

NOVA SCOTIA BUDGET BULLETIN

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2006-07



Opportunities for Learning

Great beginnings start with a solid education. This year's education budget is being increased by 6 per cent, bringing the total budget for education to \$1.138 billion.

Learning for Life II

Additional funding of approximately \$20 million will help to meet the diverse needs of Nova Scotia's students and will help make the province's public education plan—Learning for Life II—a reality. The funding will help to focus on priorities like accountability, parental involvement, and results measurement.

Classroom Resources

Almost \$5 million will be provided to extend the plan to reduce class sizes in the early grades. Starting this fall, the maximum class size for grade 3 students will be 25, just as it is for grades primary, 1, and 2. Another \$200,000 will add 60 more schools to the accreditation list—ensuring high and consistent standards for students.

Mentors for Students

Almost \$1 million will fund reading and math mentors. As well, an additional \$200,000 will fund math and reading assessments for grade 3 students. An additional \$500,000 will be provided to hire more guidance counsellors.

Opportunities and Options

An additional \$1.4 million will be provided to 27 schools for the Opportunities and Options program. This program matches students with qualified employers and provides practical learning experiences. Successful students are then guaranteed a seat at the Nova Scotia Community College in order to continue their studies. As well, \$100,000 will be invested to develop new career-oriented courses for high school students.

University Funding

In 2004, a three-year agreement was signed with universities, capping tuition for most at the undergraduate level to 3.9 per cent, resulting in average savings of \$2,600 per student. This year's commitment is \$20.3 million, bringing total university funding to \$227.9 million.

Post-Secondary Education Incentives

Nova Scotia's student debt reduction program—which helps about 10,000 students—will receive a \$1.2-million investment, doubling the employment and repayment bonuses under this program. Graduates will also benefit from a \$1,000 tax credit, which can be applied against a graduate's Nova Scotia income tax. Students will have three years after graduating from a post-secondary institution to use the credit.

The required parental contribution for student loans will be reduced by 25 per cent. A total of \$46 million will now be available to an even greater number of students.

Youth in the care of the province will benefit from an extension of the bursary program that covers the cost of tuition and books. Currently, only those under 21 can access the program, and an increased investment of \$200,000 means that the age limit will increase to 24.

Skills and Learning

An additional \$787,000 brings the total skills and learning budget to \$13.6 million. These funds will expand on the many initiatives designed to develop a skilled and adaptable workforce ready to meet the demands of tomorrow's employers.



The Honourable Michael G. Baker Q.C.
Minister of Finance