



Responses of the Three Major Parties  
To  
NSGEU Election Issues Questionnaire

September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013

# NDP:

---

## 1) COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

During the past four years, your government has respected the collective bargaining process even though there have been a number of difficult sets of negotiations in the public sector. A new Labour Board has been established and first contract settlement legislation was passed to help both employers and employees in newly organized workplaces with negotiations of a first contract.

Q. IS YOUR PARTY STILL COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING FULL AND FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, AND ARE THERE ANY CHANGES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE FOR IT IN THE FUTURE?

A. Yes, the NDP remains committed to full and free collective bargaining. The NDP does not contemplate any changes at this time. The NDP would expect the *Labour Management Review Committee* to develop any advice and recommendations.

## 2) SIZE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

In the Budget of 2010-11, your government announced that the civil service will be reduced by 10 percent by 2013 through retirements and voluntary departures. You have claimed that there has been a net reduction of 632 positions over four years.

Q. WHAT IS YOUR PARTY'S POSITION ON THE CURRENT SIZE OF THE PROVINCIAL CIVIL SERVICE? DO YOU THINK IT SHOULD BE FURTHER REDUCED IN THE FUTURE, AND IF SO, BY HOW MUCH? WHAT IS YOUR PARTY'S COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING CURRENT COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ITS PROVISIONS FOR ENHANCED JOB SECURITY??

A. The NDP is committed to an effective civil service, in which Nova Scotians are proud to work. The NDP will not set new targets for reduction in the size of the civil service. The NDP will focus on how to improve services, with good employee engagement, in addition to the annual assessment of priorities during the budget process. The NDP is committed to current collective agreements, including enhanced job security.

## 3) CONTRACTING OUT

Your Party has committed on two occasions to the NSGEU Five Point Quality Public Service Protection Plan. As government, you opposed the full implementation of the Ernst and Young Report recommendations for merged health services and the contracting out of Restaurant Services at Capital Health. However, your government did agree to contract out the Department of Finance SAP jobs to IBM and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal's stationery stockroom.

Q. WHAT IS YOUR PARTY'S CURRENT POSITION ON CONTRACTING-OUT OF PUBLIC SERVICES? ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC PROGRAMS OR SERVICES WHICH YOU THINK SHOULD BE CONTRACTED IN THE FUTURE, AND IF SO, WHY?

A. The NDP stands by Premier Dexter's quality public service assurances to the NSGEU. In particular the NDP opposes contracting out or privatization that is undertaken to reduce wages and benefits of hard-working public servants. The NDP does not have a policy in favour of contracting out. The NDP will involve the NSGEU early if there is ever any further consideration of a serious proposal that could involve contracting out.

#### 4) PUBLIC HEALTH CARE

There has been much recent debate about the structure and delivery of public health care in Nova Scotia. Your government has focused on moving ahead on merging administrative services, and not reducing the number of District Health Authorities.

Q. WHAT ARE YOUR PARTY'S PLANS FOR PROTECTING AND STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH CARE?

A. The NDP is committed to a strong and vital public health care system that is accessible to all Nova Scotians. The NDP upholds the values of the Canada Health Act – public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility. Those principles are endorsed by the NDP's Insured Health Services Act which was approved by the Legislature on December 6, 2012. Detailed preparation of the Act's implementation is now underway.

The overarching platform goal for the NDP is to deliver better health care when and where you need it. The NDP will build on NDP initiatives like the new plan for expansion of home care and long-term care, the successful collaborative emergency centres (CECs), expanding children's dental coverage to age 17 and providing insulin pumps to kids. The NDP will also create nurse-managed clinics, work with doctors to provide same day or next day access to primary care, help families cover the cost of well water tests and create a seniors hearing aid program to help low income seniors cover the cost of hearing aids. The NDP will continue to redirect funds from administration to front-line. The choice for Nova Scotians is between paper work and patient care.

