

# Something *better* for Nova Scotia





## Nova Scotia NDP

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## DEAR FRIENDS,

We stand at a moment of decisive choice in Nova Scotia—between the Liberals, who plan to cut \$209 million from programs and services in the year following the election; the Conservatives, who are focused on privatizing health services and listening to their corporate friends; and the NDP, who propose a vision for moving beyond this recent time of challenge in the direction of something better.

This document sets out that vision: for a Nova Scotia where the health care you need is the care that is provided, where every person and family has an affordable place to live, where the climate emergency is addressed with unprecedented investments in green jobs and a transition to a renewable economy, and where paid sick days, decent wages, and access to quality child care are available to everyone.

We're all glad to see the end of the year and a half that's just behind us. Together, in Nova Scotia, we have paid the price, stayed the course, and done what's been required to protect our families, communities and neighbours.

We see now, more clearly than ever, what's needed to ensure we come out of this healthier, more prosperous, and stronger.

**It's time for something better.**

All the very best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Burrill".

**Gary Burrill, MLA**  
**Leader, Nova Scotia NDP**



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# A COVID RECOVERY FOR ALL OF US



IMAGINE WHAT YOU COULD DO if you didn't have to spend so much energy on the basics.

In the NDP, we believe Nova Scotia can be a place where people don't have to choose between going to work sick or putting food on the table. Where the health care you need is there when you need it. Where child care is affordable and accessible. And where our energy comes from our own renewable resources.

We can do things differently so that the wealth we all produce can provide access to health care, a place to live, and opportunities for everyone.

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.

*As we recover from the pandemic, the climate emergency threatens our way of life in Nova Scotia—so our recovery must help us tackle climate change.*

An NDP government would bring together a broad Economic Recovery Taskforce to make recommendations about how we can grow the economy as we recover from COVID-19 in the next several years.

The Economic Recovery Taskforce would include representatives from the following sectors, communities, and stakeholders:

- » Fishery
- » Agriculture
- » Energy
- » Construction
- » Telecommunications
- » Forestry
- » Small business
- » Cooperatives
- » Labour unions
- » Environmental organizations
- » Non-profits, including women's organizations
- » African Nova Scotian communities
- » Mi'kmaq communities
- » Municipalities
- » Education and early childhood development
- » Colleges and universities
- » Economists, and
- » An MLA from each party

The Liberal recovery plan is to cut \$209 million from the services we all rely on. They won't say where or how they will make these cuts, which will threaten Nova Scotia's ability to truly recover from the pandemic.

The NDP plan is to invest in creating something better for everyone in Nova Scotia.



## NDP Fighting for You

AT PROVINCE HOUSE and in the House of Commons, the NDP has been fighting for real support for people since the pandemic started.

Here's some of what the NDP has won for people since the start of the pandemic:

- The NDP was able to **double the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) from \$1000 to \$2000**, putting thousands of dollars in the pockets of Nova Scotians.
- The NDP secured an **eviction ban** in the first wave of the pandemic, ensuring people were able to stay home.

- The NDP fought for **rent control**, saving many families hundreds or thousands of dollars in housing costs.
- Federally, the NDP secured the first new social program in a generation with **paid sick time** through the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit. At the same time, provincially, the NDP secured **4 paid sick days** through the COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave Program.

As we've seen with the eviction ban and with the CERB, the Liberals are prepared to roll back programs that people need. But when you elect New Democrats, you know you will have a representative who will fight for you.



# HEALTH CARE THAT IS THERE FOR YOU WHEN YOU NEED IT

PEOPLE SHOULD REASONABLY expect that when they need health care, it will be there for them. Unfortunately, over the past eight years, the Liberals have created a crisis in our health care system.

Over 69,000 people do not have access to a family doctor. Families who are facing health emergencies experience long waits for ambulances and closed or crowded emergency rooms.

For people experiencing mental health issues, there is a two-tier system. If you have money or private insurance, you can get care quickly. If you don't, you can wait months for support you need now.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can invest in making our communities healthier and expand access to primary care, mental health care, and emergency services. And we can respect the people who deliver health care on the front lines by listening to their concerns and ideas for improvements.

## Primary Care

NOVA SCOTIA HAS A significant doctor shortage, particularly in rural areas. As of July 2021, there were over 69,000 people waiting on the family doctor registry. There is poor access to care even for those registered with family practices—6-week waits for appointments, and little to no access to same-day/next-day care. Nova Scotians report this more than others across the country.

Walk-in clinics are also struggling to stay open, making it even harder for people without access to a family doctor to access prescription renewals, routine bloodwork, vaccinations, surgical follow-up, and other important primary care.

Without access to primary care, people are forced to go to the emergency room for non-emergency care or just to go without, creating more significant problems in our health care system down the road. Since the Liberals were elected, there has been a 127 per cent increase in the number of people visiting emergency departments who aren't attached to a primary care provider.

As of March 2021, Nova Scotia had a total of 160 Family Doctor and Specialist vacancies, up from 134 last summer. Between 2018 and 2020, there was a net increase of just three family physicians in the province.

Virtual care can be an important part of the solution. The pandemic has expanded our understanding of virtual health care, and many patients and health care professionals want to see this form of care continue to be an option for patients in the future.

#### **THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Introducing a Virtual Health Care Optimization Act**, which would make telehealth a permanent option for patients who wish to access care in this manner, and support physicians' needs to employ safe and secure technologies and platforms.
- **Increasing investment in physician recruitment and retention.**

There is a wide array of health professionals who can expand access to primary care while we recruit more family doctors. Nurse practitioners, family practice nurses, physician assistants, occupational therapists and social workers can all help to get more people access to the care they need. But the Liberals have been slow to invest in complementary health care providers.

For example, physician assistants have been widely employed in the Canadian Forces for 50 years, and yet are not

integrated into the Nova Scotia health system. Our province has more physician assistants than any other province but they mostly move on to other careers. A recent Conference Board of Canada report on integrating physician assistants found that making better use of the profession could free up almost 30 per cent of doctors' time.

These are the kinds of creative solutions we should be looking for in our health care system.

#### **THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Investing in community health centres** to work with communities on primary care needs.
- **Further integrating physician assistants, social workers, nurse practitioners and RNs into the health care system.**

Pregnancy, postpartum, parental, and pre- and post-natal care is another key component of our primary health care system. The Liberals have failed to expand access to midwives and cut pre-natal classes offered by public health, making it more difficult for people to access primary care during and after pregnancy.

Midwifery care has huge potential to improve the primary care outcomes during pregnancy for those who might not otherwise be integrated into the health care system. It has the best care outcomes for low-risk pregnancies. In Nova Scotia, there are midwives based in Fishermen's Memorial Hospital in Lunenburg, the IWK in Halifax and at St. Martha's in

Antigonish.

There are no midwives practicing at Cape Breton Regional Hospital, which has the province's highest rate of C-sections for low-risk pregnancies.

**THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Creating a full midwifery program throughout Nova Scotia**, so that every person who requests midwifery services is able to access them.
- Working with all Atlantic Provinces towards establishing a **training program for midwives in Atlantic Canada**.
- Ensuring public health is able to **provide comprehensive pre- and post-natal support to parents**.

## Emergency Care

IN NOVA SCOTIA, TOO MANY PEOPLE are not getting the emergency care they need because emergency rooms are too often overcrowded (in urban areas) or closed (in rural areas). ER closures have increased every year since the Liberals have been in power, and they increased again last year by 30 per cent. Our hospitals are bursting at the seams—the share of people who left an emergency department without being seen grew by 45 per cent last year.

Solutions are available in innovative and creative models of care—but the Liberals have refused to implement fixes that are proven to work, such as opening Collaborative Emergency Centres where patients can have better access to primary health care services,

or integrating physician assistants into our health care system.

