



Our plan to make life more **affordable** and **equitable** for **Nova Scotians**

We can only achieve a strong economic recovery
when all Nova Scotians have the chance to succeed.

Creating an economy where
business can grow and hire

Making life more
affordable and equitable

The skills today for
the jobs of tomorrow

A cleaner, greener
Nova Scotia by 2030

Investing in quality care

Our vision for a fair and prosperous Nova Scotia is rooted in affordability and equity. We can only achieve a strong economic recovery when all Nova Scotians have the chance to succeed.

Nova Scotia entered the pandemic in a strong fiscal position. The economy was growing, people saw opportunity here and were moving to our province in record numbers.

We now have the chance to take the next step as a province – recovering with inclusive economic growth, protecting our environment, and fostering a more equitable society.

The pandemic taught us many lessons, some of them difficult. COVID demonstrated that we can come together as a province, that we can unite to protect one another and to achieve incredible things. However, it also revealed some systemic inequalities in our system.

The burdens of the pandemic were not shared equally across society, rather, were borne disproportionately by those already disadvantaged or marginalized, including women, seniors, youth, racialized people, or those with lower incomes.

Our government took steps to begin addressing issues of equity and affordability throughout our response to COVID, ensuring those experiencing the greatest hardship received priority support as we worked to protect public safety.

Though we have come a long way in Nova Scotia – there is so much more to do. The pandemic has shown the importance of providing all Nova Scotians with equal opportunities for economic success, but also reiterated the need to reflect on emerging issues of social justice.

A re-elected Liberal Government will continue our dedicated efforts to make life more affordable and equitable for all Nova Scotians while investing in families, reducing poverty and tackling racism.

We can write a brighter new chapter for Nova Scotians – but we need to do it together.



Iain Rankin,

Leader of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party



Affordable Housing

Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission

Affordable housing is one of the most complex challenges Nova Scotians face today, and a problem exacerbated by the booming, record population growth and rising construction costs associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Housing prices are reaching record highs as home purchase rates grow, and low vacancy rates put upward pressure on the rental market.

The Liberal Government struck the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission in November 2020 to recommend immediate investment, legislative and structural initiatives that can be undertaken to make meaningful progress to improve the supply of, and access, to affordable rental housing.

National Housing Strategy

Partnering with the Federal Government, our Government committed to the National Housing Strategy that will **invest \$105 million** over the next three years to increase access to affordable housing and preserve and maintain existing housing stock.

This commitment also includes **\$70 million** over that same three-year period for renewal of existing housing and supports for low-income homeowners. We have also funded **\$12 million** in initiatives to support those experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness and **\$6.4 million** for social housing needs in communities across Nova Scotia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

\$25 Million in Quick Start Initiatives

The Affordable Housing Commission tabled its report on May 31st, 2021. The Rankin government accepted its recommendation to allocate **\$25 million** on 5 quick start initiatives to immediately increase supply and access to affordable housing. This investment included:

- **\$20 million** New Affordable Housing Supply Fund
- **\$2.5 million** Community Housing Growth Fund
- **\$2 million** for the renewal and repair of existing public housing
- **\$500,000** to assist municipalities with housing needs assessments

We know that more needs to be done. We are currently analyzing the 17 longer term recommendations made by the commission.

A re-elected Rankin Government is prepared to take immediate steps to alleviate supply constraints and increase access to affordable housing in Nova Scotia

Affordable Housing – Planning for a Long Term Solution

While short term action is necessary, we must consider the dynamics of our rental market today and plan for anticipated growth into the future.

A Liberal Government will develop a long-term provincial housing strategy that will map out a 10-year plan, including milestones and review periods, to ensure accountability and that we are meeting our goals and housing targets every step of the way over the life of this plan.

Comprehensive Review of Provincial Legislation

Empower our municipal, non-profit and private sector partners with modern and innovative tools to tackle the affordable housing challenge.

A Liberal Government will immediately begin a comprehensive review of provincial legislation and regulations, including the Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, to create an appropriate legislative environment to reduce housing costs, including a thorough analysis of inclusionary zoning and its role in increasing the supply of affordable housing units. We will direct the Department of Municipal Affairs to support municipal governments to complete a targeted assessment of the municipal development process to identify ways we can support local governments in their efforts to combat their affordable housing challenges.

