

# 2017 NSGEU Election Questionnaire

## 1. Collective Bargaining

### ***Anti-worker legislation***

Over the past three and a half years, your/the government passed multiple laws that attack working Nova Scotians – laws that deeply undermine the rights of Nova Scotians with jobs.

Health care workers, public servants, teachers and many more feel bullied and abused in the aftermath of your/the government's mandate.

**If elected, how will your Party restore full and free collective bargaining in Nova Scotia?**

**What changes would you make to legislation affecting workers passed by the 62nd General Assembly of Nova Scotia? Please describe the outcomes your described changes would achieve.**

### ***Public Service Five-Point Plan***

The last four Nova Scotia Premiers signed the public service five-point plan (attached).

Of those, you/Premier McNeil broke your/his signed word that you/he would follow the process set out over your/his signature.

**Will you agree to sign the plan prior to May 30, 2017?**

**How will public servants, whose trust was broken by your/Premier McNeil's government, be sure they can trust what you have promised in 2017's election?**

### **Stephen McNeil – Liberal Party**



The Liberal government remains committed to working together through a meaningful labour process while respecting what taxpayers and employers can afford. We remain committed to a free collective bargaining process that seeks innovative ideas from unions as well as employers on how we can deliver services to Nova Scotians.

The Liberal Party Platform in the 2017 election is the only platform that is fully costed and fully funded. The PC Party Platform has a \$500 million hole with no explanations as to what programs, services or jobs will be cut. The NDP Platform will run deficits with no substantial plans as to how we will manage this and pay for it now or how our children and grandchildren will pay for it later.

Premier McNeil signed the Five-Point Plan prior to May 30, 2017.

### **Gary Burrill - New Democratic Party**



### ***Anti-worker legislation***

It has become clear over the past three and a half years that the McNeil Liberals have two standards: one for their

friends who enjoy patronage appointments and massive pay increases, and another for the rest of the hard-working people who face wage freezes. The Liberals lied to workers when they said they would bargain in good faith. They disrespected teachers and other public sector workers by passing legislation that undermines their collective bargaining rights.

We believe Nova Scotians deserve a government that respects the democratic process and will negotiate with public servants rather than legislating contracts. An NDP government will respect free and fair collective bargaining. If elected, we will immediately repeal Bills 30, 37, 100, 148, and 75. We are committed to creating a fairer and more equitable work environment for Nova Scotians.

### **Public Service Five-Point Plan**

The NDP is opposed to the privatization of public services, and we share NSGEU's belief that any proposals for privatization must be brought before the public through a transparent process of consultation. We are deeply disturbed that Stephen McNeil has allowed private sector interests to influence important decisions about public services, undermined the democratic process by engaging in back-room discussions and deals, and failed to keep his word to public servants.

Gary Burrill and the NDP will gladly sign the Public Service Five-Point Plan, which reflects our values and vision for the protection of public services in Nova Scotia.



#### **Jamie Ballie – Progressive Conservative Party**

Yes, the PC Party will restore free collective bargaining in Nova Scotia. We will repeal Bills 75 and 148. Repeal of Bill 75 removes the imposed contract on teachers. Repeal of Bill 148 is also important because, even though not proclaimed, it has received Royal Assent and could be used very quickly to remove key elements of free collective bargaining, such as the access to meaningful arbitration. If Bill 148 stays on the books, re-negotiation with teachers would take place with this same threat hanging over the negotiation. Similarly, other public sector workers would also face negotiations with this threat.

The Progressive Conservative Caucus voted against both Liberal bills and were clear in our view that they would be challenged in court and found unconstitutional, as has been the case with similar legislation in BC and Ontario.

*\*NSGEU note: Jamie Ballie signed the 5 Point Plan on May 19, 2017*

## **2. Civil Service Size**

The civil service has undergone a sizeable reduction since 2010. That same time frame has also seen reduced departmental spending.

This reduction in workforce and spending has happened at the same time Nova Scotians are experiencing fewer services offered in our provincial parks, trying to manage less supervision in our correctional facilities and reeling from not having nearly enough employees to look after children in provincial care.

**Given the growing problems resulting from understaffing in our provincial civil service, how would your Party ensure our civil service is expanded to a level such that our provincial employees feel their work is valued by their elected government?**



### **Gary Burrill - New Democratic Party**

We believe a robust civil service is an essential component of a healthy, thriving province. We disagree with the McNeil Liberals' approach of cutting back, freezing wages, and denying Nova Scotians the services they need.