The emergency care problem is particularly acute in Cape Breton, but the Liberals are closing community hospitals there while they centralize services. Cape Bretoners were promised that community hospital emergency rooms would stay open in the meantime, but in fact they have together had thousands of hours of unscheduled closures in recent years. None of this results in better access to emergency care.

**THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Opening new Collaborative Emergency Centres**. This is an innovative solution to the problems plaguing emergency care in rural Nova Scotia, such as frequent ER closures and reduced availability of primary care. This successful approach began under the NDP government but was abandoned by the Liberals.
- **Keeping Cape Breton community hospitals open**. People in New Waterford and the Northside deserve to be able to go to an emergency room in their community.

People who do not have regular access to primary care often end up in emergency departments just to have a prescription filled, or for problems that should have been looked at much sooner. Others end up in the emergency room in mental health crisis when access to earlier, more appropriate supports could mean that people get

access to the right care at the right time.

Space is at a premium in our hospitals, and many beds are occupied by people who don't need or want to be in the hospital. More than 20 per cent of hospital beds are occupied by people who require a different type of care, usually placement in a long-term care facility or at home with additional home care supports. Keeping people in hospital is expensive—it costs over five times as much to care for someone in a hospital than in a nursing home.

Despite these challenges, the Liberals refuse to publish regular information about the state of our emergency rooms. People in Nova Scotia are forced to make Freedom of Information requests to find out how long people wait or how many people leave without being seen. We need a

government that will publish this information regularly so that the public can track the state of emergency care.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Building a single long-term care room for every person who needs one**, so that our hospitals are not overcrowded by people who are better served in a different level of care and ensuring seniors are not stuck in hospital for months.
- **Improving access to emergency mental health services so people have more options before resorting to the emergency room when in crisis.**
- Improving the transparency of our emergency care system by **regularly publishing emergency department standards.**





Understaffing and overcrowding in ERs means that paramedics and ambulances are routinely stuck, waiting for hours to be able to offload patients, which means they are not available to help someone in an emergency. This can be the difference between receiving life-saving care and not. It also means that paramedics work long shifts and are burning out at an alarming rate.

There are too many people who do not call an ambulance when they need one because they are worried about the bill. Patients with a valid Nova Scotia health card are billed \$146.55 for a trip to the hospital and the cost is even higher for non-residents and new Canadians. These fees are

unmanageable for many people and it is unfair that people have to hesitate when calling for medically-necessary transportation. The policy also does not work—last year, the government wrote off \$2.7 million in uncollectable ambulance fees.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Addressing paramedic burn-out** by making sure our entire health system is working as it should.
- **Eliminating fees for ambulance services.** No one should hesitate to call for help in an emergency.

# Mental Health Care

THE MENTAL HEALTH OF Nova Scotians has been neglected by the Liberals for too long. The NDP recognizes that mental health is just as important as physical health. Despite the growing awareness of the importance of mental health care, the Liberals do not see it as an urgent issue. They have stood by while mental health wait times have remained high, moved mental health services farther away from communities, and have offloaded responsibility for mental health care onto local organizations and families. People who work in the system and people who access it describe a broken system that is burning people out.

When people are experiencing anxiety, depression, mental illness, or other forms of mental health concerns, they need to be able to get help right away. Barriers to publicly-funded mental health services have created a two-tiered system in our province. Individuals seeking care and treatment face extremely long wait times, and an absence of primary-level assistance and education that might be useful before seeking a diagnosis.

Nova Scotians report one of the highest lifetime prevalence rates of mental health disorders in Canada. To start, we need to fund mental health services properly. Currently, the Liberals only dedicate 6 per cent of the health budget to mental health services, but experts recommend a minimum of 10 per cent. Meeting this baseline would

mean millions of dollars more for frontline services.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Establishing a Mental Health Bill of Rights** and moving to funding mental health services to the World Health Organization's recommended 10 per cent of the health budget.
- **Making same-day/next-day in-person mental health appointments available across the province.**
- **Integrating mental health services** with other services associated with mental distress, such as education, family supports and housing.

When you or someone you love is facing a mental health emergency, you should not have to choose between waiting weeks or months to get an appointment or calling the police. Police are not trained for mental health emergencies; however they are routinely asked to respond to emergency mental health calls. Police services across the province have explained that they are not best suited to respond to mental health crises.

In Nova Scotia, there is only one emergency mental health response program, the Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team, which is based in the HRM. Emergency crisis response services should be equally available, no matter where in the province you live.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Establishing emergency mental health crisis teams** across the province, like the successful models in other

jurisdictions. These crisis teams will include a variety of mental health care professionals, such as social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and nurses.

## Long-Term Care

NOT ONLY DID THE COVID-19 pandemic expose the many cracks in the long-term care system in our province, but residents of long-term care facilities and their families also made significant sacrifices during the pandemic. We owe it to these residents and their families to fix the problems in long-term care now.

For eight years, the Liberals have refused to build the long-term care beds that are required, leaving many seniors waiting months in hospital or at home for a space in long-term care. Eleven homes the previous NDP government

had slated to be replaced have been ignored by the Liberals.

Several reports over the last decade note that multiple occupancy rooms directly impact infection control. Forty-two per cent of rooms in the province's facilities have shared bathrooms. Many of these are in facilities that were slated for replacement, but have not been replaced.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Northwood repeatedly requested funding to build additional floors, allowing each resident to have their own room, but the Liberals refused.

The Liberals also cut \$5 million in funding to long-term care facilities, impacting the ability of facilities to provide adequate staffing and support.

On the eve of the election, the Liberals



announced some new long-term care beds to be built by several years from now. Hundreds of new beds would already be open had the Liberals followed the NDP plan in place in 2013. The Liberals still have no plan for providing staffing ratios and minimum care standards, and or to provide long-term care and home care workers a living wage.

It's time for significant public investment in a system that values the people who live and work in long-term care.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Building a room for every resident in long-term care by 2030.** The NDP would build a room for every person on the waitlist, so that seniors are no longer waiting months or more in hospital for access to appropriate care in a long-term care home.
- **Increasing the number of minimum care hours per resident** per day to 4.1 hours.
- **Raising the wages of Continuing Care Assistants** funded by the Department of Health and Wellness to help recruit and retain staff in long-term care. This workforce should be respected and protected by good jobs with benefits and adequate pay that recognizes the skill involved in the work.
- **Taking the profit out of long-term care** by investing any new public money in public and non-profit facilities.

In many other provinces, there is a

seniors' advocate who is at arm's length from government and can sound the alarm about issues that impact seniors in our province. The NDP believes that this type of accountability can ensure that seniors' interests and needs are better considered by the government.

In some provinces, it was the Seniors' Advocate who alerted the public to the risk of the COVID-19 pandemic to long-term care residents.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Establishing a Seniors' Advocate Office.**

More than 17,000 Nova Scotians rely on home care supports that are delivered by about 20 agencies contracted by the Nova Scotia Health Authority. The province spends about \$260 million a year on home care supports and the waitlist for service is growing as the population gets older and long-term care spaces are hard to come by.

The current patchwork system makes it difficult to access information about home care services. For example, the Liberals have not been able to say how many people are receiving care, or the average length of time that people spend on the waitlist for home care.

There are currently around 1,400 people on the waitlist for home care supports. Wait times for home care keep people in hospital beds who cannot return home because there is not the capacity to care for them in their recovery at home.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Helping people stay in their homes** as long as they are able.
- **Expanding the services that are available through home care** to include allied health such as physiotherapy, social work and occupational therapy.
- **Conducting a review of nursing hours** available to home care recipients with the goal of creating standards of care at home.
- **Establishing and reporting on home care wait time standards** and providing more support to continuing care logistics.