#### 5) EDUCATION

With declining enrolments, school boards, universities and community colleges have been facing difficult funding challenges during the past four years. This has resulted in cuts to programs and services, reductions to front-line staff positions as well as rising tuitions in universities and community colleges.

Q. WHAT IS YOUR POSITION ON THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH PUBLIC SCHOOL AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION? HOW WILL THEY HELP TO RESTORE AND EXPAND SUPPORT SERVICES SUCH AS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS AND SCHOOL LIBRARIANS IN P-12, AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE FACE OF DECLINING ENROLLMENT?

A. The NDP is focusing on working with the partners in education, including school staff, to improve learning in the classroom and support for community-based schools, so kids and learning come first. After a modest decrease to recognize the significant enrolment decline, money for public schools is increasing again. Unlike the Liberals, the NDP did not rollback wages or require mass lay-offs. The NDP recognizes that school board operations can become more efficient, freeing up resources for in-school services like librarians and special needs education. The NDP will work closely with staff and school boards to achieve that redirection of funds to schools. In addition, the NDP has already increased the money that is dedicated to special education, while increasing the number of teachers and

educational assistants to meet the smaller class sizes set by the NDP. As smaller classes are extended through Grade 6, more education assistants will be needed.

Smart strategic planning is needed for Nova Scotia's universities to thrive. That's why negotiation of the next multi-year funding plan is addressing quality, funding stability, and access and affordability.

Innovations like the new admissions portal will reduce needless duplication and enable universities to better support priorities such as student support services.

A key post-secondary issue is affordability. The NDP brought in Canada's first student debt cap; doubled the needs-based grant part of student aid; increased the NS Student Bursary; upped the text book allowance; and limited tuition increases to 3 per cent for most students.

## 6) MENTAL HEALTH

In May 2012, your government released Nova Scotia's first-ever provincial mental health and addictions strategy, and also issued a one-year report card in May 2013.

Q. HOW DOES YOUR PARTY PLAN TO BUILD ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS STRATEGY? WILL YOU CONTINUE TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS? WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR MOVING AHEAD TO IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL STANDARD OF CANADA FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE?

A. After just one year of implementing *Together We Can*, there has been significant progress, as detailed in the update at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/mhs/reports/MHS-Together-We-Can-One-Year-Update.pdf>. The NDP will complete the funded implementation of the strategy and complementary actions, like the recent announcement of \$14 million to hire more mental health professionals and guidance counselors in schools. This addresses a need that was brought forward through the NDP government's work on bullying and cyberbullying.

The NDP will keep working with the NSGEU to monitor implementation of the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace in the civil service.

## 7) WORKERS' VOICES IN PUBLIC POLICY

For the first time, workers and their unions have helped to play a major role in setting public policies while your government has been in office. This has included the economy, labour legislation, occupational health and safety, employment insurance, and workplace mental health. For example, there is labour involvement in the Premier's Council on the Economy, the Workforce for the Future, and the Provincial Housing Strategy.

Q. ARE YOU COMMITTED TO SEEING THIS ROLE CONTINUE, AND IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU WILLING TO SEE IT EXPANDED?

A. Yes. The NDP believes that Nova Scotian families benefit when the labour movement is engaged side by side with business and community representatives at the highest levels of public policy development.

---

# Liberals:

---

## 1) COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

During the past four years, there have been a number of difficult sets of negotiations in the public sector which were completed with very few strikes or lockouts. A new Labour Board has been established and first contract settlement legislation was passed to help both employers and employees in newly organized workplaces with negotiations of a first contract. Your platform says nothing about workers' rights and collective bargaining.

**Q. IS YOUR PARTY COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING FULL AND FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING? WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE TO RECENTLY PASSED LABOUR LEGISLATION AND WHY?**

A. Liberals believe in open and transparent collective bargaining and we are committed to maintaining full and free collective bargaining.

A Liberal government would amend First Contract Arbitration legislation to bring it in line with the Canada Labour Code which requires evidence that the parties are at a bargaining impasse, bargaining is not productive or there has been bad faith bargaining before an application for FCA can be made.