An NDP government will invest in our hospitals, school and communities. Our plan of investment will result in the hiring of more health care professionals, teachers, early child educators, and government employees in a number of departmental areas. Only through investment in public services can we offer our citizens a better standard of living and a path to an equitable, prosperous future.



### **Jamie Ballie – Progressive Conservative Party**

In the 2013 provincial election, public servants and, in fact all Nova Scotians, were subjected to a political leader who was prepared to say or sign anything, in order to get elected. Whether the promise to keep the film tax credit, provide a doctor for every Nova Scotian, or to respect collective bargaining, Stephen McNeil broke them all.

Our platform has also put forward a suite of accountability measures that will offer all Nova Scotians more transparency into how we govern, and can hold us accountable.



### **Stephen McNeil – Liberal Party**

We value the work all our public servants do in Nova Scotia and thank them on behalf of all Nova Scotians for the service they provide to our province.

Any decisions our government makes about hiring within the civil service will be done with an eye to providing the best value for our province. We look to what are both affordable and what is in the best interests of the province.

A new program was launched during our government's mandate called the Experience Through Opportunity Program which involves advertising positions that require limited or no job experience. This allows newly graduated persons to begin a career in the public service commission upon graduation and reinvigorates our public service. This program started in 2015 and at that time, set a five-year goal of recruiting young workers to make up 5% of new government hires, creating about 250 jobs.

## **3. Contracting Out and Privatization**

Nova Scotians, and Canadians generally, have been bombarded in recent years with examples of how contracting out and privatization schemes disproportionately benefit large corporations rather than average, working people.

**Given the overwhelming amount of evidence that speaks in favour of keeping public services public, how would your Party ensure the services delivered by our province are not contracted to corporations whose motivation is mostly profit-driven?**



### **Jamie Ballie – Progressive Conservative Party**

A Progressive Conservative government does not anticipate privatizing or contracting out services. If, in future we consider doing so, a full and open impact assessment will be done. Services will not be compromised and government revenue generation will be strongly considered. We will put Nova Scotia first.



### **Stephen McNeil – Liberal Party**

As a government, we have always done what we feel is in the best interests of Nova Scotians as responsible stewards of taxpayer funds. We do not anticipate any privatization of any public service over our next mandate if re-elected.

The Premier will also sign the five-point plan and honour it. Although our government investigated outsourcing of certain government functions, such as the Joint Registry of Stock Companies, it was determined to not be in the best interests of Nova Scotians.



### **Gary Burrill - New Democratic Party**

As stated above, the NDP is committed to keeping public services public. We will honour the Public Service Five-Point Plan and refrain from signing P-3 deals for our hospitals, schools, highways, and other public infrastructure.

## **4. Public sale of controlled substances**

Controlled substances like liquor are not ordinary commodities and should not be sold as such. The NSLC has evolved to effectively and ethically sell liquor to Nova Scotians. In fact, Social Responsibility is at the core of their stated mandate:

***The NSLC is mandated to manage the sale of beverage alcohol in a responsible manner. But we take this well beyond legislation, making responsibility a core value and a filter through which we make business decisions. We are committed to the societal shift towards a culture of moderation, and demonstrate this through a focus on responsible retailing and education on responsible consumption to all Nova Scotians.***

Soon, marijuana will be sold as a controlled substance as well. Research shows there is a strong appetite for that same socially responsible NSLC regime to oversee the sale of marijuana upon legalization.

### **How will your Party ensure the NSLC maintains it’s current ability to execute its revenue generating business model and social responsibility mandate respecting the sale of controlled substances?**



### **Stephen McNeil – Liberal Party**

Our government has no plan to privatize the NSLC nor are we considering such an option. Our position is this service is properly placed within the public sphere. The NSLC provides excellent service and product selection for Nova Scotians. The current model also ensures the sale and consumption of alcohol is tightly regulated, the laws on identification of minors are respected and that alcohol is kept out of the hands of underage kids.

No decision has been made on how marijuana will be distributed and sold in Nova Scotia. Our government will engage with all Nova Scotians over the coming months to determine the distribution regime that Nova Scotians would like to see. We want to ensure that whatever distribution system is ultimately selected, it is one that keeps the product out of the hands of minors and provides safe and well regulated products for adults.



**Gary Burrill - New Democratic Party**

We believe it is important that the province, which has an interest in protecting the health and safety of Nova Scotians, have a monopoly over the sale of controlled substances. This is why the NDP recommended this spring that the province commit to distributing marijuana through the Nova Scotia Liquor Commission.



