

Rodney MacDonald's Plan for a
New Nova Scotia

June 2007
Progress Report

7 Priorities

1. A Working Families Pharmacare Plan for the 140,000 Nova Scotians who go without.
2. Nova Scotia's first Anti-Crime Agenda, including 250 new police officers to keep our streets and communities safe.
3. A break for working families, starting with no provincial sales tax on home energy costs.
4. Greater support for all students, from lowering tuition by more than \$1000, to smaller class sizes up to grade 6.
5. The right home for every senior, through 1,300 more nursing home beds or more help for seniors to stay in their own homes.
6. The largest single road building program in 40 years – with at least 2,000 km of new paving.
7. More parks, more green spaces and 500 km of new trails.

....Building Healthier Communities

Commitment:

- Implement innovative solutions, including new financial and human resources, to reduce wait times for cancer and other serious illnesses.

Progress:

- ✓ Work continues on the implementation of information system projects like the Nova Scotia Electronic Health Record, which also includes the provincial provider registry, client registry, and interoperable Electronic Health Record foundation components. Funding is being secured for these initiatives through Canada Health Infoway.
- ✓ A \$1-million investment in a new medical oncology satellite in Kentville and expanded services for Inverness, Antigonish, New Glasgow and Yarmouth will further support cancer services for rural Nova Scotia. Funds include payment for new positions such as nurses, pharmacists and clerical support, as well as physicians' costs to provide more services in the district.
- ✓ Added another \$2.7 million through Budget 2007, primarily for oncology operations at Capital Health and the Cape Breton District Health Authority. The investment will help expand staffing to better respond to the needs of patients and their families, including RNs, radiation therapists, social workers, and other support staff.

Commitment:

- Expand early detection programs for cancers such as colorectal, cervical and breast cancer.

Progress:

- ✓ Investing \$300,000 to develop and establish a colorectal screening program, as recommended by Cancer Care Nova Scotia.
- ✓ Added another \$2.7 million, primarily for oncology operations at Capital Health and the Cape Breton District Health Authority, to assist in expanding staffing. This includes RNs, radiation therapists, social workers, and other support staff.
- ✓ To help decrease the incidence of cervical cancer, the province will begin a human papilloma virus (HPV) immunization program for young women in Nova Scotia in 2007. Working within a federal program, almost \$3

million will be spent to vaccinate girls and young women as part of the school-based immunization program.

- ✓ In May 2007, held a one-day workshop for health professionals on the management of colorectal cancer, focusing on new and emerging practices, screening methods, quality care and patient management. Clinical experts from across Nova Scotia attended.

Commitment:

- Dedicate new funding and staff to physician, nurse and other professional recruitment and retention so that every health care professional who wants to work in Nova Scotia has the opportunity to do so.

Progress:

- ✓ Budget 2006 invested an additional \$5.2 million to ensure the province's medical specialists continue to live and practise in Nova Scotia. The investment has supported funding plans for 150 of these professionals.
- ✓ Through Budget 2006, close to half a million dollars was again dedicated to fund eight new undergraduate medical training seats at Dalhousie Medical School. Bursaries to medical lab technician students total \$462,000, while almost \$400,000 supports the expansion of nursing seats at St. F.X. University.
- ✓ Funded the Rural Nursing Program as a pilot project (delivered by the Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre) to provide nurses with the skills they need to practice nursing in rural communities. The program will also help boost recruitment and retention efforts in rural areas. The first group of nurses to enroll in the program began training May 2007.

Commitment:

- Continue to increase investments in capital equipment to lower wait times on the front lines and bedsides of health care.

Progress:

- ✓ Phased-in new MRI units in Yarmouth, Kentville, Pictou, New Glasgow and Antigonish. Also committed to the replacement of two aging units in Halifax. When complete, Nova Scotia will have a ratio of one MRI scanner for 117,500 people - among the best capacity in the country.
- ✓ In August 2006, provided \$1 million to address the wait list for individuals experiencing chronic pain.
- ✓ Invested an additional \$700,000 in the Sound Start program to ensure that all newborns in the province undergo screening for hearing.

Commitment:

- Work with expert organizations like the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), as well as district health authorities, to improve access to mental health assessment and treatment.

Progress:

- ✓ Invested \$6.7 million to construct four, home-like mental health in-patient units at the Nova Scotia Hospital to benefit both patients and staff. The project allows for the relocation of 40 in-hospital beds.
- ✓ In September 2006, announced \$400,000 over four years to the Canadian Mental Health Association - Nova Scotia Division for the *Communities Addressing Suicide Together* initiative.
- ✓ Created the Seniors Mental Health Network, bringing together a group of experts in the field to focus on enhancing and expanding mental health services to seniors at the community level. Held an education conference for clinicians in February/March 2007.

Commitment:

- To encourage greater support and recognition of those with mental illness, provide targeted tax relief to private and not-for-profit employers that provide mental health programs for their employees.

Progress:

- ✓ Commitment identified for implementation in 2008-09.

Commitment:

- Initiate a province-wide RN-based tele-health system for people who require an initial consultation and assessment on non-urgent conditions.

Progress:

- ✓ In planning stages.

Commitment:

- Add more funding for Nova Scotia's Integrated Stroke Strategy each and every year until it reaches \$3 million annually by 2010.

Progress:

- ✓ In progress. A successful pilot project of the stroke strategy is underway. Government will monitor this pilot project and use this information to honour its commitment to increase funding.

Commitment:

- Expand the number of Youth Health Centres in the province.

Progress:

- ✓ Provided \$800,000 in funding in 2006-07 ensuring existing Youth Health Centres remained open. Also, opened an additional five centres and implemented new standards and guidelines.

Commitment:

- Create more than 1,300 new long-term care beds across the province over the next 10 years - with 800 within the next four years.

Progress:

- ✓ The Request for Proposals for 832 new long-term care beds was posted in April 2007. It will close in August and contracts for construction will be awarded by Fall 2007.
- ✓ Budget 2006 designated more than \$16 million to help advance the continuing care strategy by adding 50 restorative beds and more dialysis options closer to and in the home.
- ✓ The replacement of a total of 721 beds in existing facilities across the province was announced in February 2007. New long-term-care facilities will reflect more home-like environments for smaller numbers of residents. This will also allow them to be located in more communities around the provinces, giving Nova Scotians access to care closer to home. Facility resources will include more social and recreation space, more personal space, and private rooms. Facilities may also include different levels of care, allowing people to remain in the same location even as their health requirements change. The new facilities are expected to be completed by March 2010.
- ✓ Announced 64 beds for Sydney and North Sydney in April 2007. My Cape Breton Home for Seniors was awarded 13 residential care facility beds for Sydney and 12 for North Sydney. The Northside Community Guest Home Society was awarded 39 nursing home beds for North Sydney. The beds are expected to open in 2008 and 2009. These 64 beds are part of 125 new beds previously planned for Cape Breton. Through the Continuing Care Strategy, Cape Breton will also receive another 88 new beds from a total of 832 that will be built by 2010. This brings the total of new long-term care beds for Cape Breton to 213.

Commitment:

- Expand home care service for families in need.

Progress:

- ✓ Invested \$3.8 million to develop and expand access to home and community support services like personal care and housekeeping.
- ✓ Provided \$3.6 million to district health authorities to implement community-based initiatives for patients who need some level of home nursing support.
- ✓ As of March 2007, increased the amount of home support services palliative care patients can access to help them remain in their own homes in the last three months of their lives. Patients can now access about 200 hours of home-care services per month - an increase of about 50 hours per month.
- ✓ As of April 2007, eligible Nova Scotians will have access to a monthly supply of portable oxygen to allow patients who rely on oxygen to have greater mobility, boosting quality of life. The province will pay part, or all, of the cost of the 10 tanks of portable oxygen each month depending on the client's need, income and family size.

Commitment:

- Increase the number and length of adult day care programs in Nova Scotia communities.

Progress:

- ✓ This commitment will be addressed as part of the implementation of the province's new Continuing Care Strategy, our 10-year plan to enhance and expand Nova Scotia's continuing care system.

....Promoting Healthier Citizens

Commitment:

- Increase the healthy living tax incentive for Nova Scotians under the age of 18 from \$150 to \$500 per person to emphasize the importance of physical activity for young people.

Progress:

- ✓ Budget 2006 increased the Healthy Living tax credit to \$500.

Commitment:

- Extend the \$500 healthy living tax incentive for young people to all Nova Scotians.

Progress:

- ✓ Deferred.

Commitment:

- ✓ Double the number of children from low-income families who can access the KidSport program run by Sport Nova Scotia.

Progress:

- ✓ Health Promotion and Protection is working with Sport Nova Scotia on a strategy to achieve this result by 2010 and making great progress.
- ✓ In 2005, 926 children were assisted through KidSport (total funding in 2005 was \$185K). In 2006, 1324 children benefited from the program (total funding was \$325K).
- ✓ In partnership with the Department of Community Services, Health Promotion and Protection streamlined the application process to allow for improved access for eligible children.
- ✓ Committed an additional \$75, 000 to KidSport through Budget 2007.

Commitment:

- ✓ By 2010, ensure the majority of Nova Scotia schools are “active school communities” in which children have access to a wide range of active, healthy lifestyle choices.

Progress:

- ✓ Budget 2006 made an investment of \$2.4 million in a comprehensive physical recreation strategy to enhance recreational facilities and programs. In 2007, a Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation Framework will be created for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.

