-done-for-canadians-mental-health/>

The only way to stem exponential increases in curative healthcare is to prevent ill health, address health inequality, and thus invest in health's social determinants.<sup>56</sup> Social inequalities are largely the cause of health inequalities. As outlined in the remaining chapters, the NSAB invests significantly to address their root causes.

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## Addressing Social and Economic Inequalities

Nova Scotia has the highest provincial poverty rate in the country (9.8% - tied with BC). It has the highest provincial poverty rates for individuals living alone, children, and young adults (aged 18-24) (19.8%, 11.4%, and 18.4%).<sup>57</sup> Indeed, across all ages except for 65+, NS has the highest or tied for the highest provincial poverty rates.

The current governmental approach to poverty is disastrous. It remains entrenched in assumptions about who lives in poverty and why—and beliefs about how one gets out of poverty; assuming that individuals are making bad choices, that they must pull themselves up by their bootstraps and get a job, and that if they are missing our opportunities, it is their fault. It is claimed that individuals need to be spurred to make better choices by making them uncomfortable in the system and ensuring they don't have enough. This ideology is reflected in the Employment Support and Income Assistance program, where people turn for help as a last resort.

Nova Scotia has some of the stingiest income support packages in the country,<sup>58</sup> with the lowest amount for a single parent with one child (provided with 62% of the poverty line). 35% of the poverty line is all a single person deemed employable can access; \$8,385 per year or about \$700 monthly. The amount provided, adjusted for inflation, is less than in 1989. Persons with disabilities are provided with only 48% of the poverty line. Like all others on ESIA, they are considered to have been living in deep poverty for the last 20 years (equivalent to support that is 75% or less than the Market Basket

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56 Government of Canada. Social determinants of health and inequalities. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health.html>

57 Statistics Canada. (2022). Individual Market Basket Measure poverty status by economic family characteristics of persons: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions. [Table 98-10-0113-01 Individual Market Basket Measure poverty status by economic family characteristics of persons: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions](#)

58 This is welfare income for 2021 from the most recent Maytree report. Laidley, J., & Tabbara, M. (2022). *Welfare in Canada, 2021*. Maytree.

Measure threshold). The income support system guarantees that people struggle to afford the basics.

The impact of minimally helping people cope with living in poverty has a cost greater than what it would take to lift people out of poverty. Living in poverty impacts people’s mental and physical health, and holds them back from reaching their full potential; the cost of poverty in Nova Scotia is \$2 billion a year or close to 4.85% of GDP. That cost includes \$204.8 million in additional healthcare costs and \$367.2 million when children get trapped in poverty.<sup>59</sup> As was outlined in the 2022 NS Child and Family Poverty Report Card, the lesson from what happened in 2020, is that bold action and significant investment, like the temporary pandemic benefits, can lift people out of poverty. This historic reduction of 24% in one year happened despite a pandemic and a dramatic slowdown of the economy. Poverty has likely worsened since 2020, given that those benefits were temporary and the cost of living has spiked. The urgency remains to lift the remaining 31,000-plus children out of poverty.<sup>60</sup>

Part of the current Minister of Community Services mandate is to “work across Departments to establish a five-year target for the reduction of childhood poverty in the Province.”<sup>61</sup> They have yet to announce a target.

**The NSAB invests to provide enough income support (phased in over three years) to lift all individuals and families out of poverty with substantial increases to ESIA, the NS Child Benefit and the NS Affordable Living Tax Credit. The NSAB also invests to adequately fund the Child and Youth Commission announced, allowing it to be a “proactive and restorative” office that monitors targets, advocates for policy change, and investigates a child’s critical injury and death.<sup>62</sup> The NSAB provides additional funding to alleviate the significant stressors on the child welfare system by increasing overall staffing levels by 10% to handle the demands and bring stability to the system. Funding is also provided to build and implement core training modules for all incoming social workers to complete before being assigned a caseload, including those**

59 Saulnier, C., & Plante, C. (2021). *The Cost of Poverty in the Atlantic Provinces*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://policyalternatives.ca/AtlanticPovertyCosts>

60 Frank, L. and Saulnier, C. (2023). *2022 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia: Kids Can’t Wait*. CCPA-NS office. <https://policyalternatives.ca/2022NSreportcard>

61 Nova Scotia Government. (September 14, 2021). *Ministerial Mandate Letters, Minister of Community Services*. [https://novascotia.ca/exec\\_council/letters-2021/ministerial-mandate-letter-2021-DCS-OLA-SOW.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/exec_council/letters-2021/ministerial-mandate-letter-2021-DCS-OLA-SOW.pdf)

62 Smith, C. (April 2022). *N.S. commitment to create Child and Youth Commission welcomed but ‘long overdue’*. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/8737171/n-s-commitment-to-create-child-and-youth-commission-welcomed-but-long-overdue/>

**related to the core recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children inquiry. It also invests in hiring additional Family Support Workers.**

As explained in the other chapters, the NSAB also invests in non-income, non-market-based solutions. Expanding publicly-provided, free healthcare means people pay less out of pocket for healthcare. The same applies to expanding access and affordability of child care, post-secondary education or public transportation and supporting local, sustainable, affordable food production and distribution.

