

**Confederation of Canadian Unions**  
Political Party Questionnaire for 2017 Nova Scotia General Election

Greetings,

The Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU) is the nation's largest federation of independent labour unions. Founded in 1969 on the initiative of labour organizers Kent Rowley and Madeleine Parent, the CCU is dedicated to the establishment of a democratic, independent Canadian labour movement. The CCU includes members in affiliated unions across the country in both the public and private sectors.

The CCU is establishing a political education campaign to help its membership make informed voting choices for the 2017 Nova Scotia general election. The following sixteen questions will be sent to all four major parties in the province, including the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party and the Green Party.

The answers from each party will be posted on the CCU website ([www.ccu-csc.ca](http://www.ccu-csc.ca)), and the CCU leadership will also provide a "school grade" to the parties on each of the issues below.

We would ask that you keep your answers to 250 words or less per question, and that you return the full questionnaire to Sean Cain at [media@ccu-csc.ca](mailto:media@ccu-csc.ca) by May 16, 2017, so that we have time to properly inform our membership before the vote on May 30.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email. And thank you for participating.

Sincerely,

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## Questions

### 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?**

This is a question I am struggling with myself. I have been a member at large at our Dalhousie Faculty Association and have seen first-hand the confrontational atmosphere and deterioration of labour relations. Also, we have seen a complete breakdown of labour relations and true negotiations in Nova Scotia. I strongly believe in the need for strong labour protection and see the role of a government to ensure this. Clearly, our system is not working, and I am looking forward to much deeper discussions about this.

What to do about it is a much more difficult question. A fellow German-born Nova Scotian reminded me lately that we have many unions in Germany but much less strikes, and he thought that one of the critical parts might be that unions are represented as true part of an executive. That is, there is not just a time every three years where we asked for things, but that we are part of decision making all the way. I would like to discuss such possibilities more.

I would like to point out that the Green movement typically includes a much different vision of our work environment, where the health on satisfaction of our workforce is the source of sustainable economies.

**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, of course we will respect our constitutional rights and repeal any unconstitutional laws such as Bill 75.

**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?**

This is a good example where I would like to learn more about the situation. More inspectors seems like one way to go, a better awareness training including the responsibility of workers to possibly anonymously point to deficits might be another. The Green Party of Nova Scotia is committed to evidence-based decision making and to work with groups that have studied these issues in more detail.

**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?**

Indeed, there is an increased imbalance between raising corporate profits and worker's wellness both financially and in terms of security and long term prospects. GDP is also well recognized to not capture the true progress of our society, and measuring this, such as using the Genuine Progress Index (GPI) is important.

We would support an increase in a minimum wage to \$15 in the short term, but we also believe that we have to move further by moving to a livable wage.

## **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 increasing economic inequality is very concerning. We believe that moving towards a local sustainable industry is therefore very important. Instead of giving tax-breaks to large international companies, we need to support small and medium size enterprises that have local ownership and are sustainable. Such an economy would leave more money in our province and are more embedded in our society, thereby providing jobs and more balanced economies instead of focusing on investor return.

**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?**

What is even more shocking to me is that large corporations rarely pay taxes or benefit from large handouts for promises of jobs that do not seem sustainable to us and rarely come through as promised. Only a business that can effort reasonable taxes can be called sustainable, and thus we think that corporations must pay a fair share while we must ensure the SME can get to the point where they can be sustainable.

**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?**

While the Green Party of Nova Scotia believes in fiscal responsibility, we do not believe in austerity measures and believe that we need to provide strategic investments, in particular, to make new developments possible.

**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?**

I do not know enough of this topic at this point to make an educated statement.

## 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?**

Our health care system is not sustainable in the way we operate, and the Green Party of Nova Scotia wants to put more emphasis in health promotion and disease prevention. In the short term we want increase collaborative health clinics and early access with an increase role for a more health practitioners, from community nurses, midwives, to walk-in mental health clinics. There is much more on that in our platform.

**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?**

There have been several studies that pharmacare would save us money, and we want to work with the federal government to achieve this. There must also be an update on drugs covered by MSI and a strategy for emergency funding.

**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?**

No, this is not necessary as a matter of policy. Indeed, it is failing our citizens and the reason we are here. Our policies are about health promotions and supporting an increased autonomous living by 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?

I am very concerned about the rising debt load for our students. The Green Party of Nova Scotia is very clear that our goal is free tuition in the long run, and I have campaigned on this for the last 10 years. To get there I believe that we need a much more diverse and effective education system including enhanced professional schools and apprenticeship programs. We also want to remove parental income from the student loan criteria, find solutions for reductions in tuitions in the short term.

**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?**

Yes, repeal Bill 75 right away and start true negotiations. I would love to see more openness in these talks. I do believe we also need a fundamental shift such as moving to a priority where students are all considered individually. Such changes in policy has made huge improvements as shown in the Finnish system.

## **Environment**

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

We consider carbon pricing part of the solution and prefer a fee and dividend system where emitters must pay for the pollution and we use the fees to help those effected negatively by this such as seniors heating bills. The aim is to make industries which have much less of a carbon footprint competitive so that we can move to a sustainable green economy. Indeed, we believe that a green economy would already be sustainable ant is only prevented by unfair subsidies to the carbon industry.

**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?**

Indeed, public transport is important for us. I would personally like to see a dramatic shift like dedicated bus lanes in the HRM area and electric trains to the valley. We can also build fuel-cell busses here or electric trains. If we can build warships, why can't we build those?

## **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?**

I am very proud that the rights of Indigenous people is very important to us and that we have included this as a major point in our platform. I had the opportunity to start learning more about the history of this unceded land of Mi'kma'ki, in which I am invited as settler under the condition to keep the land for future generations. I am looking forward to hearing and learning about the difficult history and possible solution that we need to develop together. Too often have imposed so-called solutions resulted in more harm than good. In the short term, we need and urgent attention to the social emergencies at some reservations.