- ✓ In September 2006, announced the Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools, requiring schools to begin phasing out food and beverages of low nutrition over the next three years.
- ✓ Sport animators continue to work in every school board in the province and are critical links between community-based resources and the encouragement and support of non-curriculum based physical activity for students.
- ✓ *A Question of Influence*, a Teachers Drug Education resource, was launched in May 2007 for the Grades 7-9 Health/Personal Development and Relationships program after being field-tested in almost 40 schools across Nova Scotia. It is based on best-practice evidence that uses educational activities that are proven effective with 12- to 14-year-olds. The resource uses role-playing and other effective strategies to engage students.

Commitment:

- Make physical education a mandatory high school credit by the 2007-2008 school year.

Progress:

- ✓ Budget 2006-07 invested \$400,000 to increase the number of physical education teachers, preparing for the introduction of physical education as a mandatory high school credit by the 2007-08 school year. Many high schools will begin expanding physical education programs in September 2007. All high schools will introduce a compulsory credit requirement in September 2008. The delay in full implementation gives extra lead time to boards to resolve issues such as scheduling, facilities and staffing.

Commitment:

- Create a new, comprehensive sport and recreational infrastructure program to update and replace many of Nova Scotia's aging facilities.

Progress:

- ✓ A 10-year, \$50-million program to build, replace, and upgrade recreation facilities in Nova Scotia was funded in Budget 2007. This program will be equally cost-shared with municipalities and communities, which could bring the investment in our communities to \$150 million over the next 10 years. With the existing \$3-million recreational facilities development program, this will mean \$8 million in provincial funding available for 2007-2008.

Projects already announced include:

- Multi-sport fieldhouse and outdoor track, Bridgewater;
- Expansion, improvements to Raymond Field, Wolfville;
- New indoor soccer facility, Pictou; and
- Expansion and improvements to Amherst Stadium.

✓ Budget 2006 increased the Recreational Facilities Development (RFD) Program budget by \$1 million. Examples of new projects announced within the RFD program include:

- a new civic centre in Clarks Harbour, a 2.8-km multi-use trail in Woods Harbour, improved playgrounds in HRM, new trail work across HRM, new trails, a ball field and an outdoor swimming pool in the Valley region, upgrades to the Shelburne arena, improvements and upgrades to playgrounds and ballfields in Pictou County, renovations to the Sydney Curling Club and Wentworth Park along with work on trails and a skateboard park in Cape Breton.
- The \$111-million, six-year Canada-Nova Scotia Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund continues to support recreation facilities such as two new recreation centres in Fall River and on Prospect Road, HRM and various trails in Dartmouth and Bedford.

Commitment:

✓ Ban on aggressive point-of-sale advertising for tobacco.

Progress:

✓ Passed point-of-sale legislation to discourage Nova Scotians, particularly children and youth, from tobacco use. The bill prohibits cigarettes from being advertised and displayed prominently behind store counters. Exterior signage will also be eliminated. Only government authorized signage will be permitted at the point-of-sale. Nova Scotia will pull the plug on what are known as power walls. Regulations of the Tobacco Access Act will be implemented in two phases, in consultation with tobacco vendors. Phase one began on May 31 -- World No Tobacco Day -- and spans two months. The province will provide guidance to tobacco vendors as they remove tobacco products from public view. In August, tobacco inspectors will begin issuing verbal warnings if vendors have not complied with the regulations. As of September 1, 2007 vendors still not in compliance will be issued written warnings. After that, charges will be considered.

Commitment:

- Taking action with Bill 222 to initiate the best possible legal action to recover the costs to our health care system caused by large multinational tobacco companies – with all net proceeds being applied to health promotion programs.

Progress:

- Options are being reviewed.

....Nurturing a Greener Nova Scotia

Commitment:

- Update Nova Scotia's five-year old Energy Strategy to ensure it reflects the energy realities of today and tomorrow.

Progress:

- ✓ Consultations on-going with key stakeholders for Energy Strategy updates.
- ✓ Introduced and passed new legislation in April 2007 - *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*. Objectives include:
 - reducing greenhouse-gas emissions to 10 percent less than 1990 levels, 35 per cent lower than projected 2020 levels;
 - adopting emission standards for new motor vehicles by 2010;
 - developing and adopting a sustainable procurement policy for government by 2009; and
 - ensuring a minimum of 18.5 per cent of electricity will come from renewable sources by 2013.
- ✓ One step in that process is the province's announcement to open up the market to independent power producers. As of February 1st, 2007, Nova Scotia's six municipal utilities could purchase power directly from independent power producers, such as wind farms.
- ✓ Passed an act to provide an effective property tax regime to encourage growth in the wind farm industry.
- ✓ The Federal investment of \$42.5 million to create the Nova Scotia Green Trust will assist with the following initiatives:
 - Pending the outcome of a strategic environmental assessment, expanding the province's portfolio of renewable energy to include funding for one or more in-stream tidal power pilot project;
 - Establishing the N.S. Municipal Climate and Clean Air Fund to enable municipalities to take on projects that will reduce carbon emissions;
 - Setting aside funds to conduct studies and experiments in the sequestration of Carbon Dioxide; and
 - Establishing the Nova Scotia Environmental Technology Fund to support the development, commercialization, and use of new technologies and applications to reduce greenhouse gases.
- ✓ Asked Utility and Review Board to create new rates for green energy producers to sell power to municipal utilities - rates also necessary for

- ✓ retail sales of renewable energy.
- ✓ Assisting Cape Breton's Strait-Highlands region to take action against climate change through the Strait-Highlands Regional Development Agency's Green Action Plan.
- ✓ Funded the Nova Scotia Climate Change Centre.
- ✓ Assisted with a study of the potential impacts of climate change on the Halifax Harbour, in conjunction with Halifax Regional Municipality.
- ✓ Provided grants to support:
 - Ecology Action Centre (EAC) to show "An Inconvenient Truth" and to meet increased demand for their Movie Series Educational and Outreach Project;
 - EAC Food Miles Project - a study on sustainable food procurement; and
 - the Nova Scotia Forestry Association for the Annual 2007 Provincial Envirothon - highlighting "Alternative Renewable Energy".
- ✓ Commissioned a study of green paving techniques to reduce emissions in highway construction and maintenance through greater use of recycled paving options.
- ✓ Helped fund a 'green' roof for the new Citadel High School in Halifax.
- ✓ Supported Dalhousie University and Nova Scotia Power Inc.'s efforts to secure funding for the Carbon Dioxide Storage and Enhanced Coal Bed Methane Recovery studies.
- ✓ Funding a study through Energy and Natural Resources on the impact of a changing climate on the future distribution and growth of commercial tree species.
- ✓ Working with the Eco-Efficiency Centre.
- ✓ Announced a new policy framework for the development of tidal power and other forms of offshore renewable energy.
- ✓ Announced funding of almost \$80,000 for an online and interactive wind atlas of Nova Scotia which, when complete (Fall 2007), will assist smaller-scale wind developers locate new projects in the province.
- ✓ Released "A Proponents' Guide to Wind Power Projects" on the Environment and Labour website, to help wind developers prepare an Environmental Assessment Registration document.

Commitment:

- Support the conversion of major public facilities to natural gas, starting with the Nova Scotia Hospital, Dartmouth General Hospital and the Nova Scotia Community College.

Progress:

- ✓ Natural gas conversion is underway at the Nova Scotia Hospital, and Heritage Gas has extended the natural gas line to the facilities. Natural gas was able to be used at the facility in late March 2007.
- ✓ Through the Federal Nova Scotia Green Trust, converting the heating plants at the Capital District Health Authority to burn natural gas, creating a market for natural gas on the Halifax peninsula.
- ✓ Updating studies on natural gas options for Capital Health, Dalhousie University and St. Mary's University.

Commitment:

- Create *Conserve Nova Scotia* – a new Crown corporation, wholly funded by the province, not the private sector – whose sole goal is to persuade Nova Scotians to decrease their environmental footprint through a wide range of new and existing programs, and to reduce energy consumption or become more energy efficient in their day-to-day activities.

Progress:

- ✓ Done. Launched Conserve Nova Scotia in October 2006.
- ✓ The first program announced by the agency was a \$1.1-million energy efficient oil appliance rebate called *Retire Your Furnace*.
- ✓ Introduced to residents in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality a power monitor pilot program that can cut electricity costs by at least five per cent. The program - *More Power To You* - was launched December 2006, in conjunction with NSPI and the Atlantic Coastal Action Program Cape Breton. The 100-household pilot program is designed to help consumers use less electricity by making energy-efficiency improvements.
- ✓ Introduced the *Drivewiser* campaign to encourage drivers to maintain vehicles, properly inflate tires, and modify driving habits. Campaign staff will also work with driving schools to educate new drivers about fuel efficiency. Automotive dealers will also participate in the program to help customers identify the most fuel-efficient model in the vehicle class that best suits their needs.
- ✓ Launched the Nova Scotia EnerGuide for Houses Program in October 2006. Homeowners can make energy-efficiency upgrades to their homes and get up to \$2,000 back. Low-income Nova Scotians who participate in

- ✓ the program will receive an additional \$400 grant.
- ✓ Announced a revised Nova Scotia EnerGuide for Houses program to align with the new ecoENERGY Retrofit program offered by the federal government where homeowners can get up to \$6,500 in combined provincial and federal grants.
- ✓ Launched the Residential Energy Affordability Program to help 105 low-income households across the province take control of their energy costs by permanently saving up to 30 percent. The \$650,000-pilot program, announced in January 2007, is designed to work with homeowners receiving assistance under current provincial low-income housing programs.
- ✓ Partnered with Nova Scotia Power Inc. to distribute energy efficient LED holiday lights in eight municipalities.
- ✓ Funded the conversion to LED holiday lights in 18 municipalities.
- ✓ Launched *It Starts With Me* - a residential energy-efficiency campaign.
- ✓ Launched the Shared Atlantic Vision for Energy Efficiency (SAVE) campaign with community-based compact fluorescent light bulb change-out initiatives in 10 communities.
- ✓ Announced industry consultation to begin February 2007 on a plan that could see new homes built by 2011 being required to meet an EnerGuide for Houses rating of 80. (There is no current minimum rating - Nova Scotia average is 67.) Also announced all new homes in Nova Scotia will require mandatory energy efficiency rating labels beginning in January 2008.
- ✓ Launched the *It Starts With Me* school fundraising program where Nova Scotia students can sell energy efficient light bulbs, night lights, and low-flow showerheads to raise money for school activities.
- ✓ To encourage the building of homes to the EnerGuide 80 rating before 2011, the agency is offering a \$500 incentive under the EnerGuide for New Houses program. Homes built to a EnerGuide 77 rating will have the cost of the EnerGuide evaluation rebated, meaning consumers could gain more than \$850 in rebates.
- ✓ Helped fund the purchase by HRM of hybrid diesel-electric buses.
- ✓ Working with Eco-Efficiency Centre on energy efficiency solutions for businesses.
- ✓ Assisted all municipalities in the province purchase LED traffic signals which provide a 90 percent energy savings.
- ✓ Launched the Ministerial Advisory Council on Conservation and Energy Efficiency.