**The NSAB funds the implementation of the plan mapped out in the Housing for All<sup>63</sup> report enacting housing as a human right—ensuring every Nova Scotian has access to housing. There is a housing crisis in Nova Scotia, with low vacancy rates and high and increasing rental rates, increasing housing insecurity and homelessness.<sup>64</sup> The funding in the NSAB meets the scale of the need for about 30,000 units of affordable, nonmarket, cooperative, non-profit and public housing over the next five years (for a total of about \$6 billion).**

### **Dismantle Intersecting Barriers**

We know that poverty rates are higher for different populations,<sup>65</sup> depending on age and family type (unattached individuals and lone-parent families have higher rates than couples). Lone mother-led families had higher rates of child poverty than sole father-led families (37.8% versus 28.7%), and these rates are much higher than for children living in families with two parents (9.9%).<sup>66</sup> Poverty rates are also higher for refugees and new immigrants, racialized people, persons with disabilities, nonbinary and transgender persons, and Indigenous people. According to the 2020 Census,<sup>67</sup> in Nova Scotia, 48% of non-permanent residents live in poverty. Of immigrants who arrived between 2016 and 2021, 23% live in poverty compared to 8.5% for non-immigrants. The poverty rate for racialized persons is three times higher

<sup>63</sup> Housing for All Working Group. (2021). *Keys to a housing secure future for all Nova Scotians*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/keys-housing-secure-future-all-nova-scotians>

<sup>64</sup> Housing for All Working Group. (2021). Op. cit.

<sup>65</sup> Statistics Canada. (2022). *Disaggregated trends in poverty from the 2021 Census of Population*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021009/98-200-X2021009-eng.cfm>

<sup>66</sup> Frank, L. & Saulnier, C. (2023). *2022 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia: Kids Can't Wait*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://policyalternatives.ca/2022NSreportcard>

<sup>67</sup> Statistics Canada. (2022). *Disaggregated trends in poverty from the 2021 Census of Population*. Op. cit.

than for non-racialized (23% versus 8%). The highest poverty rate is 38% for Koreans. It is also necessary to consider the diversity within these groups and how intersecting identities<sup>68</sup> can make people even more vulnerable. It is also important to consider geographic inequities; we know for example, that child poverty rates vary quite substantially within Nova Scotia and even within the Halifax Regional Municipality.<sup>69</sup> The evidence of systemic inequalities is stark and needs to be addressed.

The NSAB funds dismantling the often intersecting barriers that result in social and economic marginalization and exclusion because of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, immigration status, and other social locations and systems of inequality.<sup>70</sup> To do so, the NSAB provides funding to improve participation in the labour market, address disproportionate higher levels of poverty and improve public services to better respond to the diversity of needs, whether in the public education system, healthcare or employment services.

**The NSAB also invests in substantive reform of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission to address all forms of discrimination.** The Commission should be structured and funded to deal with “policy matters and public education, and in bringing forward, complex issues, like systemic discrimination,” and an independent Human Rights Tribunal needs to be set up to deal with complaints and adjudication, as well as a Human Rights Legal Support Centre that “provides legal advice to applicants, assists them in framing their complaints and can act for clients before the Tribunal.”<sup>71</sup>

## Building an Inclusive Economy, Ensuring Decent Jobs and Fair Wages

Although it is often assumed that working-full time is a pathway out of poverty, plenty of people who work at or around the minimum wage in Nova Scotia know a different reality. The minimum wage will finally reach \$15 an hour in October of 2023. However, the living wage research shows that the

68 See page 23 in *Transforming our Systems. The 2022 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty*. [https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2022-annual/NACP\\_2022-Report-EN-final.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2022-annual/NACP_2022-Report-EN-final.pdf)

69 Findlay and Saulnier, 2023, Op. Cit.

70 Hankivsky, O. (Ed.). *An Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework*. Vancouver, BC: Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy, Simon Fraser University. This publication is also available online at [www.sfu.ca/iirp/ibpa.html](http://www.sfu.ca/iirp/ibpa.html)

71 Equity Watch. (2021). *Justice Impeded: A Critique of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Regime*. <http://equitywatch.ca/equitywatch/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/EWcritique-of-NSHRC-final-version1a-1.pdf>



lowest living wage in the province is \$20; it is time to make a plan for a \$20 minimum wage and to cover all workers in Nova Scotia.<sup>72</sup> Labour standards in Nova Scotia need to be stronger.<sup>73</sup> The NSAB invests in strengthening labour standards and increasing staffing to proactively enforce them.

