



Nova Scotia's
Workforce
Strategy

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Get Ready

Nova Scotia is facing a time of change and opportunity. The great opportunity offered by winning the \$25 billion shipbuilding contract, and the difficult challenges facing some sectors of the economy, carry a common message.

Get ready.

Nova Scotia's economic stability is tied to our ability to compete and respond to changes in the global market. That ability requires a vibrant and adaptable workforce—a workforce strong in numbers and in skills.

This strategy will build that workforce.

The Workforce Strategy fulfills a priority of the *jobsHere* strategy. *jobsHere* lays out a coherent, cohesive, and attainable strategy to build a strong, vibrant, globally competitive economy in Nova Scotia.

jobsHere focuses on three priority areas and highlights actions the government will take to promote long-term sustainable economic growth and good job opportunities for Nova Scotians. Those priorities are

- 1. learning the right skills for good jobs**
- 2. growing the economy through innovation**
- 3. helping businesses be more competitive globally**

The need for a provincial workforce strategy is increasingly important because Nova Scotia faces a people challenge. The demographic shift to an older population, at the same time fewer young Nova Scotians are entering the workforce, is now a reality.

Over the next 10 years, Nova Scotia's working-age population (18–64 years) will decline by 47,000 people. At the same time, most of the jobs—and certainly higher-value jobs—will be attained by people with post-secondary education and high skill levels. But there won't be enough people with those qualifications to meet the demand, so some jobs will go unfilled, which presents a challenge for our employers.

In addition, Nova Scotia has one of the lowest levels of labour market participation in Canada. That means, compared to most provinces, we have a higher proportion of people who are not in the workforce, for a whole host of reasons.

The challenge before us is jobs without people and people without jobs. Nova Scotia's Workforce Strategy will help us meet this challenge.

The role of the province is to work with partners across the economic spectrum to do the following:

- *Encourage and support learning and skills development in workplaces throughout Nova Scotia.*
- *Improve, expand, and strengthen career development initiatives that make it easier for young people and those looking for work to find good jobs and build a career here in Nova Scotia.*
- *Enhance and increase opportunities for success in the workplace for all Nova Scotians, paying particular attention to new immigrants, income-assistance recipients, and groups that have been traditionally under-represented in our workplaces.*

On the pages that follow, the government lays out how we will support Nova Scotia's workforce to develop the right skills for good jobs. Developing our workforce is necessary to equip men and women, young and not-so-young, working, looking for work, and preparing for work, with the right skills and tools to succeed and prosper—for themselves, their families, and their communities.

To meet the challenges and prepare for the opportunities ahead, we must change how we work and how we get ready to work. For government, that means fundamental change in how to support people as they prepare to enter or re-enter the workforce.

The effort will reach into public schools and post-secondary institutions, and will support professional accreditation, trades certification, and training for managers and employees. It requires collaboration and partnerships among government, business, industry, unions, sector and trade associations, and educators. Most of all, it requires the understanding and participation of Nova Scotians.

Nova Scotia's employers need to plan and implement effective human resource strategies to find and retain the workers they need, and help those workers keep their skills up to date. For businesses to remain competitive and productive, their employees will need to learn on the job in their own workplaces—they cannot always leave their workplace to learn.

Investment in workers' skills makes good economic sense. Having the right people with the right skills will enable employers to adapt to new technologies, improve competitiveness, and capitalize on opportunities. According to Statistics Canada,

investment in education and skills training is three times as important to economic growth as investment in physical capital. A recent World Bank study (Almeida, 2006), found that, on average, the return was 24% for those enterprises providing training to their workers and -7% for those not providing training.

Over 60% of Nova Scotians do not take part in job-related training and education. As well, training tends to be short in duration, and not always given to workers who need it the most. This assessment recently received support from the Conference Board of Canada: "basic training skills continue to sit at the bottom of the training priorities, accounting for only 2.2% of training investments in 2004." (Conference Board, 2005b) Today, almost 40 per cent of Nova Scotians, including those already employed, lack the essential skills needed to work in a knowledge-based economy. That means they cannot compete for good jobs, and struggle to respond to changing job requirements in their current work.