- ✓ Announced funding to the TRAX program for community groups, municipal governments, and band councils to apply for community-based sustainable transportation grants.
- ✓ Introduced Energy Audit Grants for NS Early Learning and Child Care.

....Extending a Helping Hand

Commitment:

- Effective October 1, 2006, introduce a new pharmacare program for children of low-income families.

Progress:

- ✓ Initiated the new pharmacare program in October 2006. The program aims to assist up to 26,000 children under 18 whose families receive the Nova Scotia Child Benefit and have a household income below \$20,921.

Commitment:

- Create a *Working Families Pharmacare Plan* to ensure that 140,000 working Nova Scotians are able to access basic drug coverage where currently they have none.

Progress:

- ✓ In Spring 2007, invested \$5 million toward the initial implementation. The \$75-million *Nova Scotia Family Pharmacare Program* is expected to be put in place before the end of the fiscal year.

Commitment:

- Expand support for adoptive and foster families to create more happy homes for waiting children here at home and around the world.

Progress:

- ✓ Expanding post-adoption services to include a directory of services; guidelines for setting up community-based mentor programs; and support groups for adoptive parents.
- ✓ Eliminated international adoption fees to allow more Nova Scotians the opportunity to build and complete their families.
- ✓ Increased maintenance rates for children in care by five per cent.
- ✓ In February 1, 2007, travel rates for foster parents increased and will be reimbursed at the same rate as provincial government employees.

Commitment:

- Extend the Alternate Family Support Program province-wide to help families caring for adults with disabilities.

Progress:

- ✓ Direct Family Support and Alternative Family Support are available province-wide. Independent Living Support is available in the Eastern

Region and will be available shortly in the Northern Region. It will be available province-wide by the end of 2007.

Commitment:

- Implement a 10-year child care strategy, creating more than 1000 licensed and portable child care spaces.

Progress:

- ✓ Added 250 new subsidized portable child-care spaces as the first step in the province's new 10-year, *Early Learning and Child Care Plan*.
- ✓ Invested \$10 million in an expansion loan program that will create more than 1,000 child care spaces over the next five years. The program is available to full- and part-day licensed commercial or non-profit child-care centres, and family home agencies - providing funding support to expand facilities or to help with the costs of adding new child-care spaces.
- ✓ Approved \$640,000 for 30 repair and renovation projects for licensed child care centres around the province.
- ✓ Investing more than \$20 million in regulated family home day care as part of the strategy. The program is voluntary and will provide home day care providers access to professional support that enhances their services.
- ✓ In March 2007, announced a \$54-million investment in child care operating grant funding. This provides funding per occupied space to all licensed full-day child care centres - a key component of the plan to help hire and retain qualified staff.

Commitment:

- To help fight poverty, legislate annual adjustments to the Department of Community Services' basic personal allowance.

Progress:

- ✓ Regulation will be brought forward in 2007 to allow annual adjustments to basic personal allowance.

Commitment:

- Establish a new Persons with Disabilities Allowance that recognizes that many Nova Scotians are unable to work due to a permanent disability.

Progress:

- ✓ Research and analysis is under way.

Commitment:

- End the Department of Community Services' clawback of increase in the Canada Pension Plan disability benefits.

Progress:

- ✓ Under review.

Commitment:

- Accelerate implementation of Affordable Housing Agreement Phase II within the next 24 months – ensuring hundreds of Nova Scotian families have access to a home two years sooner.

Progress:

- ✓ Issued province-wide request for proposals under the New Rental Housing Initiative of the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement November 2006, inviting not-for-profit organizations and private developers to submit proposals to build new affordable rental housing for individuals, families, seniors and persons with disabilities. This will provide hundreds of low-income Nova Scotians with access to more affordable homes.
- ✓ Opened 23 new affordable housing units in Fairview March 2007 - built through the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement. Government contributed \$18,000 for a geothermal heating system to help make the new unit energy-efficient.
- ✓ Low-income, single-parent students attending university will receive help through a housing pilot program created under the Canada-Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Agreement. The assistance will be directed to 30 low-income, single-parent students attending university full-time.

Commitment:

- Develop and implement – in consultation with poverty advocates, social workers, educators, employment experts, business and community leaders – a multi-year Poverty to Work Strategy, aimed at reducing poverty, particularly among women and children, and generating more meaningful employment through a variety of ways to improve the standard of living of Nova Scotians struggling on low incomes.

Progress:

- ✓ Community Services is working with other departments to develop a strategy aimed at reducing poverty, which will include a group of government, business and community-based stakeholders. The group is expected to report back to government Fall 2007.

Commitment:

- For seniors, establish a new home renovation plan to help more seniors stay in their homes.

Progress:

- ✓ Budget 2007 committed \$4 million for the Expanded Home Repair/Adaptation Program, to help seniors make repairs and renovations to address health and safety issues in their homes.
- ✓ Invested \$1 million in funding for the Senior Citizens' Assistance Program in November 2006 to assist more low-income seniors to make home repairs so they can remain in their homes longer.
- ✓ Amended Housing Act regulations to enhance the Access-A-Home program - increasing income limits so more people can access the program and increasing the amount of assistance a household can receive. The program budget has also been doubled for this fiscal year. Program assistance may include adding a wheelchair ramp, widening doorways and making bathrooms wheelchair accessible.

Commitment:

- Double the cap of the 50 per cent Seniors' Property Tax Rebate from \$400 to \$800 to help seniors manage the growing costs of living in their own homes.

Progress:

- ✓ Passed legislation in Fall 2006 which amends the Assessment Act, extending the cap for rising property assessments. A significant change will mean that, as of 2008, the cap would be tied to the Consumer Price Index.

....Seeking Fairness, Stability

Commitment:

- Remove the provincial portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax on all household energy costs by January 1, 2007.

Progress:

- ✓ Budget 2006 set in motion the eight per cent rebate on a wide range of fuels used for residential heating and residential electricity used for non-heating purposes. *Your Energy Rebate* became effective a month ahead of schedule - December 1, 2006 - providing relief from high energy prices to an estimated 400,000 households, regardless of family income.

Commitment:

- Continue the cap on sudden property assessment hikes and consider further steps, in consultation with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, to help Nova Scotians deal with higher property taxes.

Progress:

- ✓ Passed legislation in Fall 2006 which amended the Assessment Act, extending the cap for rising property assessments. A significant change will mean that, as of 2008, the cap would be tied to the Consumer Price Index.

Commitment:

- Starting July 1, 2006, regulate the price of motive fuels, such as gasoline and diesel in Nova Scotia, matching all provinces east of Ontario.

Progress:

- ✓ Done. After six months, reviewed effectiveness of regulation. Received report by Gardner Pinfold Consulting April 2007. As a result, moved to weekly gas price setting and removed the price cap on full-service gas.
- ✓ Committed to again review the amended regulation process in May 2008 after one full year of implementation.

Commitment:

- Adopt a new \$500 tax credit to help volunteer firefighters offset some of the costs of doing this important job in many Nova Scotia communities.

Progress:

- ✓ Invested \$2.3 million through Budget 2007 to offer a \$250 tax credit in 2007. This will increase to \$375 in 2008 and \$500 in 2009.

Commitment:

- Adopt new measures to protect consumers, including a new law governing the conduct of the Payday Loan industry, based on legislation recently introduced in Manitoba.

Progress:

- In Fall 2006, passed legislation enabling the province to enforce stricter guidelines and penalties on payday lenders. The bill will help to ensure greater protection to those people who need to borrow from the companies that make small, short-term loans. Consultation process regarding regulations has begun with an intent to set in motion Fall 2007.

....Growing Our Communities

Commitment:

- In consultation with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities and the Government of Canada, focus new infrastructure dollars towards community basics, such as clean water and sewer.

