



NDP
NOVA SCOTIA NDP

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August 9, 2021

NSNDP Response - NSGEU Provincial Election Questionnaire

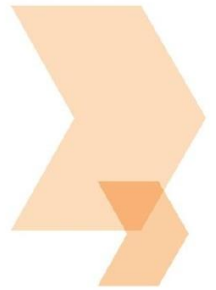
1. Following seven years of almost constant labour strife, will a government led by you respect the collective bargaining process? Would your government use legislation to interfere at the bargaining table?

The Liberals' approach over the last number of years has caused a critical rift between the government and our labour movement. The damage from this rift has rippled through Nova Scotia's schools, hospitals, nursing homes, workplaces and beyond. The NDP recognizes the pressing need for a change of course in this relationship, and will make working together with unions a distinct priority.

The NDP is committed to free and fair collective bargaining. An NDP government would not use legislation to interfere at the bargaining table.

2. Bill 148, the "Public Services Sustainability (2015) Act" Imposed a non negotiated wage settlement and used legislation to unilaterally remove longstanding articles from collective agreements. The history of Bill 148 will cast a long shadow over public sector bargaining for years to come. If elected Premier, will you repeal Bill 148? Will you accept the findings of the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal?

Yes, an NDP government will repeal Bill 148 and respect the high court decisions that ruled free collective bargaining is required by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.



3. Nova Scotia's Long Term Care and Home Care sector is currently privatized, run either as not-for-profit or for-profit enterprises. This has led to a fragmented system of operations with varying degrees of capability. The NSGEU believes that home care is health care, and should be managed and delivered as such with Nova Scotia Health.

What is your stance on long-term care reform?

The NDP recognizes the significant overhaul needed in the living, working and caring conditions of long-term care. An NDP government would take a number of significant steps toward long-term care reform.

An NDP government would build a single room for every person who needs one in long-term care. There is a shortage of around 3,000 single rooms across the province, and the NDP would make the investments needed to build them. An NDP government would:

- *Support renovation requests to update facilities so there are no longer multi-occupancy rooms.*
- *Focus on renovations and building new facilities, based on best practices in long-term care and infection control.*

An NDP government would also:

- *Take the profit out of long-term care by prohibiting public money to be spent on new beds in for-profit homes, and supporting for-profit homes to transfer to public, non-profit or cooperative ownership.*
- *Increase the number of minimum care hours per resident per day to 4.1 hours in long-term care so that residents receive the care that they need and deserve.*
- *Raise the wage floor of Continuing Care Assistants funded by the Department of Health and Wellness through respectful bargaining. Caring*



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jobs are green jobs, and this workforce should be respected and protected by good jobs with benefits and adequate pay that recognizes the skill involved in the work.

The NDP would also undertake a full compensation review of all roles in long-term care, in collaboration with the unions representing long-term care home care workers, to ensure fair treatment of these important workers.

4. Chronic health care understaffing has been affecting our health services long before COVID-19: Emergency Departments are regularly over-capacity; ambulances and paramedics wait with patients for treatment; and Emergency Departments throughout Nova Scotia are forced to close regularly. Many of these issues can be traced back directly to chronic understaffing.

What is your plan to fill longstanding full-time vacancies?

The NDP is committed to free and fair collective bargaining with all unions and to an equivalent respectful relationship with doctors and other non-unionized health care providers. Part of the bargaining discussion will be the pay and working conditions required to retain and attract health care workers.

The NDP will treat health care workers with respect and work with front-line staff to find solutions to the challenges facing our health care system.

Many of the workplace shortage issues in our health system are symptoms of wider systemic issues. In our platform document and throughout the campaign, we are detailing the steps that an NDP government would take to improve our health care system and thereby improve working conditions. For example, an NDP government will:

- *Reduce mental health wait times by opening 14 same day next day mental health care centers;*
- *Establish mental health crisis response teams across the province.*



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- *Make more hospital beds available and reduce wait times by ensuring every senior in long-term care has their own room;*
- *Support health care professionals to work to the full scope of practice;*
- *Hire more nurse practitioners;*
- *Adequately support community health centres;*
- *Improve transparency of our emergency care system by regularly publishing emergency department standards;*
- *Increase long-term care standard hours of care to 4.1 hours per resident per day;*
- *Raise the wages of Continuing Care Assistants;*
- *Integrate Physician Assistants into emergency department to reduce wait times and help ensure everyone gets the care they need; and*
- *Open more Collaborative Emergency Centers bringing emergency care closer to more people and keep more ambulances on the road.*

5. Have you ever had to worry about not having a place to live? Many Nova Scotians were experiencing the threat of evictions and uncontrolled rent increases of 20%, 40% and 90%. This meant vulnerable people faced the choice of going without food or medications and potential homelessness. Government recently capped increases at two per cent per year, retroactive to September, 2020. The cap will remain in place until February 1, 2022, or whenever the COVID-19 State of Emergency is lifted. The issue of affordable housing existed before COVID-19 and will last well after.

As Premier, what would your government do to address this issue on a permanent basis?

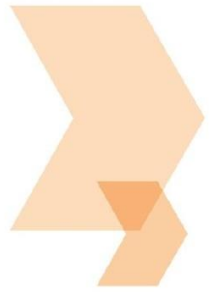


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An NDP government will legislate permanent rent controls to prevent unfair and unjustified rent increases which drive tenants from their home, and strengthen tenants' rights.

Rent control, already enjoyed by most Canadians, is vital. The NDP will also build 1,000 new units of community housing as part of a larger crash program to dramatically increase the supply of affordable housing and work quickly to ensure Nova Scotians enjoy the right to decent housing.