Our structural low-wage economy<sup>74</sup> has broad, negative implications that must be addressed. Nova Scotia has the second lowest wages after PEI (as of January 2023).<sup>75</sup> Average weekly earnings increased by 5.5% from January 2022 to January 2023.<sup>76</sup> However, the increase in Nova Scotia's consumer price index was 6.9% in 2022 (it peaked at 9.3% in June). This inflationary increase surpasses the earnings increase and represents an average wage cut of 1.4%. The median hourly wage for all employees in NS is \$24 (\$23 for women and \$25.37 for men).<sup>77</sup> Given that the living wage in Halifax is \$23.50<sup>78</sup>—where more than half of the working-age population lives, almost 50% of workers earn less than that wage. **The NSAB invests in a Fair Wages and Decent Jobs Commission that will advise on the best practices to ensure that workers are adequately protected and supported.**

To build an inclusive economy, the NSAB also invests in addressing pay inequity. The largest gender pay gap is for full-time median hourly wages, where women earn 87 cents for every dollar a man earns.<sup>79</sup> We also know that compared to a white man's median wage, Black women face a pay gap of 42%, and Black men face a gap of 33%, whereas the gap for white women

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72 The living wage in 2022 ranges from \$23.50 per hour in Halifax to \$20 in Cape Breton. Saulnier, C. (2022). *Living Wages in Nova Scotia 2022*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/living-wages-nova-scotia-2021>

73 Casey, R. (2019). *A rising tide to lift all boats Recommendations for Advances to Nova Scotia's Labour Standards Code*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/rising-tide-lift-all-boats>

74 Saulnier, C. (2022). The impact of a low-wage economy on government revenue and expenses. Submitted to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. CCPA-NS Office. <https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/impact-low-wage-economy-government-revenue-and-expenses>

75 Statistics Canada. (2023). *Employee wages by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410006301>

76 Statistics Canada. (2023). *Employee wages by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality*. Op. cit.

77 Statistics Canada. (2023). *Employee wages by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality*. Op. cit.

78 Saulnier, C. (2022). *2022 Living Wages in Nova Scotia 2022: Working for a Living, Not Living to Work*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/livingwageNS>

79 Statistics Canada. (2023). *Employee wages by industry, monthly, unadjusted for seasonality*. Op. cit.

is 30%, which indicates a compounding impact of racism and sexism.<sup>80</sup> These gaps persist despite often higher educational attainment; “many racialized populations, including the Korean, Chinese, South Asian, West Asian, Japanese, Arab and Filipino populations, had education levels well above the national average”<sup>81</sup> **The NSAB invests in establishing the Fair Wages and Decent Jobs Commission to enforce pay equity for other equity-seeking groups and the private sector. The Commission will also strengthen employment equity within the public sector and extend it beyond this sector.**

As an economic strategy, immigration is taking the best and brightest from poorer regions of the world to offset the lack of investment and training in Nova Scotians. The province has to do more than merely ask for immigrants to come to create jobs and save the economy.<sup>82</sup> **The NSAB invests in providing more services to newcomers upon arrival and expands immediate eligibility for vital public services to those excluded, including international students, refugee applicants, and temporary migrant workers.**

A critical step to achieving our inclusive growth goals is to democratize the controls that the wealthiest Nova Scotians have over how our wealth is generated and allocated. The NSAB invests in supporting the growth of business models with a proven track record to create quality jobs, revitalize regional economies, and promote inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic development,<sup>83</sup> including employee-owned and controlled businesses such as worker co-operatives. By shifting economic growth away from investor-driven corporate business models, **the NSAB prioritizes social enterprises, co-operatives and other community-based organizations that focus on creating economic opportunities that improve local communities’ social and environmental conditions.**

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80 Black women’s median wage is \$22,934 and Black men’s is \$26,458. White women’s median is \$27,973 and white men’s is \$39,680. Statistics Canada. (2016). *Census, Catalogue Number 98-400-X2016356*.