For workers and those looking for work, a commitment to education and continuous skill development will offer the adaptability and productivity needed for personal success. It will also enable Nova Scotians to contribute more effectively to the province's economic and social progress.

This strategy sets out priority actions in three areas:

- **supporting learning and skills development in the workplace**
- **helping Nova Scotians connect with good jobs**
- **growing our workforce, in numbers and in skills**

It is about helping Nova Scotians get ready and seize opportunities for employment success.



Support Learning and Skills Development in the Workplace

Nova Scotians are eager and ready to learn new skills when those skills will lead to the good jobs they need to support themselves, their families, and their communities.

Education, training, and skills development point the way to good jobs for young Nova Scotians entering the workforce. Over the next five years, six of ten job openings will require some form of post-secondary education—college, university, or apprenticeship training.

Just as importantly, for those already in the workforce, new skills and upgrading are the way to secure long-term employment and advancement. Higher skill levels and recognized employee credentials are increasingly required to compete in the global marketplace.

While the workplace remains the primary location for working adults to learn and upgrade their skills, Nova Scotian businesses and employers historically under-invest in training and skills development. Given that success in today's economy demands knowledge and innovation, employers need to support their workers in ongoing training and development. Industry organizations must also keep pace with evolving human resource needs in their various sectors.

To encourage productive and globally competitive workplaces, Nova Scotia's Workforce Strategy focuses significant resources on our workers and their employers.

Priority Actions:

jobsHere Investments in Training

The province will offer financial incentives to encourage businesses and employers to invest in employee skill development and training.

As part of the Productivity Investment Program announced in jobsHere, the new Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive makes funding available to businesses that have solid plans to improve their productivity, innovation, and competitive position through workplace training. This incentive can be used to advance the skills of employees, managers, and business owners; provide training that leads to certification; and help workers adapt to new processes, equipment, and technologies.

Workplace Education Programs to Increase Essential Skills

The government will support employers in developing the essential skills of their workers through increased funding to the Workplace Education initiative. This program offers customized training in the workplace so more Nova Scotians can improve the skills required to be more effective in their current roles, evolve with their jobs, and be more adaptable to changes in the workplace.

Mobile computer labs will be made available to provide workers with digital literacy training. The Workplace Education initiative will also be expanded to support the non-profit and voluntary sector.

Human Resources (HR) Supports for Employers

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are often challenged by a lack of support in key areas of human resource development.

An online portal for employer human resources information will help SMEs by offering useful HR tools through Nova Scotia's extensive broadband Internet service. The HR toolkit will help employers recruit and retain workers, develop business skills, and offer safe, welcoming workplaces to employees.

The province is establishing an online learning network, giving employers and workers free access to online courses covering a variety of business and professional development topics that promote productivity and business success. Courses will include business skills, project management training, and continuous improvement techniques, among others.

Welcoming Diversity in the Workplace

Too many of Nova Scotia's workplaces are not representative of our province's diverse population. Diversity in the workplace not only offers a broader and deeper wealth of experience for employers, it is an important factor in broadening the labour pool for Nova Scotia. In order to attain the benefits offered by a workforce diverse in culture, age, gender, ethnicity, and other qualities, the government will support employers in creating workplaces that welcome and embrace immigrants and Nova Scotians traditionally under-represented in the workforce. This cultural shift will open doors and provide opportunities for individuals who experience barriers to employment.

A Welcoming Workplaces initiative will foster diversity by encouraging employers to adopt more inclusive HR practices that result in more welcoming environments.

Support for Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Employers

Organizations in the non-profit and voluntary sector make a vital contribution to our communities and to the lives of Nova Scotians. This sector plays an important role in supporting healthy and vibrant communities across Nova Scotia through the many programs and services they deliver. Staff working in the non-profit and voluntary sector need access to skill development and management development tools.