## A More Equitable Health Care System

OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM is at a breaking point, and there are some communities in our province for whom health care is particularly hard to access. These communities have been telling us what they need and it is time to listen.

Nova Scotia has a long history and present reality of anti-Black racism. This means that African Nova Scotians experience barriers to accessing housing, education, justice, employment and health care. Studies have shown that African Nova Scotians experience higher rates of chronic disease than white populations, but we also lack comprehensive data on health inequities in Nova Scotia.

The NDP believes that access to health care is a human right. But many migrants, international students, and temporary residents in Nova Scotia have to pay out of pocket for health care—ambulance fees alone are over \$1,000 per trip in an emergency. This is wrong and it is time to treat people like the members of our communities that they are. COVID-19 has shown us that our collective health depends on the health of each of us.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Implementing a community-developed African Nova Scotian Health Care Strategy** that includes collecting race-based data in health care.
- **Ending the practice of birth alerts in hospitals that disproportionately impact Black and Indigenous families.**
- **Expanding MSI coverage** to all people living in Nova Scotia regardless of citizenship status.
- **Ensuring supports in hospitals are in place for people with disabilities**, such as interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing people.

2SLGBTQIA+ people in Nova Scotia continue to face barriers and long waits to accessing knowledgeable and appropriate health care, particularly physical and mental health support for people accessing gender-affirming care. Timely care is critical—as many as 45% of trans people attempt suicide at some point.

The Liberals have taken the approach of only covering gender-affirming procedures after human rights challenges to their policies. We must be much more proactive, in consultation with trans and non-binary communities, to develop supportive policies that mean that gender-affirming care is truly accessible. We also need to grow our province's capacity to provide gender-affirming procedures. Travel to Montreal to seek care is an unacceptable hurdle for many people.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Funding the coverage of PrEP HIV prevention medication**, and making rapid testing for HIV a reality.
- **Engaging in a widespread consultation process with trans and non-binary communities** to determine barriers to accessing health care, with a commitment to identifying and addressing broad access to care issues.
- **Establishing a principle of broadly extending MSI coverage to gender affirming procedures** that are determined to be medically necessary by a patient together with their healthcare provider.
- **Removing gendered language and unnecessary focus on marital status from the birth registration process.**

## Improving Access to Health Care in Cape Breton

THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT shortage of family physicians, specialists, psychiatrists and other health care workers in Cape Breton. Stories of doctors leaving Cape Breton are more and more common. As of July 2021, there were more than 8,000 people on the registry for a family doctor in Cape Breton.

Emergency room closures in Cape Breton have increased every year since the Liberals have been in power, jumping by 30 percent in 2019-2020. Death rates at Cape Breton hospitals are also among the highest in the country.

The average ambulance offload time at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital is 31 minutes, well above the 20-minute standard recommended in the Fitch Report. #CodeCritical alerts are called frequently in Cape Breton, meaning that ambulances are often not available for people who need them.

In response to this concerning reality, the Liberals have committed to closing two community hospitals in Cape Breton—the New Waterford Consolidated Hospital, and the Northside General. Removing emergency and hospital services from communities in Cape Breton is poised to make the health crisis worse.

**THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Listening to health care workers, doctors, and community members** in Cape Breton about what is needed in the health care system.
- **Creating a health strategy for Cape Breton** to address the disparity in health outcomes between Cape Breton and the rest of the province. This would include reporting regularly on progress.
- **Keeping in-patient and emergency health care in New Waterford and North Sydney** to ensure people have care close to home and to relieve pressure on the Regional.
- **Creating same-day/next-day mental health appointments and an in-person mental health crisis response service** in Cape Breton.
- **Making sure every person who needs a long-term care bed in Cape Breton is able to get a bed locally.**



## Keeping people healthy

HEALTH IS SO MUCH MORE than what happens in a hospital or doctor's office. We know that access to housing, healthy food, adequate income and social supports are all essential to good health. We need a government that recognizes that healthy people make up healthy communities and vice versa. This means investing in social services and preventative health care, not just bandaid solutions.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Making sure people have the basics:** food security, shelter, adequate income and community supports.

The Liberals have allowed our health care system to become stretched to the point where anything extra feels out of reach. People have to pay out of pocket, sometimes thousands of dollars, for necessary medical supplies and pharmaceuticals like vaccines, insulin pumps, and contraceptives. While the federal NDP continues to lead the charge towards a national, universal pharmacare and dental plan, provincial



governments can play a much larger role in providing better access to essential drugs and services that will keep people healthy and save our health care system money in the long run.

**THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Expanding coverage of pharmaceuticals and medical devices** so that Nova Scotians have access to things like free birth control, free shingles vaccines, and better access to insulin pumps.
- **Working towards the availability of a safe supply of drugs** so we do not lose another person to preventable opioid overdose.
- **Creating a universal, public, school-based oral health program in Nova Scotia**, staffed primarily by dental hygienists with the assistance of public health dentists.



## Fighting for a Fair Deal from the Feds

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT plays a major role in Nova Scotia's economy. For smaller provinces, like Nova Scotia, equalization payments help provide important public services.

Unfortunately, under the Liberals and Conservatives, the federal government has reduced funding for health care and other important transfers. And there has been limited progress towards a universal, national pharmacare program.

The provincial Liberals are not fighting for Nova Scotia's fair share.

**THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Actively pressing the federal government to implement a national pharmacare program.** Nova Scotians should not have to choose between paying for medication and other necessities.
- **Standing up for Nova Scotia's proper share of the Canada Health Transfer.**

# LIGHTENING THE LOAD FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



RIGHT NOW, NOVA SCOTIA has the lowest incomes in the country, rapidly increasing housing costs, and the fastest rising food bank use. Whether it's finding an affordable place to live in your community, trying to afford child care, or figuring out how to pay for the basics, many families are falling behind. And with most of us living paycheque to paycheque, it is harder to pay the rent or mortgage and save for the future.

When COVID-19 hit, we saw how close to the line people are living. Thousands of people lost their jobs and they were only one paycheque away from not being able to pay for the basics—housing, food, bills.

The NDP believes that people need to be able to afford to live. That means making sure the basics are affordable, and improving wages and benefits for all workers.

## Housing you can afford

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has made very clear that having access to safe, affordable housing is essential. During a time when we have all been told to stay home to keep everyone healthy and safe, many people have had to struggle to keep a roof over their heads. Massive rent increases, "renovictions," and skyrocketing house prices have made it more difficult to rent or own a home in many communities.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Halifax's vacancy rate sat at an historic one

per cent, lower even than Vancouver or Toronto. Currently, one in five renters in Nova Scotia pays more than 50 per cent of their income on rent and utilities. High rents and a hot housing market mean many families also can't save to buy a home.

The Liberal approach to housing has been to funnel public money to private landlords through rent supplements and other subsidies. Rent supplements are an ineffective tool in a low-vacancy environment when landlords can easily choose renters without the paperwork and stigma of a rent supplement attached.

Under pressure from the NDP, community organizations, and tenant groups, the Liberals brought in a temporary cap on rent increases. The Liberals will lift the cap when the State of Emergency is lifted, which could be as soon as this fall. Tenants are already receiving notices of rental increases of \$250 or more.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Making rent control permanent** so that annual rent increases are capped.
- **Strengthening tenants' rights** including allowing tenants to file group complaints, requiring landlords to post rental rates in a building, and creating a registry of health and safety violations in rental properties.

Rent control alone will not address the housing crisis. We need more affordable units. Since 2013, the Liberals have built

fewer than 200 new units of housing and abandoned the housing strategy that was laid out by the previous NDP government.

