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Confederation of Canadian Unions 2017 Election Questions NDP Responses

LABOUR

1. Statistics Canada reports unionized workers enjoy 14 to 20 percent higher wages than nonunionized workers in the same line of work, as well as stronger pensions, superior health and safety standards, longer paid vacation time, better health and drug benefits, and more rights in the workplace. Does your party believe that unions play a positive role in our economy? If so, what policies will your party implement to create a climate that is easier for unions to organize?

We most certainly believe that unions play a positive role in the economy. When the NS NDP was in government, we changed the Trade Union Act to make it easier for unions to achieve representation in a workplace. When we form government, we will continue that work. A better legal framework would help to create a better climate for organizing.

2. Will your government respect the decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada and the core conventions of the International Labour Organization regarding freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike for unions?

Yes, we respect the decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada and the core conventions of the International Labour Organization regarding freedom of association, free and fair collective bargaining, and the right to strike. We will repeal the numerous statutes adopted by the McNeil Liberals, including Bill 30, Bill 37, Bill 100, Bill 148, and Bill 75, which have served to undermine the rights of organized labour.

3. According to the Workers Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, there has been an average of 10 acute and 18 chronic workplace fatalities in our province each year. This makes the per capita rate of workplace fatalities in Nova Scotia among the highest in Canada. What will your party do to guarantee better health and safety conditions to reduce workplace injuries and fatalities? Will your party commit to increasing workplace inspection by department inspectors as an enforcement tool?

The NS NDP is acutely aware of the issues around workplace health and safety, and we will direct resources to enforcement tools. We have a strong record of working with labour to identify and eliminate hazards in the workplace.

4. While corporate profits, productivity and GDP have all increased consistently during the past thirty years, Statistics Canada reports that both real hourly wages and median family income have been stagnant since 1980. Why do you think this has happened, and what does your party propose to change the situation? Will your party commit to instituting a \$15 an hour minimum wage in Nova Scotia?

The NS NDP has been clear about its commitment to a \$15 per hour minimum wage. And we have committed to eliminating the discriminatory lower wage rate for inexperienced workers. Under the leadership of Gary Burrill, the NS NDP has taken strong anti-poverty positions to redress the current economic imbalance. We will reverse McNeil's cuts to employment programs for African-Nova Scotians, people with disabilities, and women. We are determined to build a more equitable economy by investing in our people.

THE ECONOMY

5. According to a recent study published by the Nova Scotia Centre for Policy Alternatives, income inequality in Nova Scotia is at a forty year high. How will your party reverse this trend and reduce the growing levels of economic inequality in the province?

The NS NDP follows closely the work of the CCPA. With our commitment to the \$15 minimum wage and our focus on anti-poverty measures such as changes to a more progressive tax policy, better income assistance, and affordable post-secondary education, we have demonstrated our commitment reducing economic inequality in our province. Nova Scotia's Liberals and Progressive Conservatives have reprehensible track records of spending on big business to "attract jobs" rather than investing in homegrown development. The NDP believes that the most prosperous future is the one that we build ourselves.

6. According to a recent Vote Compass poll, 71% of Canadians believe corporations should pay more taxes and 77% of Canadians believe the wealthy should pay more taxes. Does your party believe that those who benefit the most should pay their fair share of taxes? Will your party commit to raising taxes on corporations and the wealthy?

The NS NDP believes in a progressive taxation structure. When the NDP was in Government, we began to make changes to the income tax system to implement this, and we will continue to do so. We will raise taxes for corporations and the wealthy. We have made a commitment to implement a 3% surtax on incomes of more than \$250,000.

7. Over the past several years, the debt-to-GDP ratio in Nova Scotia has compared favorably with that of most of the Atlantic Provinces and Ontario and Quebec. Will your party commit to rejecting an austerity agenda as a regressive economic strategy that has been proven to weaken economies and stifle economic growth?