Working with the sector, we will continue to advance training and development opportunities, including the following:

- *a pilot program for HR management standards, to strengthen HR management practices in small to medium-sized non-profit and voluntary sector organizations*
- *training to support social enterprise development of non-profit organizations*
- *support for organizational development and enhanced networking across the sector*

Increased Co-op and Internship Opportunities

Today's employers often want to hire individuals with work experience. Offering meaningful work experiences to students and young graduates is a way to help open doors to that all-important first full-time job. More opportunities are needed for high school and post-secondary students to participate in co-operative education programs that put them on the job with businesses across the province. In addition, young Nova Scotians, while they are still in school, need to learn more about the work world that awaits them.

To broaden access to work experiences, the province will invest in the Strategic Cooperative Education Incentive and create a new Graduate Internship Program. The province will also expand career-oriented courses in public schools. Together, these programs will provide important workplace skill building experiences for young people and new graduates.

As in many other jurisdictions, the Nova Scotia government faces an aging population. With a large number of retirements on the horizon, the recruitment of youth into the public sector grows increasingly important. The Public Service Commission (PSC) will increase youth employment opportunities in the provincial civil service by creating entry-level employment positions.

Nova Scotia Sector Council Program

Sector councils and other industry-led organizations have an important role in workforce development—a role that needs to be encouraged.

A strategic investment of up to \$2 million annually over each of the next three years will support sector councils and build capacity for industry-led human resource development. Organizations with a mandate to support human resource development in their industries will be eligible for stable funding for this period, allowing them to focus on key activities to plan for and build the human resource requirements specific to their industry needs.

Sector councils and similar organizations are also eligible to apply for funding under the Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive to support productivity-enhancing training for their members.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a pathway to a career in the skilled trades. Apprentices learn on the job, alongside experienced journeypersons, supplemented by technical training in their trade.

The economic opportunities for Nova Scotia mean that employers will need skilled tradespeople in high numbers.

To get ready for these opportunities, the province will undertake a comprehensive review of the apprenticeship system, consult with stakeholders, and develop an Apprenticeship System Strategic Plan. An investment of \$2.5 million to improve and expand the apprenticeship system will do the following:

- **Support additional technical training.** *This support will be directed to trades where demand has increased or is anticipated to increase. For example, the shipbuilding contract won by the Irving Shipyard will result in significant demand for a range of skilled tradespeople, such as welders, pipe fitters, and machinists.*
- **Enhance existing curriculum and develop new curriculum.** *In order to meet training requirements of apprentices in ever-changing and more technical work environments, apprenticeship curriculum will be expanded and updated, and new investments will be made to update training equipment.*

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- **Support journeypersons to become better managers and business operators.** *A business skills development program designed to meet the unique needs of skilled tradespersons will be developed and implemented.*

 - **Continue to support youth apprenticeship initiatives.** *The province will encourage young people to consider career opportunities in skilled trades through a targeted marketing program and enhanced skilled trade experiential learning opportunities for young workers, particularly those from under-represented groups.*

 - **Continue to support targeted initiatives for women in the trades.** *Women are still under-represented in skilled trades. The province will continue its efforts to support women seeking a career in the trades through initiatives such as Techsploration and Women Unlimited.*



Help Nova Scotians Connect with Good Jobs

Career training and education in Nova Scotia has often focused on traditional work and the jobs that are available today. We still need to train for the jobs of today, but with a commitment to the future. Technology is advancing at breakneck speed, bringing radical shifts in the tools we use and the way we work. With a focus on the future, the province is launching a new, comprehensive online career resource centre—*careers.novascotia.ca*—to help shape decisions and deliver timely information for training, education, and career choices.

Nova Scotians need to know where the good jobs are, or will be in the future, and how to prepare for them. Careers Nova Scotia—a comprehensive workforce development network—will strengthen career planning supports to help workers find jobs, and help employers find workers. Young people, parents, job-seekers, and employers will all benefit from Careers Nova Scotia’s coordinated approach to labour market information, a revitalized job opportunity website, and improved career development resources for individuals and employers.

Priority Actions:

Careers Nova Scotia Centres

Whether the search is online or in person, the government will ensure Nova Scotians have access to quality information to aid their educational, training, and career planning. Using existing career resource centres, funded by Employment Nova Scotia, a province-wide network of commonly branded centres will provide on-the-ground support for career planners, job seekers, and employers throughout Nova Scotia. Staff of Careers Nova Scotia Centres will be accredited professionals who will have access to the best available labour market information. Employment Nova Scotia will work with existing career resource centres to determine how these credentials will be met.