81 Statistics Canada, The Daily (2023). *Racialized Canadians are less likely to find as good jobs as their non-racialized and non-Indigenous counterparts early in their careers*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230118/dq230118b-eng.htm>

82 Dobrowolsky, A. & Ramos, H. (2014). *Expanding the Vision: Why Nova Scotia Should Look Beyond Econocentric Immigration Policy*. CCPA-NS Office. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/expanding-vision>

83 Novkovic, S., & Webb, T. (eds.) (2014). *Co-operatives in a Post-growth Era Creating Co-operative Economics*. Fernwood Publishing and Zed books. [https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/cooperatives\\_in\\_a\\_postgrowth\\_era](https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/cooperatives_in_a_postgrowth_era)

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## Transformational Climate Investment

Rising sea levels, increased frequency of dangerous storms, and growing floods, will all pose a significant risk to the many residents living along the shoreline on our peninsula.<sup>84</sup> Potential increases in drought may also have a substantive impact, given that 46% of people in rural Nova Scotia rely on groundwater supplied by private wells.<sup>85</sup> The costs of inaction on the climate are too high. The monetary costs are quantifiable, which is critical for budgeting purposes. We should be very concerned about the loss of lives, livelihoods, homes, and our children's futures, which is priceless. There is still time to build a brighter future.

Hurricane Fiona, like the pandemic, taught us costly but familiar lessons. Learning these lessons requires investing in climate strategies to adapt, mitigate, and prevent further disasters by repairing, altering, and strengthening our built infrastructure, as well as our social safety net and public services. We need to prioritize stopping the environmentally extractive and destructive industries and actions, including clear-cutting, gold mining and coal mining, which contribute to making the impact of these events even worse.

The transformational climate investments<sup>86</sup> made in the NSAB 2023 amount to new public spending of \$800 million over three years (an average of \$266 million per year), which, when added to what is currently being spent (\$37 million), would be equivalent to approximately 2% of GDP. This is the scale of the investment needed to tackle climate change, decarbonize our economy, and achieve net zero by 2030.<sup>87</sup>

**This NSAB invests to make homes and all buildings more energy efficient while ensuring everyone has access to affordable energy. The NSAB invests to transition the electric grid to 100% renewables and to nationalize Nova Scotia power.** The province should not invest in green hydrogen (or liquified natural gas) but rather accelerate the reduction of coal, and increase its support to solar, wind and other renewable energy production. The NSAB does so by centring energy democracy, which “empowers ordinary citizens to participate in the energy decisions that affect their daily lives.”<sup>88</sup>

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84 Clean Foundation. (2020). *How Climate Change Impacts Nova Scotia*. <https://clean.ns.ca/municipal-climate-adaptation/>

85 Rural Water Watch Association. <https://www.ruralwaterwatch.org/>

86 Modelled after the federal plan: <https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/spending-what-it-takes>

87 Climate Emergency Unit. <https://www.climateemergencyunit.ca/nova-scotia>

88 Sierra Club. *Energy Democracy*. (n.d.). Beyond Climate Promises. <https://beyondclimatepromises.ca/energy-democracy/>

**The NSAB funds a provincial transportation plan that will be overseen by a new crown corporation to provide affordable, public, provincial, interregional, and intercommunity electric transit busing, while supporting active transportation options.** This plan will enable access to the centre of communities by foot or bicycle; and by fixed-route transit for those living in more dispersed population areas. Door-to-door accessible transportation should be available for those who need it. Nova Scotians should be able to travel between communities using a convenient and reliable inter-community public transit system, minimizing their dependence on private automobiles.

**The NSAB supports more locally grown, lower carbon, sustainable food, including supporting investments in co-ops.** While successive NS governments have, under intense pressure, protected more green spaces, more needs to be done to protect and restore nature. **The NSAB also invests in zero-waste recycling, supporting investments in municipally-owned systems.** Some of these investments can be paid for by ending subsidies for biomass, coal mining, gold mining, and sea-cage fish farming.

### Transition to a Just, Green, Caring Economy

“The over-consumption of a wealthy minority is fuelling the climate crisis yet it is poor communities and young people who are paying the price. Such extreme carbon inequality is a direct consequence of our governments’ decades-long pursuit of grossly unequal and carbon intensive economic growth.”<sup>89</sup> This must change. A significant portion of NSAB’s climate investments will be used for a comprehensive Just Transition Plan, which the new Department of Just Transition will oversee. The aim is to minimize the harm to workers and communities with the move away from fossil fuels.<sup>90</sup> This move to a zero-carbon economy must mitigate the detrimental impact on workers, predominantly white men, employed directly in extractive processes. Workers who will be displaced, like the 125 employed in the coal mine, will be supported with income, retraining, job transfers and other programs that a Just Transition Jobs Partnership will oversee. The Partnership will comprise representatives from the private and public sectors, workers and