The NDP will get Nova Scotia back into the housing game by investing in building affordable housing through co-operatives, non-profits and public housing.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Building 1000 new units of housing** in the next four years by reinvesting in publicly-owned, cooperative, and non-profit housing.
- **Supporting a permanent Housing Trust** where provincial, municipal, and private resources would go to a pool of money that non-profit housing providers can access quickly in order to acquire and provide affordable housing.
- **Exercising a right of first refusal to acquire existing affordable housing** that comes on the market.
- **Enabling municipalities to require affordable housing** through inclusion-ary zoning.

The NDP also believes in prioritizing the needs of marginalized people and groups living in precarious housing conditions including seniors, people with disabilities, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and communities made vulnerable by structural racism and discrimination.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Funding housing for African Nova Scotian communities, Mi'kmaw communities, people experiencing criminalization, lone parent households and other marginalized populations.** These funds could be used to support alternative ownership models including resident-run co-ops and community land trusts as ways to enable community control.
- **Accelerating the building of Small Options Homes** for people with disabilities.

The current housing crisis will get worse, not better, if we allow housing to be only about investment income and not about people having a place to live.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Addressing the financialization of housing.** The NDP would explore options such as phasing out public money going to Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), implementing a vacant unit tax, and introducing progressive property taxes over \$1 million.
- **Strengthening the regulation of short-term rentals** to stop the creation of "ghost hotels" and prevent the loss of long-term residential units.

## Investing in our children

THE CLOSURES OF SCHOOLS and licensed child care during the pandemic highlighted how important child care is not only for parents and children, but also for our economy. Parents were often forced to juggle work responsibilities—whether working from home or on site at a workplace—with child care and parenting responsibilities.

Not surprisingly, many women were forced to leave the workforce either due to job loss or caretaking responsibilities. In the third wave of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia, women’s unemployment increased by 23 per cent.

The Liberals have failed to understand the important role that affordable child care plays in the lives of parents, particularly women. During the first wave of COVID-19, Nova Scotia was the only province that did not provide child care for essential workers. And the Liberal government suggested that parents and families could find “organic” child care arrangements. More recently, the Liberals announced child care options for essential workers, but failed to follow through, leaving parents and child care providers in the dark about how child care would be provided.

The NDP believes in investing in universal affordable child care. Parents shouldn’t have to pay \$900 per month per child for care.



For too long, child care in the province has been characterized by a shortage of options for infants and school-aged children, high parent fees, and low wages for early childhood educators.

We can invest in something better for our children and save parents money.

**THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Introducing free, inclusive, school-based, before- and after-school care** for children in elementary schools (including pre-primary).
- Working closely with child care providers to **establish a system of universal, \$10/day child care** starting by:
  - » Reducing all parent fees by half in our first year and piloting \$10/day child care in 50 existing non-profit licensed sites including rural and urban settings, family day homes, and diverse communities.
  - » Establishing new publicly owned and operated child care centres in child care deserts, creating new licensed child care spaces in underserved areas.
  - » Establishing a new wage floor for ECEs and developing an equitable benefits package for ECEs, regardless of where they work.

We can also make life easier for parents and students by delivering more programs through our schools. Around the world, publicly-funded school meals are the norm. Canada is the only G8 country that does not have a national school food program.

What we have now in Nova Scotia is a patchwork of school programs that rely heavily on volunteers and charitable donations. Universal school food programs reduce costs for families, have positive health outcomes for students, support local farms and create good jobs.

**THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Establishing a universal school food program** that would provide at least one meal during the school day with an emphasis on foods that are locally, ecologically, and ethically produced, nutritious, and culturally appropriate.



# Better Wages and Working Conditions

COVID-19 HAS MADE PLAIN the importance of many low-wage workers not only to our economy, but to our health and safety. People working in grocery stores, gas stations, food services, food processing, cleaning and janitorial services and other essential sectors have been on the frontlines of this pandemic while being paid low wages, often without any benefits.

So far in 2021, Loblaws—the parent company of Atlantic Superstore—has reported \$313 million in profit—a 30 per cent increase from before the pandemic. And yet, these large, profitable employers are not paying good wages or providing adequate benefits to their employees.

By increasing the minimum wage, we can ensure that people are able to make ends meet and also have money to spend in the local economy.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Introducing a \$15 minimum wage** to get Nova Scotia on the road to a living wage.
- **Ensuring the right to join a union is protected.**

Without access to paid sick time, many people have to make the impossible choice between paying the bills and following public health guidelines. In many cases people simply cannot afford to take time off when they are sick.

During this pandemic, the lack of access to paid sick days has had deadly consequences. The first death in



Canada due to COVID-19 came at a long-term care facility where staff sick time had just been cut back. As a result of the cutbacks, staff had no choice but to go to work sick, initiating an outbreak that resulted in twenty-one deaths.

After pressure from the NDP and health experts, the Liberals introduced a paid sick time program that will expire on July 31, 2021.

Before the pandemic, people went to work sick regularly, putting their coworkers and the public at risk. Without permanent paid sick time, this will continue to be the norm. We can prevent this with paid sick time for all workers so no one has to choose between going to work sick and paying their bills.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Introducing 10 paid sick days** into the Labour Standards Code to ensure all workers can afford to stay home sick.
- **Conducting a comprehensive review of the Labour Standards Code** to ensure that workers in Nova Scotia have access to better working conditions.
- **Expanding the definition of workplace violence** to include bullying and psychological harm.



# Saving you money on essentials

WITH STAGNANT WAGES and increasing costs, families are feeling squeezed when it comes to paying the bills. The pandemic has created even more uncertainty as people have been laid off or had their hours cut.

The NDP believes in finding ways to help families save money. When your household budget is tight, increases in any expenses are tough to swallow. This year, while many Nova Scotians are seeing increases in their auto insurance, drivers in British Columbia are actually seeing rates go down because of public auto insurance.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Exploring a public auto insurance option** to save families money.

Almost half of all Nova Scotians rely on well water. The province recommends having well water tested every six months for coliform bacteria, but the cost of doing so makes it extremely difficult for many people.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Providing free well water testing** for bacteria, arsenic, lead and uranium.

Not all household expenses are the same. For women and trans people, menstrual products are a necessity and come at a price. Many people, particularly young people, are embarrassed to ask for menstrual products at school, at work, or in a

public place if they need them.

Municipalities, community organizations, and schools have started providing free menstrual products in bathrooms. We can build on this to ensure no one is going without these essential products.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Providing free menstrual products** in all public places and workplaces.

This past year, more than any other, we have seen the importance of gathering together to mark the death of someone we love. Not being able to gather to mourn has been a particularly sad and difficult part of COVID-19.

The NDP doesn't think that the government should be collecting tax from families during this difficult time.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Eliminating the HST on funerals.**



# TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS WITH GREEN JOBS

WHEN IT COMES TO THE environment, everyone wants the same thing: clean air, clean water and a future for the next generation. Nova Scotia is rich with natural spaces and resources, but for too long these resources have been exploited in unsustainable ways.

Climate change will impact every aspect of people's lives in Nova Scotia, from coastal erosion, heat waves and droughts, to more intense winter storms and hurricanes. The province needs to do our part to prevent catastrophic global heating, and to mitigate the impacts of a changing climate.

The Liberals have said one thing when it comes to the environment, and then done another. They have been unwilling to set a greenhouse gas emissions target that is in line with what Nova Scotia must do to prevent catastrophic climate change and keep global warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius. They gutted Nova Scotia's flagship environmental legislation, removing more of Nova Scotia's environmental targets. The Liberals also tried to sell Owl Heads provincial park to a golf course developer in a secret deal, and they even gutted their own Biodiversity legislation.

