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Nova Scotia Department of Finance and Treasury Board
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Dear Finance and Treasury Board Minister Lohr:

As the province prepares its 2027-28 budget, the Ecology Action Centre urges this government to invest in solutions that simultaneously work toward greater affordability for Nova Scotians, positive health outcomes, a strong community, and a healthy environment.

While we recognize that this budget focuses only on the year ahead and that the fiscal situation of the province is challenging, we urge this government to take the long view and to consider solutions that will help all Nova Scotians thrive in the decades to come.

Revenues

We were dismayed at the government's decision to exclude discussions of revenue from the budget consultations. As anyone who has ever created a budget knows, there are two sides of a budget and it is disingenuous to open a conversation that excludes revenue. We submit two methods of increasing revenue: increasing mining royalty rates and adjusting taxation to be more progressive.

Increase mining royalty rates

The government of Nova Scotia should increase mineral royalty rates as a means to increase revenue from selling off our limited mineral resources. This increase should also help to counter-balance the money the Province provides to companies to support mineral exploration and mining projects. The Nova Scotia government should make changes to its royalty rates to finally be closer to on par with other countries, particularly Australia, which like Canada, is a major global player in the mining industry. Other countries with higher royalty rates receive substantially more revenue from royalties than we do.

Adjust taxes to be more progressive and increase revenue

We urge the government to make use of existing analysis produced by non-profits and academics in Nova Scotia regarding taxation. The EAC is an active member of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative's Alternative budget process. The CCPA has closely examined tax options[1] and has made a series of proposals including a modest increase to income tax in the highest tax bracket, adjustments to capital gains, amongst others. It is clear that the government requires additional tax revenue. Those in society with greater capacity to contribute must do so.

Growth opportunities

The public "Building our Budget Together" consultation sessions ended with each table being asked to choose an area in which we saw the greatest potential for growth. Unfortunately, many of these options were double barrelled and/or lacked nuance, and the pairing of two industries – one desirable and one undesirable – created a ridiculous list of choices. For example, clean and "conventional" energy were paired together. We are highly supportive of clean energy and see high potential for offshore wind, as well as batteries and solar and energy efficiency. However, we do not support the expansion of fossil fuel energy or "conventional energy" as you have chosen to call it, and see the money being spent on fracking as a waste of resources.

Furthermore, the list was grossly incomplete. Highly valuable industries, like tourism, the arts and film were left off of the list. Tourism, the arts and film sectors are highly compatible with and enhanced by nature protection.

We wish to elaborate on the following three opportunities for growth: Offshore wind, tourism, and building retrofits.

Offshore Wind

Atlantic Canada has some of the best offshore wind resources in the world. This natural resource holds real potential to support Canada's transition to clean

[1] https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/nova-scotia-alternative-budget-2026-for-the-many/

energy. This could help power homes and industries, create jobs, support local businesses, and strengthen connections between provinces.

Offshore wind farms, developed through transparent and meaningful collaboration with Indigenous rights holders, coastal communities, and other stakeholders, could play a central role in building a resilient energy future. They can create local jobs, support thriving communities, and contribute to Canada's transition to a low-carbon economy.

Tourism

The Tourism Industry of Nova Scotia has been clear that protected parks and tourism experiences that respect the environment are part of Nova Scotia's competitive edge when it comes to tourism[2]. This $2.6 billion industry can grow in a sustainable way with supports that align with provincial environmental goals, such as growing the protected areas network. This sector makes up more than 10% of working Nova Scotians, many of them in Nova Scotia's rural communities. It is a win-win to enhance this industry while also securing natural assets that benefit us all.

Building Retrofits

In order to improve energy efficiency, address energy poverty and meet our climate goals, 16,500 homes will have to be retrofitted per year until 2040[3]. Strong demand is projected for construction managers, electricians, ironworkers, and plumbers due to increasing energy efficiency investments. However, by 2030, shortages of 7,010 carpenters and 4,292 electricians are expected, creating potential bottlenecks in retrofitting projects. In order to create these jobs, we need:

- workforce development (mentorship, foreign skilled trades validation, micro credentials for rapid upskilling, and training grants);
- energy retrofit programs that are easier to access and more resilient to policy shifts; and

[2] https://www.tians.org/content/uploads/2026/05/TNS100-49_TIANS-Annual-Report-2025-2026_WEB-Pages.pdf

[3] https://ecologyaction.ca/sites/default/files/2025-04/BuildingNSGreenWorkforce_Apr2025.pdf

- funding for more education and training programs in rural areas and reserves that help underrepresented groups to see trades as viable career paths.

