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[Party platform of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party].

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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The Liberal Party has a plan for Nova Scotia.

The Liberal Plan is based on a solid record and a commitment to continued stability.

The Liberal Plan is based on the common knowledge that past achievement is the only sure guide to future performance.

Nova Scotians know that the answer is not in books full of promises. Irresponsible political promises that will send the province back to its insolvent past. And not dream-like wish lists without consideration for either costs or consequences.

Nova Scotians know that whatever social policy enhancements we make must be made within the context of a financial plan that dictates that we pay our way - as we go. A plan that leaves the benefits, not the bill, for our children and grandchildren.

The Liberal Plan reflects that common wisdom and community commitment.

The Liberal Plan reflects a mutual trust conferred by a record of responsible Liberal government.

The Liberal Plan is simple and straight forward - continued improvement of social programs based on sound financial management and a strong economy.

Today I want to speak directly to how that plan will enhance a key concern of Nova Scotians, health care.

And how that solid fiscal and economic underpinning can lead to unprecedented improvements.

But first, let's briefly review that record of responsible financial government and economic performance that has formed the framework of the Liberal Plan.

Nova Scotia is entering upon the most significant period of economic and social development in its political history.

It is not only moving into a new century of unprecedented opportunities for economic prosperity and social security - it is putting behind it a century of economic disappointment.

And the current Liberal government has prepared Nova Scotia well for this striking transformation of promise and potential.

It has been an astonishing accomplishment.

Because in four years Nova Scotia has stepped back from the very edge of financial disaster to stride

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confidently through a doorway of unprecedented potential.

In 1993, this province recorded a \$617 million deficit. In 1996-97, it recorded a budgetary surplus. In 1997-98 we will record another budgetary surplus.

Over that period the new employment rolls grew nine percent above the national average. Last year alone we had a job growth rate of 13% above the national average.

A record 400,000 people are now working in Nova Scotia. That's a level unprecedented in our history.

And the world is noticing. Last year, capital investment in Nova Scotia increased by an astounding 22.9 per cent. Compare that to the Canadian average - 4.4 per cent growth, and you see why Nova Scotia is the economy to watch in Canada.

There is a new confidence in Nova Scotia, and the new-found stability of our public finances have contributed significantly to that confidence.

Today, Nova Scotia is one of Canada's leaders in creating new jobs and attracting new investment at a record pace, in part, because a sound financial footing has allowed it to put a renewed focus on economic growth.

Billions of dollars in investment has meant hundreds of new jobs, new industry and increased public resources to invest in better education and health care for Nova Scotians. And it's beginning to pay off.

For example, the Sable Offshore Energy Project which my government negotiated, will alone will pumping an additional one million dollars a day into our province over the next two years.

That's a great revenue boost, but the real value of major investments such as the Sable project are in the long term jobs they will create, and the competitive advantages they will give to Nova Scotia companies.

The Liberal Plan is founded on one important principle: The revenues that are now being generated by successful economic investment and development that will fund our renewed provincial health care, education and social programs.

Nova Scotia's achievement over the past four and a half years took hard work, determination, vision and uncommon political courage.

And that's how my new Liberal government will be managed.

Prudently, responsibly, and with an eye on the next generation - not on the next election.

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The Liberal Plan is based on keeping in close touch with Nova Scotians.

And Nova Scotians have said loudly and clearly that they also expect their community values to be reflected in a caring health care system that is there, when and where our parents, our children, our neighbours and our friends need it.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is that fundamental expectation concerning health care that I want to address today.

It is the responsible and responsive focus to that concern that defines the spirit of the Liberal Plan.

A key objective of the Liberal Plan is to do more.

We have an agreement to keep emergency rooms open in community hospitals, a Rural Locum Service, a Rural Stabilization Fund and additional places reserved in the medical school to train family physicians.

Initiatives such as the world's largest Telemedicine program have made a whole new range of expertise and accessibility available to rural doctors. Now a specialist in Halifax can view X-Rays from a hospital in Neils Harbour.

Nova Scotians have said they want responsive health care. So we've improved our emergency health care capacity. We now respond to emergencies faster than ever before - and provide better care when we get there.

More than 100 new, state-of-the-art ambulances are on the road saving lives. A new Air Medical Transport helicopter has already flown more than 400 missions.

Mandatory high level training and equipment for Emergency Medical Technicians has also been established, and a new dispatch centre provides instantaneous lifesaving instructions across the province.

These are just some of the marked improvements that have been made to our health care system. They are proud achievements of the Liberal Plan.

But they're not enough.

We still have concerns.

Over the past several months Nova Scotians have told us:

- They are waiting too long for EEG's and CT-SCANS, for hip replacements and eye surgery

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- Many Nova Scotia women have no access to obstetricians and gynaecologists
- There is concern about the early detection and treatment of cancer
- In some cases Nova Scotians in rural areas are waiting too long to see a family physician
- There is a shortage of equipment such as dialysis machines, MRI's and mammogram units; and
- There is a need for more long term care beds and facilities

We're listening.

And we recognized the concerns.

Here is our plan.

It builds on the additional \$100 million dollars spend on health care last year. As we said at the beginning of the campaign we are providing a further 80 million dollars annually to the health care budget.

Health care remains a core element of the Liberal Plan.

Specifically the Liberal Plan will significantly reduce waiting times and waiting lists across this province for the most high demand services and waiting times in emergency rooms will be reduced. It will put in place, across Nova Scotia, the specialists we need, the special facilities and health units required to support them, and increase the current number of long term care beds now available.

Specifically the Liberal Plan will mean: 100 new doctors and surgeons across Nova Scotia.

Ear, Nose and Throat surgeons, neurosurgeons, orthopaedic specialists, oncologists, obstetricians and gynaecologists, pediatricians and other specialists.

Fully 20% of these new doctors will be family physicians.

And they will have the equipment to do the job.

We will be providing new MRI units, including a mobile MRI unit. This will reduce waiting time for this important procedure by 50 percent. We will also provide Dexa units across the province for osteoporosis diagnosis, a new mobile mammogram unit and a new CT Scan unit.

And dialysis machines and chairs in the province will be increased by 25%.

And to ensure that the room is there to handle this increased access to treatment, 170 additional long term care beds will be apportioned across the province.

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These line item additions to the province's medical treatment capacity represent a very significant improvement to our health care system.

These improvements will cost just under 80 million dollars. Of this sum we will spend approximately 30 million dollars on new specialists & technologists, ten million dollars on new medical equipment, and approximately 25 million dollars on acute & long term care beds.

And we are going to pay for it with our own money.

The Liberal Plan also acknowledges that these improvements must be done in a way that is both responsible and lasting.

This Liberal government will bring in a balanced budget.

There can never again be any turning back to irresponsible, free-spending.

We have come too far - and the future is too promising - to travel that road again.

Therefore, for government to effectively and responsibly make the health care adjustments that are needed - it must and will be within the context of our current and ongoing budgetary planning process.

The provincial financial framework has been studied in detail to ensure that this is affordable. It can be done.

And it will be done.

It is the only way to address these concerns responsibly and remain answerable to our balanced budget agenda.

This announcement, ladies and gentlemen, is a real reflection of the Liberal Plan.

A Plan we can afford.

A Plan based on a proven record of success and built on hard work and determination.

A Plan that will continue to combine proven responsible financial management with a demonstrated leadership that is attentive, compassionate and decisive.

That is the Liberal Plan for Nova Scotia.

THANK YOU

