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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Nouvelle-Écosse | 56e  | 1re  | Discours du Budget | 30 Septembre 1993 | Bernard Boudreau | Minister of Finance | Nova Scotia's Liberal Party |

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to a notice of motion given by me on September 24, 1993, and the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, I have the honour, by command, to present a message from His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia, relating to the Estimates of sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 3 1994, which is:

The Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia transmits Estimates of Sums required for the Public Service of the province, for the year ending March 31, 1994, and in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982, he recommends them to the House of Assembly.

I am honoured to present to the House of Assembly the first budget of this government. Initiatives that I will outline today reflect policies aimed at reviving the Nova Scotia economy and stemming the growth of debt and deficits in this province.

The task will not be easy. Debt and deficit levels accumulated by the province when we took office were staggering. This situation has severely limited the fiscal resources that we now have available to address the economic and social problems confronting us. As disturbing as the debt and deficit figures have been, the rate of increase was even more .so. Over $2 billion of our $6.8 billion debt has accumulated in the last two fiscal years. This trend of increasing debt and deficit levels must not continue. Our fiscal manoeuvrability has become ever more restricted as debt servicing costs consume a mushrooming proportion of financial resources. At stake is simply the ability of our people to govern themselves - to direct the choices about government services that fundamentally affect their lives.

Our economic future can only be built on a solid base. That base, that bedrock, involves the realistic appraisal and disclosure of our present fiscal predicament to the Nova Scotian public.

Through the presentation of the audited financial statements by Deloitte Touche. for 1992-93 and the Price Waterhouse Review of Financial Matters from April 1, 1993 to June 30, 1993, we have attempted to reach bedrock. With this Budget Address, and with the assistance of our 30-60-90 day consultative process, the government will begin to lay the foundation for economic recovery.

While the Canadian economy posted modest growth in 1992, the Nova Scotia economy suffered its second year of negative growth. In fact, the recession had an even greater negative impact in the province last year than in 1991.

Modest economic growth is anticipated for both Canada and Nova Scotia this year. However, economic performance will continue to be weak. Real growth of 1.3 per cent is anticipated for the Nova Scotia economy in 1993 compared to 2.8 per cent for Canada.

Clear signs of a strong recovery from the recession that started in 1990 are still not apparent for the Canadian economy. Domestic demand continues to be weak as consumers grapple with modest income gains, high unemployment, and uncertainty over long-term employment prospects.

Employment in Nova Scotia is expected to decline by 0.6 per cent this year, reflecting the third consecutive year of decline in the number of jobs in this province. This will result in an anticipated rise in the unemployment rate to 14.5 per cent for 1993, the highest rate in recent history.

The relatively weak performance of the Nova Scotia economy for this year, and last, can be attributed to several factors, including the downturn in the fishery, a decline in construction activity, continued weakness in the manufacturing sector, as well as a reluctance on the part of consumers to spend.

We are well aware of the economic impact that recent groundfish quota cuts will have on many communities throughout Nova Scotia. The traditional way of life in many rural and coastal communities is seriously threatened by the collapse of the groundfishery.

Despite these obvious difficulties, the province has a diversified fishery and is not totally dependent upon the species subject to the quota reductions. Indeed, some higher priced sectors of the fishery, such as the shellfish industry, are performing well.

Aquaculture production for 1992 represented a 5 per cent increase over 1991 levels. This production was valued at $7.1 million last year, representing an increase of 8.8 per cent over the previous year. Production is expected to be higher again in 1993.

The recovery in the Canadian economy to date has reflected gradual increases in economic output without a commensurate increase in employment. Much of this can be attributed to the fact that both the recession and the subsequent protracted economic recovery have been complicated by the structural changes that have been occurring at the same time.

There has been rapid technological change that has resulted in increased productivity without necessarily increasing employment levels.

The manufacturing sector continues to feel the effects of the lingering recession and the challenges associated with industrial restructuring that is occurring in most of the world's economies. The value of manufacturing shipments in 1993 is expected to be virtually unchanged over 1992 levels, with employment anticipated to be 2,000 fewer than last year.

Continued weakness in the province's traditional heavy manufacturing industries, such as steel and shipbuilding, is forecast for some time to come.

Real growth in the Nova Scotian economy is expected to be 2.3 per cent in 1994, still relatively weak by post-recession standards. However, for the first time in three years, positive employment growth is anticipated.