<sup>89</sup> OXFAM. (2020, September 23). *Carbon emissions of richest 1 percent more than double the emissions of the poorest half of humanity*. Oxfam International. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/carbon-emissions-richest-1-percent-more-double-emissions-poorest-half-humanity>

<sup>90</sup> Mertins-Kirkwood, H. (2023). *Does Canada’s Sustainable Jobs Plan deliver on the promise of a just transition?* The Monitor Online. <https://monitormag.ca/articles/does-canadas-sustainable-jobs-plan-deliver-on-the-promise-of-a-just-transition/>

communities directly affected, and the labour movement. Governments must also actively participate in labour market management to ensure enough workers are trained for the jobs created.<sup>91</sup> **The NSAB invests in a Union Training Skills Development program to support union-based apprenticeship training in green jobs. It will also invest in a Youth Green Career Program that will support youth to pursue in-demand green and care-related training with free tuition and create thousands of summer jobs that pay a living wage.**

“By making caring work more visible by recognizing its significance to the general economic health of a nation, a shift in the structure of an economy could begin to occur.”<sup>92</sup> **The NSAB prioritizes investment in initiatives to diversify local economies, undertake import replacement and create green jobs, including supporting the caring economy and jobs not narrowly defined as renewable energy jobs.** A genuinely equitable plan must ensure that those who have largely not been to blame for the climate crisis are not made to carry the burden of paying for the transition. Climate change affects people differently, depending on their position in society. Therefore, the transition must benefit those who these systems have made especially vulnerable to these shocks, including Black, Indigenous, and communities of colour, and those living on a low income, using community-benefit agreements for public infrastructure and procurement and preferential hiring for underemployed,<sup>93</sup> worker co-operative ownership models, and training programs.<sup>94</sup> **The NSAB invests in Indigenous-led and owned climate initiatives.** It also invests in supporting grassroots initiatives to address the harms of environmental racism, meaning “environmental policies, practices, or directives that disproportionately disadvantage individuals, groups, or communities (intentionally or unintentionally) based on race or colour.”<sup>95</sup>

A Just Transition Plan is designed to ensure that no one is left behind.

91 Mertins-Kirkwood, H. (2023). *What is a just transition, and why does it matter?* The Monitor Online. <https://monitormag.ca/articles/what-is-a-just-transition-and-why-does-it-matter/>

92 Cohen, M. G. (2014). Gendered Emissions: Counting Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Gender and Why it Matters. *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research*, 25. <https://www.alternateroutes.ca/index.php/ar/article/view/20595/16990>

93 Yalnizyan, Y. (2017). *Community Benefits Agreements: Empowering Communities To Maximize Returns on Public Infrastructure Investments*. Ottawa: Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy. <http://www.ifsd.ca/web/default/files/Presentations/Reports/17011%20%20Community%20Benefits%20Agreements%20-%2017%20July%202017.pdf>

94 Mertins-Kirkwood, H., & Deshpande, Z. (2019). *Who is included in a Just Transition?* CCPA National Office. [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2019/08/Who%20is%20included%20in%20a%20just%20transition\\_final.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2019/08/Who%20is%20included%20in%20a%20just%20transition_final.pdf)

95 Waldron, Ingrid. (2020). *Environmental Racism in Canada Canadian*. UNESCO.

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## Investing in the Next Generation

Besides facilitating work, and strengthening women's equality, **early childhood education and care** support healthy child development, school readiness and overall child well-being.<sup>96</sup> In 2019, 57% of families found it hard to find care in their community, and 38.4% cited affordability as a barrier. In 2020, 60.6% expressed difficulty, and 46.3% cited affordability as a barrier.<sup>97</sup> What has changed since? The Nova Scotia and federal governments are to be applauded for the investments made since 2021 to “expand the not-for-profit and public delivery of early learning and child care with the goal of moving to a fully not-for-profit and publicly managed system.”<sup>98</sup> Licensed child care has become much more affordable, with a 50% reduction in average fees.<sup>99</sup> Despite some investments to increase the number of spaces available, there appears to be a net loss of licensed spaces, with only gains in unlicensed before and after-school care.<sup>100</sup>

Child care is an essential part of the care economy and can even help recruit healthcare workers if it is made available in their communities and at times that respond to their needs. Child care more than pays for itself through job creation and increased tax revenue for governments.<sup>101</sup> There is still a need for more licensed care in many communities, and for instituting a central public agency to oversee building a system and not just tinkering with the patchwork of market-based child care.