Progress:

- ✓ Continue to enhance municipal infrastructure. Examples include:
 - In 2006, the provincial and federal government together invested more than \$58 million towards Nova Scotia's infrastructure.
 - Upgrades for water treatment plant serving residents of Cornwallis Park, Annapolis County, ensuring safer drinking water for more than 250 households.
 - Upgrades to wastewater treatment facility and the extension of the sanitary sewer system, assisting residents in Joggins.
 - Federal and provincial funding totalling \$235,818 invested in an improved wastewater system for the Village of Bible Hill.
 - An improved wastewater collection and treatment system for the Town of Pictou and Lyons Brook - federal and provincial funding totals \$5,095,684.
 - A Federal-provincial investment of over \$200,000 towards an improved wastewater system, helping residents in Antigonish.
 - Improved wastewater systems, for Springhill and Parrsboro residents and improved drinking water, for Oxford residents - through a joint investment of over \$700,000.
 - Improved drinking water, for more than 550 households and almost 140 businesses in Truro.
 - An injection of almost \$4-million for a water project, assisting Richmond County residents in St. Peter's and Samsonville.

Commitment:

- Work with the federal government and interested municipalities to increase the capacity of public transit services – by bus, ferry or rail – in high traffic or remote areas.

Progress:

- ✓ Received \$37.5 million from the federal government November 2006 which was directed by the province to assist eleven public transit systems

across the province. The funding will assist Metro Transit, Cape Breton Transit, Kings Transit, along with eight other community transit organizations. Examples of improvements include:

- The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) invested its almost \$10.9 million to upgrade farebox technology and purchase new vehicles. New electronic fare boxes provide statistical data to help track passenger travel and monitor passenger fares, providing information that can be used in transit planning.
- Cape Breton Regional Municipality is spending its allocation of almost \$350,000 on capital improvements toward regular transit buses that are accessible to people with disabilities.
- Kings Transit plans to use its allocation of over \$320,000 to purchase two feeder buses and to enhance its bus camera security.
- Five accessible mini-vans or buses are also being purchased for rural community transit organizations, at a cost of just over \$170,000.

Commitment:

- By 2007, match the federal government's transit tax credit.

Progress:

- ✓ Deferred.

Commitment:

- Lower taxes for working families by fully indexing income tax rates.

Progress:

- ✓ Budget 2006 introduced measures to reduce the personal income tax burden over the next four years. Starting January 1, 2007, Nova Scotia's basic personal amount increased by \$250 to \$7,481. The basic personal amount will increase by another \$250 in the next three years until it reaches \$8,231 by 2010 - an increase of \$1000 over 2006. At the same time, many other provincial tax credits will increase in proportion. Over four years, this will save Nova Scotians an estimated \$113 million in provincial income taxes.
- ✓ Starting in 2011, the government will index personal income tax brackets and credits at a prescribed rate.
- ✓ Introduced additional personal income tax relief through an increase to the Healthy Living Tax Credit from \$150 to \$500, a new graduate tax credit worth \$1,000 and a credit to offset the tax impact of the Federal Government's Universal Child Care Benefit.

....Maintaining Fiscal Stability

Commitment:

- Reintroduce and pass Nova Scotia's fifth straight balanced budget this summer, with the same revenue and expenditure measures brought forward in the legislature on May 9, 2006.

Progress:

- ✓ Done. Budget 2006 and Budget 2007 were both passed with historic, unanimous votes in the legislature.

Commitment:

- Maintain Nova Scotia's legislated commitment to balanced budgets, debt management and debt reduction.

Progress:

- ✓ Tabled and passed sixth, consecutive, balanced budget April 2007.
- ✓ Province has received three bond-rating agency upgrades reflecting the province's improved financial results.
- ✓ In 2007–08, the province's Net Direct Debt will decline by \$15.4 million - reducing the Net Direct Debt \$7 million lower than estimated in the 2005 Debt Reduction Plan.
- ✓ Net direct debt as a percentage of gross domestic product has declined from 46.8 per cent to a forecasted 38.1 per cent for March 31, 2007.

Commitment:

- Direct the all-party, Nova Scotia Election Commission to prepare recommendations to fundamentally reform the financing of political parties and candidates.

Progress:

- ✓ Passed Bill 117 in 2007 Winter Legislative Sitting. Under amendments to the Members and Public Employees Disclosure Act, political donations will be subject to an annual maximum of \$5,000 per party and political parties will get an annual grant tied to votes they receive in provincial elections.

Nurturing Nova Scotia's Youth ...Developing Our Future

Commitment:

- ❑ Starting in 2007, initiate a multi-year program to make university education more affordable for Nova Scotia students, by lowering undergraduate tuition fees by more than \$1,000 over a four-year period.

Progress:

- ✓ Offset the 3.9 per cent tuition increase scheduled for the 2007–2008 school year through a \$12.5 million investment. This will result in a tuition freeze at September 2006 levels for most Canadian students and an equivalent reduction in tuition rate increases for medical, dental, law, and international students. Through the Nova Scotia Tuition Reduction Program, providing a \$500 tuition reduction for Nova Scotia residents attending Nova Scotia universities; an \$11.6 million investment. This is the next step in the province's commitment to bring Nova Scotia tuition to the national level by 2010-11.
- ✓ As of January 2007, assisted more than 23,000 provincial students in paying less tuition due to a \$10.3 million investment; full-time students received a \$440 bursary and part-time students received a \$220 bursary.
- ✓ Helped make post-secondary education more affordable through additional measures including:
 - A \$1,000 tax credit for post-secondary graduates to offset Nova Scotia income taxes was announced in Budget 2006. New university and college graduates who choose to live and work in Nova Scotia can benefit from the new Nova Scotia Post-secondary Graduate Tax Credit. This is not restricted to graduates of Nova Scotia institutions; it is also offered to new graduates of eligible programs across Canada, and in many international locations. The Graduate Tax Credit will rise to \$2,000 in 2008.
 - Doubling the employment and repayment awards in the Debt Reduction Program.
 - Lowering the required parental contribution, for the second year in a row, making more students eligible for student loans.
 - Introducing a new multi-year, needs-based grant program in 2007–2008 to help students from low-income families to fund their second, third, fourth, or fifth year of studies.
 - Introduced Federal-Provincial French First and Second Language Bursary program. The goal is to encourage top students to pursue their

bachelor of education in French, accept a full-time position with a Nova Scotia school board and agree to teach in that board for at least two years after being hired.

- Announced *Career Seek* pilot program in Fall 2006, allowing eligible income assistance clients to attend university or a post-secondary education program of more than two years and continue to receive benefits from the income assistance program.

Commitment:

- Extend public school class size reductions up to and including Grade 6.

Progress:

- ✓ Have currently capped, at 25 students per class, from Grades Primary to 3. The next steps will be addressed, first with Grade 4 in 2008-09, and then through to Grade 6 in the two subsequent school years.

Commitment:

- Introduce vocational/composite programming in our high schools to give older students a greater choice.

Progress:

- ✓ Provided an additional \$1.3 million to further expand choices for hands-on learning in the areas of vocational and composite programming. When implemented, the new programming will offer students opportunities for trade-specific learning in the areas of metals, wood, plumbing and pipefitting, and electrical work.
- ✓ In 2006, directed \$100,000 to develop new career-oriented courses for high school students.
- ✓ Invested \$483,300 in *Invest in Youth* - a program which builds a database of Nova Scotia employers, making it easy for schools to identify opportunities for students to connect to the workplace. The program complements programs like *Options and Opportunities* and co-operative education.
- ✓ Committed \$480,000 annually to the *Workit Youth Apprenticeship* Initiative to provide a career pathway to the skilled trades for 16-19-year-olds. Information and awareness about skilled trade careers is also shared with high school students, educators, employers and parents.
- ✓ Better prepared students for careers in Nova Scotia with the expansion of the *Options and Opportunities* (O₂) program, which gives students on-the-job experience while they are still in school. In 2006-07, the O₂ program was offered to almost 400 Grade 10 students in 27 schools across the

province. Next year, an additional \$1.5-million will be invested to expand the program to Grade 11 in all 27 schools currently offering it. It will also expand to eight more schools in the province.

Commitment:

- Review the bus transportation criteria to ensure young children are not walking too far or in unsafe conditions to school.

Progress:

- ✓ Began consultations with school boards in Fall 2006 to identify appropriate walking distances.
- ✓ Announced a formal review of student walking distances in June 2007. Report is due Fall 2007.
- ✓ Health Promotion and Protection working with the Ecology Action Centre on identifying active and safe routes to schools.

Commitment:

- Increase investments in public school and university infrastructure on a needs basis, while leveraging federal funding opportunities for the latter.

Progress:

- ✓ Rankin School opened for students in early 2007. Construction is underway at Citadel High, Harmony Heights Elementary School, Musquodoboit Rural High and Oyster Pond Academy.
- ✓ The following schools are involved in site selection and/or recently had a groundbreaking ceremony: École de la Rive Sud, Glace Bay Junior High, Northside Elementary Junior High, Oxford P-12, Stewiacke Elementary, Truro South Elementary, Waverley/L.C. Skerry.
- ✓ Major renovations are underway at Carleton Memorial Elementary School, Chester Middle School, Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional School, Donkin Complex, East Richmond Education Centre, École Acadienne de Truro, École NDA, Gaspereau Valley Elementary School, Glooscap Elementary School, Hants West Middle School, Middleton Regional High School, New Minas Elementary School, North Queens Elementary/High Schools, North River Elementary School, Riverview Rural High School, G. R. Saunders Elementary, Somerset and District Elementary School, Springhill Junior/Senior High School, St. Mary's Elementary (Aylesford), Strait Area Education Recreation Centre, Sydney Academy, West Kings District High School.

Commitment:

- Begin consultations on the second phase of the NSCC's growth plan, including consideration of new campuses where educational needs warrant.

Progress:

- ✓ Discussions are on-going regarding Phase 2.
- ✓ Opening a new Metro NSCC Campus on the Dartmouth Waterfront Fall 2007.