**Jamie Ballie – Progressive Conservative Party**

The NSLC will continue to be a government crown corporation under a Progressive Conservative government. Its mandate does not cover the sale of other “controlled substances.” The imposition of the legalization, and therefore regulation of, marijuana upon Provinces by the Federal Liberal Government does not mean that Nova Scotia must rush into a regulatory model that is not well thought through. Making a profit from the sale of marijuana is secondary to ensuring our citizens, especially our youth, are kept safe. The location of sale will be important in achieving those goals. It will be subject to further discussion.

**5. Health Care**

***Amalgamation***

Prior to the 2013 election, the Liberal Party was warned amalgamating the health care system would distract government from delivering care effectively and keep administrators too focused on the mundane tasks associated with reorganization.

Since 2013, amalgamation and mismanagement has resulted in little to no cost savings, new and increased levels of bureaucracy, reduced regional autonomy, mental health funding shortages and severe overcrowding in Atlantic Canada’s regional health centre, the QEII.

**How will your Party fix the problems amalgamation created?**

**How will your Party put government’s focus back on front-line delivery?**

**How will your Party balance adequately funding health care needs while not undermining the workers who deliver that care?**

Home Care and Long Term Care

Home and Long Term Care play a critical role in Nova Scotia’s health care system. By 2026, 25% of our population will be older than 65.

Any government responsibly planning to deal with future demographic challenges needs to be able to attract and retain workers in these sectors. That ability to attract and retain requires respectable wage and benefit packages for the people we’ll be asking to look after our loved ones.

## How will your Party ensure for-profit providers do not undercut government's ability to provide respectable wages and benefits for those who will look after our older population?



**Gary Burrill - New Democratic Party**

### ***Amalgamation***

The Liberal government has spent three and a half years building a centralized health bureaucracy while front-line health care has gotten worse and ER closures have skyrocketed.

The NDP has a proven record of working with communities to improve health care. An NDP government will partner with doctors, nurses, communities and health care professionals to better meet the needs of communities and improve patient care. We will invest \$120 million into making sure the people of Nova Scotia have the health care they deserve. This includes \$30 million each year over the next four years to hire more doctors and nurse practitioners, and improve community health infrastructure.

An NDP government will also invest in seniors' care, improve access to mental health and addiction services, and fix emergency care by opening more Collaborative Emergency Centres.

### ***Home Care and Long Term Care***

Gary and the NDP believe in a province where seniors are treated with respect and are able to live with dignity. We were disturbed when the McNeil government cut more than \$8 million from long-term care facilities, which adversely affected the quality of life of many seniors. Although they re-invested some money for nutrition and programming (because even they realized the harm created by the cuts), the fact remains that the Liberal government has not opened one new long-term care bed since it took office in 2013.

Home care is an important part of the spectrum of care for seniors in Nova Scotia. While in government, the NDP expanded the Caregiver Benefit, restorative care and self-managed programs to allow seniors to manage their own care and stay in their homes and communities longer.

An NDP government would build on these investments to ensure that caregivers have the resources they need to provide quality care to seniors in their homes. We will reverse the cuts to long-term care, and make an additional investment of \$60 million over four years, so that seniors and those who care for them have the resources they need. Our approach will protect and grow jobs in seniors' care across the province.



**Jamie Ballie – Progressive Conservative Party**

The whole purpose of amalgamation of health authorities was to streamline bureaucracy and decision-making so that frontline services could be bolstered by the savings generated. But that is not what has happened. Instead of generating the \$13M in annual savings promised by the McNeil Liberals, it actually cost nearly \$5M in severance payments and then the eventual projected savings was lowered to \$5M annually, maybe. In the interim, a whole new layer of middle manager bureaucracy has mushroomed, while local communities, hospitals, emergency departments, clinics have seen declining services.

While there is still value in streamlined administration, it only really helps if the result is improved healthcare. We will respect local decision-making by implementing site-based management at our regional hospitals, replacing the bureaucratic zone system now in place.

A PC government also offers a range of commitments, including:

- We will hire more doctors and medical specialists, and reduce wait times, by working with our doctors to get results.
- We will double the tuition relief program for doctors and nurse practitioners who commit to practicing medicine in rural and underserved communities.
- We will become a leader in mental health research and innovation by establishing the Mental Health and Wellness Institute at a Nova Scotia university.
- To better serve those with mental illness, we will establish mental health crisis centres to divert patients from Emergency Rooms to more appropriate care.
- We will expand access to Mental Health Courts across the province.
- A PC government will support Nova Scotians with mental illness through a direct tax rebate for those who rely on a psychiatric service dog.
- We will make sure mental health services are available in all Nova Scotia schools.



