

# ELECTION 2006

## ALL PARTY SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN NOVA SCOTIA

The Nova Scotia Environmental Network (NSEN) is delighted to report that all four parties passed the test with a grade of over 50% in the 2006 provincial election survey. The NSEN, which represents more than 60 environmental organizations in the province, conducts a poll on environmental issues to all political parties during every provincial election.

Environmental groups contributed questions in the survey that cover many of the most urgent and important environmental issues currently facing Nova Scotians, such as biosolids, clearcutting, energy and protected lands. The completed surveys were graded by representatives of the Ecology Action Centre, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Nova Scotia, the Youth Environmental Network, the Sierra Club of Canada - Atlantic Chapter, which are all members of NSEN.

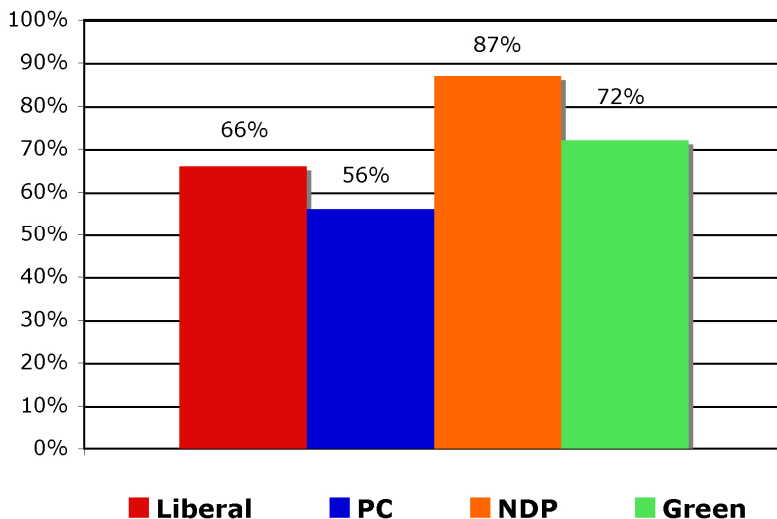
### THE GRADES

From the lowest to the highest, parties spanned a 31% gap, from a middling D to a strong A. Each reviewer independently graded the answers to each question from all the parties on a scale from 0 to 10. All the parties have some improvements to make before we're on the path to a truly livable, green, and sustainable province!

#### AND THE FINAL SCORES:

Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia	D (56%)
Liberal Party of Nova Scotia	C (66%)
Green Party of Nova Scotia	B (72%)
New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia	A (87%)

Responses to NSEN Election Survey, 2006



Compared with the past few surveys, many policy commitments are stronger, and several answers demonstrated a deeper, more nuanced approach to the issues. Given that, we wonder why all parties have such a hard pronouncing the "E" word, *Environment*, and why they haven't delivered a stronger environmental message during this election.

Even the higher scoring Greens and NDP can do better; the Greens were shaky on several items that should be core policy issues, and the NDP, despite its strong showing, has few environmental issues in its core platform points.

### **HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS**

The Progressive Conservatives gained their highest score with their commitment to ensuring that public consultations toward the development of the new Department of Natural Resources biodiversity, forests, mining, and parks strategies be conducted by the Voluntary Planning Board. Signed by Premier Rodney MacDonald, the Conservative response said that “consultations are conducted by a third-party and are inclusive of the Nova Scotia public, being conducted in communities across the Province and open to everyone who wishes to participate. Voluntary Planning is a citizens' policy forum that operates arm's length to the provincial government. Our mandate is to engage non-governmental volunteers and citizens in policy discussions important to the future of Nova Scotia.” The Ecology Action Centre and many others had been asking for this commitment for the past 18 months.

The Green Party's commitment to sustainable transportation policies appealed to the reviewers, with its focus on reducing truck traffic by improving rail service, urban planning to help ease the public transport system, and promoting walking and biking by making trails and routes safer and easier.

The highest score for any party on any issue was received by the NDP for its answer on energy efficiency and air emissions, with its proposal to pay the interest and insure loans for energy efficiency improvements. Commented one reviewer, “Low or zero interest loans is an intelligent way for the government to leverage its investments. It helps break down the real barrier to energy efficiency, which is the high up-front capital cost. The substantial loans at no-interest are likely to spur greater energy savings by providing the up-front capital to undertake extensive retrofits.”