Consumer spending is expected to remain subdued again in 1993 in the face of weak personal income growth and declines in employment.

Also, considerable downsizing and rationalization has occurred in many firms, which has led to an increase in self-employment and the use of part-time workers. This has affected income levels and created uncertainty for long-term employment prospects. These factors are major economic challenges confronting all governments.

Addressing economic issues has been the focus of the government since coming to office in June. We have embarked upon the 30-60-90 process to seek the views and ideas of Nova Scotians for developing ways to create viable economic development in the province. The results of this process, as well as some initiatives that the government will be undertaking immediately, have recently been announced.

Economic development was also a major topic of discussion at the Annual Premiers' Conference hosted by the province in August 1993. While it was understood that governments alone cannot necessarily effect immediate improvements in the economy, there was consensus on the important role for governments to establish a climate where sustained economic growth can occur.

Reflecting the importance that Premiers attach to economic issues, they have called for a First Ministers' Conference on the Economy immediately following the installation of a new federal government. Within the next two months, I, along with the Minister of Economic Development, will be attending a meeting of Provincial and Territorial Ministers' of Finance and Economic Development to discuss economic development and job creation strategies. This meeting will lay the groundwork for the First Ministers' Conference on the Economy.

We are pleased to be participating in this initiative because we are convinced that all governments must work together to address the difficult economic issues confronting the country today.

Our four-year fiscal recovery plan is based on two realities. Firstly, we did not get into this fiscal mess overnight, and neither will the solution be implemented in one year. Secondly, any debt and deficit management program must be active on both sides of the ledger - on the expenditure and on the revenue side -, to hold any promise of success. Therefore, in this Budget Address, we propose to outline the foundation for improvement in both of these areas. As with any foundation, it will no doubt be built upon and added to in subsequent years, but it will also clearly layout our blueprint, our road to recovery.

The difficult fiscal decisions ahead of us cannot be put on hold, unfortunately, waiting for the economy to turn around. Like all provincial governments in Canada, Nova Scotia faces many immediate financial pressures in 1993-94 including:

- continued slow growth in provincial revenue sources continued federal restraint in transfers to the provinces escalating program expenditures driven by prolonged recessionary conditions and restructuring of many traditional sectors of the economy.

- budget revenue forecasts downward by more than $150 million, long after the major expenditure decisions had been made for this year.

It is a frustrating exercise to reduce expenditures in a budget process by over $200 million and then to see these savings washed away by last-minute revised revenue estimates, particularly with respect to federal transfer payments.

We will endeavour to minimize future fluctuations in our revenue projections, to the extent possible, thereby providing for the most stable estimation of our debt and deficit position. The government will provide for greater review of the underlying fiscal and economic assumptions and federal projections that form the basis of the forecast of total revenues for the province. To assist us in achieving as accurate a revenue picture as possible, the province welcomes the assistance of the Auditor General in the review of our revenue estimates to confirm their reasonableness, given the emerging economic and fiscal environment in which we find ourselves. We will be introducing legislation in the House to formalize the role of the Auditor General in this process.

Total revenues of the province are currently estimated to be $3.5 billion in 1993-94. I think that it is important to note that in spite of all the revenue enhancement measures that I will announce, current revenues of the province are expected to be lower than actual levels for the previous year.

Federal transfer payments to the province for health care and post-secondary education will continue to be frozen at 1989-90 per capita levels during the year. This federal restraint measure, coupled with the anticipated increase in the value of the tax point transfer, will result in a decrease in cash payments provided to the province in support of essential programs and services for Nova Scotians.

Slow recovery from the recession continues to dampen the growth in consumption by Nova Scotians and consequently the growth in the province's Health Services Tax revenues.

As revenue numbers become finalized throughout the upcoming year, the province will continue to monitor its overall position in respect of recent years to determine the feasibility of any new stabilization claim to the federal government resulting from a downward adjustment to annual revenues due to economic factors.

As a goal of this budget, our government accepts the challenge of estimating the annual deficit with greater accuracy and realism.

The government is committed to putting in place a Four- Year Recovery Plan that will set the stage for solid economic growth throughout the province and consequently provide for a strengthening of the revenue base in future years. Realistically, however, this objective can only be achieved over the medium term once we have addressed the deficit situation and gained the flexibility to channel our resources to produce the environment necessary for such growth.