Commitment:

- Starting in the Fall of 2006, extend the province's Tuition Support Program to three years, until greater consultation can be completed with parents, students, educators, administrators and medical professionals on a new provincial policy for students with special needs.

Progress:

- ✓ Done. Further study on the program is underway.
- ✓ Set in motion a three-person team to review special education programming. Public meetings were held province-wide. The review is considering whether special education programming and services are achieving their desired results and the impact of special education programming and services on children in the school system in Nova Scotia. Topics for discussion included specifics such as teacher education, transition planning for 18-21 year-olds, inclusionary practices, integrated services and programming support. Report expected Summer 2007.
- ✓ Helped fill the gap for needed funding to ensure Access to Community Education and Employment program continued. The program, operated by the Independent Living Resource Centre, helps young adults with special needs living in Metro with the transition from high school to independent living.

Commitment:

- Expand the number of International Baccalaureate sites to ensure students at every school board in the province have access to one of the world's most respected pre-university diploma programs.

Progress:

- ✓ With the addition of ten new schools, a total of 12 Nova Scotia high schools will be authorized to offer the program by September 2007. Budget 2007 invests \$862,000 to expand the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program to all school boards, including the conseil scolaire acadien

provincial, which will be offering IB in 2008. Nova Scotia is the only province or state to have launched the program in so many schools at one time.

Commitment:

- Continue to act upon the conclusions of the Black Learners Advisory Committee Report.

Progress:

- ✓ Invested an additional \$1.6 million in Budget 2007 to complete the implementation of the recommendations of the Black Learners Advisory Council (BLAC) Report.
- ✓ Injected \$1 million in Budget 2006 to help further efforts to address inequities in the education of African Nova Scotian students.

Commitment:

- Expand the Skills Nova Scotia Framework, working with the private sector and educators, to develop and implement a new 4R's strategy (retain, retrain, repatriate, recruit) to address the looming skills shortage in the province and region.

Progress:

- ✓ Consulted with a wide-range of stakeholders, industry, labour organizations and education and service providers to complete a review of the *Skills Nova Scotia Framework*. Input from these stakeholders has led to recommendations for the Framework which include a new operational structure, increased focus on stakeholder collaboration, productivity, barriers to training and employment, and integration of a *Four R Strategy* (Recruitment, Retention, Repatriation, and Retraining).
- ✓ Initiated *Opportunities Nova Scotia* to better connect employers and job seekers. Phase 1 consisted of a series of hiring fairs held in key regions of the province. The hiring fairs were held from March to May 2007 and were delivered in partnership with local regional development authorities, local municipalities, Jobboom.com, The People Bank and Education. Phase II will be launched in Fall 2007 and will consist of targeting Nova Scotians living and working in other jurisdictions in Canada. Events will be held in key centres such as Ottawa, Toronto, Calgary and Edmonton to raise awareness among expatriates of the many great job opportunities in Nova Scotia.
- ✓ Launched a dedicated information and communications job site: www.techportjobs.com in March 2007, linking recent graduates, local

professionals and expatriates with employment opportunities in Nova Scotia. The site, developed by the information technology alliance, in partnership with NSBI and the provincial government, is a user-friendly, confidential tool which is free to any provincial employer with information and communications technology job openings.

- ✓ Budget 2007 invested \$3.6 million in strengthening Nova Scotia's apprenticeship training system, making it accessible to more people.
- ✓ Dedicated an additional \$13.5 million in the Nova Scotia Community College system – an increase of 15.3 per cent. This includes \$4.84 million to create 591 more student seats across Nova Scotia, with a particular focus on the areas of skilled trades and information technology training.
- ✓ Investing \$1.4 million in Workplace Education programs to help business upgrade the skills of its workforce and to help specified groups and individuals enter or re-enter the workforce. This includes offering support to workers who have been displaced as a result of downsizing or closures and working with Sector Councils and Business Associations to assist them in recruitment and retention activities. Education is also initiating a new *Employer of Choice* initiative aimed at helping both private and public sector organizations recruit, retain, retrain and repatriate their workforce.
- ✓ Provide more than \$6.6 million in annual funding to help nearly 5,000 Nova Scotian adults improve their education levels through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL), better preparing adult Nova Scotians to enter the workforce or pursue additional education.
- ✓ Provide Nova Scotians with extensive and up-to-date information on career and post-secondary opportunities in the province through printed materials and on-line at www.novascotiacaareeroptions.ca.

Commitment:

- Ensure community welfare and student benefit are legislated criteria for school boards when they consider the future of schools with declining populations.

Progress:

- ✓ Held consultations in Fall 2006 to provide parents, students, school boards and communities an opportunity to have input into the review of the current school closure process. The School Closure Process Review Committee made seven recommendations in January 2007 - all accepted by the Education Minister.
- ✓ Introduced and passed changes to the Education Act regarding the school review process, giving communities a clear, predictable process that

ensures all voices and considerations are heard before a decision about the future of a school is made.

Commitment:

- Eliminate the need for not-for-profit groups and organizations to buy insurance when they use school buildings for recreational and community events.

Progress:

- Department reviewing options.

....Securing Safer Communities

Commitment:

- Over the next four years, providing funds to hire 250 new police officers for communities that commit to maintain current levels of policing, with new officer positions allocated to RCMP and municipal forces on a needs-based formula.

Progress:

- ✓ Justice, Nova Scotia's Police Chiefs and the RCMP met in Fall 2006 concerning distribution of additional officers - to be phased in over four years - to ensure they will have the greatest impact on community safety. Total budget for the new officers is \$65 million, with an on-going cost of \$25 million per year once all officers are in place.
- ✓ In November 2006, allocated the initial 109 officers - with all municipalities receiving at least one new officer by Spring 2008. Smaller municipalities will receive one or two officers, HRM will receive 36 and CBRM will receive 10.
- ✓ Established a Strategic Deployment Committee to plan for the allocation of the remaining officers. Priority issues when considering distribution of new officers include activities to address organized crime, street crime, child exploitation, illegal drugs and school safety.

Commitment:

- Establishing a Youth Attendance Centre that requires young law-breakers to participate in crime prevention programs.

Progress:

- ✓ A new Halifax Youth Attendance Centre opened February 2007. The \$1.1-million centre provides one-stop access to programming for youth under court-ordered community supervision in the HRM. Programs will include education, counselling, job training and addictions treatment. The centre is linked with a \$200,000 bail supervision program. Evaluating methods to expand the attendance centre and bail supervision programming outside Metro.

Commitment:

- Committing new resources to dedicated squads for child pornography and illegal drugs.

Progress:

- ✓ Additional police officers hired to address Internet -- and technology-

based offences through a \$330,000 Budget 2006-07 investment - critical in addressing child pornography.

- ✓ Passed legislation that will allow Nova Scotia to control the distribution of products used in the manufacturing and production of illicit drugs.
- ✓ Budget 2006-07 invested \$685,000 to law enforcement to improve co-ordination among the RCMP and municipal police. Improved links will enhance policing efforts against organized crime, as part of a \$6-million commitment to Criminal Intelligence Service Nova Scotia.

Commitment:

- Passing new laws against the production of illegal drugs and criminals profiting from their crimes.

Progress:

- ✓ Done. Passed Bill No. 17 - *Criminal Notoriety Act* - Fall 2006.

Commitment:

- Taking a hard stand against crack houses and other illegal activity through a new *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*.

Progress:

- ✓ Passed Bill 1 - *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* - Summer 2006.
- ✓ Appointed Fred Sanford - a former superintendent with Halifax Regional Police - to lead the province's new Public Safety Investigation Unit. Complaint line activated for citizens (1-877-35-SAFER).
- ✓ Invested \$540,000 to create a Public Safety Investigative Unit under the *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* - targeting criminal activities such as the illegal sale of drugs and alcohol, prostitution, and illegal gaming.
- ✓ Established the Minister's Task Force on Safer Streets and Communities. The 25-member committee held public meetings around the province in Spring 2007. Report was presented report to the Minister May 2007. The findings lay the foundation for the creation of a provincial crime prevention strategy.

Commitment:

- Working with MADD Canada to improve our performance compared to other jurisdictions in fighting drunk driving.

Progress:

- ✓ Announced changes to the Graduated Driver Licensing Program to strengthen the blood alcohol content restriction on new drivers and

- extend the term of the learners stage of the program.
- ✓ Passed legislation amending the Motor Vehicle Act which gives officials the authority to use the Ignition Interlock Program in the fight against drunk driving and related injuries and deaths on Nova Scotia roads. Earmarked \$722,000 in Budget 2007 to implement the first year of the ignition interlock program.
- ✓ Working with a variety of public and private organizations through the Road Safety Advisory Committee, and looking for more ways to reduce road fatalities and injuries.

Commitment:

- Taking all necessary steps to successfully implement Canada's first program of electronically monitoring offenders.

Progress:

- ✓ Increased supervision for offenders through a \$500,000 electronic supervision program that uses global positioning system (GPS) technology. A Canadian first - it allows Nova Scotia to more closely monitor offenders on house arrest. Another \$200,000 will help police monitor bail compliance and ensure more aggressive monitoring of offenders in the community.

Commitment:

- Establishing and funding a provincial program that will offer rewards for information leading to arrests and convictions in cases of unsolved crimes.

Progress:

- ✓ Launched the program in October 2006. Program offers cash rewards of up to \$50,000 for information leading to arrests and convictions of individuals responsible in unsolved crimes and for suspicious, long-term, missing persons cases. To date, nineteen cases have been announced as part of the rewards program. Details can be viewed on line at www.gov.ns.ca/just/divisions/polvs/rewards.