A Liberal government will also bring more balance to the Labour Management Review Committee that ensures that non-unionized employers and employees have representation at that table.

## 2) SIZE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

In the Budget of 2010-11, the government announced that the civil service will be reduced by 10 percent by 2013 through retirements and voluntary departures. In your platform, you have said you want to see a 1% reduction in departmental spending (excluding health, education, P-12 and post-secondary).

**Q. THE CIVIL SERVICE HAS ALREADY BEEN REDUCED OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS AND DEPARTMENTAL SPENDING IS DOWN. WITH THAT IN MIND, EXACTLY HOW MUCH DO YOU INTEND TO REDUCE THE CIVIL SERVICE TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR TARGET, AND HAVE YOU STUDIED WHAT IMPACT THOSE REDUCTIONS WILL HAVE ON SERVICES TO NOVA SCOTIANS? WHAT IS YOUR PARTY'S COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING CURRENT COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ITS PROVISIONS INCLUDING JOB SECURITY?**

A. Liberals believe in the importance of public services and also in ensuring that taxpayer dollars are well invested. A Liberal government will reach that reduction without laying off civil servants.

I've heard from many civil servants who tell me that we can save money by doing business more effectively – that there are ways we can improve procedures that will save money while protect services. It is by listening to those on the front lines, those workers who do their jobs every day and are able to spot those things which may not make sense or have an idea for a way to do things which would help save money. By listening, we can identify changes which have the potential to have significant impacts.

Liberals support collective bargaining and will respect agreements. As well, as noted above, we also respect public services and, with civil servants, will see to it that Nova Scotians will not see reductions in direct service.

### 3) CONTRACTING OUT AND PRIVATIZATION

Food services at Capital Health as well as wine and beer sales have been proposed as targets for privatization. You have earlier been quoted as saying Capital Health should not be in the retail food business but focused on delivering health care services.

Q. WHAT IS YOUR PARTY'S POSITION ON CONTRACTING-OUT OF PUBLIC SERVICES? WHAT IS YOUR POSITION ON THE PRIVATIZATION OF BEER AND WINE SALES? AND IS YOUR PARTY PREPARED TO SIGN OUR FIVE POINT QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICE PROTECTION PLAN (SEE ATTACHED)?

A. Selling off a public monopoly to become a private monopoly would be a mistake. We had that experience with Nova Scotia Power. This is a contrast in priorities. The Liberal Party of Nova Scotia remains focused on reducing power rates, growing our economy, creating a better education system for our children and fostering job creation across the province. We do need to explore ways in which we can support local industry through the growing market for craft beer and Nova Scotian wines while maintaining a strongly regulated environment.

A Liberal government will not privatize or sell off the NSLC, nor will we change the manner in which alcohol is regulated in Nova Scotia. We will explore options for how to better support local craft beer and the Nova Scotian wine industry and ways in which we can help provide some fairness for restaurants, bars and other licensees.

In health care, we need to focus our scarce resources on frontline delivery. We need to have a conversation as to how we can best serve patients, and where our resources are best able to achieve the goal of putting patients first. For example, we need to ensure that our nurses are supported, and we will work with the Provincial Nursing Network to review and update the strategy and focus on a plant that will retain nursing graduates as well as experienced nurses.

### 4) PUBLIC HEALTH CARE

There has been much recent debate about the structure and delivery of public health care in Nova Scotia. Your platform has called for reducing the number of District Health Authorities from 10 to 2. As you will recall, the move from 4 Regional Health Boards to 9 DHAs created major disruption in the system for several years. Only through the determined and persistent efforts by our members were legislated protections to the existing rights and benefits of healthcare workers maintained.