Careers Nova Scotia Centres will help people make informed decisions and take concrete actions about education, jobs, and careers.

careers.novascotia.ca

This new one-stop shop for Nova Scotia career information will support individuals and employers, and will be linked to Nova Scotia’s new *business.novascotia.ca* website. The *careers.novascotia.ca* site will be an easy-to-navigate web resource, providing information on current and projected job opportunities in Nova Scotia, up-to-date labour market information, interactive career planning and job search tools, and links to career-specific education and training options right here in Nova Scotia.

Together, the Careers Nova Scotia Centres and *careers.novascotia.ca* will improve access and coordinate everything related to career development and job searching in Nova Scotia for young people, parents, teachers, career counselors, job seekers, and employers.

Parents as Career Coaches

Most working Nova Scotians entered a very different work world than the one their children now face. Young Nova Scotians continue to look to parents and community leaders for help, advice, and direction in plotting their future. To help equip parents and other leaders with the tools and information they need to make good career decisions, the province will invest an additional \$50,000 to renew the Parents as Career Coaches program and expand its reach into more junior and senior high schools across Nova Scotia.

Career Development Focus in Public Schools

Now more than ever, education has an important role in preparing young people for all aspects of their lives, especially the workplace.

To help young Nova Scotians learn about education, training, and career options that are available in the province, the government will update and improve career development supports in high schools. These are some of the specific actions:

- *Establish career planning and job research areas in all high schools to provide career planning environments and up-to-date labour market information.*
- *Continue support of the successful Options and Opportunities program to provide high school students with hands-on job-related learning opportunities. Enrolment will be increased in the 48 high schools currently offering the program, and schools wishing to offer the program will be supported.*
- *Introduce an Opportunities Academy in at least one junior high school, as a pilot, to support early career development planning and core skills development.*
- *Strengthen entrepreneurship in the curriculum and incorporate entrepreneurship learning across a range of courses.*
- *Ensure multimedia learning content is accessible through downloading and streaming in high schools.*

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- *Expand career-oriented courses in public schools.*
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- *Ensure career and co-op courses are supported by blended hands-on and virtual learning opportunities.*
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- *Encourage young people to consider career opportunities in skilled trades through a targeted marketing program and enhanced experiential learning opportunities in skilled trades.*

Sector Awareness Campaigns Linked to Career Opportunities

In this age of information overload, sometimes a sharp, targeted message delivered across the media spectrum is needed in order to attract broad attention.

Working with industry sectors, government will improve awareness and market emerging opportunities, like those in shipbuilding and related sectors. The recent Ships Start Here campaign is an example of how combined efforts raised awareness of Nova Scotia's talents in the shipbuilding sector.



Grow the Workforce in Numbers and Skills

With a shrinking workforce, Nova Scotia's economic health and social progress will be directly tied to the knowledge, skills, and productivity of our current workforce. In addition, to meet the workforce demand, the province must add more skilled workers.

Initiatives specifically targeted to women, older workers, new graduates, and traditionally under-represented groups in Nova Scotia's workforce will help meet the coming demand. The province, together with businesses, educational institutions, and communities, must also enhance our ability to attract and retain both workers and students from outside our borders.

The government will work with industry and regulated professions to improve labour mobility, particularly in high-demand sectors, such as health and the skilled trades. Attracting new workers and developing talent that is already here will help close the gap between available jobs and people ready to fill them.

Priority Actions

Nova Scotia's Immigration Strategy: *Welcome Home to Nova Scotia*

One way to increase our skilled workforce is to welcome new immigrants to the province.

The government will continue to aggressively implement the province's immigration strategy, aimed at attracting 7,200 newcomers to Nova Scotia annually by 2020.

While the provincial Nominee Program is the most direct way for us to increase immigration, newcomers can also arrive in Nova Scotia through federal pathways. By being creative and strategic, the province is also promoting federal pathways to potential immigrants.