While the government has mainly focused on recruitment, **the NSAB invests in the retention of Early Childhood Educators through competitive wages that address gender pay inequities (revising the wage grid), additional wage support, and a new benefits package (a pension plan, as well as health**

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96 The Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development, Nova Scotia Chapter. (2014). *Early Childhood Education Report 2014: Time for Preschool*. Toronto: Atkinson Foundation, OISE/UT, McCain Foundation, p.16. [http://timeforpreschool.ca/media/uploads/profiles-eng/ns\\_v2.pdf](http://timeforpreschool.ca/media/uploads/profiles-eng/ns_v2.pdf)

97 Statistics Canada. (2022). *Type of difficulty encountered by parents and guardians in finding a child care arrangement, children aged 0 to 5 years*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=4210000801>

98 NS Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (2011). *Federal-Provincial Agreement Will Transform Child Care, Reduce Costs for Families*. <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20210713001>

99 Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2022). *Game Changer, Will provinces and territories meet the new federal childcare fee targets? Canadian child care fees 2021*. CCPA National Office. <https://policyalternatives.ca/gamechanger>

100 NS Government, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (2022). *More Families to Have Access to Licensed Child Care*. <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20220601001>

101 Fortin, P. (2018). Quebec, Childcare Program at 20. *Inroads: the Canadian Journal of Opinions*. Issue 42. <https://inroadsjournal.ca/quebecs-childcare-program-20-2/>

and dental benefits, similar to what teachers or other public sector workers can access). The NSAB also invests to cover all operating expenses required, as in the school system, with parent fees collected centrally by the government in a progressive manner (maybe via the tax system), working towards a capped, regulated, set provincial fee of \$10 per day and free for those below the Market Basket Measure.<sup>102</sup> There should be no economic barriers for any child to access ELCC. **The NSAB also invests in licensed child care expansion in the not-for-profit and public sector** to build a publicly-managed and publicly-delivered system (with an Early Learning and Child Care Agency for English-language services), following the evidence<sup>103</sup> that for-profit care is more expensive and introduces unnecessary insecurity for families and educators alike.

### Public Education

Quality early learning and care opportunities also enhance children’s experiences in their subsequent education phases. Our public education system has been under stress since before the pandemic. Teachers need to be supported to take the time to prepare, which is sometimes outside of classroom time. Teachers are increasingly challenged to do so, understaffed and without more substitutes and other support staff. The union is calling for investments in wages for substitutes, who “still earn less than a livable wage even if they work every day of the school year.”<sup>104</sup> **The NSAB invests in enhancing their wages and hiring more permanent teachers. It also invests in the team of professionals and resources required to ensure quality educational opportunities at every grade level for all students.**

### Post-Secondary Education

Nova Scotia has the highest undergraduate tuition in Canada, averaging \$9,328 per year for full-time domestic students, with international students

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<sup>102</sup> Saulnier, C. & Findlay, T. (2021). *On the right track: Reflections on the federal-provincial bilateral agreement on early learning and child care in Nova Scotia*. The Monitor Online. <https://monitormag.ca/articles/on-the-right-track-reflections-on-the-federal-provincial-bilateral-agreement-on-early-learning-and-child-care-in-nova-scotia>

<sup>103</sup> Friendly, M., Vickerson R., Rothman, S., & Nguyen, N. (2021). *Risky Business: Child care ownership in Canada past, present and future*. Childcare Resource and Research Unit. Childcarecanada.org. <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/21/07/risky-business-child-care-ownership-canada-past-present-and>

<sup>104</sup> Wentzell, S. (2022). *New NSTU president plans to prioritize wage increases for substitutes*. CityNews Halifax. <https://halifax.citynews.ca/local-news/new-nstu-president-plans-to-prioritize-wage-increases-for-substitutes-5468292>

paying at least two times the domestic rate.<sup>105</sup> It isn't surprising that Nova Scotia students have the highest average debt (\$41,000) at graduation (61% of whom graduate with debt) and struggle to make ends meet throughout their programs.<sup>106</sup> Combined federal-provincial aid packages have remained more or less constant across the past decade in real terms at just under \$10,000 per year in loans and between \$2,000 and \$2,500 in grants.<sup>107</sup> Government funding has been relatively stagnant since 2013, with more revenue coming from tuition and other fees. Universities in Nova Scotia received 39.4% of their revenue from government sources, the lowest in the country (in 2019/20). They received the second highest percentage of all provinces from student fees at 34.7% of total revenue. The highest percentage of government funding over the previous 20 years was 48.9% in 2008/09, with the lowest student fees that year at 24% of total university revenue.<sup>108</sup>

