

Nova Scotia Environmental Network (NSEN)

All Parties' Survey and Questionnaire on Environmental Issues in Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia Environmental Network represents more than 60 environmental organizations in the province. This survey and questionnaire was developed with the input of many of these various organizations. We are sure you agree with us that the environment is a critical issue and should be given appropriate attention during this election. We request that you please return your responses by Friday, May 26th, at which point we will complete an analysis of all party's answers and issue a report card. We will hold a press conference to announce the results of this survey and we are sure that you will want your party's environmental views included in our media release. Please send your completed survey to the NSEN by **Friday, May 26** via email: nсен@web.ca or by fax 902-454-6841.

1) Protected Areas

In 1992, Canada and all provincial and territorial governments committed to legally protect a minimum of 12% of the land in each jurisdiction for biodiversity conservation. This came as a result of the international convention on biological diversity agreement signed at the historic Rio Earth summit. In 2003 the provincial governments' environmental green plan committed to "continue to work towards a comprehensive Network of Protected Areas". Currently only 8% of Nova Scotia's land is legally protected, including our two National Parks.

If elected, will your party accelerate the process and complete the province's protected areas network by 2010?

Yes No

Comment:

The NDP will work with communities and environmental organizations in Nova Scotia to ensure that at least 12% of Nova Scotia's land is protected through legislation. We have raised this issue with the government repeatedly through resolutions and debates in the house, since the target was first agreed to by the province in 1992.

The NDP is the only party in the Legislature that has campaigned vigorously for the Conservatives to adopt the draft Tobeatic Management Plan since its publication, raising the issue during Question Period in the Legislative Assembly on a number of occasions.

In May 2006, the NDP introduced *Wilderness Area Protection Act* amendments to require the Minister of Environment and Labour to adopt and apply to the Tobeatic Wilderness Area the Tobeatic Wilderness Area Draft Management Plan of April 2004.

In 2005, the NDP worked with the Ecology Action Centre and other environmental organizations to ensure that wilderness protection from damage incurred by ATV use was included in the Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) legislation and regulations. Since the introduction of the regulations, the NDP has pushed two Ministers of Environment and Labour to follow through on their commitment to abolish the Ministerial power to allow ATV use in wilderness areas.

2) Emissions Mitigation and Energy Efficiency Programming

The expected primary impacts of climate change in Nova Scotia include sea level rise, drought, increase in extreme weather events and changes in precipitation, all of which can have an adverse impact on our social infrastructure, tourism, fisheries, forestry, agriculture, ecosystems and water resources (*GPI Atlantic Greenhouse Gas Accounts*).

Nova Scotia has signed on to the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers 2001 Climate Action Plan with a target to reduce GHG emissions by *at least* 10% below 1990 levels by 2020. The majority of Nova Scotians have demonstrated consistent support for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. In the absence of strong federal support for Kyoto, many provinces have resolved to continue to do their part.

Will your party commit to meeting these targets on schedule, through initiatives to reduce emissions from NSPI (one of Canada's top ten polluters) and funding for programs like Energuide for Houses?

Yes No

Comment:

The NDP is the only political party in Nova Scotia that has unequivocally committed to following through on meeting the province's obligations under the Kyoto Protocol.

The NDP has consistently promoted the need for reduced emissions both from Nova Scotia Power, which is a major polluter, and from homes and businesses in Nova Scotia.

The NDP had intervener status at the Utility and Review Board hearings on NSP's application for a 15% rate increase, which focused on the need to establish clear targets to help NSP customers reduce electrical consumption. During the hearings, the NDP tabled a petition signed by 32,563 Nova Scotians, calling for no more power rate increases until the utility and the government work together to help power consumers achieve 15% energy savings through conservation.

The NDP is currently the only political party that has intervenor status in the current UARB hearing on NSP's application to add scrubbers to its generating station at Lingan, to reduce SO2 emissions.

Nova Scotia needs to increase renewable energy generation and supply. Darrell Dexter and the NDP will drive greater public awareness and education about alternative energy sources, including wind, solar, biomass and earth energy. We will make Nova Scotia Canada's leader in renewable energy generation, by adding 500 megawatts of wind power to Nova Scotia's energy grid by 2010 – that's 20% of the province's electricity needs. This is a platform commitment.