The Liberal Party scored highly for its stance on wilderness protected areas. The Party noted that it had, when in government in 1998, after three years of consultation by a public review committee, enshrined in legislation all 31 sites recommended for inclusion in the protected areas strategy. It committed to achieving the 12% national target as soon as possible.

We were very pleased that all the political parties are committed to resurrecting the Roundtable on the Economy and the Environment and to increase the funding of the Environmental Trust Fund – two provisions under Nova Scotia Environment Act that have been neglected in the past.

On the other hand ...

The Conservatives, overall, avoided making commitments, pointed to government achievements often unrelated to the actual question, and ducked many key issues, like clearcutting. The Green Party lacked depth in many of its answers, and had failed to develop

policy on several important concerns, such as renewable energy. The NDP provided weak responses on oil and gas, and the simmering issue of the NS Environmental Trust (Un)Fund and the lack of a Round Table on Environment and Economy. The Liberals failed badly on several areas, including pesticides, oil and gas, the Sydney Tar Pond clean-up, and clearcutting.

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Question	Greens	Liberals	NDP	PCs
1) Protected Areas: If elected, will your party accelerate the process and complete the province's protected areas network by 2010?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2) Emissions Mitigation and Energy Efficiency Programming: Will your party commit to meeting these targets [the 2001 Climate Action Plan] 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	Yes	Yes	Yes
3) Renewable Energy Initiatives: If elected, will your party commit to adopting legislation for Standard Offer Contracts for all renewable energy projects under 10 megawatts in Nova Scotia?	No (no policy)	Yes	Yes	No
4) Transportation: 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	Yes	No	Yes**
5) Non-Agricultural Organic Waste (NAOW)/biosolids on Farmland: Will your government commit to ceasing the application of Non-Agricultural Organic Wastes on agricultural land?	No (no policy)	Yes	Yes	Yes**
6) Pesticides: 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? 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, and yes.	- *	Yes, and yes	Yes**

7) Clearcutting: 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	Yes	Yes**
8) Oil and Gas Exploration: 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	—	—
9) Sydney Tar Ponds: 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	—	Yes	—
10) Public Consultation on Natural Resources: 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	Yes	Yes	Yes
11) Coastal Protection: If elected will your party immediately initiate a review of the Beaches Act as promised in the Green Plan?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12) Game Sanctuaries: If elected will your party commit to designating these areas as protected wilderness areas?	Yes	—	Yes	Yes**
13) Environment Trust and Round Table on the Economy and the Environment: If your party is elected, will you fund the [Nova Scotia] Environmental 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 the new Round Table?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\* In some cases, parties chose not to give a Yes or No response, but answered with a comment. These responses are flagged as —.

\*\* In some cases, parties answered Yes, but a close reading of their comments indicated that the 'Yes' did not appear to be in direct response to the content of the question.

# THE QUESTIONNAIRE

All questions were followed by a Yes/No answer choice, and a space for comments.

## 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?

## 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?

## 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?

#### 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?

#### 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?

#### 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?

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?

#### 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?

#### 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?

#### 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?

#### 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?

#### 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?

#### 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](http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/sanctuaries/pdfs/finalreport.pdf)). Three areas in particular have been asked by local stakeholder groups 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?

### 13) *Water*

Increasingly, Nova Scotia surface and groundwater resources are being compromised by human activities. In some parts of the province there are serious conflicts among various users which is causing declines in water quality and quantity. There is a need for management of water resources on the scale of bioregions and watersheds. These processes need to be community based and involve all stakeholders in an open, transparent and inclusive process. Will you commit to initiating watershed planning in Nova Scotia?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

For the past 50 years, uncontrolled livestock access has been an offence under the federal Fisheries Act. Livestock in waterways destroys aquatic habitat and is a significant source of contamination. In PEI, the agricultural community in cooperation with the federal and provincial governments have initiated a program for complete exclusion of livestock from waterways. Will you commit to initiating a similar program in Nova Scotia?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

### 14) *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?

**\*Note:** The question on water was not received/answered by two parties so was not included in the final grade. Water protection, water shed management, acid rain, clean and safe drinking water, and water conservation are critical issues in Nova Scotia. Clean water must be a priority for all parties.