Commitment:

- Continuing to lobby the federal government to act on its stated priority of tackling crime, through tough amendments to the Criminal Code and Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Progress:

- ✓ In October 2006, Minister met with federal counterparts, calling for legislative action to improve the Youth Criminal Justice Act. The Minister

will continue to lobby the federal government to improve and strengthen the Act to better protect Nova Scotians and serve youth at risk. The federal government has brought forward legislation to strengthen penalties under the Criminal Code.

- ✓ Accepted all recommendations of the Nunn Commission Report, including all recommendations re: the federal act. The province has invested an initial \$3 million to begin implementation of a youth strategy, new family and youth services division, hiring more mental health professionals and two Crown attorneys specializing in youth crime.
- ✓ Named the Executive Director of the new Youth Strategy and Services Division April 2007.
- ✓ In Fall 2006, called on Federal counterparts to introduce stronger penalties for people who assault police and other peace officers.

...Building a New Nova Scotia

Commitment:

- Lower taxes for small business

Progress:

- ✓ Starting in April 1, 2006, the government increased the small business threshold for the lower corporate income tax rate to \$400,000.
- ✓ Eliminated the 3.5 per cent liquor licence levy effective January 2007, benefiting hundreds of small businesses in Nova Scotia's tourism and hospitality sector.
- ✓ Introduced the Digital Media Tax Credit.
- ✓ Working with the Canada Revenue Agency to develop a means of recognizing, for tax credit purposes, additional groups of medical professionals, such as naturopaths, whose services are part of a course of medical treatment.

Commitment:

- Match the federal government's tax credit to help workers offset the cost of work-related products, such as tools and uniforms.

Progress:

- ✓ The federal government's deduction for tools can be used to reduce provincial taxable income starting with tools acquired on or after May 2, 2006.

Commitment:

- End the large corporation tax for business by July 1, 2012.

Progress:

- ✓ For companies with taxable capital over \$10 million, the Large Corporations Tax rate was reduced from 0.275 per cent to 0.25 per cent on July 1, 2006. It will be reduced to 0.225 per cent on July 1, 2007.

Commitment:

- Expand the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI) to help businesses that deal with government succeed.

Progress:

- ✓ As part of the Better Regulation Initiative, Budget 2007 invested \$100,000 in BizPaL, an online service that makes it easier for business to find and apply for permits and licences by business sector.
- ✓ Environment and Labour, through the CCI, is implementing foundation

training for the department's inspectors and investigators to improve consistency in policies, procedures and practices.

- ✓ In April 2007, Ministers and officials from the four provinces, along with representatives from the private sector, met to discuss rule and regulation reform for small- and medium-sized business.
- ✓ Responded to recommendations of power engineers in Nova Scotia and made changes to the Power Engineer Regulations reflecting concerns raised. The new regulations developed through consultations between Environment and Labour and industry in 2006 took effect April 16, 2007.
- ✓ Improved access to new technologies and matched provincial regulation more closely with that of other provinces through new regulation. A pilot project to test the proposed regulations for the installation of on-site septic systems showed wait-times for septic approvals dropped from three weeks to one - which will save home builders time and money.
- ✓ Enhanced commitment to better regulation in Budget 2006-07 with \$400,000 to support second year activities of the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative, allowing for the development of regulatory training and better co-ordination of the province's 180 inspectors.
- ✓ Gave more regulatory flexibility without jeopardizing safety crane operators in Nova Scotia when changes to legislation took effect January 1st, 2007.
- ✓ As part of the Better Regulation Initiative, Service Nova Scotia launched *Service to Business* in October 2006 to make it simpler for Nova Scotia businesses to operate. The first stage included a new business services area at all Access Nova Scotia Centres, a new website and a toll-free information line.
- ✓ As part of the Better Regulation Initiative, departments across government are working to reduce the paperwork burden associated with regulatory requirements by 20 per cent by the year 2010.

Commitment:

- Based on the success of the current Credit Union Loan Guarantee Program, help small businesses access financing not presently offered by looking at new complementary programs that would be offered by credit unions and/or other private sector financial institutions.

Progress:

- ✓ Staff continue to work to identify gaps and potential solutions.

Commitment:

- Act on the recommendations of the Premier's Advisory Council on Innovation, particularly as they relate to commercialization and research and development.

Progress:

- ✓ A strategic framework is under development with Nova Scotia Economic Development around the provincial government approach to supporting private sector R&D and commercialization.
- ✓ Continuing to invest in the Nova Scotia Research and Innovation Trust with an \$8 million commitment for fiscal 2007-08.
- ✓ Exploring a strategic focus around linking the economy and the environment through new legislation. The proclamation of the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act recognized the emphasis stressed by the Council that a healthy environment contributes to a healthy economy and to our long-term prosperity.

Commitment:

- Ensure Nova Scotia's film tax credit continues to be competitive with other jurisdictions to maintain the province's position as a leader in Canadian film production.

Progress:

- ✓ As of July 1, 2007, films with more than 50 per cent production outside the Halifax Regional Municipality can receive the five per cent regional bonus on the entire value of the production, even the portions inside the HRM.
- ✓ Maintained position as the fourth largest production location in Canada.

Commitment:

- Extend the eligibility criteria of the film tax credit to include digital entertainment.

Progress

- ✓ Introduced a new Digital Media Tax Credit to support digital media producers and encourage them to hire Nova Scotia workers. The measure will offer companies a 35 per cent credit on eligible Nova Scotia expenditures.

Commitment:

- Provide more support for English as a Second Language (ESL) programming to match growing demands.

Progress:

- ✓ Provided an additional \$200,000 for English-language training for Primary-to-12 students.

Commitment:

- Provide additional funding to accelerate results of the Immigration Strategy.

Progress:

- ✓ Introduced a new immigration stream to assist Nova Scotia employers recruiting and wanting to retain international graduates with sought-after skills. The International Graduate Stream of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program is employer-driven and focuses on international graduates who have strong ties to Nova Scotia and intend to live, work and establish careers here. There is no program application fee.
- ✓ Added a Family Business Worker Stream to the Nova Scotia Nominee Program enabling local immigrant entrepreneurs to address labour needs by bringing in family members to the province who are qualified to do the work. There is no program application fee.
- ✓ Increased funding to the Office of Immigration in Budgets 2006 and 2007 to a total of \$3.728 million, of which \$1.8 million was allocated for settlement programming and enhanced language training.
- ✓ Partnered with employers experiencing skills shortages to strategically focus Nova Scotia Nominee Program recruitment efforts. To enhance those efforts, hiring two new nominee program officers to assist in recruitment and help respond to the growing number of immigrants interested in living and working in Nova Scotia.
- ✓ Supported the Business Advisory Service Program for Immigrant Entrepreneurs introduced by the Entrepreneurs' Forum. The mentoring program offers newcomers advice from experienced business people who can help them overcome business challenges. At no cost to the entrepreneurs, advisors will help immigrants develop their business plans so that they can start their businesses in Nova Scotia and develop networks within the business community, increase knowledge of the local business environment and of the resources available to them.
- ✓ Hosted a series of forums across the province with Nova Scotia business leaders to promote the hiring of immigrants, who can help address labour-

market shortages.

Commitment:

- As part of Nova Scotia's *Route to Prosperity Strategy*, create the province's largest single highway and road building program of the last years, which will result in 2,000 new kilometres of twinned, paved or repaved highways over the next four years.

Progress:

- ✓ Exceeded first year goal with 525 km of roads twinned, paved or repaved in the 2006 construction year.
- ✓ Increased capital budget in 2006-07 by almost \$39 million. Of the \$199.1 million capital budget for Transportation, approximately \$176.2 million is targeted to make improvements to roads, bridges, and highways.
- ✓ Projects announced, underway or completed include:
 - The twinning of a 15-km section of Highway 103 - between Exit 3 and 5;
 - Highway 101: from Exit 33 near Richmond Road for 10.3 km west to Exit 34, including the west on- and off-ramps at Exit 33 and all on- and off-ramps at Exit 34;
 - The \$20.6-million, 8.3 km Barrington Bypass;
 - Highway 103: from the Port Clyde River Bridge west for nine km to the new Barrington Bypass;
 - 11.9 km of eastbound lanes of Highway 125, Highway 105 near the bridge at St. Andrews Channel, and Groves point Road from the intersection of Highway 105 to Groves Point Provincial Park;
 - Indian Point Road from the intersection of Route 333 at Glen Haven for 4.5 km to the end of the road and including Sunset Drive;
 - \$32-million joint federal-provincial investment for further twinning of both Highways 104 and 125;
 - Route 354 from the intersection of Findley Road for about 7.7 km to the intersection of Route 215 in Noel;
 - Trunk 8 from the Pleasantfield sign north for 8.3 km to the intersection of Route 208 at South Brookfield; and
 - Route 354 from the intersection Findley Road for about 7.7 km to the intersection of Route 215 in Noel.

Commitment:

- Use existing provincial agencies and resources, such as the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission, to develop a transportation strategy specific to the needs of the people of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Progress:

- ✓ Developing a strategy for the area. Meetings with HRM continue re: transportation priorities.
- ✓ Completed two major regional projects in 2006-07: 15 km of twinning of Highway 103 from Exit 3 to Exit 5 (\$46 million) and the Highway 118 interchange at Dartmouth Crossing (\$19 million).

Commitment:

- Pursue a comprehensive, transportation infrastructure agreement – covering highways, air, rail and ports – with the federal government to establish Nova Scotia as Canada’s Atlantic Gateway.