**Stephen McNeil – Liberal Party**

Nova Scotians deserve a strong, unified health care system. One that spends less on administration (\$6 million less annually) and focuses on front-line care. Over the past four years more money than ever has gone to hiring doctors, nurse practitioners and other clinicians, and addressing waitlists. For too long, our province relied on nine different DHA's with nine different ways of doing things. This led to inequitable service across the province and even worse, artificial barriers to accessing services. MRI wait times are done and there is virtually no wait for home care services. The long-term care waitlist is almost 50% smaller and people can now access services anywhere in the province; and they are choosing to do so. The NSHA and IWK are efficiently implementing evidence-based decisions and planning for the entire province. They help people get care faster by providing mobility and utilizing all our health resources. We know there is more work to be done. A re-elected Liberal Government will work with health care providers, community health boards and the public to finalize new provincial health service plans, starting with primary care, critical care, mental health and addictions, Orthopaedics, cancer care and pediatrics.

We will work with all our home support agencies across Nova Scotia to incrementally begin a process where performance based contracts will be introduced. This process will be undertaken working with all our home care and home support agencies to ensure they are best positioned to meet deliverables when it comes to the provision of care to our most vulnerable citizens. The decision as to the continuation of service will rest with all providers; including the VON. We as a government will commit to ensuring the transition to a contract will be a collaborative one that includes working with all our service providers.

## **6. Education**

Educational assistants, school board employees, teachers and others are unimpressed with the current government's bullying tactics and attempts to undercut the education system.

In one of the previous government's first acts, the government killed the Graduate Retention Rebate and chose not to reinvest the money back into post-secondary education. On top of that, Nova Scotia now has the second highest tuition costs in Canada after the government lifted the tuition cap.

More recently, the current government imposed a contract on teachers they said would be harmful to students.

During the 2013 election, we heard the Stephen McNeil Liberals promise to make things better. Having been given the chance, front line education workers have said the current government has only made things worse.

## How will your Party help restore and expand support services for our school system?



### Jamie Ballie – Progressive Conservative Party

A Progressive Conservative Government will build an education system that is the foundation of a strong economy. The chaos created across Nova Scotia by the McNeil Liberals touches on nearly every aspect of education – from political interference into the schools replacement priority list, to locking kids out of school in a stunt meant to turn parents against teachers. Eventually, having broken negotiating confidence by releasing inflated costing of the NSTU proposals to media, and backing down once on imposing a contract on teachers, Stephen McNeil and the entire Liberal caucus voted to impose a contract on teachers. The relationship between the McNeil Liberals and Nova Scotia teachers is poisoned.

But no one should have been surprised by that, as it was an established pattern of behaviour for Stephen McNeil.

This is not our vision for education and classroom experiences in Nova Scotia. We will get back to basics. Following, is a list of commitments we have made. And will keep.

- We will repeal the Liberal Bill 75 that imposes a contract on teachers, saving taxpayers millions in legal fees. We will also repeal Liberal Bill 148.
- We will immediately use the \$20 million set aside for classroom improvements to set hard class caps and hire more Educational Assistants
- We listened to teachers. We will work with them to make needed classroom improvements in areas like discipline and an enforceable attendance policy.
- We will end the “no fail” policy once and for all and ensure students meet the expected outcomes to succeed.
- We will sign a new Memorandum of Understanding with our universities to get tuition in Nova Scotia back down to the national average.
- Our plan to put vocational training back in schools will let students choose to begin trades training earlier and graduate with a trades certificate.
- We will take money out of the boardrooms and put it in the classrooms by reviewing school board governance.
- A PC government will harness the knowledge and resources already in Nova Scotia by requiring universities to focus on innovation and job creation.



### Stephen McNeil – Liberal Party

The Liberal Party knew when we assumed government in 2013 that a stronger Nova Scotia is not possible without a stronger public education system. That is why, despite some very tough fiscal challenges, we re-invested the \$65 million the previous NDP government cut from classrooms.

The priorities for the Liberal Party regarding education are not our party’s priorities – they are the priorities of teachers, family and students.

Our priorities involve providing teachers with the appropriate supports they need so they can do what they do best – teach



and inspire. Therefore, the Liberal government hired more than 500 new teachers since 2013 to ease the burden teachers are feeling. We also hired more Reading Recovery teachers, early literacy specialists, math mentors, early intervention math teachers and mental health clinicians to ensure our students have the resources they need to excel in literacy, numeracy and creativity and teachers are well supported.