Q. WHAT ASSESSMENT HAS YOUR PARTY DONE OF THE IMPACTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC HEALTHCARE SERVICES AND FOR FRONT-LINE WORKERS WHO PROVIDE THESE SERVICES? WHAT STEPS WOULD YOU BE PREPARED TO TAKE TO PROTECT THE BENEFITS AND RIGHTS OF ALL HEALTHCARE WORKERS? WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RIGHT TO STRIKE IF THESE BOARDS WERE TO BE FORMED?

A. A Liberal Government would reduce the number of CEO's and VP's by reducing the number of DHA's from 10 to 2. The Liberal Party is proposing fewer CEO's, fewer VP's and fewer Directors in our health care system so a reinvestment can be made back into front-line health care. There will be one CEO and a lean executive leadership team. Health care will be delivered through four regional zones. Site based management and site based decision making will be strengthened and implemented providing health care workers with the ability to make a difference for the patients they provide care for. Community

Health Boards will remain in place and their role and linkages with the health care system will be strengthened. The delivery through four zones coupled with site based management and decision making, and a strengthened role for Community Health Boards, will strengthen community decision making – not weaken it. There will be one volunteer provincial board that will work with the executive leadership team to plan and manage health care for the province. Membership of this board will consist of one member from each of the current DHA's. The cost savings from this restructuring - \$13 million annually - will be re-invested into front-line health care. The IWK will remain as its own entity due to the fact that its Regional status and funding extends beyond Nova Scotia. All existing collective agreements will remain in place; successor rights will be protected; and benefits and salaries will be carried over into the new system. Unlike both the NDP and Conservatives, a Liberal government will not unilaterally take away the right to strike for health care workers.

## 5) EDUCATION

In the face of declining enrolments, school boards, universities and community colleges have been facing difficult funding challenges during the past four years.

**Q. HOW WILL YOUR PLATFORM PROPOSALS ADDRESS THE FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGES FACING BOTH PUBLIC SCHOOL AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION? HOW WILL THEY HELP TO RESTORE AND EXPAND SUPPORT SERVICES SUCH AS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS AND SCHOOL LIBRARIANS IN P-12, AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE FACE OF DECLINING ENROLLMENT?**

A. Liberals were proud to stand with NSGEU, CUPE and SEIU to speak out against the NDP cuts to public education.

Liberals see education as a social investment. We are committed to reinvesting the \$65 million back into our classrooms that was cut by the NDP government. We were proud to stand with the NSTU to present the Kids not Cuts petition of over 20,000 signatures to the legislature. We are committed to initiating a comprehensive curriculum review.

We want to work with educators to revise our curriculum to ensure we are giving our students a modern, relevant curriculum that best meets their needs in today's society. A Liberal government will allow and encourage teachers to ensure that students can master a skill to the best of their ability before progressing through the system.

We will also cap class sizes at 20 students for grades primary to two. To allow for flexibility, those classes in primary to grade two with 21-25 students will get the additional support of an education assistant, grades 3- 6 will be capped at 25 students.

We have heard from teachers that classroom composition is an issue that many teachers find more and more challenging, especially with eroding supports. A Liberal government will increase investment in special needs services and ensure that students can access specialist services in a timely manner.

A Liberal government will also invest in Student Support Grants to help alleviate the fundraising burden faced by school communities. Each school will be eligible for \$5000 per school and \$25 per student to be directed toward meeting student need and alleviating some of the fundraising burden.

Our post-secondary education system is an asset. Federal transfers for post-secondary education currently go to provinces where students are born. Nova Scotia welcomes over 13,000 out of province students a year- without seeing the benefit of that federal funding.

A Liberal government will lobby- with our federal counterparts to have these transfers reflect where people study and not where they're born.

As well, international students are a great asset to our communities and our universities- we need to look at how we can best attract students who will come to our universities and hopefully stay in Nova Scotia to build their careers and lives. We will also support universities and look at how we can leverage the research and innovative work happening in the province.

The MOU between the government and universities expires in 2015. We need to look to the future working with students and universities at how we can continue to have the strongest university system in the province that is accessible to all.

We need to ensure that on- campus student services are made available and accessible to students. A Liberal government will work with students and universities to ensure that quality student services are made available.