Building Sustainable, Mixed-Income Multi-Family Residential Developments

A re-elected Rankin government will bring together provincial, municipal, non-profit organizations and private sector developers to create mixed-use projects that leverage a wide range of expertise and ideas. By prioritizing mixed-income developments we ensure affordable units are the same quality as market rate units and reduce the stigma associated with affordable housing.



Affordable Housing – Increasing & Maintaining the Affordable Housing Supply

Rebate Provincial Portion of HST on Construction of Affordable Rental Units

The cost of new housing developments includes government fees and taxes that can account for more than 20 percent of the construction cost of a new unit. These costs are passed on to tenants and drive rental prices upward.

A Liberal Government will **rebat**e the provincial portion of the HST on construction costs for new affordable housing units, **committing up to \$25 million** to a pilot program in each of two years that will incentivize construction of new affordable housing units. Our government will ask the Affordable Housing Commission to provide advice on the eligibility criteria for this program.

We will also amend legislation to provide municipalities with the authority to offer property or commercial tax incentives for affordable housing developments, enabling municipal governments to help lower the cost of housing construction.

Provincial Loan Program for Non-profit Housing Organizations

Our government recognizes the need to balance initiatives to increase the supply of affordable units with efforts to make sure that the existing stock of affordable units remains affordable.

A Liberal Government will consult the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia on the creation of a provincial loan fund for non-profit housing organizations. This will facilitate the acquisition of rental properties that are being sold or risk being converted to market rate housing. This will allow our non-profit housing sector to maintain these units as affordable or to convert them into social housing.

Non-Traditional Forms of Housing

Encouraging innovation in the affordable housing space is critical to achieving our goal of increasing housing supply, by leveraging new and non-traditional models of construction and living spaces. Thinking beyond traditional forms of housing can help provide affordable rental units targeted to single persons and our seniors.

A re-elected Rankin government is committed to expanding the housing options available to include secondary suites and garage lofts, tiny homes and other non-traditional forms of housing.

We will explore innovative forms of funding, like forgivable and repayable loans for homeowners that want to add affordable, non-traditional rental and housing options to their existing properties. A re-elected Rankin government will also provide support for single-room occupancies such as boarding houses in areas of need.

Renter Protections

Housing insecurity has become an increasing challenge for tenants, especially low-income renters, in our current housing environment. An increasing number of tenants have been displaced from their homes so buildings can be renovated. Additional protections for renters are needed.

A re-elected Rankin Government will require **compensation** for renters who are displaced from their homes due to **"renoviction"**. Tenants will be eligible for compensation from the landlord equal to one month's rent for each year they have lived in their current dwelling place, up to 6 months, when a landlord gives notice to quit to allow for renovations.



Reducing Energy Poverty by Reducing Heating Costs

Increasing the Heating Assistance Rebate

The cost of heating your home, especially during the winter months can be a high portion of a monthly budget.

A re-elected Rankin government will continue to invest in the **Heating Assistance Rebate Program** to help low-income Nova Scotians with their home heating costs by adding \$2.3 million in additional funding annually. This will allow the rebate to be **raised from \$200 to \$250** and help over 45,000 Nova Scotians with their home heating bills.

Helping Low-Income Renters

Incentivizing owners of multi-unit rental properties to improve energy efficiency in their rental units helps renters.

A re-elected Rankin government will invest \$3 million annually through Efficiency Nova Scotia to complete an **additional 220** units through the **Multi-unit Rental Property Upgrade Program**. This program offers rebates of up to 80% on energy efficient upgrades in qualifying multi-unit residential dwellings. Landlords will have the opportunity to make investments in their properties that helps both landlords and renters by creating more energy efficient buildings and lowers energy costs.

Helping Low-Income Homeowners

Many low-income Nova Scotians living in old stock housing need complete home energy retrofits which can cost up to \$20,000 per home. By making these homes more energy efficient, energy costs can be lowered by up to \$900 per year.

A re-elected Rankin government will invest **\$20 million** per year from the Green Fund to help low-income Nova Scotians **complete these home energy retrofits**.