The NDP knows that every decision the government makes needs to go through

a climate change lens. We must act now if we want to protect our province from the devastating impacts of climate change.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Doing Nova Scotia's part to prevent catastrophic climate change** by setting a new target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 50 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.
- **Immediately establishing a Green Jobs Task Force to guide the transformation of Nova Scotia's economy** into a sustainable one while creating thousands of green jobs. This task force will include representatives from:
  - » labour organizations;
  - » business organizations;
  - » environment organizations;
  - » the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities;
  - » fisheries organizations;
  - » agriculture organizations;
  - » forestry organizations;
  - » universities and community colleges;
  - » anti-poverty organizations;
  - » women's advocacy organizations;
  - » African Nova Scotian

- organizations;
- » Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse; and
- » Mi'kmaq organizations.
- **Starting the work of a Green Jobs Plan right away by:**
  - » **Tripling Nova Scotia's energy efficiency targets.**
  - » **Committing to 90 per cent renewable energy by 2030.**
  - » **Initiating a just, community-led transition for carbon-intensive workforces**—including free NSCC tuition and dedicated training streams for energy efficiency and renewable workforces.
  - » **Introducing a step code designed to bring new buildings to net-zero energy by 2032** and mandatory building and home energy efficiency disclosure.
  - » **Creating and funding test sites for**
    - a deep retrofit strategy** that would dramatically lower heating costs and GHG emissions with materials manufactured locally.
  - » **Making provincial investments in research and development for battery storage and renewable technology.**
  - » **Establishing a food secretariat and a new universal school food program.**
  - » **Phasing out coal by 2030.**
- **Reigning in Nova Scotia Power** by writing 'climate change' into Nova Scotia Power and Efficiency Nova Scotia's mandates, studying the possibility of returning some or part of Nova Scotia Power to public ownership, and establishing stricter oversight— including higher penalties for performance failures, and base-rate refunds for outages.



## Supporting local communities to address climate change

MUNICIPALITIES ARE A KEY PARTNER in addressing climate change. This local level of government is on the front lines of the impacts of climate change, dealing with challenges like coastal protection and infrastructure issues, energy poverty, electrification of transit and more.

The NDP believes in working in partnership with local municipalities to combat

climate change and improve the lives of people across the province.

THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Expanding municipalities' abilities to support retrofits and renewables** in homes through a province-wide Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs.
- **Establishing a fund for climate adaptation projects** that would create local jobs and protect municipal infrastructure.
- Getting Nova Scotia on the path to 90% renewables by moving quickly to **create regulations to allow for community-owned renewables and**



**virtual net metering** and working with communities to install their own renewable energy systems.

- **Studying the possibility of returning Nova Scotia Power and the power grid to public ownership.**
- **Creating strategies for the electrification of transportation and the elimination of energy poverty.**

## Forestry

NOVA SCOTIA FORESTS are in trouble. Decades of unsustainable harvests, the rise of invasive species, and a changing climate have weakened the forests.

People across our province want to see a major reduction in clearcutting on Crown land and the use of more sustainable harvest methods in general. The Lahey Report outlines the path for moving towards more ecological forestry.

The Liberals have failed to implement the Lahey Report over the past three years, and they have allowed clearcutting to continue without any safeguards.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Implementing a moratorium on clearcutting on Crown lands** until the Forest Management Guides are complete and Crown lands are divided in the triad model as outlined in the Lahey Report.
- **Fully implementing the Lahey Report without delay.**

- **Supporting forestry research and development** that will improve Nova Scotia's ability to use local wood products for retrofitting for energy efficiency, building affordable and net-zero homes, and sequestering carbon.
- **Ensuring that any plans for retrofitting buildings and updating building codes would create opportunities for manufacturing more local products from our forestry industry**, while meeting our targets for climate change and sustainable forestry practices.
- **Supporting private woodlot owners to explore carbon-capture credits.**
- **Increasing funding for silviculture work** with an emphasis on restoring biodiversity.

## Fisheries and Aquaculture

NOVA SCOTIA'S FISHERY is the most valuable in the country. Preserving the sustainability of the fishery, and ensuring the vast majority of revenues benefit our coastal communities, must be the priority.

The Liberals are planning to allow an expansion of open-net pen fish farms in the province, which would endanger natural fish stocks.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Protecting the fisheries by continuing to support the owner-operator model in the inshore fishery.**
- Working with the fisheries sector to identify provincial goals and create a plan to implement the “Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.”
- **Including Nova Scotia fisheries products as part of school food menus.**
- **Fully implementing the Doelle-Lahey report** and supporting sustainable aquaculture projects such as land-based and shellfish.
- **Advocating for a federal aquaculture act** that does not create two sets of rules for our coasts.
- **Ensuring that communities have the ability to say no to open-net pen fish farms.**
- **Continuing to diversify Nova Scotia’s markets for fish.**
- Consulting with fishing and angling groups to explore opportunities for expanding recreational fishing in the province.

## Agriculture

THE CHANGING CLIMATE is putting pressure on Nova Scotia’s farmers and food producers. Many family farms are looking at an uncertain future, as younger generations leave farming

behind.

At the same time, there is incredible new energy in food production across the province. New crops, products and ways of farming are helping to lead the development of a vibrant local food and beverage sector in Nova Scotia.

The province can do much more to support young people getting into agriculture, and to sustain our family farms.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Creating a school food program** that would provide at least one meal during the school day with an emphasis on foods that are locally, ecologically, and ethically produced, nutritious, and culturally appropriate.
- **Supporting procurement of local food in public facilities** such as schools, hospitals, colleges and universities, and long-term care facilities.
- **Launching an updated campaign to encourage people to buy local food.**
- **Supporting Indigenous-led food solutions and partnerships.**
- **Creating a provincial food security secretariat** in government that would work strategically across government departments and with communities, non-profits, and local farmers towards meeting strong food security and local food goals like protecting agricultural land.
-

- **Supporting farmers navigating the effects of climate change** and working towards climate change mitigation.
- **Putting local food procurement and local farm growth goals back in Nova Scotia's environmental legislation.**
- **Providing direct support for food processing, storage and distribution**—this could mean community food hubs for distribution, storage and processing, and/or a mobile abattoir.
- **Supporting farming cooperatives, agricultural land trusts and incubator/ educational farms.**
- **Proactively working on labour issues impacting the sector** through partnerships with universities, NSCC, and other appropriate groups to improve the Temporary Foreign Worker and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programs—for example, by granting access to MSI—and grow the domestic workforce.



# CARING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES



## Eliminate homelessness

THE HOUSING CRISIS IN NOVA Scotia is fuelling a homelessness crisis. With vacancy rates at a historic low of one per cent, lower than Toronto or Vancouver, people simply cannot find affordable places to live. As a result, more and more people are sleeping rough, couch surfing, or living in tents. In May 2021, it was estimated that there were 383 people in the Halifax/Dartmouth region who were homeless.

The Liberals have failed to take any meaningful action on the issue of homelessness, despite repeated calls from shelters, municipal officials, and experts.

And with the Liberals set to lift the cap on rental increases, the homelessness crisis is likely to get worse.

The NDP believes everyone should have access to a home. Investing in long-term solutions to homelessness can help ensure that people aren't forced to live on the streets.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Establishing a Right to Housing Act**, which would create a roadmap to eliminate homelessness, address systemic barriers to housing, and require the government to create a housing strategy, including regular reporting on progress.
- **Re-establishing the ban on evictions during the pandemic.**

## Make Nova Scotia the first jurisdiction in North America to eliminate poverty

WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO HAVE a province where everyone can afford the basics—food, shelter, utilities.

Nova Scotia has the third-highest provincial child poverty rate in Canada, and the highest rate in Atlantic Canada. Our province also has the fastest rising food bank usage. One in five children in Nova Scotia live in poverty, while in Cape Breton, Annapolis County, and Digby County, more than 1 in 3 children live in poverty. Children also make up 30 per cent of people accessing food banks in the province.

