

Parties get passing grades on green plans

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Most political parties still don't get the connection between the environment and the economy, the Nova Scotia Environmental Network says.

"We're in an economic crisis," Gretchen Fitzgerald, a member of the network's board, said in an interview Monday. "Why are we not using this to create green jobs?"

The network released a report card Monday that ranked the political parties on environmental issues.

The NDP, Greens, Liberals and Conservatives were given 25 questions on issues ranging from the green economy to pesticide bans.

Not surprisingly, the Green party came out on top with a B plus, followed by the NDP (B), Liberals (C plus) and Conservatives (C).

While there were no failing grades, Ms. Fitzgerald said she was disappointed that only the NDP had a specific plan on the green economy. The NDP responded with a detailed plan on job creation in energy efficiency, retrofit programs and incentives for renewable energy projects, such as wind, solar and tidal facilities.

The Conservatives got the worst mark for green job creation, partly because the party included all employment that would result from its stimulus spending.

"A huge proportion was fixing roads. That's not fulfilling a commitment to a green future," Ms. Fitzgerald noted wryly.

Environment Minister David Morse said he believes Nova Scotians have confidence in the Conservatives' environmental record.

He pointed to funding for wind and tidal energy projects, and the \$50 million the Conservatives have set aside for retrofitting homes to make them more energy efficient."

"There are all kinds of green jobs currently in Nova Scotia and I would suggest because of policies we've put in place, that's going to grow exponentially."

While the Greens received top marks in the survey, Ms. Fitzgerald said the party fell down on practical details. "If you can't figure out where in a budget something would come from, it won't happen," said Ms. Fitzgerald, director of the Sierra Club of Canada's Atlantic chapter.

Green Leader Ryan Watson said the party respects the environmental network and takes its opinions seriously. (jmcphee@herald.ca)