**The NSAB takes some of the onus off the students and families by eliminating tuition fees at the Nova Scotia Community College, freezing tuition (providing 3% of additional funding to universities), no longer charging interest on student loans, and converting all student loans to grants going forward.<sup>109</sup> The NSAB also invest in universities' core operating expenditures, recognizing that the 1% in the memorandum of understanding is insufficient to cover inflationary increases. However, the NSAB requires that the funding not be used for inflationary increases for the top tier of administrators, e.g. university presidents or vice presidents, and that the universities must use it entirely to support core teaching and research. This recognizes that between 2011/12 and 2020/21, 83% of all increased spending went to support senior administrative salaries and a 73% increase in these positions.<sup>110</sup>**

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<sup>105</sup> Statistics Canada. (2022). *Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study (current dollars)*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710004501>. Note that Nova Scotia offers students who are residents of the province a credit rebate as per the Nova Scotia University Student Bursary Program, which totalled \$1283 for 2022/23. These rebates are not deducted from the tuition fees as presented. <https://novascotia.ca/university-student-bursary/>

<sup>106</sup> Statistics Canada. (2019). *Student debt from all sources, by province of study and level of study*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710003601>

<sup>107</sup> Usher, A., & MacLennan, T. (2022). *Nova Scotia in a Nutshell*. Higher Education Strategy Associates. <https://higherstrategy.com/nova-scotia-in-a-nutshell/>

<sup>108</sup> Statistics Canada. (2022). *University revenues by source, as a percentage of total revenue*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710011001> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/3710011001-eng>

<sup>109</sup> CFS-Nova Scotia. (2023). *In this Together, Education Justice for All*. [https://assets.website-files.com/6227851233f5910d2ccda042/63ea6c265a4d974120b7b693\\_CFS-NS\\_2023%20Lobby%20Doc-compressed.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/6227851233f5910d2ccda042/63ea6c265a4d974120b7b693_CFS-NS_2023%20Lobby%20Doc-compressed.pdf)

<sup>110</sup> Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers. (2022). *A Culture of Entitlement: An Overview of Administrative Compensation at Eight Nova Scotia Universities*. [https://www.ansut.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Culture-of-Entitlement-Report-2012-2021\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.ansut.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Culture-of-Entitlement-Report-2012-2021_FINAL.pdf)



# Conclusion

FOR TOO LONG, governments have neglected to address structural inequalities and systemic inequities that prevent many Nova Scotians from reaching their full potential. We must move away from a perpetual low-wage economy that harms so many tremendously. We need to ensure that people are not running in place, trying to make ends meet, leaving parents unable to provide what their children need. Our society leaves many depleted and even fearful of the future. Generations of young people trapped under the weight of student debt are now facing multiple crises--climate, housing, healthcare, to name a few.

We should never focus on economic growth for growth's sake. We need to consider who shares in that growth, and whether it is beneficial or harmful to human health, our planet, and our well-being as a society. Similarly, we cannot just focus on job creation without considering the quality and kind of jobs created. As we transition to a greener economy, we need to help workers adapt to changing skill needs. We need also to centre jobs in the caring economy. We must strengthen worker protections and create conditions for decent jobs and fair wages, while addressing pay and employment inequity.

The NSAB does not take into account its impact in terms of spin-offs and return on investment. Additional income supports from the government provide an income base for spending for low-income families, who are more likely to spend in our local economy, thus also impacting sales taxes. Investments, such as in child care or post-secondary education, have spin-off effects in terms of building human capital and productivity or income taxes from the newly employed.