A total of \$4.9 million has been allocated for new settlement funding. New English and French-language immigration websites have been launched. The government will soon launch NS Start, a pre- and post-arrival provincial resource administered in partnership with Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS), Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE), and the Nova Scotia Association of Regional Development Authorities (NSARDA). NS Start will help Nova Scotia to welcome and retain more skilled workers. Protections for foreign workers in Nova Scotia are also being improved.

Programs Targeted to Specific Groups

Many Nova Scotians have been under-represented in the workforce or have encountered barriers that have limited their full participation in the labour market. These groups include people with disabilities, aboriginal people, African Nova Scotians, immigrants, income-assistance recipients, older workers, women in non-traditional fields, and Acadians. Targeting employment and training programs for these groups will help improve skills and access to employment.

These are some of the initiatives:

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- **Link job seekers with employers**, using specifically designed “training for work” models, such as One Journey Work & Learn, Skills Up!, Women Unlimited, and Link Continuing Care Assistants programs.
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- **Reach youth and adults through targeted learning and employment programs** for African Nova Scotian and Aboriginal communities, including adult learning supported by the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning.
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- **Create one system of employment supports for Nova Scotia**, so that income-assistance clients are provided with early supports to move to employment. This will involve actively seeking out the advice and guidance of representatives from traditionally under-represented or barriered groups, communities, unions, sector associations, education, training providers, and employers, and then integrating those perspectives into government programming.
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- **Support diversity in the civil service.** The Nova Scotia Public Service Commission (PSC) continues to value diversity and promotes diversity in its employment attraction and retention initiatives. The PSC will work with partners, such as the Diversity Round Table and Employability Tables, to update employment practices, remove barriers, and increase diversity in the civil service.

Expansion of Nova Scotia's School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) and Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS)

Nova Scotians who want to go back to school to get a high school education need to know where the opportunities are.

To maximize the jobsHere commitment of an additional \$1 million to the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, government will increase awareness of NSSAL and promote the school as a skills and career-building opportunity. Adults 19 years and older can access this unique, tuition-free high school and obtain a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) accreditation at a number of schools and campuses throughout the province.

The Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS) will continue its expansion to provide access to more online courses toward a high school diploma. Within the next three years there will be enough courses online for individuals to work toward a high school graduation diploma in a supportive NSVS learning environment.

Recognition of Prior Learning and Credentials

As globalization, demographic shifts, and competition for skilled workers increase, labour will become increasingly mobile. To attract and retain workers in Nova Scotia, it will be vital to have good systems in place to assess and recognize workers' credentials and previous experience, as well as their skills, knowledge, and abilities.

The government has a number of initiatives underway to ensure Nova Scotia is well placed in the global competition for talent. Some of these initiatives aim to do the following:

Support the integration of immigrants with international qualifications into their profession or trade. The government is working at national and provincial levels—with regulatory authorities, professional organizations, unions, and other governments—to build a timely and fair process to assess and recognize valid credentials, competencies, and international work experience.

Recognize informal and formal prior learning. The province is developing tools to help employers assess workers' skills, knowledge, and abilities, and to offer bridging programs that build on workers' prior knowledge instead of requiring them to repeat training and certification. The province will work to raise awareness so that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) practices are applied in more Nova Scotia workplaces.

The Nova Scotia Public Service Commission (PSC) is also leading a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) project to update hiring models in the civil service. The pilot will include more inclusive job advertisements and assessment tools to recognize workers' skills, knowledge, and abilities, however acquired. This pilot will enable the province to attract more applicants, and will improve civil service opportunities for youth, older workers, and immigrants. The assessment tools and methodology can also be adapted by employers in the private and non-profit sectors.

Rebates for New Graduates and Their Employers

The province will use a variety of incentives to retain newly graduated talent. For example, Nova Scotia Business Inc. will use payroll rebates as incentives for employers to hire talented new graduates. This is part of its work to help existing businesses grow in Nova Scotia and to attract new businesses to the province.

In addition, the province will continue to offer the Graduate Retention Rebate to university and college graduates who stay and work in Nova Scotia. For those eligible, the rebate reduces income taxes for up to six years following graduation.