Energy Retrofits for Social Housing

A re-elected Rankin government will invest \$2 million per year from the Green Fund into **Affordable Housing Retrofits**. These retrofits will improve energy efficiency in these Housing Nova Scotia homes with measures that include insulation, efficient lighting, air sealing and heating and cooling system upgrades.



Making Childcare More Affordable and Accessible for Nova Scotian Families

Quality childcare is essential to the health and development of children, supports workforce participation for parents and contributes to a thriving economy. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need for affordable and accessible child care across Canada.

Now, Premier Rankin led the way in Canada by becoming one of the first provinces in the country to partner with the federal government to deliver universal childcare for Nova Scotian families.

\$10 a day childcare

The ability to access high-quality early learning and care has profound academic, social, and economic impacts for children and families.

The Liberal government has signed the new **Canada-Nova Scotia Early Learning & Child Care Agreement**, an historic **\$645 million commitment**. This agreement will make childcare much more affordable for families, while expanding access to quality care across Nova Scotia.

Currently, in parts of the province, the average cost of childcare is \$44 per day. By next year, families in Nova Scotia will pay **50% less** for regulated child care, and by 2026, child care will cost an average of **\$10 a day**. The Liberal Party's commitment to providing affordable, high-quality, inclusive child care and early learning will support parents, especially women, to enter or re-enter the labour force.

"This is a game-changer for Nova Scotian families – better quality care that is more affordable and accessible. A Canada-wide early learning and child care system has been talked about for decades, and I'm proud that our province is at the forefront of making this a reality for Nova Scotian families."

Premier Iain Rankin



Major Increases in Child Care Spaces

The agreement will create **9,500** new childcare spaces including increased spaces for infants and toddlers.

Play-based early learning programs will be introduced for three-year-olds, expanding service into rural communities currently without childcare options, while wrap-around programs will extend service to before and after hours to increase flexibility for working parents.

The addition of **7,500** new 'wrap around' spaces by 2026 will ensure each child's day is seamless, while reducing the need for parents to make alternative arrangements for child care.

Priority will be given to vulnerable and equity seeking families, providing those with socioeconomic barriers to childcare secure access to an affordable, high-quality service.

Oversight and management of all child care operations, including fees, wages and policies will be provided by a newly established provincial entity. All currently funded operators and agencies, both commercial and not-for-profit will have access to funding under this agreement, including:

- workforce development fund
- reduced fees for parents
- wage package for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs)

Investing in early childhood educators

As our Government embarks upon this transformational expansion of our childcare system, we recognize that investments in childcare spaces must be matched with investment in the individuals providing quality care to our children. As such, we will ensure that childcare services continue to be provided by qualified early childhood educators, who are intrinsically valued professionals supported with opportunities for further training and enhancement of their skills.

Our early childhood workforce strategy is grounded in the belief that successful early childhood learning requires a workforce that is diverse and inclusive, supported by access to lifelong learning and is professionally recognized.

We are **investing \$10.9 million** in our early childhood workforce, training hundreds more Early Childhood Educators while covering the cost of tuition and books for over 300 current childcare and pre-primary staff to upgrade their credentials.

The workforce strategy includes opportunities for underrepresented groups to access designated seats for ECE certification, ensuring Mi'kmaq and Indigenous people, African Nova Scotians, Acadian and francophone Nova Scotians and newcomers can pursue careers in early childhood education. We will further enhance the workforce by taking a systematic approach to professional certification, developing a compensation framework that will reflect education, speciality training, and years of work experience.

The Liberal Government is prioritizing Nova Scotian families. Implementing the **Canada-Nova Scotia Early Learning & Child Care Agreement** will deliver affordable, inclusive and high quality child care that is universally accessible, while investing in and supporting the workforce that provides valuable services to our children.

Healthy lunches for healthy kids

The global pandemic highlighted food insecurities that too many families face every day. Children should not have to worry about where their next meal is coming from. Food insecurity is known to impact academic performance, while poor nutrition impacts long-term physical, social, and emotional well-being.

The government launched a school breakfast program that has been widely successful and is now available across the province. There has also been interest expressed by the Federal Government in a national school food program.