## 6) MENTAL HEALTH

In May 2012, the government adopted Nova Scotia's first-ever provincial mental health and addictions strategy, and issued a one-year report card in May 2013.

**Q. HOW DOES YOUR PARTY PLAN TO BUILD ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS STRATEGY? WILL YOU CONTINUE TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS? WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR MOVING AHEAD TO IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL STANDARD OF CANADA FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE?**

A. In September 2009, it was the Liberal Caucus that brought forward legislation around not only the formation of an Advisory Council on Mental Health but also legislated a mandate for the group to develop recommendations, provide an implementation plan and monitor the results to ensure the mental health needs of Nova Scotians were met. At the time, the NDP indicated that this was not needed, so we were pleased when government eventually announced the development of a mental health strategy. This strategy, which was completed in 2012, provides a set of recommendations and an implementation schedule. If elected a Liberal government will ensure the ongoing implementation of this strategy. One of the single biggest threats to ensuring ongoing implementation of this strategy lies in the 1% HST reduction both the NDP and Conservatives are proposing which will reduce revenues by \$190 million at a time when CHT transfers to our province would be reduced. The tax reduction plans of both the NDP and the Conservatives will further deteriorate health care services including mental health.

The National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace, announced by the Mental Health Commission in Canada in early 2013, will be a valuable tool for all workplaces. If a Liberal government is elected, we will work with both business and labour to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of this voluntary standard.

It is important to note that two of the thirteen workplace factors addressed in the standard are involvement and influence, and engagement; key goals a Liberal government would meet by reducing the number of CEO's and VP's in our health care system and allowing health care workers and professionals to have a greater say in the decisions making process.

#### 7) WORKERS' VOICES IN PUBLIC POLICY

During the past four years, workers and their unions have helped to play a major role in setting public policies. This has included the economy, labour legislation, occupational health and safety, employment insurance, and workplace mental health. For example, there is labour involvement in the Premier's Council on the Economy, the Workforce for the Future, and the Provincial Housing Strategy.

**Q. WHAT IS YOUR PARTY'S POSITION ON THE ROLE OF WORKERS AND THEIR UNIONS IN HELPING TO SET PUBLIC POLICY? ARE YOU WILLING TO SEE THIS ROLE CONTINUE AND BE EXPANDED, AND IF SO, HOW?**

A. In order to grow our economy in Nova Scotia and ensure that public services are protected, it is important to continue a fair dialogue with all stakeholders, including workers. A Liberal government will work with the NSGEU on issues of importance to your membership.

# Progressive Conservatives

---

## 1) COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

During the past four years, there have been a number of difficult sets of negotiations in the public sector which were completed with very few strikes or lockouts. A new Labour Board has been established and first contract arbitration legislation was passed to help both employers and employees in newly organized workplaces with negotiations of a first contract. Your platform calls the repeal of the first contract arbitration legislation. You have introduced legislation to take away the right to strike from specific groups of workers.

Q. WHY IS YOUR PARTY COMMITTED TO REMOVING THE RIGHT TO STRIKE WHEN THERE WERE MORE ADVERSARIAL NEGOTIATIONS AND STRIKES UNDER THE HAMM AND MACDONALD GOVERNMENTS THAN SINCE THEN WHEN NO SUCH MEASURES WERE BROUGHT FORWARD? HOW WILL REPEAL OF THE FIRST CONTRACT ARBITRATION LEGISLATION HELP TO RESOLVE PROLONGED FIRST CONTACT NEGOTIATION DISPUTES?

A. We are committed to collective bargaining just as you feel that arbitration – and not a strike - is an appropriate end to some situations (eg, first contract where parties can't reach a deal), so do we (where patient care suffers). I note your own criticisms of the approach of the paramedics' union, a situation which would have ended in chaos and almost certainly in tragedy had the NDP not acted. We heard from a great many people who had procedures cancelled - including cancer surgery - because of a previous strike threat. Can't we agree that there has to be a better way? Isn't protecting vulnerable patients more important than standing for strikes in some situations, but not in others? Can't we also agree that winding down an entire system while the maybe-maybe not of a looming strike or lock-out means scarce public resources get wasted instead of directed to patient care, something which only takes resources away from what your members do so well?

