

Small Business Strategy

What is your strategy for making Nova Scotia a better place for small business?

The Liberal Government has had at the core of our mandate the fiscal health and economic prosperity for all Nova Scotians. We believe that helping our small, medium and large business here in the province grow and maintain their competitive advantage is crucial to the overall fiscal health of the province. We are proud of the fact that under the leadership of Premier Stephen McNeil, Nova Scotia businesses reported some of the highest business confidence in the country this past year. Liberals believe that it is government's responsibility to create the right climate with which business can succeed. That is why a new Liberal Government would increase the income threshold for small businesses from \$350,000 to \$500,000 thus putting more money into the economy of Nova Scotia.

With the implementation of the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness, we are working to remove barriers to success for the business community. A new Liberal government would set a target of reducing red tape worth \$25 million. We understand that access to broadband internet is important for small business to succeed and that is why we have committed another \$14.5million for rural high speed internet in our 2017-2018 budget. As well, we increased the small business loan guarantee from 75% to 90% so that small businesses have more access to capital. We have also committed \$500,000 for small business startups in our last budget.

We have opened more trade with Asia and as a direct result increased our provinces seafood export to a record \$1.8 billion in 2016. A re-elected Liberal Government will double the funding for our export growth program; a program that provides financial incentives to small and medium sized businesses to grow their companies in the export market.

We will establish an export accelerator program designed to assist Nova Scotian companies get their products to market. This program will directly connect exporters to international expertise and resources to drive innovation, build competitive advantages and grow exports in key markets.

A re-elected Liberal Government will establish an accessible Innovation Rebate Program for small and medium sized businesses focused on job growth. We will rebate up to 15% of eligible capital investments between \$3 million and \$15 million.

Last year was a record year for tourism in Nova Scotia and our small businesses were a key factor in that success. We want to continue to build on that momentum. That is why our 2017-2018, budget, we committed to bringing more tourism from China. We announced a Culture Action Plan this past spring and committed \$ 2 million in our last budget to celebrating what we know is a winning formula; our culture and heritage.

Nova Scotia Tax Environment

How will you create a tax environment that encourages small business prosperity?

To provide small businesses the ability to invest in and expand their operations, helping to grow the economy and create jobs, a new Liberal Government will increase the income threshold for the 3% small business tax rate from \$350,000 to \$500,000. This means small businesses can earn \$150,000 more, without moving to the higher income tax rate used for larger corporations.

Red Tape

How would you reduce the impact of red tape on small businesses?

The Liberal government created the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Effectiveness to help eliminate unnecessary red tape. We've stripped away needless regulations that stood in the way of growth, while strengthening those that protect health and safety.

CFIB recently declared that Nova Scotia has improved regulation reduction the most of any province in the country, for the second year in a row; improving our grade from a "D" to a "B".

We will build on this success and further reduce the cost of unnecessary regulations on the economy by \$25 million.

Government Spending

What steps would you take to ensure government spending is sustainable over the long-term?

The fiscal health of the province has been a priority for Stephen McNeil and his Liberal government. We have focused on target initiatives that will help Nova Scotians who need it the most while putting in place the right economic levers that will grow the economy and bring fiscal sustainability to the province.

The Liberal Government under the leadership of Premier Stephen McNeil delivered back to back balanced budgets for Nova Scotians. The Ivany Commission recommended that we must obtain a debt to GDP ratio of 30%. We are well on our way to meeting that goal.

Our 2017 election platform is costed with surpluses projected in each of the next four years. We want to continue to grow the economy via tax relief for small businesses, targeted industry specific investment and a focus on research, innovation and growing our population. A new Liberal government would raise the small business tax threshold to \$500,000 from \$350,000.

A new Liberal Government would also ensure that our expenditures are aligned with our revenue over the course of our next mandate.

Labour and Skills Shortage

What do you propose to do to create a strong, skilled workforce in Nova Scotia?

We are working very hard to keep our new graduates here in Nova Scotia, as a result increase our population and build our knowledge economy.

In our election platform, we have committed to \$45million to fund youth employment opportunities across Nova Scotia.

We would expand skilled trades centres in high schools to 7 with an investment of \$5 million over 2 years. We would also eliminate the requirement for apprentices to pay tuition when they leave work to complete technical training. As well, we will expand the

START apprenticeship program, this will incentivize business to hire underrepresented apprentices such as minority groups and women.

Having a skilled and innovative workforce is key to Nova Scotia's long term prosperity. That is why the Liberal Government under the leadership of Premier Stephen McNeil invested heavily in programs designed to keep our Nova Scotia graduates living and working right here in Nova Scotia.

We have implemented successful programs like Graduate to Opportunity that encourage companies to hire new grads. We have also removed the 2-year work experience requirement for entry-level government of Nova Scotia jobs. In our platform, we have committed to doubling the Graduate to Opportunities program creating 1200 jobs over the next 4 years.

In our 2017-2018 budget, we committed \$3.4 million on a new program called the Graduate Scholarship Program that would encourage companies to hire recent graduates of masters and PhD programs for research and innovation jobs as well as our very successful Graduate to Opportunities Program.

Growing our economy and keeping our young Nova Scotians living and working here in the province is a Liberal priority, one that makes sense and something no other government; NDP or Conservative have been successful in doing.

2016 was a very successful year for immigration. We welcomed more than 5 000 newcomers to Nova Scotia in 2016. Stephen McNeil understands that we cannot grow our economy without a growing population. The Provincial Nominee Program and the Federal Pilot Program have helped us stem the tide on population decline. More people call Nova Scotia home than ever before. This is good news for Nova Scotian labour shortages and good news for the Nova Scotian economy.

Workers' Compensation

What will you do to improve the Workers' Compensation System for small business owners in Nova Scotia?

In 2013, one of the first actions we took as government was to make changes to the administrative penalty system. We made it less about financial penalty and more about education and encouraging safe practices. It is now a graduated system and giving business the opportunity to make necessary changes.

As government, we were working on paying down the unfunded liability

In 2015, Stephen McNeil created the office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness were given a mandate to look at all provincial regulation in order to remove unnecessary red tape that hinders business in Nova Scotia.

A new Liberal Government would require the office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness to find 25 million in red tape savings.

Innovation

How will you support small business innovation?

Having a workforce that is innovative and responsive to the changing market is critical for Nova Scotia to be successful. That is why we are proud to talk about a Liberal Government's commitment to developing a strong research and development environment here in the province. We have invested \$25 million into Research Nova Scotia Trust. Our goal is to attract researchers here to Nova Scotia to help improve and grow our economy.

We have also invested a total of \$705,000 in the Mitacs Accelerator program, which is a not-for-profit organization with a mandate to partner with the public and private sector on projects that encourage innovation.

We want to capitalize on our incredible university talent here in Nova Scotia. We have committed \$1.7 million to fund a new program called the Innovate to Opportunity Program. It is designed to encourage employers to hire recent PhD and Masters graduates for jobs in research and innovation. This will create 240 new jobs and strengthen our partnerships with Mitacs by connecting more than 600 graduate students with businesses over the next 4 years.

Working with our Universities and the Nova Scotia Community College, we have invested in Sandbox innovation hubs across the province. Over 3,800 students have worked with 120 mentors to turn their ideas into reality. A re-elected Liberal Government will maintain Nova Scotia's seven Sandboxes and add a new Ocean Sandbox.

With our sights set on larger world markets, we committed to \$10.7 million to support the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurs (Cove) in our 2017-2018 budget and we have supported innovation hubs like Volta among others.