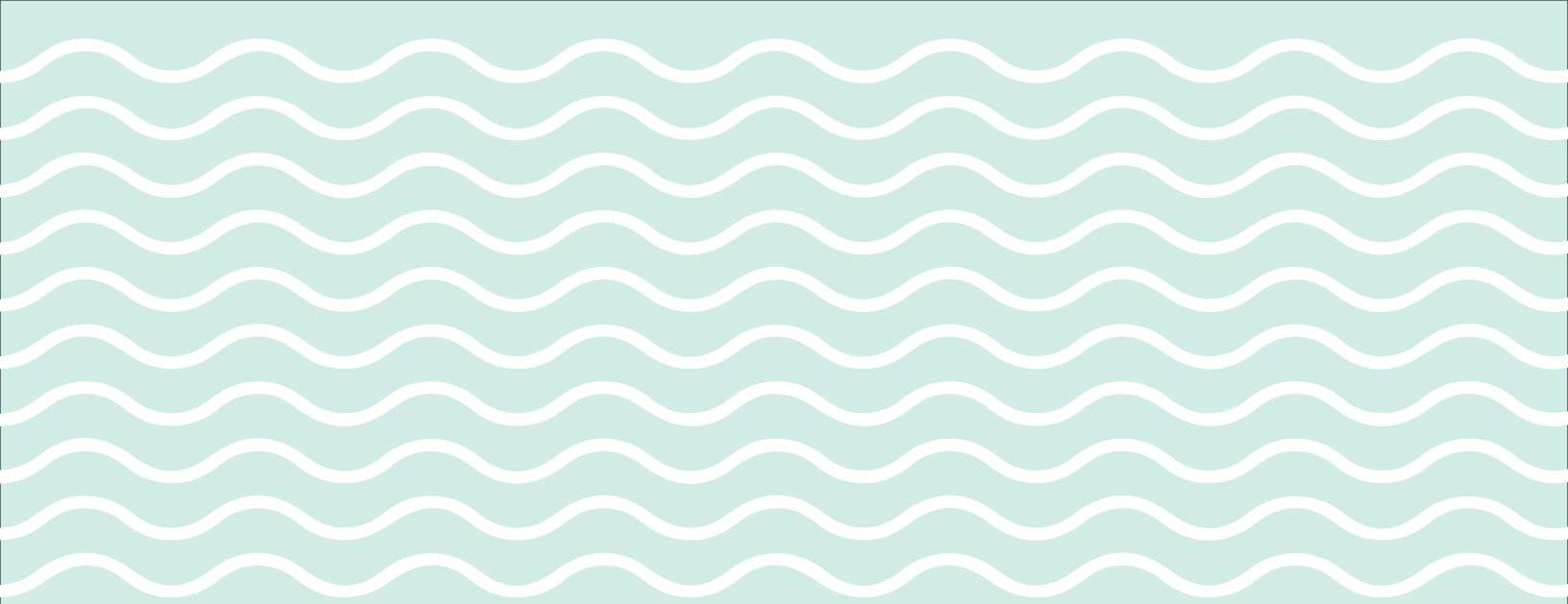
The Nova Scotia Alternative Budget 2023 shows us we must and we can implement an alternative vision for the province. A vision of a province where no one is left behind requires us to change how we tax and spend. It requires us to come to terms with the scale and scope of the investment needed to transform our way of living before it is too late.

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Catherine Leviten-Reid, Community Economic Development, Cape Breton University  
Christine Saulnier, CCPA-NS  
Claire McNeil, Dalhousie Legal Aid  
Danny Cavanagh, Nova Scotia Federation of Labour  
Debbie Richardson, Halifax Dartmouth District Labour Council  
El Jones  
Emma Norton, Climate Emergency Unit  
Hallie Tattrie, Nova Scotia Justice for Workers  
James Sawler, Economics, Mount Saint Vincent University  
Justin Hiltz, Nova Scotia Nurses Union  
Karen Blair, Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County  
Kate Ervine, Global Development Studies, Saint Mary's University  
L Corbin, NS Chapter of the Coalition for Health School Food  
Mary Best, Council of Canadians  
Michael Bradfield, CCPA-NS Research Associate  
Nan McFadgen, CUPE NS  
Sheri Lecker, Adsum for Women & Children  
Sherry Costa-Lorenz, Nova Scotia League of Equal Opportunities  
Stacey Gomez, No One Is Illegal - Nova Scotia, Migrant Workers Program  
Stella Lord, Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia  
Tammy Findlay, Political and Canadian Studies, Mount Saint Vincent University  
Teresa Workman, Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers  
Trish McCourt, Tri County Women's Centre  
Vince Calderhead

## Supporting Organizations

Adsum for Women & Children  
Adult Learning Association of Cape Breton County  
Affordable Energy Coalition  
Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers  
Canadian Federation of Students-Nova Scotia  
Child Care Now NS  
Climate Emergency Unit  
Canadian Mental Health Association-Nova Scotia  
Coalition for Healthy School Food, NS Chapter  
Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia  
Council of Canadians  
Canadian Union of Public Employees Nova Scotia  
Dalhousie Legal Aid  
Equity Watch  
Halifax Dartmouth District Labour Council  
Halifax Refugee Clinic  
Halifax Workers' Action Centre  
Justice for Workers Nova Scotia  
No One Is Illegal - Nova Scotia, Migrant Workers Program  
Nova Scotia Action Coalition for Community Well-Being  
Nova Scotia College of Social Workers  
Nova Scotia Federation of Labour  
Nova Scotia Health Coalition  
Nova Scotia League of Equal Opportunities  
Nova Scotia Nurses Union  
Nova Scotia Teachers Union  
Tri County Women's Centre



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NOVA SCOTIA OFFICE