The NDP will bring the property tax for wind farms in line with Ontario, where there is a fixed assessment rate for the components of wind generation equipment. This will reduce the substantial tax burden on the renewable energy sector and encourage future investment.

The NDP is also committed to lobbying the federal government to expand and extend the Wind Power Production Incentive (WPPI), so that Nova Scotian wind energy producers can compete with other jurisdictions that are aggressively pursuing wind energy production.

Nova Scotia needs to reduce household GHG emissions. Based on the guidelines issued by the One Tonne Challenge project, before its cancellation by the federal government, a comprehensive retrofit can reduce emissions from a medium-sized family home by up to 1.5 tonnes per household. The NDP would provide 10,000 interest-free loans per year for energy efficient retrofits of homes and small businesses. Homes will be eligible for up to \$10,000 in financing while businesses will be eligible for up to \$25,000. The NDP will also increase the home repair program by 30%. This is a platform commitment.

3) Renewable Energy Initiatives

European countries such as Germany, Denmark and Spain have successfully achieved national rates of 20-30% of renewable energy use by adopting Standard Offer Contracts. This policy is a mechanism for fair pricing in renewable energy and market access. Standard Offer Contracts, in addition to ensuring uptake of renewable energy, allow community-based development and ownership of renewable projects, which create local employment and greenhouse gas emission mitigation benefits. Based on the success of this model abroad, Ontario adopted the Standard Offer Contract model this year for projects under 10 megawatts.

If elected, will your party commit to adopting legislation for Standard Offer Contracts for all renewable energy projects under 10 megawatts in Nova Scotia?

Yes No

Comments:

The NDP has enjoyed an open and positive dialogue with members of the renewable energy sector, and we will continue to work with all stakeholders to create the legislative framework and environment necessary to encourage the development of more sustainable energy projects in Nova Scotia.

The NDP will bring the property tax for wind farms in line with Ontario, where there is a fixed assessment rate for the components of wind generation equipment. This will substantially reduce the current tax burden on wind energy and encourage the development of more projects.

If, upon review and advice from appropriate bodies, the adoption of Standard Offer Contracts for all renewable energy projects under 10MW is considered an effective instrument to help Nova Scotia meet its renewable energy targets, the NDP will adopt the appropriate legislation.

Traditionally, the NDP has worked with the Ecology Action Centre and other interested groups to promote the conditions necessary for the development of renewable energy.

The NDP plans to encourage new low-flow tidal power projects also by working with proponents to ensure there is a clear, positive policy framework for this new source of renewable energy. The NDP also plans to develop sustainable biomass energy regulations.

4) Transportation

It was projected that the Nova Scotian government would need to spend \$3.2 billion on the province's highways and bridges within this decade. Nova Scotia's transportation paradigm is heavily biased towards the automobile (e.g. free parking at many workplaces, high investment in roads, insufficient investment in public transit, absence of bike lanes and sidewalks in some areas). In this era of climate change and obesity, public and active transportation needs to be a priority.

If elected, is your government willing to divert revenues normally spent on highways and bridges toward an integrated transportation plan that includes active transportation and public transit?

Yes No

Comments:

Nova Scotia needs an integrated transportation plan that takes into consideration the fact that investment in our roads and bridges is necessary to increase competitiveness, and promote tourism and business growth in Nova Scotia. The NDP plans to invest in road and bridge infrastructure in addition to providing alternatives to automobiles through the development of a viable public transportation strategy for the province.

Due to chronic under-investment in public transportation by successive governments, most Nova Scotians living outside urban areas have no choice but to use a car, and increased gasoline and insurance costs makes this difficult for many families living on low and fixed incomes. This situation needs to be addressed through the establishment of a provincial transportation strategy to provide sustainable transportation choices in rural areas.

The NDP will work to make meaningful investments in public transit, and develop all reasonable options to bring much needed transit service to rural areas.

The NDP is committed to supporting healthy, active lifestyles. If elected, we will invest in school zone sidewalks, to make it safer for children to adopt a healthier lifestyle by walking to school, and with the attendant benefits this will bring for other community members wishing to become more physically active.

The NDP also plans to encourage purchases of fuel-efficient cars by working to eliminate the PST on hybrid vehicles.