In the meantime, the government has found it necessary to adopt certain revenue measures calculated to provide some relief from the relatively weak position of our current revenue sources. I realize that many Nova Scotians are undergoing difficult financial times as the economy is slow to turn around, and income increases are not being realized. For this reason, the government has endeavoured to implement these necessary revenue measures in as fair and equitable a manner as possible.

The following changes will be made to the Health Services Tax:

- Effective January 1, 1994, sales tax on private sales of used vehicles will be determined by an automated evaluation system.

- Effective midnight September 30, 1993, the exemption from sales tax for accommodations with less than four rooms will be removed.

- Effective midnight, September 30, 1993, the exemption from sales tax will be removed in respect of business services, selected recreational services, and landscaping supplies and services.

- Effective midnight, September 30, 1993, the current monthly levy on electricity for residential, commercial and industrial users will be replaced by a Health Services Tax rate of 3 per cent.

- As well, effective midnight, September 30, 1993, the Health Services Tax rate will be increased from 10 per cent to 11 per cent.

Due to the complexities involved in the collection of the Health Services Tax on commercial flea market sates, effective October 15, 1993, a registration fee equal to 50 per cent of the rental fee charged by commercial flea market operators will be levied and collected by the operators and remitted to the province. Rental fees currently average $5.00 to $10.00 per table.

As a step toward strengthening retail activity during these slow times, and providing consumers with increased purchasing opportunity, the province will introduce legislation which will permit Sunday shopping effective immediately until December 31, 1993. During this time, we will monitor the policy and decide whether it should be expanded or modified in any way.

As well, effective midnight, September 30, 1993, gasoline and diesel fuel tax rates will be increased to 28.8 per cent and 36.2 per cent respectively, equivalent to an increase of 2 cents per litre.

It has also been necessary for the government to generate additional financial relief, over the short term, until such time as the economy is able to sustain stronger revenue growth on its Own. We are, therefore, calling upon Nova Scotia public sector employees to make a one-time, special sacrifice of up to a five-day unpaid furlough for the 1993-94 fiscal year. After consultation with public sector unions, legislation will shortly be introduced in the House outlining the terms and conditions of this leave.

As a step toward protecting those who can least afford such a restraint measure, the furlough program will only apply to those public sector employees whose income is in excess of $22,000 per year.

To ensure this measure is applied in as broad and equitable a manner as possible, effecting maximum cost savings for the government, the furlough program will be applied throughout all sectors of the Public Service starting with the Premier, Ministers and MLAs. It will be extended to all employees and elected and appointed members of the provincial and municipal governments, Crown Corporations, school boards, universities, community colleges, hospitals, homes for special care, and judges of the Provincial and Family Courts. The medical profession will be similarly affected.

As a final step to providing immediate relief to the difficult revenue position of the province, the government will call upon those who. are most able to pay to assume an increase in their tax burden for one year. Effective for the 1994 taxation year only, the government will replace the existing high income surtax with a high income surtax of 20 per cent on provincial tax payable between $7,000 and $10,499 inclusive, and 30 per cent on provincial tax payable of $10,500 and over. These increased taxes will generally not apply to anyone with income levels less than approximately $65,000 and $85,000 respectively.

While we recognize that these are very difficult measures for many Nova Scotians and are most unwelcome in the economic environment that has plagued our province in recent years, the devastating fiscal situation of the province has left us with no other short-term alternatives. The one-year duration of both the furlough program and the high income surtax will provide the time necessary for the renewal policies of this government to be felt within the economy, resulting in a natural strengthening of our revenue base for the future.

As previously noted, even with the measures I have just announced, the province is still looking at revenues for this fiscal year that are lower than those achieved in 1992-93. As we have seen in the past, revenue projections are highly speculative by nature and can render deficit and debt projections meaningless should unanticipated swings occur.

Consequently, the only concrete way in which government can be assured of relieving pressure on the debt and deficit position of the province is to take steps to reduce and control the expenditure pressures that are driving the cost of government programs and services.

In the few short months since taking office, the government has deliberated over numerous options for achieving immediate cost savings in this fiscal year. This has been a very difficult process given the short time available to achieve such savings. In most cases, however, departments have been required to operate throughout the 1993-94 fiscal year at 98 per cent of the previous year's estimated spending levels. As well, capital expenditures have been scaled back to 95 per cent of 1992-93 estimated levels in most departments.