While the Liberals have just tinkered around the edges, the NDP believes we can ensure all Nova Scotians have a good quality of life. By increasing wages and social assistance benefits, while also investing in universal programs and services that lower the bills we all pay—we can eliminate poverty in Nova Scotia.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Introducing a \$15 minimum wage** and getting Nova Scotia on the road to a living wage to make sure working people can afford to live.
- **Increasing income assistance rates to get people out of poverty.**
- **Lowering everyone's bills** by limiting

rent increases with permanent rent control, increasing the number of affordable housing units, introducing free before- and after-school care, and establishing a universal school food program.

## Supporting Children and Youth

NOVA SCOTIA'S HIGH POVERTY rates mean that many children and young people are not able to get the start they need in life to succeed.

For several years, the NDP has been advocating for a Child and Youth Advocate Office that operates at arms-

length from government and can help ensure government actions and policies are considering the needs of children and youth.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Introducing a Child and Youth Advocate office** to ensure that government policies and programs respect the rights of children and youth.
- **Making post-secondary education free for former children and youth in care.**



# STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIES

## Improving P-12 Education

CHILDREN DESERVE THE BEST education possible to give them the best start in life and prepare them for the future. Nova Scotia's teachers and educational assistants go above and beyond every day to try to make this happen.

Unfortunately, for the past number of years, the Liberal government has

picked fights with teachers and parents instead of building a more collaborative approach.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Investing in programs that will make schools hubs for services for children and their families** including school food programs, a school-based oral health program, and more supports for students with disabilities.



- **Investing in inclusion for students with disabilities** by publicly releasing a plan for implementing the recommendations from the Commission on Inclusive Education, updating the provincial Autism Spectrum Disorder Action Plan, and conducting an audit of services across all departments through an autism lens.
- **Working in partnership with teachers and parents to improve schools**, instead of continuously picking fights with stakeholders, as the Liberals have done.
- **Making before- and after-school care free of charge.**
- **Giving young people a chance by converting government loans to grants** so students are not graduating with massive debts.
- **Expanding access to trades, with specific focus on communities facing discrimination and underemployment.**
- **Implementing hard caps on university executives' compensation.**

## Post-Secondary Education

STUDENTS IN OUR PROVINCE are forced to pay the highest tuition fees in the country. Many young people are not able to afford to continue their education in Nova Scotia and instead leave for other provinces. Some of them never come back.

The Liberals have made the situation worse. Tuition fees have risen every year since the Liberals took office, and university executives are still receiving golden parachutes when they leave.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Working towards eliminating tuition fees**, beginning with tuition fees at the Nova Scotia Community College.

## Justice for African Nova Scotian Communities

AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN communities have been waiting too long for action to address ongoing anti-Black racism in Nova Scotia.

The Liberals dragged their feet on the implementation of the Wortley Report on street checks. The Liberals consistently say they will take action on addressing racism, but they continuously engage in symbolic gestures instead of meaningful action.

The NDP has been actively listening to the African Nova Scotian community through regular meetings and discussions with communities.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Addressing racism in policing** by implementing all recommendations made in the Wortley Report.
- **Implementing a community-based strategy for collecting race-based demographic data** in health care,



education and corrections.

- **Continuing to accelerate access to land titles for African Nova Scotian people.**
- **Creating a “Local Action on Racism Fund” for municipalities** to access funding for initiatives to combat racism in their communities.
- **Actively encouraging conversations about reparations for African Nova Scotian communities.**
- **Systematically addressing instances of environmental racism across the province.**

## Commitment to Reconciliation

MI'KMAW COMMUNITIES have been calling for meaningful nation-to-nation dialogue and movement toward reconciliation for a long time. Often these calls have been met with indifference or silence.

The recent discovery of mass graves located near former residential schools has again highlighted the long road toward true reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. We need to see genuine efforts at all levels of government.

The Truth and Reconciliation Report was released in 2015. Six years later, a large number of these recommendations have never been implemented.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Implementing all provincial Calls to Action from the Truth and**

**Reconciliation Commission** and reporting annually on our progress. Some of these include:

- » Eliminating the over-representation of Indigenous adults and youth in custody in jails and report on progress toward doing so.
  - » Adopting and supporting community sanctions that would provide alternatives to imprisonment for Indigenous people.
  - » Fully implementing Jordan's Principle.
  - » Increasing the number of Indigenous professionals working in the healthcare field.
- **Maintaining a strong nation-to-nation relationship with Mi'kmaq communities.**
  - **Systematically addressing instances of environmental racism.**

# Invest in Rural and Regional Economic Development

PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN RURAL communities want to know that their schools and hospitals will be there when they need them. For too many years, governments have focused on taking services away from rural Nova Scotia, instead of investing in the projects that will build shared prosperity once again.

The Liberals have centralized decision-making in Halifax by eliminating local health authorities and local school boards, and axing the Department of Economic and Rural Development, which was largely focused on supporting rural economies.

In order for Nova Scotia to be a vibrant place to live, we need to make sure rural communities have the supports and services they need to thrive.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Creating a services guarantee** for communities, to ensure they have the local services they need to thrive and attract workers and business.
- **Expanding access to high-speed internet** in rural communities, including support for municipally-owned, non-profit, and cooperatively-owned internet services.
- **Returning the mandate for rural and regional economic development to the Department of Inclusive Economic Growth.**
- **Introducing a tax incentive for seasonal businesses** who want to extend their seasons.
- **Protecting Nova Scotia's natural places**, which attract visitors from all over the world to our rural communities. The NDP would **protect the remaining areas of the Parks and Protected Areas Plan, including Owls Head**, and consult with the public and Mi'kmaw communities about new areas.
- **Working to expand the use of cooperatives** across all sectors to ensure that communities see the maximum benefit of economic development.
- **Increasing provincial support for creating Community Economic and Development Investment Funds (CEDIFs).**
- **Improving the government procurement process** so that local companies are more likely to receive contracts and so that the local economic, environmental, and social impacts of a bid are considered including metrics like good wages, unionization, local jobs, and a diverse workforce.

## Investing in Arts and Culture

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has hit arts and culture workers particularly hard. Many artists and performers have been without regular work for the duration of the pandemic because of gathering restrictions, an inability to access grants, and the cancellation of festivals and events.

Arts and culture workers were already facing challenges because of the Liberal government's attack on the film sector, and a decade-long funding freeze for local arts organizations including theatres, artist-run centres, galleries, and museums.

Nova Scotia's arts and culture sector makes vital contributions to the

economic and social fabric of the province. Nova Scotians also value the contributions of artists and performers to our communities.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Investing one per cent of the provincial budget** into arts and culture.
- **Increasing core and operational funding to local arts and culture organizations.**
- Developing employment supports for arts and culture workers such as **portable health benefits.**
- **Developing an arts infrastructure strategy** that would build arts and culture spaces in every region of the province.



Across the country, the film and television industry is a core component of the arts and culture sector.

Before it was cut by the Liberals in 2015, the Nova Scotia Film Tax Credit was a fully refundable program that reduced the costs of filming movies and television shows in Nova Scotia. This tax credit included refunds for film crews' salaries, improved access to credit, incentives to film in rural communities, and bonuses for companies frequently filming projects in the region.

Since the Liberals cancelled the Film Tax Credit in 2015, Nova Scotia has been left behind in the streaming production boom over the past number of years. Since 2013, Nova Scotia's film and television industry has shrunk, while in other provinces the industry has grown 10, 15, or even 20 per cent.