Moving Forward: Be Ready

At its core, Nova Scotia's Workforce Strategy comes down to individuals—the choices that are available to them and the choices they make. Government's job is to provide Nova Scotians with career development information, public education and training, and workforce development programs, in partnership with industry and business.

Significant economic opportunities are on the horizon and Nova Scotians will be well positioned to take advantage of them. The government will continue to seek and implement initiatives that help Nova Scotians maximize their employment and earning potential so they can support themselves, their families, and communities.

The government will also continue to link investments in our workforce with the economic priorities of the province. Working across government and with partners outside government, efforts will be aimed at growth in strategic sectors, including aerospace and defence, information and communications technology (ICT), and oceans technology.

The seeds of economic growth are planted by individual initiative. The province needs and will continue to support self-employment and entrepreneurship as a career choice. The government also recognizes the vital role of other economic sectors, such as tourism and traditional resource-based industries, where entrepreneurship, productivity, and innovation are occurring.

Government plays another role in the economy—as a major employer in its own right, as well as a consumer of goods and services. The government will support skills development and diversity in the public service and will expand government procurement opportunities to employers with preferred human resources practices.

The provincial government and its agencies will work together to implement the priority actions in this strategy, along with those in jobsHere. Nova Scotians will be ready with the skills and education they need for sustainable prosperity. Businesses will be strengthened by a rich diversity of skilled workers—each contributing ideas, creativity, and knowledge that foster innovation, productivity, and business success.

The strategy promotes an “evergreen” approach to workforce development. While progress will be measured on a short- and long-term basis, it will be important for the strategy to adapt and evolve to changes in the economy and labour force.

Nova Scotia's Workforce Strategy will help Nova Scotians fully realize the opportunities before them. Individually and together, Nova Scotians can create the future.



Workforce Strategy Initiatives and Programs

Information on all of these programs can be found by accessing www.careers.novascotia.ca

Apprenticeship Nova Scotia
Building Futures for Youth
Business.novascotia.ca
Careers.novascotia.ca
Careers Nova Scotia Centres
Co-operative Education
Employer Payroll Rebate for hiring new graduates
Employment Nova Scotia (Targeted Wage Subsidy, Skills Development, Self Employment, Careers Nova Scotia Centres)
Graduate Retention Rebate
Immigration Strategy
Job Bank
Link Continuing Care Assistants
Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL)
Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS)
One Journey Work and Learn
Options & Opportunities (O2)
Parents as Career Coaches
Post-Secondary Disability Services
Recognition of Prior Learning
ShipsStartHere.ca
Skills Up!
Strategic Cooperative Education Incentive
Student Assistance
Student Employment Program
Students in Business
Targeted Initiative for Older Workers
Techsploration
Voluntary Sector Professional Improvement Initiative
Welcoming Workplaces Initiative
Women Unlimited
Workit – Youth Apprenticeship Initiative
Workplace Education Initiative
Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI)

Workforce Strategy Action Plan

Support learning and skills development in the workplace	Underway	New
jobsHere investments in training – Workplace Innovation and Productivity Skills Incentive (WIPSI)	✓	
Workplace education programs to increase essential skills	✓	
Human resources (HR) supports for employers		✓
Welcoming diversity in the workplace		✓
Support for non-profit and voluntary sector employers	✓	
Increased co-op and internship opportunities	✓	
Nova Scotia sector council program		✓
Apprenticeship		✓
Help Nova Scotians connect with good jobs		
Careers Nova Scotia Centres		✓
Careers.novascotia.ca		✓
Expand Parents as Career Coaches Program		✓
Expand career development focus in public schools		✓
Sector awareness campaigns linked to career opportunities		✓
Grow the workforce in numbers and skills		
Nova Scotia's immigration strategy: Welcome Home to Nova Scotia	✓	
Programs targeted to specific groups		✓
Expansion of Nova Scotia's School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) and Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS)		✓
Recognition of prior learning and credentials		✓
Payroll rebates for hiring new graduates	✓	
Graduate Retention Rebate	✓	