That's why a Liberal Government will allocate **\$3 million** a year to pilot a P-6 **school lunch program**. The **Healthy Lunches for Healthy Kids program** will provide healthy, locally sourced, low-cost lunches, ensuring children in elementary schools are well nourished and prepared to succeed in the classroom. The average cost per lunch will be \$5 a day. The program will use a pay-what-you-can model and will be first launched in communities demonstrating the highest need. The pay-what-you-can model provides families with flexibility within their household budgets while adaptable, convenient payment options promote inclusive participation.

A buy local component will promote and emphasize locally sourced foods and vendors, highlight healthy local food options, as well as provide additional markets for farmers and producers.

The Liberal Party is committed to the health and wellbeing of our children. Providing affordable, healthy lunches will lead to greater health and academic outcomes for our kids, while making life more affordable for Nova Scotian families.



Investing in poverty reduction

Building a more caring and compassionate Nova Scotia makes us stronger and requires that we look after all members of our society, especially those who need our help most.

The Liberal Party recognizes the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on lower income households and has committed to providing additional support to individuals and families to help alleviate poverty.

That is why we **invested \$35.2 million** in Budget 2021/22 to enhance the **income assistance program**, providing an increase of **\$100 per month** for every adult recipient, and an additional **\$200 per month for couples**. This represents the largest ever increase to the standard household rate and came into effect on May 1st.

We have committed new money to food insecurity initiatives, over **\$500,000** to allow income assistance recipients to collect CPP at age 60, increased the **Poverty Reduction Credit**, provided **millions in PPE and additional cleaning supplies to housing authorities**, and **\$3.5 million** to increase and expand prevention and early intervention programming for children at risk.

This increase will put more money directly into the hands of those who need it most, helping families and children with the cost of food, shelter, clothing and transportation.

A fairer, more equitable Nova Scotia

Our province's best asset is our people, and we all win when everyone is given a fair chance to succeed. For far too long, African Nova Scotians, Mi'kmaq, Indigenous peoples, and people of colour have faced additional barriers.

COVID-19 disproportionately impacted these communities, and it only added to the systemic inequities they faced before this global public health crisis. Whether it's in the economy, justice, education, or our healthcare system, many communities have felt left out, and left behind.

The role of government must always be to ensure that everyone, no matter their background, religion, skin colour, sexual orientation, or gender, is given a fair, and equitable shot at success, and provided the support needed to get there. With the end of the pandemic in sight, we have a real chance at making a lasting change for all Nova Scotians.

Equity is our end goal, and we must work together with communities who have faced hundreds of years of systemic discrimination to right historic wrongs. Government has a role to play, and Liberals recognize that it will take hard work, and a whole-of-government approach to ensure that we can reach our common goal.

That's why we created the **Office of Equity and Anti-Racism** to ensure that we champion equity in all that we do. Since its creation in February of 2021, the Office has engaged directly with local community leaders, community organisations, advocacy groups, and across government. The overall consensus is clear – nothing can be done without community, and the time to act is now.

Accelerating the Land Titles Initiative

For over 200 years, African Nova Scotians have lived in land passed down through generations without clear and formal land title, excluding families from the full benefits of land ownership. This has prevented African Nova Scotians from developing, building upon, selling or transferring land, and limiting the opportunity for intergenerational wealth transfer.

Following the creation of the new Office, our government launched a **\$3 million** compensation fund to **settle land title claims** in five historic African Nova Scotian communities. This will ensure that community members can finally receive—and maintain—clear title to their land at no cost, while accelerating efforts to address the legacy of systemic racism in the land registry system.

Collecting race-based health data

We know that to deliver better health outcomes and improve equitable access to health services for all Nova Scotians, we must first understand what barriers individuals and communities experience. The collection and interpretation of **race-based data** allows government to identify and **address systemic inequity** within the health system and deliver better services to racialized Nova Scotians.

The Liberal Government understands this need and continues to collaborate with the community-based working group to support the collection of race-based health data.

African Nova Scotia Justice Institute

Our justice system must do better for African Nova Scotians with meaningful change in our criminal justice system.

That's why the government is investing \$4.8 million in a new community-led African Nova Scotia Justice Institute to support African Nova Scotians in contact with the law and help address overrepresentation and anti-Black racism in the justice system. This will be led by community and driven by African Nova Scotian subject-matter experts whose work will support programs and services that will help address institutional racism.