In certain instances this restraint policy has required some immediate expenditure reduction. By the time the government assumed office, the first-quarter of 1993-94 was already complete, and commitments had been made that, in some instances, exceeded 100 per cent of a department's budget for last year. For example:

The budget of the Department of Transportation was already overcommitted by $26 million in 1993-94, requiring the government to cancel 23 contracts and projects slated to occur this fiscal year in order to live within the constrained budget targets.

Capital assistance grants for municipal water and sewer projects provided through our Department of Municipal Affairs were also committed at over 165 per cent of last year's budget, necessitating the deferral of funding approval for 24 projects this year.

Commitments were made in 1992-93 to increase the resources available for legal aid. However, the required funding was not provided in that year. This meant that the 1993-94 budget for legal aid had to increase significantly to cover unfunded commitments from the previous year and provide a full level of service in the current fiscal year,

Commitments made in prior years in respect of capital assistance grants for recreation facilities provided under the Sport and Recreation Commission have consumed the total budget for 1993-94 as well, effectively suspending the Capital Grants Program for this year.

In addition, there are various cost pressures which have required immediate action by government.

In order to maintain the government's commitment to providing a comprehensive Drug Benefit Plan for seniors, the government will be introducing a major reform of the Pharmacare Program. The reforms will address all aspects of the program. It is expected that the savings to the province and seniors will exceed $10 million in 1993-94.

As well, operating grants to health-care facilities in the province have been scaled back by $25 million, representing a 2.5 per cent reduction in grants for the year.

A reduction of $2 million has been implemented in respect of commitments made to operating grants to school boards for 1993-94.

The government has decided not to open the Museum of Industry as a provincial museum. However, the province is actively pursuing, with the private sector, alternatives by which the museum might be operated.

There will be several changes to the Family Benefits Program to ensure the basic needs of only those Nova Scotians most in need are being met.

Most departments have experienced reductions in administrative costs, and most programs have been funded at reduced levels.

An immediate and ongoing hiring freeze in non-essential positions has been implemented.

 These are but a few of the difficult situations that required our immediate attention if the government were to live within the budget commitments set out for this year.

 There were, however, major expenditure areas that required increased budgetary commitments over the previous year as well. These reflected areas where it was felt the government must maintain responsiveness to the essential needs of many Nova Scotians. The budget provides, therefore for:

A 1 per cent increase in Family Benefits rates, effective January 1, 1994, with a further 1 per cent increase effective April 1, 1994

An additional 50 subsidized day care seats in the province

A 2 per cent increase, effective, January 1, 1994, in the per diem rate for subsidized day care spaces, bringing the maximum to $16.85 from $16.50.

Enhanced financial support for the Plant Workers Adjustment Program (PWAP) under the Department of Fisheries to assist the thousands of Nova Scotians affected by the structural changes that are occurring within the fishery

Increased education spending to cover previously negotiated wage increases for teachers and to address the unfunded liability in the Teachers' Pension Fund.

In grappling with the painful decisions that were required to achieve the spending decreases for this fiscal year, it became evident, very quickly, that what the province needed was a realistic and concrete plan to control and reduce expenditures over the medium term: a credible course of action that would map out the government's commitment to achieve significant reductions in program expenditures over the coming years.

Toward this end, the government will be introducing legislation in the House, to remain in place for the next four years, that will dictate global program expenditure reductions over this period. At the end of this four-year program, the government will reassess its effectiveness and requirement for future years.

The Expenditure Control Program will require reductions of 3 per cent in the net program operating expenditures in each of the next two years, commencing in 1994-95, and 2 per cent in the following two years, commencing in 1996-97. This Expenditure Control Plan will demand cost savings by the government and for the people of Nova Scotia of over $300 million within the next four-year period.

A similar initiative will be adopted in respect of capital expenditures of the province. The Expenditure Control Legislation will require the government to cut capital expenditures by at least 5 per cent per year, over the next four years, resulting in $60 million of cost savings.

The government recognizes that achieving these expenditure targets will not be easy and will inevitably result in the restructuring of some long-established programs.

At the same time, we are committed to ensuring that government expenditures are priorized and that taxpayers get increased value for the money spent. If we are to be successful in achieving these targets, savings must be" found in the most costly areas of government spending. The four largest cost centres of government are the following departments:

- Health

- Community Services

- Education

- Transportation and Communications

These four spending areas account for 82.2 per cent of total program expenditures of the province this fiscal year, excluding our debt service. To achieve the cost savings that are required under our Expenditure Control Plan, these sectors must be targeted for review.