Progress:

- ✓ Invested \$250,000 in the Atlantic Gateway Strategy in 2006 and dedicated \$1 million in 2007 to develop and advance the Atlantic Gateway.
- ✓ Premier hosted a symposium on the Atlantic Gateway in May 2007, with more than 300 leaders from the transportation, business and trade, public policy, and post-secondary sectors, as well as representatives from all levels of government in attendance. Expert panelists and speakers from across the country explored how to create partnerships, develop infrastructure and advocate policies to capitalize on gateway opportunities.
- ✓ Requested proposals to develop a gateway marketing strategy and action plan to create greater awareness of Nova Scotia’s international transportation gateway assets at home and abroad.
- ✓ Held *Nova Scotia Days* in Ottawa in Fall 2006 to help promote Nova Scotia’s business advantages and met with Prime Minister to promote the development of the province as the Atlantic Gateway.
- ✓ Met on issue of Atlantic Gateway with regional premiers in December 2006 to discuss the benefits for Atlantic Canada as a whole.
- ✓ Nova Scotia led the initiative with the other Atlantic Provinces to establish the Atlantic Gateway Federal/Provincial Officials Committee with representatives from the Atlantic Provinces, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Transport Canada. The mandate is to develop the Atlantic Gateway Strategy.
- ✓ Nova Scotia was invited in February 2007 to make a presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications on the Atlantic Gateway.

Commitment:

- ❑ Build 21st century infrastructure by working with the private sector and other levels of government to guarantee that all Nova Scotians, regardless of where they live in the province, have access to high-speed Internet service by 2010, in concert with the introduction of WiFi in the Halifax Region.

Progress:

- ✓ Announced in 2006 that by end of 2009, all Nova Scotians, no matter where they live, will have 100 percent coverage for Broadband Internet.
- ✓ Announced that up to \$10 million will be spent in 2007-08, in partnership with private sector service providers and federal partners, to deliver infrastructure to the first set of unserved areas in the province.
- ✓ Selected Tidnish and Port Howe in Fall 2006 for a pilot project to look at ways to bring high-speed Internet service to rural and remote areas of Nova Scotia, with an investment of \$430,000. The pilot, which began January 2007, will help develop a model to bring broadband service to all areas of Nova Scotia.
- ✓ Held public information sessions across the province to engage communities, municipal governments and regional development authorities in the initiative.
- ✓ The Broadband Services for Rural Nova Scotia Initiative is on track. As of May 31, 2007 there were 39 highly satisfied customers connected and, in the weeks following, the number of subscribers will climb to an expected 100-150 as new sections of the network come on-line.
- ✓ Close to completing the collection and mapping of detailed geographical, demographic, and supporting infrastructure (towers, backbones, etc.) information on the unserved areas.
- ✓ Proceeding, with the help of a \$2.6 million federal-provincial investment in February 2007, to expand broadband, high-speed Internet service to 45 communities in rural areas of HRM.

... Promoting Nova Scotia

Commitment:

- Over the next four years, dedicate more marketing dollars to promote Nova Scotia as a tourist destination experience to visitors here and abroad.

Progress:

- ✓ Government and industry launched a tourism plan in December 2006 addressing the realities of the current global tourism market and setting new directions to ensure Nova Scotia remains competitive. *New Realities, New Directions* is a multi-year tourism plan that incorporates a courtship strategy, a gateway strategy and a core experiences strategy to build Nova Scotia's tourism brand.
- ✓ Budget 2007 invests \$2.5 million more for tourism marketing and product development - consistent with the new tourism plan, *New Realities, New Directions*, developed with the industry through the Tourism Partnership Council.
- ✓ Held a tourism development workshop in April 2007 to help Nova Scotia communities make themselves more attractive to tourists.
- ✓ An example of direct tourism marketing involved, for the first time, the province participating in the Irish Fest in Milwaukee August 2006. Some 130,000 visitors to the Fest had an opportunity to experience Nova Scotia's unique Celtic culture first-hand. It is the largest festival of its kind in the world, providing the province with a venue to promote itself to those with Celtic roots or interests.

Commitment:

- Take all steps, in concert with the federal government, other provincial governments and the private sector, to counter the detrimental economic effects of new incoming United States travel rules.

Progress

- ✓ Included information and contact references in the 2006 and 2007 travel guides, on www.novascotia.com and through the Nova Scotia Check Ins Reservation and Information Service to ensure visitors are informed about the new passport law. Also shared information with industry members, and travel media so they can advise visitors appropriately.
- ✓ In addition, announced a new tourism plan which recognizes the decline in American visitors to Canada. The plan focuses marketing efforts on cities in the US, Canada, and Europe with direct air access to Nova Scotia, increases the province's emphasis on on-line marketing, and continues

- ✓ building the tourism brand with core experiences for today's travellers.
- ✓ To help restore the competitive advantage to Nova Scotia's tour and convention industry, introduced a provincial program which will mirror the Foreign Convention and Tour Incentive Program announced by the Federal Government in Spring 2007.

Commitment:

- ✓ Through Nova Scotia's new Heritage Strategy, deliver stable, predictable, increased funding to community museums.

Progress:

- ✓ Received the Voluntary Planning Task Force on Heritage - *Our Heritage Future: A Shared Responsibility* December 2006. Reviewed the recommendations within government and with key provincial heritage groups to identify priorities. The strategy is expected Fall 2007.
- ✓ Dedicating an additional \$1 million to help address critical infrastructure needs in the Nova Scotia Museum system and to further support community museums.
- ✓ Helping to create a world-class tourism and heritage site at the Joggins Fossil Cliffs, Cumberland County with nearly \$7 million in new federal and provincial capital investments. The investments will help build an interpretive centre to showcase one of the world's richest and most significant coal age fossil site that dates back 310 million years.

....Enhancing, Supporting, Protecting Our Natural Resources

Commitment:

- Hire new support officers for farmers within the new Department of Agriculture.

Progress:

- ✓ Agriculture is working to identify industry needs and to determine how best to deploy resources.

Commitment:

- Provide immediate short-term relief for struggling farm sectors, such as red meat producers, by implementing a one-year interest forgiveness of Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board payments.

Progress:

- ✓ In May 2006, the government approved an extension to the Ruminant Loan Interest Grant, providing an additional one year's interest grant on existing and new ruminant loans.

Commitment:

- In consultation with farmers, develop a comprehensive, long-term strategy for sustainable agricultural growth.

Progress:

- ✓ Budget 2007 directed assistance to help farmers become more competitive. This funding included several elements. The Strategic Infrastructure Investment Fund was kick-started this year with an initial investment of \$750,000, and will provide \$6 million over four years to projects supported by a strong business case and a good probability of generating a positive result. Up to \$6.2 million in transitional assistance is also available to the hog and ruminant sectors, contingent on a view to the long-term viability of an operation, transition to a new model or product, farm debt mediation, or a viable succession plan or exit strategy. In addition, \$2 million in income relief has been paid out to the non-supply managed sectors.
- ✓ A further \$500,000 is going towards helping pork producers. Of this, \$400,000 will go towards direct income support, while \$100,000 will be added to the Strategic Infrastructure Investment Fund for pork producers to access.

Commitment:

- Dedicate new funding to research and development, in concert with federal efforts, at facilities like the experimental farm in Nappan.

Progress:

- ✓ To enhance productivity and opportunities in the fishery sectors, Budget 2007 set out an additional \$50,000 for lobster research programs and \$175,000 for salmon research at the Margaree River Hatchery.
- ✓ The Atlantic Poultry Research Centre opened in May 2007 at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. The Centre will provide leading edge research capacity in poultry management, welfare, and processing.
- ✓ Agriculture contributed \$195,000 to the Atlantic BioVenture Centre at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College to promote bioeconomy development opportunities in the rural sector.
- ✓ Working with the federal government and other provinces, Nova Scotia contributed \$100,000 to the portable modular microfactory development project of the Atlantic BioVenture Centre at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. This project aims to enhance the sustainability of, and expand, rural agri-businesses.

Commitment:

- Establish a marketing program to encourage more Nova Scotians to purchase agricultural and fishery products made in Nova Scotia.

Progress:

- ✓ Working with a 'Buy Local' campaign to encourage Nova Scotians to buy locally-produced food. The strategy will promote the benefits of buying local, both to farm families and the economy overall. The committee, comprised of industry and government representatives, has been struck to advise the Agriculture Minister on buy local initiatives.
- ✓ The results of the Women's Institute Buy Local Challenge were released in January 2007. The survey was used to raise awareness of local products and provide information about consumer attitudes about foods produced in Nova Scotia.

Commitment:

- Review, consider and act on best aquaculture practices from jurisdictions that have built larger aquaculture industries.

Progress:

- ✓ Nova Scotia is working with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Maritimes)

and the Province of New Brunswick to harmonize the applications process for finfish aquaculture. This will cut red tape for aquaculture applications and for siting.

- ✓ The major aquaculture provinces in Canada (including Nova Scotia) have secured a mandate to negotiate an Aquaculture Framework Agreement with the federal government. Once the federal government receives a mandate to negotiate, Nova Scotia will embark on a process to significantly improve programming and governance for aquaculture renewal.

Commitment:

- Finalize a long-term strategy covering mining, forestry, parks and outdoor recreation and biodiversity, consistent with Nova Scotia's Green Plan.

Progress:

- ✓ Announced in May 2007 a three-year process to develop new strategies governing four key natural resource components: forests, minerals, parks and biodiversity. The process will begin with a year of public consultation, beginning in January 2008. Natural Resources and Voluntary Planning are preparing for the consultation process. Once the consultation process is complete, Voluntary Planning will report to an external, impartial panel charged with using this information in the development of the actual strategy.

Commitment:

- Expand the number of protected green spaces.