I know that unions have to look out for their members, and I applaud you for the work you have done in that regard. Political leaders have broader responsibilities. We too look out for your members.

I am deeply committed to freeing up resources to refund the health care system. That means, for example, more nurses and more technicians etc who are more directly engaged in patient care, and fewer people at the top.

## 2) SIZE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

In the Budget of 2010-11, the government announced that the civil service will be reduced by 10 percent by 2013 through retirements and voluntary departures. The government claims that there has been a

net reduction of 632 positions over four years. Your platform calls a 10% reduction in the civil service and limits to annual government spending based on the rate of population growth plus inflation.

**Q. HOW WILL YOUR CUTBACKS TO THE CIVIL SERVICE AND DEPARTMENTAL SPENDING LIMITS IMPROVE THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND CREATE MEANINGFUL JOBS? WHAT IS YOUR PARTY'S COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING THE CURRENT EMPLOYMENT, AND CURRENT COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ITS PROVISIONS INCLUDING JOB SECURITY?**

A. Premier Dexter promised the same thing (reducing size of the civil service through attrition and retirements), because we've reached a point where we need to do that if we are to fund the education, health care and other services we all rely on. He did not accomplish it. As you point out, you have job security provisions in collective agreements.

### 3) CONTRACTING OUT AND PRIVATIZATION

Your platform calls for the full implementation of the Ernst and Young Report's recommendations for merged health care and allowing the sale of wine and beer in more private sector retail locations. You have also supported the privatization of restaurant services at Capital Health.

**Q. HOW WILL THE CONTRACTING-OUT AND PRIVATIZATION IMPROVE THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND SAVE MONEY? WHY DO YOU STILL WANT TO PROCEED WITH THE PRIVATIZATION OF WINE AND BEER SALES WHEN THE EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING THAT IT IS NOT NEEDED, IT DOES NOT CREATE MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT, AND IT WOULD BE A MAJOR HAZARD TO PUBLIC SAFETY WHICH VERY FEW PEOPLE?**

A. Ernst & Young is a reputable firm and confirmed the savings in their study. That represents tens of millions of dollars – every year – that could have been spent on front line health care and wasn't. If we can improve health care for the same money, why wouldn't we?

We have seen no evidence that your membership is any different than other Nova Scotians, who in overwhelming numbers want an improvement of services, whether that is in health care or education at one end of the spectrum right through to wanting to have more convenience in picking up a bottle of wine or a few beer to enjoy while tending their BBQ.

### 4) PUBLIC HEALTH CARE

There has been much debate about the structure and delivery of public health care in Nova Scotia. Your platform has called for reducing the number of District Health Authorities from 9 to 3. You said you want

to see more private-sector options to improve access to health care in a manner that respects the five principles of the Canada Health Care Act.

**Q. WHAT ASSESSMENT HAS YOUR PARTY DONE OF THE IMPACTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC HEALTHCARE SERVICES AND FOR FRONT-LINE WORKERS WHO PROVIDE THESE SERVICES? WHAT STEPS WOULD YOU BE PREPARED TO TAKE TO PROTECT THE BENEFITS AND RIGHTS OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS? HOW CAN MORE PRIVATE-SECTOR OPTIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS BE CONSISTENT WITH THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE CANADA HEALTH ACT?**

A. We expect there will be more front line unionized health care workers under our plan. Please let your members know that we respect and need them and that – finally - help is on its way.

We strongly believe in the Five Principles of the Canada Health Act, and we believe in a strong public health care system. Much of our current health care system (eg doctors' offices), represents a form a private delivery and improves access. If any option, public or private, presents itself, firmly respects the Five Principles and reduces for example wait times for everyone, that would have to be looked at seriously and represents no threat to anyone.