The NS NDP is committed to investing in our province. Our strategy for economic development starts from the bottom and grows upwards. By prioritizing education and social infrastructure, we will create a strong ground for a dynamic economy with deep roots in the smaller communities.

8. Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) have a terrible track record in Nova Scotia as well as other provinces, and are an inefficient, exceedingly costly mechanism to deliver public services. Will your party commit to the delivery of government services without the use of P3s?

The NS NDP opposes the use of P3 (public-private partnerships) for all public infrastructure, and we certainly do not see a role for it in the delivery of services. All available evidence demonstrates quite clearly that P3 projects result in higher costs and fewer controls.

HEALTHCARE

9. There are thousands of people in the province on waiting lists for surgery, home care, and finding a family doctor. What will your party do to fund more doctors, nursing positions and hospital beds throughout the province, and ensure that our health care system is there for us when we need it?

The NS NDP has committed to invest \$120 million over four years in primary health care. We will expand the dental health care program to cover children and youth, work on recruiting and retaining medical professionals, and invest in a midwifery training program. We will create more nursing home beds and reduce wait-times for long-term care. We will open more collaborative emergency centres, and we will work with communities to create more community-based health centres across the province.

10. Increasing drug costs are a significant hardship for many Nova Scotians. What will your party do to improve Pharmacare and ensure all Nova Scotians have access to the medications they need?

The NS NDP has committed to freezing Seniors Pharmacare premiums.

11. There has been significant media coverage of recent funding cuts to senior's homes. Is this necessary as a matter of policy? What are your party's policies and commitments in this area?

These funding cuts are NOT necessary. The NS NDP has committed to reversing McNeil's \$8 million cut to nursing homes and residential care facilities and to investing in additional nursing home beds. We will work with the families and care providers of seniors to develop an integrated model of care for seniors.

EDUCATION

12. According to Global News, tuition increases for post-secondary students in Nova Scotia in 2016 were double the national average, making Nova Scotia the second most expensive province in which to study. Young people are our future, and they simply deserve much better. What will your party do to reverse these largescale tuition fee increases and make post-secondary education accessible to all Nova Scotians?

The NS NDP has committed to eliminating tuition at the Nova Scotia Community College and to reducing university tuition by 10%.

13. The educators in our public school system are vital to our economy and the future prosperity of our province, yet the government has attempted to create a surplus from painful cuts to public education. What will your party do to recognize the commitment and contribution of teachers and educational support workers in our province? Will your party repeal Bill 75?

The NS NDP will repeal Bill 75. We will invest in our classrooms, teachers, and students. We will introduce class caps for all grades. We will increase classroom supports for teachers by hiring more Educational Assistants and specialists for the classroom. We will ensure that teachers spend more time teaching and not entering data entry or supervising unnecessary assessments. We will establish a moratorium on school closures and commit to working with communities to move forward with the hub school model.

ENVIRONMENT

14. What policies will your party implement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect the environment, and how will you pay for them?

The NS NDP has committed to legislating a hard target for Green House Gas emission reductions for 2030 by the end of Year 1 of our mandate. We will work towards creating a carbon-neutral government. We will establish new programs to encourage the production of renewable energy. We will introduce an Environmental Bill of Rights and establish an independent Environmental Commissioner to enforce the Bill's provisions.

15. One of the best ways to reduce our carbon footprint on the environment is public transportation. What will your party do to make public transportation throughout the province more affordable and accessible to Nova Scotians?

The NS NDP will invest in sustainable transportation, including stable core funding for public transportation.

FIRST NATIONS

16. Where does your party stand in relation to Indigenous rights? How are you going to help with social issues facing Indigenous people on reserves across this province? Will your party adopt and implement the proposals set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

The NS NDP will recognize and take action on the recommendations and calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. We will work towards increasing Indigenous representation in the health care field, providing cultural education for all, and adopting and implementing the proposals of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We will continue to build relationships with Indigenous communities in Mi'kma'ki.