Expenses

We encourage the NS government to ensure funding to address energy poverty, support the next generation of transit users, and invest in achieving its goal of 20% land protection. Furthermore, the government should stop spending money on outdated and extractive industries, such as fracking, other fossil fuel projects, and gold and uranium mining.

Energy poverty

The Nova Scotia Energy Poverty Task Force (NSEPTF)[4] was formed in 2023 with the mandate of examining more systematic solutions to Nova Scotia's energy poverty crisis, where nearly half of Nova Scotians are struggling to pay their electricity and heating bills.

The NSEPTF commissioned a report[5] from utility affordability expert Roger Colton, who has more than 40 years of experience in over 40 jurisdictions across North America. Colton studied Nova Scotia's energy affordability situation and proposed a tailor-made program to slash energy poverty rates in A Way Forward: A Made-in-Nova Scotia Home Energy Affordability Program, released in May 2024.

The report recommends a connected four-part solution that applies a low-income discount to home energy bills, designs a more realistic payment and forgiveness system for those in debt from energy bills, expands funding for when households face unexpected emergencies and increases home energy efficiency upgrades for low- and moderate-income households.

[4] The NSPTF is made up of the Ecology Action Centre, Nova Scotia Power, Efficiency Nova Scotia, the Town of Bridgewater, Clean Foundation, Affordable Energy Coalition, Consumer Advocate, Kate Ervine (SMU), Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, Department of Community Services, Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Nova Scotia Oil Heat Association and The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

[5] https://ecologyaction.ca/sites/default/files/2024-05/AWayForward_FullReport_May2024.pdf

At a moderate uptake cost of $50 million in the first year, and reduced amounts in subsequent years due to the efficiency retrofits, over ten years, the province could lift 27,500 households out of energy poverty.

Support transportation options for the next generation

The 2026-27 budget originally cut bus passes for youth and, despite restoring them at the eleventh hour before the new school year was about to begin, we worry that this support will be short-lived. Safe and accessible youth mobility is integral to our communities and our future as a province.

The last budget also cut over $10 million to active and sustainable transportation funding across the province. This loss threatens the health, safety and future of Nova Scotians. When we cut these programs, we lose opportunities for youth engagement, community connection and sustainable transportation growth. We have worsening traffic, carbon emissions, and affordability problems in this province. Proper transit and sustainable transportation infrastructure and programming would support a much needed cultural shift away from single occupancy vehicles.

We urge the province to continue the funding for youth bus passes and restore funding for sustainable transportation.

Protecting nature

To meet its legislated commitment to protect at least 20 per cent of the province's land by 2030, Nova Scotia still has to protect over 280,000 hectares of land before December 31, 2030. To do this, the provincial government will have to legally protect over 5,000 hectares every month (on average). But at the current rate, it would take the provincial government until 2041 to legally protect 20 per cent of the province.

The provincial government left almost 5 million dollars in federal nature funding on the table, as specified in the EGCCRA Progress Report this summer. The majority of the money was to purchase private land in order to protect it, but the government has only mentioned a handful of sites moving toward designation. The government needs to be much more transparent about:

- Which lands were purchased with this funding?

- How is each protected/what category of protection these lands have been placed in?
- If some of these lands haven't been protected in some way, why not, and when will they be?
- If these remaining parcels are not designated, will more money have to be returned to the federal government?

Furthermore, it is imperative that the government meet its land protection commitments and invest the funds necessary to do so.

Stop spending money on fracking, other fossil fuel projects and mining

In 2026, the government spent 30 million dollars on fracking alone through the Subsurface Energy Research and Development Investment Program based out of Dalhousie University. We strongly urge the government to stop spending money on harmful, and out dated industries, inconsistent with our climate commitments.

Thank you for your consideration. We are available at your convenience to discuss any of the above.

Sincerely,

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