One of the first areas where expenditure restraint must be achieved within government is in respect of the escalating cost of health care in the province. The government is estimating that health care costs in 1993-94 will reach $1.3 billion, accounting for 27.2 per cent of total expenditures of the province. It is our target, through the Expenditure Control Plan, to reduce the cost of health care by government down to 26 cents per dollar spent by government within the next four years. While a tremendous challenge for our health professionals, this is one commitment that the government and the people of Nova Scotia cannot afford to forgo.

The government's goal is to provide better service at less cost to its constituents. Toward this end, we have already initiated independent management audits of each of these major expenditure areas as a first step toward identifying the most efficient and effective way to deliver essential programs and services to Nova Scotians. These management audits will be carried out with full understanding of the Expenditure Control Plan of the government.

One of the most costly components of the total government budget is the commitment of over $600 million in wages and salaries for over 20,000 provincial employees. As part of the process of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of government, it is our objective to streamline government operations and reduce the size of the Civil Service. These reductions will be directed by the management audits and expenditure control targets, in conjunction with the general thrust throughout government toward a client-driven approach for delivering programs and services. It is our hope that these staff reduction targets can largely be achieved through attrition, improved retirement options, and the creation of a vacancy list resulting from the current hiring freeze.

As well, the government will be introducing legislative amendments respecting the members' retiring allowances, aimed at reducing benefits for members of the Legislature. During these difficult times we must all be prepared to make sacrifices in public expenditures.

Working closely with other levels of government to identify areas for improved efficiency and effectiveness will also continue to be a top priority of government.

We will continue to work as partners with municipal governments to achieve a rationalization of the municipal government system throughout Nova Scotia.

We strongly support a co-operative federal-provincial effort currently underway to identify and eliminate areas of overlap and duplication of programs and services throughout the province.

We are strongly committed to continued Atlantic co-operation and are prepared to participate fully in discussions that will lead to the more efficient delivery of programs and services throughout the Atlantic region. Our commitment to this process has only recently been reaffirmed with our participation in an emergency air ambulance system with the Province of New Brunswick.

Government is setting a new standard for itself, a standard of increased efficiency at less cost to the public. We call upon other public sector groups and agencies to follow our lead and be more conscious of the fiscal environment in which we are struggling to survive. Increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness must prevail throughout the entire public sector if we are to succeed in our long-term fiscal goals for this province. This will require increased rationalization of services throughout all aspects of our system - universities, hospitals, municipalities, school boards, and so on.

As well, we are committed to reviewing the operations of all Crown Corporations and agencies, boards, and commissions of government. We must ask two fundamental questions. Are these operations essential for government, and are they operating as efficiently as possible? Past history has made it very clear to government that we must continually assess the feasibility of our Crown Corporations to ensure that the tax dollars of Nova Scotians are invested as wisely as possible.

Achieving efficiency in government is only one side of the equation. The government recognizes that it is equally important to foster economic renewal within the province by creating an environment where private sector businesses are able to operate efficiently and prosper as well. As emphasized in the 30-60-90 process and confirmed last week by government, community economic development and small business are the engines of growth within our province. The government is committed to working with communities and the small business sector to build an environment which will create long-term, viable jobs for Nova Scotians.

As part of this commitment, the government's goal over the medium term will be to channel a significant portion of the revenue gains we will realize as we emerge from the recession toward the development of a competitive and prosperous environment for small business. The government intends that this growth dividend will be targeted toward incentives and initiatives to encourage the formation of new small businesses and to assist existing small businesses to expand and prosper within Nova Scotian communities.

Studies indicate that the present tax burden, particularly on companies, and particularly in areas such as property taxes, sales taxes, and Workers' Compensation Board premiums, is one of the major obstacles to profitability and growth. This government is committed to working with municipal governments, the private sector, and other agencies to achieve a major reduction in this tax burden. To this end, we are committing 20 per cent of the revenue growth over the next four years toward reducing the tax burden and improving the climate for business in Nova Scotia.

Even on the assumption of very modest revenue growth of approximately 3 per cent annually, the estimated value of this dividend will be $32.4 million in year one, building to $102.6 million in year four.

Throughout the 30-60-90 process, Nova Scotians advised the government to simplify the tax system and ensure fairness for all. In response, the government will be asking the Taxation Committee of Voluntary Planning to direct a review of the tax system, and to assist in identifying viable options for reducing the tax burden on businesses.