Nova Scotia's current share of the Canadian film and television industry is one per cent, down from two per cent when the Nova Scotia Film Tax Credit was in place.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Implementing a competitive film and television production tax credit** and an overall improved incentive system.
- **Funding the establishment of a modern, working, and fully accessible soundstage.** A soundstage is an essential part of a thriving film and television industry, and a modest upfront investment would create economic benefits many times over.

- **Supporting a healthy and growing crew base.** The Liberals have allowed a steady out-migration of skilled crew in the last several years. We can rebuild a diverse film and television crew base in partnership with the film sector, colleges, universities, film unions and guilds.
- **Establishing a Content Creator Fund for locally developed feature films and other types of locally developed productions** to replace the equity fund that was eliminated in 2015. The equity fund closed common funding gaps for local content that frequently prevents them from being made locally or made at all. These are the types of productions that often hire local cast in principal roles.

## Improve Access to Affordable Cell and Internet Services

IN 2021, HAVING CELL PHONE and internet service is a necessity, just like electricity or plumbing. The pandemic has highlighted how cell phone service and high-speed internet are essential for people to stay connected, get the information they need, and find and keep employment. As remote work becomes the new norm, access to these services is also essential to growing our economy.

Having reliable, affordable internet service across the province allows people to stay in their communities,

and supports small businesses and local economies by keeping Nova Scotians connected, wherever they are.

But here in Nova Scotia, we have some of the highest cell phone and internet bills in the country. These essential services are not accessible or affordable to everyone because prices are too high and coverage is spotty.

Part of the problem is that a small number of large telecommunications companies provide most cell and internet service across the province, with no incentive or requirement to be affordable or accessible to communities.

Internet infrastructure doesn't need to be solely owned and operated by large corporations. We can bring internet bills down and provide reliable service

by supporting internet infrastructure owned by municipalities, communities, and not-for profit groups.

#### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Recognizing cell and internet access as an essential service.**
- **Working to develop and implement publicly-owned, low-cost internet options**, with preference given to municipalities, non-profits, and cooperatives to implement networks.
- **Partnering with existing internet providers to offer all families with students in school a low-cost internet package with the installation/hook-up fee waived**, and a free option for families for whom the monthly service fee is a barrier.



# Expanding public transit and active transportation

PEOPLE NEED TO BE ABLE TO access affordable and reliable public and community transportation to travel to work, school, and appointments, and to buy groceries or attend events. Seniors, low-income people, people with disabilities and people in caretaking roles are more likely to rely on public and community transit to meet their transportation needs.

The Liberals have failed to consider access to transit when building health services. For example, in 2017 they announced that several outpatient services would move from downtown Halifax to Bayer's Lake, without discussing with HRM how to improve transit services to the area.

Municipalities have also struggled to meet demands for public and community transportation. For example, the CBRM has had challenges providing adequate transit for the growing number of international students attending CBU. In rural communities, public transportation remains unaffordable. Average fares are currently \$11 per trip. There are also large geographic areas unserved by any community or public transportation.

Transportation accounts for 31 per cent of the province's greenhouse gas emissions and is the only major emissions sector in Nova Scotia where emissions are not declining or expected to decline substantially anytime soon. This means that Nova Sco-

tia's share of emissions from transportation is increasing, and so will be critical to address in terms of the climate crisis.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Moving to a well-connected public transit network across the province that is affordable or free.**
- **Providing sustainable funding to make community transit affordable and connected.**
- **Considering options for commuter rail.**
- **Prioritizing public and community transportation in COVID-19 recovery spending.**
- **Developing an electrification strategy** which would include the electrification of public and private transportation as well as freight.

Increasingly, people want more active transportation options in our cities and rural communities, including cycling and pedestrian routes, multi-use trails, and boardwalks. While the Liberals recently announced a new Department of Transportation and Active Transit, less than 0.1 percent of the department's budget goes towards active transportation.

Investments in active transportation create new opportunities for employment, tourism, and improvements in health.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Building the Blue Route** active transit network by 2030.
- **Funding and supporting programs that make personal active transportation**

**infrastructure available and accessible.**

This could be municipal bike share programs and programs that connect low-income people with bicycles, bicycle and road safety support, and other active transportation equipment.

## Supporting Small Business

MANY MICRO AND SMALL businesses have struggled over the past year and a half, as public health measures have often had major impacts on their revenues and operations. At the same time, large corporations and the big banks have profited off small businesses' misfortune. Most small business owners just want a level playing field.

The Liberals aren't listening to the concerns of small businesses. In fact, the Liberals choose to support big box stores instead of supporting local retailers.

**THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Including small businesses at the table as part of the Economic Recovery Task Force** to ensure our recovery includes increasing our capacity to rely on food, energy, and goods and services that are produced here at home.
- **Developing a system of portable benefits that could bring down the cost of benefits for small businesses.**
- **Improving the government procurement process so that local companies are more likely to receive contracts** and so that the local economic, environmental, and social impact of a bid are considered including metrics such as



good wages, local jobs, and the hiring of a diverse workforce.

- **Making sure businesses across the province have access to affordable internet.**
- **Establishing tax incentives for seasonal businesses that want to try to extend their season.**
- **Providing small businesses with local access to information and expertise by reopening rural economic development offices.**
- **Increasing money being spent in the local economy** by increasing the minimum wage, and reducing the cost of housing and child care.

## Investing in Community Organizations

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS across Nova Scotia often step up to provide support to people whenever it is needed. Our province is fortunate to have such a vibrant community sector.

But over the past eight years, the Liberals have made cuts to community organizations that people depend on.

**THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Increasing core funding to women's organizations** across the province to ensure that survivors of sexualized violence have access to trauma-informed counselling.
- **Providing sustainable, multi-year funding for non-profit housing**

**organizations** to ensure workers are paid a living wage and access to housing first, housing support and eviction prevention are available across the province.

- **Working with disability support organizations to address gaps in transition support and programming for people with disabilities** as they age out of the education system.
- **Developing a system of portable benefits that could bring down the cost of providing benefits for community organization employees.** This would mean there was more money to spend on programming.
- **Including community organizations at the table as part of the Economic Recovery Task Force.**
- **Reducing the burden on community organizations by strengthening public services and making sure everyone has the basics.**
- **Making sure organizations across the province have access to affordable internet.**

# Fairness for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality

PEOPLE IN CAPE BRETON are concerned about the lack of fairness between HRM and CBRM when it comes to provincial support and service delivery.

People know the Cape Breton Regional Municipality needs more support. The population decline of the region has had a major impact on our province's second-largest municipality. CBRM's tax rates are now much higher than HRM's tax rates, and Cape Bretoners receive lower levels of services despite the higher taxes. The situation is not sustainable.

Cape Bretoners deserve something better than a Liberal government that closes hospitals, cuts funding to long-term care, and refuses to invest in transportation infrastructure in Cape Breton.

The NDP believes that people should be able to expect equitable services for comparable tax rates. An NDP government will act as a partner to the CBRM in addressing the region's problems. The NDP knows that for Nova Scotia to be successful, CBRM needs to be successful.

## THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Providing direct economic stimulus funding to the CBRM** to provide the resources required for the CBRM to become more sustainable.
- **Working to stabilize the population of CBRM.**
- **Keeping in-patient and emergency health services in New Waterford and North Sydney.**
- **Providing the provincial portion of funding for the new central library in CBRM.**
- **Considering a public option to maintain the Cape Breton railway** and supporting the Port of Sydney.



# GOVERNING WITH RESPECT

## Democratic Reform

NOVA SCOTIA'S DEMOCRACY is in trouble. Voter turnout, and public participation and trust in electoral politics have been steadily declining for decades.

The 2017 provincial election had the lowest turnout since at least 1960.

The Legislature didn't meet at all during the first year of the pandemic. And the Liberals have used their majority to shut down debate.