The Liberal Party, if re-elected will continue to support students and classrooms. We will invest in specialists such as speech pathologists and school psychologists so students with complex needs are better positioned to maximize their full potential. On March 7, 2017, the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions was established. This Council, consisting of teachers and parents with considerable experience on and with the front-line are in touch with today's classroom. A Liberal Government will continue to work with the Council and implement their recommendations over the next two years with a \$20 million funding commitment

In late April 2017, the Council recommended spending \$9.3 million of its first-year funding on recommendations which include class caps for junior high, middle school and high schools as well as additional teachers for to support math and literacy in classrooms that have a high number of students with special needs. These recommendations were accepted and implementation has begun. If re-elected, we will continue to work with the Council to implement their recommendations.

Finally, if re-elected, a new Liberal Government has committed to implement a full-day, universal, pre-primary program for four-year olds across Nova Scotia over the next four years. Countless independent evaluations have shown that children who enter school from a pre-primary program do so with more skills and confidence making a better learning environment for both students and teachers. A strong foundation for our youngest students, coupled with the necessary supports students need in today's classrooms will ensure a stronger Nova Scotia.



### **Gary Burrill - New Democratic Party**

All young people in our province should be able to learn, grow, and reach their potential through access to a quality public education.

The McNeil government has shown an unwillingness to invest in our classrooms, and a profound disrespect for our province's teachers. Rural schools are being closed under the Liberals, and hub school proposals are being met with rejection.

An NDP government will repeal Bill 75 and resume negotiations with teachers in good faith. We will make the needed investments in our classrooms--including the introduction of class caps and the hiring of more classroom specialists--to ensure our kids get the support they need. We will establish a moratorium on school closures and commit to working with communities to move forward with the hub school model.

The NDP believes young people in Nova Scotia need to be provided with the opportunities through education that will enable them to see a prosperous future here at home. Nova Scotia is renowned for its post-secondary education system; however, tuition fees at our universities and colleges present major barriers to those seeking further training.

This is why the NDP is committed to eliminating tuition fees for all students enrolled at the Nova Scotia Community College. This will assist 11,000 full-time students and over 11,000 part-time students at all 13 campuses of the NSCC. We want Nova Scotians to be able to get good job training without being saddled with debt. To this end we are also committed to reducing tuition at universities by 10% over 4 years.

By making these investments, we can open the doors to opportunity for a generation that has largely had them shut.

## 7. Workers' Voices in Public Policy

### What is your Party's position on the role of workers and their unions in helping to set public policy?



#### **Gary Burrill - New Democratic Party**

We believe that workers and unions play a key role in our democratic process. Throughout history the labor movement has advocated for the rights of citizens and held governments accountable on wages and income equality, worker health and safety, environmental concerns, racism and discrimination, gender equality, disability rights, and much more. An NDP government will ensure the voices of workers and unions are included, heard and respected in discussions about public policy.



#### **Jamie Ballie – Progressive Conservative Party**

The PC Party, under Jamie Baillie, has engaged honestly and respectfully with public sector employees and their unions. We will continue to do so. Unions and government have roles that are sometimes adversarial but achieving outcomes in the interest of our province and employees demands a sincere desire to find a mutually agreeable outcome. And that will require a respectful relationship, trust, and listening from both sides. Though we have not witnessed this approach in the past 4 years – in fact quite the opposite – it is necessary.



#### **Stephen McNeil – Liberal Party**

When it comes to developing strategies, or setting major public policy, we believe all Nova Scotians, including workers and unions have a role to play. This belief is evident by our actions. We have worked with the Nova Scotia Nurses Union to establish a set of recommendations that will improve safety in community emergency departments. Our Government is also pleased to be working with the NSNU, employers and other health care unions to develop a five-year Workplace Safety Action Plan for Health and Community Services. The work that is currently underway to develop the plan clearly demonstrates the Liberal Government's commitment to create a new culture around safety. Our Government has established the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions made up of front-line teachers, a parent, a student and a union rep to provide recommendations to improve the classrooms; the first-time teachers have had the opportunity to shape the classrooms of the future. All recommendations to date have been accepted and \$9.3 million has been made available for implementation. We have worked with the NSGEU to table PTSD Legislation that will enable workers in certain fields who have PTSD are presumed to have become ill because of their jobs. We are the only political party in this election who has made a commitment in their election platform to pass this legislation.