5) *Non-Agricultural Organic Waste (NAOW) /biosolids on Farmland*

Since 2004, the Nova Scotian government has allowed the disposal of Non-Agricultural Organic Waste (NAOW or biosolids) on farmland. Independent testing of NAOW in the province has shown over 60 hazardous toxins that pose substantiated threats to food safety, water supplies and community health. The application of biosolids on agricultural lands is banned in many jurisdictions, including Newfoundland.

Will your government commit to ceasing the application of Non-Agricultural Organic Wastes on agricultural land?

Yes No

Comment:

The NDP has questioned the lack of safeguards for the application of human bio-solids to farmland, and supported the grassroots campaign that successfully ended the practice of their disposal on farmland near Truro.

The NDP will work to develop and implement an environmentally safe alternative to the spreading of NAOW on Nova Scotia farmland.

6) Pesticides

"Pesticides are poisons, or they wouldn't kill" - Environment Canada

The Canadian medical community has spoken out expressing clear concerns regarding the health risks to children from pesticides. Medical professionals, including The Ontario and Nova Scotia Colleges of Family Physicians, the Medical Officers of Health for Toronto and Halifax, The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, are strongly urging the removal of lawn pesticides from our communities.

a) If elected, will your party facilitate the reduction of pesticide use by making changes to the Municipal Act to enable all municipalities to pass pesticide bylaws?

Yes No

b) Will you develop a provincial policy, similar to the Pesticide Code of Quebec, which phases out the sale to the public of domestic pesticide products, which contain the most toxic ingredients such as 2,4-D and Malathion?

Yes No

Comments:

The NDP has raised the issue of pesticides many times in the House of Assembly, presenting several resolutions and asking questions on the issue. In October 2004, the NDP introduced a bill to ensure the safe storage of pesticides.

The NDP will work to implement a full ban on aerial spraying of herbicides, and to enable municipalities to pass pesticide bylaws at the local level.

The NDP will work with environmental organisations, retailers and others to agree on a timetable for the removal of domestic pesticides with the most toxic ingredients from the marketplace.

7) Clearcutting

The majority of trees harvested in Nova Scotia are clear-cut. The ecological impacts of clearcutting include damage to watersheds, loss of wildlife and fish habitat, reduced soil fertility, and the destruction of our native Acadian Forest with its mix of softwood and hardwood species. Clearcutting also hurts tourism, hunting and fishing, hiking, and other human uses of our forests.

If your party is elected, will you commit to introducing new regulations that substantially limit the amount of clearcutting permitted on Crown lands, and immediately ban clearcutting within Nova Scotia's game sanctuaries?

Yes No

Comments:

The NDP will work to:

- **End unjustified clear-cutting with new forestry legislation**
- **Commission Nova Scotia Voluntary Planning to conduct a review of the Province's forest policies and, through public consultation develop a Nova Scotia Forest Strategy that will enable the Province's forest sector to meet the challenges that lie ahead**
- **Promote responsible forestry on Crown, corporation and private woodlands, encouraging Forest Stewardship Council certification**

Decades of clear-cutting and other types of poor forest management have nearly destroyed our native Acadian forest. Our forests have fewer species and have lost biodiversity. Our forests are made up of younger and smaller trees. Trees over 100 years old now make up less than one percent of our forests.

The NDP has introduced legislation that would restrict the use of unjustified clear-cutting and would obligate the province to use sustainable forestry practices.

8) Oil and Gas Exploration

Nova Scotia has had many conflicts due to granting exploration rights to oil and gas companies in areas critical to the fishing and tourism industries with serious implications for First Nations' rights. The Hamm government promised to identify sensitive areas before allowing exploration. This promise is still unfulfilled.

Will your party commit to a moratorium on new exploration until the most sensitive areas (mostly in-shore) are defined and set aside?

Yes No

Not within provincial jurisdiction, to our knowledge

Comments:

The NDP has urged the federal government to fully consult fishing communities and apply the precautionary principle before approving seismic testing.

The NDP has worked with fishing communities along the Northumberland Strait, Sierra Club and others to keep pressing this issue.

9) Sydney Tar Ponds

The recent environmental review allowed respected experts to cast serious doubts on the safety and reliability of the proposed burn and bury plan for the Sydney Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens Site. Moreover, nothing is being offered to residents to clean up contaminated backyards and basements.