The Liberals broke their promise to introduce fixed election dates, and they spent \$1 billion last year without the approval and oversight of the Legislature.

An NDP government will bring forward a Democratic Renewal Commission to address public disengagement from politics and low voter turnout.

### THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Establishing fixed election dates.**
- **Implementing a legislative calendar** to prevent governments from skirting democratic accountability and to help encourage more women and gender-diverse people to seek office.
- **Creating a Democratic Renewal Commission to address low voter turnout**

by conducting broad-based public consultation on implementing proportional representation and studying other initiatives to promote voter participation such as lowering the voting age, making election dates public holidays, and making voting and voter registration easier.

## Staying Accountable to You

THE NOVA SCOTIA LEGISLATURE meets in Province House, which is also affectionately known as "The People's House." The 55 members who are elected to serve there are accountable to you.

Over the past eight years, the Liberals have disrespected teachers, staff, parents, and students by legislating a contract on teachers, eliminating elected school boards, and failing to communicate with teachers, students and parents during the pandemic.

The Liberals have refused to release details about spending decisions, broken their promise to strengthen privacy laws, and made decisions behind closed doors about selling Owl's Head to an American billionaire.

An NDP government will be accountable to you.

THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:

- **Respecting community decisions** by:
  - » **Introducing an Environmental Bill of Rights** which would give communities more control over projects that are proposed in their communities.
  - » **Overhauling the environmental assessments system.**
  - » **Consulting with communities about reinstating school boards**, which provided a local level of democratic control over schools and education.
  - » **Establishing a school capital process that includes community consultation.**
  - » **Working in partnership with municipalities on issues of concern.**
- **Respecting collective bargaining rights and bargaining in good faith**, including repealing anti-labour legislation implemented by the Liberals.
- **Strengthening FOIPOP legislation** and making the Privacy Officer an officer of the Legislature.
- **Reforming the Lobbyist Registry** to improve transparency in government.
- **Phasing out the use of public-private partnerships** and increasing transparency about public infrastructure projects to ensure that public money is being put to the best use.



# FISCAL FRAMEWORK



THE NDP IS FOCUSED ON making investments that improve the lives of everyone. The pandemic has shown us that the government has the capacity to assist and to invest by helping people when they need it. The cost of these investments needs to be shared by government, business, banks, and the super-wealthy.

While the Liberal government has posted year-over-year surpluses and banks have collected record profits, the majority of people have been living paycheque to paycheque, facing mountains of debt, and struggling to keep up with everyday expenses.

How we spend money matters:

- It costs, on average, \$250 per day per bed in a long-term care facility; it costs an average of \$1,100 per day per bed in a hospital.
  - » The Liberal government is spending about \$1 million a day to house patients in hospitals who are waiting for a long-term care bed.
- The average monthly cost of a bed in a shelter is \$1,932 whereas the average monthly cost of social housing is less than \$200.
  - » Last year, the Liberal government spent \$1.7 million on emergency hotel stays for people without housing.



- Health care spending makes up the majority of the province's budget. Experts agree that it is more cost effective to invest in programs and services that support public health than to pay to treat largely preventable diseases.
  - » The Liberal government cut all funding for prenatal classes. Last year, the IWK reported a 156 per cent increase in people accessing maternal mental health services.
- Public infrastructure projects can create good, well-paying jobs and be used to build assets that are publicly owned.
  - » The Liberals have repeatedly insisted on using Public Private Partnership (P3) agreements which cost more. The Highway 104 Western Alignment highway, known as the Cobequid Pass Toll Highway, cost \$232 million more to build, finance, operate and maintain as a P3 project than it would have as a government-financed, delivered, and maintained project.
- Experiences in Alberta, Ontario, and across the US show that big increases in the minimum wage don't create inflation or job loss. When people have more money in their pockets, household spending goes up. More people who have enough that they can pick up a pizza on their way home is good for local business.
- In Nova Scotia, 94 per cent of the funds that were spent on direct COVID-19 relief measures were from money provided by the federal government. However, the Nova Scotia Liberals left millions of dollars on the table because they were not ready or could not be bothered.
  - » The Liberals did not access the full federal amount the province was entitled to in support for low-wage essential workers. Unlike other provinces, they chose a narrow definition of essential workers and left more than \$6 million unspent.

An NDP government will make different choices. We will make smart investments that improve the lives of everyone in the province.

#### **THE NDP IS COMMITTED TO:**

- **Reversing the Liberals' corporate tax cuts for big business.**
- **Making the tax system fairer by making the rich pay their fair share and adding a surtax to luxury items like private planes and yachts.**
- **Ending corporate handouts, like the \$5 million provided to Sandpiper Ventures.**

Our investments are aimed at addressing the root causes of long-standing issues. Not only are these investments the right thing to do, they make good economic sense.

- Child Care
  - » For every \$1 invested in the child care sector there is a \$2.23 increase in GDP.
  - » On top of that, per dollar, the child care sector creates more jobs than any other industries: 220 per cent better than spending in construction.
- School Food
  - » For every \$1 invested in school food programs there is a return of between \$3 and \$10.
- Mental Health
  - » For every \$1 invested in treatment for depression and anxiety, governments can expect a \$4 return.
- Ending poverty
  - » The direct costs of poverty include costs to the health and criminal justice systems as well as costs to victims of crime. Ending poverty in Nova Scotia will save almost \$300 million in those two areas alone.



- Ending homelessness
  - » We know that providing permanent housing solutions is more cost effective than paying for emergency shelter. One analysis of the work of a Halifax non-profit housing provider was that for every dollar invested, \$1.09 is generated in individual, community and societal benefits.
- NSCC investments
  - » Every dollar invested in NSCC has a return of 6.2 per cent. Graduates from diploma programs at NSCC see an increase in earnings of \$12,100 a

year compared to someone with a high school diploma.

- Green Jobs
  - » By adopting ambitious targets and investing in a green jobs strategy, we can add 15,000 jobs per year by 2030 and \$9.7 billion in added GDP by 2030.

These investments are possible and have the potential to transform Nova Scotia's economy.



## Our Path to Balance

THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF the COVID-19 pandemic have been uneven and our path through the pandemic has not been straightforward. Nova Scotia, like provinces across Canada, has been hit with multiple waves of the pandemic and variant strains of virus which have necessitated changing public health measures. Women, youth and others made vulnerable by poverty and discrimination have been harder hit by job losses and closures.

Governments across the country have had to acknowledge that it is difficult to predict the impact COVID-19 will have in the years to come, but that it is likely to take years before household incomes and government expenses return to pre-pandemic levels. Other provincial governments have suggested their budgets could return to normal by 2027. The Federal government forecasts that balancing the books is not expected to happen within the next five years. In spite of this, the Nova Scotia Liberals are hyper-focused on returning to balanced budgets in four years.



The Liberals' four-year fiscal plan shows a \$209 million dollar cut in departmental spending for next year. The Department of Health and Wellness represents just under half of the government's spending. Does that mean the Liberals will cut \$96 million from the health budget next year to meet their goal?

An NDP government will not put the programs and services we rely on at risk. Balancing the budget through cuts only pushes extra costs down the road.

An NDP government will follow the federal government's lead. We will make the investments needed to support an economic recovery that improves the lives of everyone and that establishes a sound financial foundation for the return to pre-pandemic conditions.



*“It’s deep inside all of us: the hunger for a home.*

For an affordable apartment, a down-payment to get started, a place to call your own.  
And a community wrapped around you – with health care, child care, and schools.  
It’s not too much to hope for. It’s what everyone deserves.  
And we can get there – but we’ve got to have a government that puts people’s real  
lives front and centre.

*It’s time for something better, because Nova Scotia is our home.”*

————— Gary Burrill, NDP Leader

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