The establishment of the institute, one of the first of its kind in Atlantic Canada, will be led by the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition.

African Nova Scotian Cohort – Bachelor of Social Work

There is a demonstrable need to enhance the capacity of social workers to be culturally responsive to the needs of all communities in Nova Scotia. In the early 2000s a Mi'kmaq and Maliseet BSW cohort was created at the Bachelor of Social Work program at Dalhousie University. A Cape Breton cohort was created in the 1990s.

A Rankin government will allocate **\$500,000** over three years to create an **African Nova Scotian** student cohort of 25 students to enter the **BSW program** at Dalhousie in September 2022. This will ensure a tailored experience for students of African descent and is an opportunity to show what social work is and can do for African Nova Scotian people.

Breaking barriers in Education

The Liberal Party believes that Nova Scotian students from all backgrounds deserve fair and equal opportunities for success in the classroom. African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students are disproportionately placed on individual performance programs (IPPs), increasing stigmatization and impacting their sense of belonging in school.

Our Government has committed to an **equity assessment of IPPs** to identify and address systemic barriers that impact students identifying as African Nova Scotian and Indigenous. We will continue to work collaboratively with students, teachers, parents, and staff, to ensure that all children have a clear path to barrier-free success.

CSAP

The Liberal Government recognizes the unique heritage of our **Acadian** communities, and appreciates the necessity of protecting the language of francophone Nova Scotians within our education system. We will continue to collaborate with the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) to **develop new, independent legislation** that will complement the Education Act, while respecting language and culture.

Mi'kmaq Language Legislation

The Mi'kmaq language is the language of Mi'kma'ki and the first language spoken in what we now call Nova Scotia. Sharing and protecting wisdom for centuries, the language is resilient and has survived efforts to erase its use, including residential schools. As of the 2016 census, there are 8,870 Mi'kmaq speakers, with approximately 5,500 residing in present day Nova Scotia.

Interest in learning the Mi'kmaq language has never been higher, and the Liberal Party will do its part to support Mi'kmaq to stabilize and sustain language learning in Nova Scotia as a necessary step along the path of truth and reconciliation.

A Liberal Government will introduce **Mi'kmaw language legislation**, in consultation with Mi'kmaq and Mi'kmaw organizations and provide funding to enable participation in the process.

The new legislation will **acknowledge Mi'kmaq as Nova Scotia's original language** and commit to specific actions that contribute to the language's preservation, including a funded action plan with an accountability structure consistent with Mi'kmaq values.

Recognizing Emancipation Day

Our shared history matters. We all have a responsibility to learn about what makes us who we are, and to work towards a better future. Through the collective efforts of community members, African Nova Scotian Affairs, and the new Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, the Liberal Government passed legislation to recognise **August 1st as Emancipation Day** in Nova Scotia.

To further highlight this important part of our shared history, our government announced funding of **\$20,000 for two artists-in-residences** at the Institute for the Study of Canadian Slavery at NSCAD University in April of this year. The artists-in-residence will begin creating works of art that speak to the study of the Institute in the fall of 2021.

This will provide Nova Scotians with the opportunity to learn about the legacy of slavery in the province, and encourage reflection on what it means to work towards a more equitable society.

Anti-Racism Strategy and Anti-Racism Legislation

Acts of hatred have no place in Canada, or Nova Scotia. We acknowledge that racism and hatred exist in our province, and we must all unite to fight back.

That's why on June 14th, Premier Rankin announced that the **Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives** would work with communities and across government to **develop clear definitions** of race based hatred, in all forms. Islamophobia, Anti-Asian, antisemitism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, and other forms of racism and inequity that exist across Nova Scotia will be defined by the Office – with guidance from communities – and will be used to educate Nova Scotians on inequity and systemic racism.

A Liberal Government will work to introduce legislation that includes these community-led definitions of hate. The Office of Equity & Anti-Racism will work with communities and across government to create a provincial **Anti-Racism Strategy** that will fight the hatred that equity-seeking groups face head-on.

The strategy will include recommendations to address hate-motivated crimes, public education, public reporting of measures, and the responsible collection and use of race-based data. Our goal of a fairer, more equitable Nova Scotia will take time and hard work, but we will build a brighter future, with communities, together.