## 5) EDUCATION

In the face of declining enrolments, school boards, universities and community colleges have been facing difficult funding challenges during the past four years. This has resulted in cuts to programs and services, reductions to front-line staff positions as well as rising tuitions in universities and community colleges. Your platform has called for reducing number of school boards from 9 to 4, and reinvesting administrative savings back into the classrooms. You promise long-term stable funding to universities and community colleges.

**Q. WHAT IS YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS FOR THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION? HOW WILL THEY HELP TO RESTORE AND EXPAND SUPPORT SERVICES SUCH AS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS, SCHOOL LIBRARIANS AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION? HOW CAN LONG-TERM STABLE FUNDING HELP UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES IF THERE ARE NO FUNDING INCREASES?**

A. The best way to get more money into our classrooms and otherwise enrich education is to negotiate stable, long term funding arrangements with our school boards, universities and community colleges. The same principle works for health boards. Why? Because it allows for planning and commitments that increase quality. It also eliminates the waste from planning and execution having to be redone repeatedly. And, it also allows the government to require commitments in exchange for the funding.

Right now, boards, universities etc cannot budget very well, they get hit with cuts at the last minute and the response is chaotic every year. We know long term stable negotiated funding agreements work because they have helped where tried and because we hear from leaders in the system that this is exactly what they need.

It is also the case that we simply have too many school boards for a province our size and can free up money and put every cent back into education. We are not talking about cuts to the system such as happened in the 1990s, but a careful redirection which is done specifically to identify resources that could be better spent. If we want to redirect resources into the classroom (good and unionized jobs, by the way) somebody needs to free up money somewhere.

## 6) MENTAL HEALTH

In May 2012, the government adopted Nova Scotia's first-ever provincial mental health and addictions strategy, and issued a one-year report card in May 2013. However, there remain many serious gaps and shortcomings in mental health services. Workplace bullying and harassment is seen to be widespread.

**Q. WHY IS THERE NO REFERENCE TO MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS IN YOUR PLATFORM? WHAT STEPS WOULD YOU TAKE TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES? WHAT WILL YOU BE PREPARED TO DO TO ADDRESS WORKPLACE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT?**

A. Substantial progress in improving our mental health services is desperately needed. We understand that perhaps one in five Nova Scotians – people all around us, in the workplace, in our families and communities – are struggling, and that the human and financial cost of mental illness is tremendous. Every party can tell you it believes in doing better, and I think everyone is sincere in that. The key to making lasting improvements is to free up funding. The party that can free up the most resources can help the most. I am determined to address this serious public health issue, and so I simply want to do the best job possible at freeing up resources and redirecting them to help people better.

## 7) WORKERS' VOICES IN PUBLIC POLICY

During the past four years, workers and their unions have helped to play a major role in setting public policies. This has included the economy, labour legislation, occupational health and safety, employment insurance, and workplace mental health.

**Q. WHAT IS YOUR PARTY'S POSITION ON THE ROLE OF WORKERS AND THEIR UNIONS IN HELPING TO SET PUBLIC POLICY? ARE YOU WILLING TO SEE THIS ROLE CONTINUE AND BE EXPANDED, AND IF SO, HOW?**

A. Joan, I want you and your members to know that we want to have a productive dialogue with labour. Nobody has a monopoly on good ideas. I would like unions and union members to play an important role. I can imagine some ways that we can work together that could be extremely productive. For example, hard working public employees know all too well where there are public resources that are being poorly used. I know it frustrates them as much as it frustrates me to come across examples of that.

Hard working public employees also tell me that they want change that works, and a province where we don't have to be so negative or to have the highest taxes, the highest power rates, weakening ability to pay for services, poor job prospects for their kids, a population that will shrink unless we change course, poor wage growth etc . We have so many challenges, and that is why I am dedicated to offering your members and all Nova Scotians real change to build a better future.

---