6. If elected, will you commit to implementing a living wage? For reference:<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/living-wages-nova-scotia-and-newbrunswick-2020>.

Why or why not?

The NDP will introduce a \$15 minimum wage and put Nova Scotia on the road to a living wage that makes sure working people can afford to live.

7. NSGEU has over 1,100 members working in Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation facilities throughout Nova Scotia. NSGEU members pride themselves on practicing the highest standards of customer service and social responsibility. These jobs are very important to many communities, especially in more rural areas. What is your plan for the NSLC and alcohol/cannabis sales in our province? As Premier, where would you stand on privatizing the NSLC?

As has been stated, the NSLC plays an important public health and customer service role in the provision of alcohol and cannabis in Nova Scotia. An NDP government would keep the NSLC public.

8. Poverty is a major issue throughout Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia's levels of child poverty has been trending in the wrong direction. What is your plan to reverse this trend and ensure that no Nova Scotian children go hungry?



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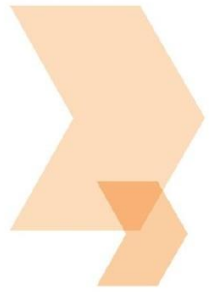
The NDP platform lays out the steps an NDP government will take to lower costs and improve income for people living below the poverty line, and get this province on track to end poverty. Better wages, better social assistance and universal programs like child care and healthy school meals are steps the NDP will take to eliminate poverty. These are investments in people, paid back in the form of a much healthier population with better incomes and the security of knowing they can afford food, shelter and utilities. Permanent rent control is also a key tool towards making sure that people have enough funds for food, shelter, medicine, and other necessities.

For example, an NDP government would make immediate improvements in social assistance to lift people out of deep poverty, and at once start the universal healthy meals in schools.

9. Prior to the election the Nova Scotia Government signed an initial agreement to eventually provide \$10 a day childcare in Nova Scotia. This is going to require a significant infusion of resources. If elected Premier will your government honour this agreement?

This agreement will also require a commitment to ensuring enough people are available to staff the new childcare spaces and facilities. We have seen how low pay has driven people from sectors like early childhood education. If elected Premier, what is your commitment to ensure training and proper salaries will be accessible to attract and keep people in the sector?

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed how critical our childcare sector is to our entire economy. An NDP government will honour the agreement and go one better by setting a maximum child care fee of \$10/day, rather than the more vague commitment to average fees. In addition, the NDP will move immediately to pilot \$10/day and open four new child care centres in



under-serviced areas with \$10/day maximum fees. An NDP government will eliminate fees for before-and-after school care for elementary and pre-primary students.

The NDP will establish a new wage floor for Early Childhood Educators that recognizes their training and skills, plus a fair benefits package, and ensure the better pay and benefits are available across the province. People with ECE qualifications would be the priority for filling the new jobs while planning for expansion addressed the need for training.

10. In what ways does your party platform ensure that decolonization is incorporated into its proposals? How will your party commit to addressing the legacy of colonialism? In what ways is your party prioritizing the social policy solutions found in the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including Jordan's Principle, and in the 231 Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls?

The NDP platform and policy commitments incorporate decolonization with

- *An anti-racism agenda that particularly targets anti-Black racism*
- *Specifically engaging racialized and marginalized communities so they will be included in implementation of major commitments like the Green Jobs Plan*
- *Respecting the nation-to-nation relationship with Mi'kmaw communities and specifically committing to implement the TRC and MMIWG recommendations for provincial action.*

Among the specific steps in the NDP plans you will find:



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- *Assemble a panel on Environmental Racism with representatives from impacted communities to report to the legislature on recommendations and compensation.*
- *End the practice of birth alerts that notify the Department of Community Services when an 'at risk' person gives birth. The practice disproportionately affects racialized parents.*
- *Implement all recommendations in the Wortley Report, including a full ban on street checks with no loophole for racist practices*
- *Improve procurement processes to favour businesses owned by African Nova Scotians and other equity-seeking groups.*
- *Specifically achieve more diversity through initiatives like rebuilding a Nova Scotia based workforce of film industry crew members*
- *Enact an Environmental Bill of Rights that would require decisions with environmental impacts to also be assessed by their impact on African Nova Scotian communities.*

The NSNDP created the Yvonne Atwell fund which supports African Nova Scotians and other equity-seeking candidates for provincial office.

11. Please briefly describe your plans as Premier to help all Nova Scotians through your Covid-19 recovery plan.

Nova Scotians' response to the pandemic has been inspiring but it also revealed the serious inequities in the delivery of public services and alarming gaps in the funding and organization of health care particularly.

This election is a decisive choice between the Liberals, who plan to cut \$209 million from programs and services in the year following the election; the Conservatives, whose plans include \$200 million in services to give to profitable corporations; and the NDP, who propose a vision for moving beyond this recent time of challenge in the direction of something better.



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The NDP believes that our recovery from COVID-19 must focus on improving the lives of everyone in our province by:

- *Lightening the load for people;*
- *Strengthening our local communities, including increasing our capacity to rely on food, energy, and goods and services that are produced here at home;*
- *Investing in public services, including long-term care, housing, and child care; and*
- *Making sure that the federal government, the wealthy, banks, and corporations pay their fair share of the costs.*

12. The civil service has undergone a sizeable reduction since 2010. During that same time frame there has also been reductions in 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?

The NDP recognizes that understaffing, particularly in the face of growing demand, creates poor morale and employee burnout while denying Nova Scotians the quality services they deserve.

This is the wrong time for penny-pinching and new cutbacks. An NDP government will listen and take an open door approach to evidence of under-staffing and inadequate or dangerous service. The NDP agrees that civil



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service staffing should be at the levels required for a successful recovery from the pandemic.