If elected, will your party commit to protecting the health of residents with a neighbourhood remediation, commit to cancelling any incinerator plan and actually clean up the tar ponds toxic waste--not just bury it?

Yes No

Comments:

These are all issues that must be resolved to the satisfaction of the people of Sydney. Proper remediation of the tar ponds is long overdue. The NDP would take seriously the analysis and recommendations from the review panel. The NDP has opposed the use of a mobile incinerator.

NDP MLA for Cape Breton Nova, Gordie Gosse, made a formal written submission to the recent Environmental Review on behalf of his constituents. In his submission, he highlighted:

- **Local concerns about the safety of a mobile incinerator**
- **The need for increased protection for marine/ freshwater habitats in the clean up plan**
- **Community concerns around managing air quality/ implementation of safety measures during the clean up, and**
- **The discrepancies in the EA, with respect to emission rates, that have been highlighted by Environment Canada**

10) Public Consultation on Natural Resources

The Department of Natural Resources is preparing to conduct public consultations on biodiversity, forest strategy, mining, and parks.

If elected, will your government commit to ensuring that these consultations are conducted by a third party and are truly inclusive of the Nova Scotia public, being conducted in communities across the Province and open to everyone who wishes to participate?

Yes No

Comments

Successive governments have used the Voluntary Planning Commission to organize substantive community and stakeholder consultation on key environmental issues and other policy concerns. Far too often, these recommendations have been ignored by the government of the day. The NDP worked with environmental organizations to ensure that Voluntary Planning Commission recommendations on ATVs were implemented as part of the recent regulations.

11) Coastal Protection

The Governments of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have adopted environmental planning and protection policies to preserve their coastal environments and ensure the safety of and public access to coastal communities. To date, the Government of Nova Scotia has not adopted similar policies.

If elected will your party immediately initiate a review of the Beaches Act as promised in the Green Plan?

Yes No

Comments

The NDP plans to review and improve the Beaches Act.

The NDP will work to improve provincial coastal protection legislation, looking at concerns about wetlands protection and also concerns about the loss of public access to the coast.

12) Game Sanctuaries

In 2005, the government undertook a review of Nova Scotia's Game Sanctuaries and Wildlife Management Areas with the intention of de-listing most of them. The public review process clearly indicated that a majority of Nova Scotians want greater habitat protection for these areas which are currently open to all forms of development including clearcutting, mining, and road building (see www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/sanctuaries/pdfs/finalreport.pdf). Three areas in particular have been asked by local stakeholder groups to be up-graded to full protected status: The Chignecto, Liscomb and Blandford Game Sanctuaries.

If elected will your party commit to designating these areas as protected wilderness areas?

Yes- No

Comments:

As they now exist there are very few protections offered to sanctuaries and Wildlife management areas. For instance the Liscomb Game Sanctuary has been heavily clear cut. The NDP will work to bring better protection to these areas consistent with the views expressed by Nova Scotians during the Government's recent review process.

The addition of protected areas such as Chignecto, (what remains of) Liscomb and Blandford will be done as part of the plan to protect a representative 12% of Nova Scotia's habitat.

The Conservatives attempted to give up on these areas and was seeking to delist them. The NDP has lobbied extensively to protect these sanctuaries. In 2005, our Natural Resources critic John MacDonell MLA challenged the minister numerous times regarding the de-listing of these areas, saying that communities wanted those sanctuaries like Blandford and Liscomb protected, and they should be preserved by listing them as protected areas.

13) Environment Trust and Round Table on the Economy and the Environment

Under articles 28-29 of the Nova Scotia Environment Act, the provincial government is required to create and fund an Environmental Trust "for the purpose of funding programs for environmental research and management and conservation of the environment" and to establish a Round Table on the Economy and the Environment to administer the fund. The intent of the fund was to ensure adequate resources to fund stewardship of the environment for future generations in Nova Scotia. Currently, the fund is a paltry \$6,000 and is not fulfilling its purpose and the Round Table is now defunct.

If your party is elected, will you fund the trust to no less than \$500,000, fulfill the commitment to resurrect the Round Table, and ensure that there will be equal and inclusive representation from the environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) selected by ENGOS on new the Round Table?

Yes No

Comments:

The NDP would work to support environmental stewardship programs and the Environmental Round Table within the framework of other funding priorities and within a balanced budget.