We will also be introducing a Health Services Tax Rebate on building materials used in the construction of new homes by first-time home buyers. For any housing starts commenced after October I, 1993, and prior to April I, 1995, a rebate of Health Services Tax will be provided to a maximum of $3,000. This measure for first-time home buyers will provide much needed stimulus to the construction sector. It will not only create many jobs in this important sector of our economy, but will also provide an opportunity for many Nova Scotians to acquire new homes during these difficult times.

In the past, direct grants and assistance have been used by government as a means of providing financial support to new business. Such a universal approach to providing assistance has often resulted in the taxpayers of Nova Scotia investing millions of dollars in support of unprofitable enterprises, which eventually failed. As outlined in the recently released report of the Isenor Committee, it is time to refocus the assistance that government provides to business. It is our belief that a more effective means of support can be found to ensure that any financial investment by Nova Scotia taxpayers will result in jobs for Nova Scotians. As a result, all direct grant programs within the Department of Economic Development will be eliminated as of March 31, 1994. We will continue to participate in an existing federal-provincial grant program only until its expiry date.

In addition to the tax burden, one of the biggest concerns throughout the many communities of the province has been the lack of available equity capital so necessary for the growth and development of business. Without access to the major venture capital pools available to larger industries, many small businesses are not able to develop and expand in order to compete and survive in the market place. This is particularly difficult in the more depressed regions of the province.

To assist Nova Scotia small business in obtaining enhanced equity capital over the next four years, the province will be introducing legislation to establish an Equity Tax Credit for any individual who invests in a Nova Scotian small business. Consequently, beginning in 1994, individuals who invest in an eligible small business within the province will receive a 25 per cent provincial personal income tax credit on a maximum annual investment of $10,000. As this measure is specifically designed to enhance the province's community economic development initiatives, we will also be providing the tax credit to those individuals who invest in an eligible Community Economic Development Fund. These funds, in turn, will be expected to invest in eligible small businesses in the province.

In addition, starting in the 1994 taxation year, the province will be providing a 20 per cent tax credit to individuals who invest in a Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Fund, including Working Ventures, a venture capital fund sponsored by the Canadian Federation of Labour. The Nova Scotia credit will match a 20 per cent tax credit provided by the federal government for investments in this fund and will create an important pool of venture capital for the province.

The fiscal plan I have brought before the House today is ambitious in its objectives yet realistic in terms of what must be done to remedy the financial difficulties of this province. For too long the province has lived beyond its means - putting-off the hard cost-cutting decisions necessary to reduce the expenditure pressures on government. The debt and deficit situation we are experiencing today is the result of that indecision.

The revenue-raising measures I have announced today in this budget are necessary to bridge the gap until a stronger economic recovery for Nova Scotia is achieved, and until a more fundamental government restructuring can occur. Over the long term, this government is committed to a reduction of the accumulated tax burden on all Nova Scotians.

Expenditure restraint is never easy. It is important, however, that we work together to achieve efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of government programs and services. This partnership must generate innovative ideas, shared sacrifice, and a deep commitment on the part of all Nova Scotians. While the expenditure decisions we have taken in this fiscal plan provide for a first step toward increased cost-effectiveness, they are not enough. The commitment of the government toward a legislated four-year Expenditure Control Plan will only provide the framework for a rational approach to achieving substantial cost savings for the people of this province.

Despite these difficult circumstances, this budget reflects the views of many Nova Scotians as expressed in the 30-60-90 process. Throughout that process, Nova Scotians recognize that the vehicle for economic renewal and job creation lies within our communities and small business sector. A long-term commitment on the part of government to work with communities to strengthen the investment climate and assist small business will go a long way toward ensuring the creation of stable jobs for Nova Scotians. This budget reflects an important step in honouring that commitment.

Our fiscal goal is simply stated - within our Four- Year Recovery Plan, we hope it will be possible to balance the budget of Nova Scotia. Once fiscal health is restored, many things become possible as our people prepare for the 21st Century. If we do not take control of our serious financial situation now, our children will be forced to sit on the sidelines as the new world passes them by. No responsible government can settle for such a future.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor transmitting the Estimates for the consideration of this House, table the Estimate Books, table the Estimate Resolutions, and move that the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1994, being Supply to be granted to Her Majesty be referred to the Committee of the Whole on Supply.