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## **Upgrade campuses, jump-start the economy**

Industry Minister Tony Clement chose Dalhousie University on March 9 to officially announce details of his government's Knowledge Infrastructure Program. Mr. Clement said his government "will provide 50 per cent of the eligible costs for selected projects, with the balance to come from provincial and territorial governments."

When it comes to helping eliminate the backlog of well-documented, well-planned, worthy and needed infrastructure projects, the Nova Scotia Government should partner with its higher education institutions and the federal government and invest in rapidly deployable bricks-and-mortar projects at the province's universities.

Nova Scotians agree.

A recent Corporate Research Associates Atlantic quarterly survey indicates that 70 per cent of those surveyed either completely or mostly supported "the provincial government matching the federal government's funding allocation to renew university infrastructure across the province."

The province's universities have submitted to the provincial government a highly detailed proposal for a strategic, \$118-million investment in Nova Scotia's knowledge infrastructure.

On the infrastructure side of economic stimulus programs, the challenge is to find the quickest starting projects that have the greatest gain over the long term for Nova Scotia's economy and its communities.

The universities infrastructure renewal proposal put forward to the provincial government will have immediate and significant short- and long-term economic impacts. Collectively, these projects will create 1,366 person years of direct and spinoff employment, \$51 million in direct and spinoff wages and salaries, \$79 million in GDP at market prices, \$5.5 million in direct and spinoff provincial tax revenue, \$9 million in direct and spinoff federal tax revenue and \$229 million in total spending through direct and spinoff effects.

Ensuring Nova Scotia's universities are equipped with 21st-century classrooms, science and technology buildings, labs and libraries is a jump-start for the economy and a down payment on our province's future economic competitiveness.

Among Nova Scotia's universities, this includes improving infrastructure by updating heating, ventilation, air conditioning systems, communications and information technology systems to upgrading science buildings and research laboratories with cutting-edge technology.

Maintaining and modernizing research facilities not only supports dozens of diversified trades and hundreds of small businesses and contractors, it helps universities attract and retain talented students and world-class faculty and staff that attracts millions of dollars of funding that fuels the innovation that supports provincial business and industry and ensures Nova Scotia's national and global competitiveness.

Making concrete investments in building and facilities also represents an investment in developing Nova Scotia's critical base of human capital — enhancing the knowledge, skills and creativity that people bring to the workplace.

In the global creative economy, human capital drives economic growth. Nova Scotia has had a legacy of strategically investing in its people; as a result, many new businesses and emerging industry sectors have located and invested in the province.

In remarks to a March 17 gathering of the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce concerning the provincial government's investments in infrastructure, board chairwoman Kim West said the chamber "understands the need and value of making wise investments that create a pathway to a productive, prosperous, sustainable future." She went on to say that, "The caveat for the chamber is whether today's investments are useful today and consider the economic, social, environmental and political realities of the coming 25 and 50 years."

Ms. West added that we need to ask ourselves whether investments that are intended to stimulate the economy create long-term economic development, address energy security and environmental issues, help create a province that will attract and retain people, and improve our education system."

The knowledge infrastructure renewal proposal submitted by Nova Scotia's universities to the provincial government more than meets the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber's criteria for worthiness.

The future competitiveness and standard of living in Nova Scotia depend on our peoples' skills, their capacity to communicate, solve problems, take advantage of opportunities and innovate.

It is for all these reasons that Nova Scotia's university leaders strongly advocate that the government of Nova Scotia commit to matching funds required by the federal government's Knowledge Infrastructure Program.

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Peter Halpin is executive director of the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents. He can be reached at [phalpin@atlanticuniversities.ca](mailto:phalpin@atlanticuniversities.ca)