Progress:

- ✓ Further protected the Tobetic Wilderness Area through a comprehensive new management plan. The plan lays the groundwork for improved partnerships and stewardship to help protect the outstanding qualities of the Tobetic.
- ✓ Developed a comprehensive protected area planning process which will lead to the protection of 12 per cent of the province's land base. The first phase of this project has been initiated in collaboration with Natural Resources and the Colin Stewart Forest Forum (a forum consisting of major forest companies and environmental organizations).
- ✓ Introduced and passed new legislation in April 2007 - *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*. Objectives include:
 - implementing a policy preventing net loss of wetlands by 2009;
 - legally protecting 12 per cent of the province's land mass by 2015.

- ✓ Invested \$27 million in March 2007 to acquire highly significant conservation lands from Bowater Mersey - the largest acquisition of private land for provincial conservation purposes in the province's history. This land includes old growth and unique forests, habitat for rare and endangered species, and important recreation, scenic and cultural resources.
- ✓ A million dollar investment is being directed to acquire critical lands for protection including four in-holdings in Tobeatic Wilderness Areas, and two in the Tangier Grand Lake Wilderness Area.

Commitment:

- Designate five new nature reserves.

Progress:

- ✓ In July 2006, announced that Nova Scotia's old-growth forests, wood turtles, and several species of rare plants are being protected by the designation of four new nature reserves, the expansion of a fifth, and an addition to a wilderness area. The four new reserves cover 884 hectares in Inverness, Victoria and Guysborough counties, and in Halifax Regional Municipality. Sixteen hectares have been added to Tusket River Nature Reserve in Yarmouth County. Eighty hectares have been added to Cloud Lake Wilderness Area in Annapolis County. Close to 12,000 hectares of wilderness area and nature reserve lands have been designated since October 2004. The latest nature reserve designations total 900 hectares -- about double the size of McNab's Island.
- ✓ Designated a new nature reserve to protect a rare ecosystem and plant species on Crown lands in the Blandford Game Sanctuary in Lunenburg County May 2007. The 320 hectares of Crown land, designated the Blandford Nature Reserve, is the province's 16th nature reserve.

Commitment:

- Acquire more environmentally-significant coastal land, as was done with Cape Split.

Progress:

- ✓ Announced that the province will protect and preserve an additional 699 hectares of prime Nova Scotia property for recreational opportunities, coastal access, inland waterways, and wildlife habitat in 2007. Islands in Mahone Bay, St. Margaret's Bay, and North Harbour, and parcels of land in Guysborough and Queens Counties are among the properties being added to the province's Crown lands. These include: Coveys and

Backman Islands (61 hectares added), Little Indian Island (or Micou's Island)(22 hectares added), Sheep Island (added 7.3 hectares), 12 hectares at McGowan's Lake; and George Eddy Company Limited lands (442 hectares located on the St. Mary's River).

- ✓ Added another 147 hectares adjacent to Cape Split land purchased in 2002. The newest land was purchased for a little over \$1 million.
- ✓ Also purchased 17 hectares on Inner Sambro Island, Halifax Co., to help conserve coastal areas of the province.
- ✓ Extended the lands and legacies conservation partnership agreement between the province and Nova Scotia Nature Trust for three more years. The partnership, which began in 2004, has already resulted in Nova Scotia acquiring high priority conservation lands through Nature Trust efforts. The Trust has also protected critical areas on private lands and raised public awareness through matching funds raised by community support.
- ✓ The Brothers Islands, near Lower West Pubnico and Grassy Island have been designated wildlife management areas, as recommended by a review of provincial wildlife management areas.

Commitment:

- Dedicate new resources to developing a comprehensive province-wide trail system connecting many of our communities – resulting in 500 kilometres of new trail over the next four years.

Progress:

- ✓ In progress. An interdepartmental committee is in place and a plan has been developed. Primary funding sources will include the \$50 million dedicated to enhance recreational facilities and the Tourism Development Investment Program. Recent Crown land purchases will also assist with the development.
- ✓ Off-highway vehicle users will soon have access to new trails and riding areas through \$700,000 worth of grants available through the off-highway vehicle infrastructure fund. The off-highway vehicle infrastructure fund is used to support OHV trail development across the province.

Commitment:

- Adopt amendments to strengthen the Environment Act.

Progress:

- ✓ Passed Amendments to the Environment Act - Bill 113 - in Fall 2006. Enhancements include the rejuvenation of the Environmental Trust Fund, a commitment to review the act every five years - down from the previous

seven - and the establishment of a new Round Table on Environmental Sustainability.

Commitment:

- Commence formal consultations with communities and environmental leaders to update and enhance Nova Scotia's Green Plan.

Progress:

- ✓ Consultations will be carried out as the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* is implemented.

Commitment:

- Work with the federal government to increase support to encourage industry compliance with lower emissions from sulphur dioxide, mercury and nitrogen oxide.

Progress:

- ✓ Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment adopted a standard for 2010 that will require utilities to capture a minimum of 60 per cent of the mercury emitted by coal-fired power plants.
- ✓ The *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* established air quality targets for Nova Scotia:
 - Nitrogen oxide emissions will be reduced by 20% by 2009, relative to the year 2000.
 - Sulphur dioxide emissions will be reduced by 50% by 2010, from sources existing in 2001.
 - Mercury emissions will be reduced by 70% by 2010, relative to pre-2001 levels.
 - The Province will adopt emissions standards for greenhouse gases and air pollutants from new motor vehicles.
 - The Province will meet the Canada Wide Standard established by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment for airborne fine-particulate matter by 2010.
 - The Province will meet the Canada Wide Standard established by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment for ground-level ozone by 2010.
- ✓ Working with the Federal government on the implementation of its clean air regulatory agenda to reduce emissions.
- ✓ Environment and Labour is working closely with Nova Scotia Power Inc. on its air quality program, which tackles broader goals such as reductions in sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and mercury. NSPI's decision in

October 2006 to spend \$45 million improving its Trenton generating plant with emission controls will reduce particulate emissions.

....Enhancing Our Diversity, Culture and Heritage

Commitment:

- Continue to take action, in concert with the Federal government, to ensure First Nations treaty rights are respected in Nova Scotia and to close the gap between the quality of life experienced by the Mi'kmaq and other Nova Scotians.

Progress:

- ✓ With the signing of the Framework Agreement in February 2007, the Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotia and the Federal government are now beginning substantive negotiations on the resolution of Aboriginal and Treaty rights and Mi'kmaq governance. This agreement sets out the process and subjects to be discussed, along with general time frames for resolution of these issues. This process will also include opportunities for Nova Scotians and interested organizations to stay informed and provide input.
- ✓ Province invested an additional \$200,000 in the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum to support the creation of a Fund for Social and Economic Change. This fund, with a matching contribution from the Federal government, and managed by all three parties will support projects/initiatives that close the gap between the quality of life experienced by the Mi'kmaq and other Nova Scotians.
- ✓ The province is supporting the vision of the Mi'kmaq to develop a world-class cultural facility in Debert that will celebrate the history and culture of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia and protect some of the most significant archaeological sites in North America. This collaboration will also support Colchester County's vision of local ownership of the Debert Air Industrial Park.

Commitment:

- Establish satellite offices for the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs, starting in Cape Breton and continuing in southwestern Nova Scotia, central Nova Scotia and the Valley.

Progress:

- ✓ Opened Cape Breton satellite office April 2007, consisting of a community development officer, program administration officer and secretary. Cape Breton was chosen for the first regional office because of its distance from the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs headquarters.

Commitment:

- Through the Office of Acadian Affairs, expand the provincial government's in-house capacity to provide French-language services to ensure the criteria of the French-language Services Act is met.

Progress:

- ✓ New regulations to the Provincial French-language Services Act describe the measures government departments, agencies and offices must take to improve services delivered in French by government. The regulations indicate the departments, agencies and offices which will prepare an annual French-language services plan. Provided a progress report April 2007 outlining a number of new publications, on-line resources in French, as well as other advances.
- ✓ Budget 2007 included \$688,000 to expand upon progress made in providing French-language services over the past year.
- ✓ Offered French-language training to a number of public servants across various regions in Nova Scotia.

Commitment:

- Create the Office of Gaelic Affairs, with its mandate to be determined through consultation with the Gaelic community.

Progress:

- ✓ Done. Established an Office of Gaelic Affairs in Antigonish to develop and promote Gaelic language and culture in the province. The mission is to work with the Gaelic and other communities and to offer advice and support to departments, agencies and Crown corporations to develop policies and services that reflect the needs of the Gaelic community.
- ✓ Premier created the first Ministry for Gaelic Initiatives in the province in 2006.
- ✓ Minister met with his Scottish counterpart in Fall 2006 to focus on the challenges and successes of other Gaelic-speaking regions.
- ✓ Celebrated Gaelic Awareness Month May 2007 and announced the launch of a new educational brochure and a promotional poster to raise awareness for government employees and the public.

Commitment:

- In keeping with the recommendation of the Canada/Nova Scotia Volunteerism Initiative Network, create volunteer resource centres to help volunteers with education and training and to identify other options to make insurance more affordable and accessible for volunteers.

Progress:

- ✓ In progress - provided \$130,000 to support priorities from the *Talking with Volunteers* Report, including addressing volunteer liability and insurance issues through an affordable and accessible insurance program, and developing regional and virtual volunteer resource centres.
- ✓ Established a Volunteerism Inter-departmental Co-ordinating Committee, with representation from various government departments. The committee will continue to grow and will include membership from most government departments--with the overall goal of ensuring the needs and concerns of the 250,000 volunteers in this province are addressed.