



Fair Vote Nova Scotia

Attn.: Steve Caines, Secretary

October 1, 2013

Via email: to halifax@fairvote.ca

Dear Mr Caines:

On behalf of Premier Darrell Dexter, Leader of the New Democratic Party, please find attached the NDP response to your questions on issues of importance to Fair Vote Nova Scotia.

I trust that your members and allied organizations will have the opportunity to review the NDP platform in informing their voting intentions in this election. More details on our campaign are available on the website at <http://www.nsndp.ca/>.

Thank you for the opportunity to outline the NDP positions on these issues.

Best regards,

Dan O'Connor

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Chief of Staff to Premier Darrell Dexter

Leader, Nova Scotia New Democratic Party



FAIR VOTE NOVA SCOTIA – PROVINCIAL ELECTION 2013

- 1) **WOULD YOU AGREE THAT PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION, TO BE THE MOST LEGITIMATE, SHOULD BE APPROVED BY A MAJORITY OF ELECTED MLAs REPRESENTING A MAJORITY OF VOTERS?**

Currently, provincial legislation is only passed when a majority of members in the legislature vote to support it. In some cases, the opposition parties vote for government legislation. There are also instances when amendments sponsored by groups or opposition parties at the Committee stage of a Bill are incorporated into the final legislation. These are all signs of healthy debate and engagement by all MLAs in the legislative process.

- 2) **VOTERS NEED AND SHOULD HAVE FAIR AND EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION IN A DEMOCRACY. YET IN NOVA SCOTIA, MEMBERS OF MINORITY GROUPS INCLUDING AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIANS, ABORIGINAL PERSONS AND OTHERS HAVE HISTORICALLY BEEN UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. NO ABORIGINAL PERSON, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS EVER BEEN ELECTED TO THE HOUSE. AS WELL, DESPITE MAKING UP HALF OF THE PROVINCIAL POPULATION, WOMEN ARE ALSO UNDER-REPRESENTED (CURRENTLY ONLY 23% OF MLAs ARE FEMALE). DO YOU FEEL THIS UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES NEEDS TO BE RECTIFIED?**

You will be aware that the NDP is doing the most important thing, which is making sure we recruit candidates as diverse as the people of Nova Scotia, and focusing this diverse recruitment in seats that are competitive so a more diverse group of candidates have an opportunity to win their seats and sit in the Legislature. The Party has some fantastic new and returning candidates:

- 12 Female Candidates
- 2 African-Nova Scotian candidates (Percy Paris and André Cain)
- 2 New Canadian candidates (Leonard Preyra and Abad Khan)
- 1 LGBTQ candidate (Peter Lund)
- 1 Mi'kmaw Candidate (John Frank Toney)

- 3) DO YOU AGREE THAT THE SHARE OF THE VOTE A PARTY RECEIVED IN AN ELECTION SHOULD BE CLOSE OF THE SHARE OF SEATS IT RECEIVES IN THE LEGISLATURE?

The concept of proportional representation comes up for discussion regularly in Canada, but each provincial referendum held in the last number of years has rejected it. The NDP will support an electoral reform commission to consider the range of ideas that have been offered. No such review has been held in Nova Scotia for some time, and the last review did not address proportional representation.

- 4) IN ITS FINAL 2012 REPORT, THE NOVA SCOTIA ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION RECOMMENDED THAT THE NOVA SCOTIA LEGISLATURE “INITIATE A PROCESS INVOLVING BOTH EXTENSIVE CRITICAL EXAMINATION AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE CURRENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM AS WELL AS POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO IT”, AND “ESTABLISH A PROCESS FOR CONSULTING WITH KEY MINORITY GROUPS, IN PARTICULAR THE ACADIAN AND AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN COMMUNITIES, FOR THE PURPOSE OF DETERMINING ALTERNATIVES MEANS FOR ACHIEVING FAIR AND EFFECTIVE MINORITY REPRESENTATION.” DO YOU SUPPORT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS AND, IF ELECTED, WILL YOU IN YOUR FIRST MANDATE INITIATE THESE PROCESSES?

It has been some time since Nova Scotia had a full review of its electoral system. The NDP will support an electoral reform commission to look at these and other matters.

- 5) AS PARTY LEADER, WOULD YOU ENSURE THAT A PROCESS (WHICH INCLUDES PUBLIC CONSULTATION) TO MAKE THE PROVINCIAL ELECTORAL SYSTEM MORE FAIR AND PROPORTIONAL IS A CONDITION OF YOUR SUPPORT FOR ANY MINORITY GOVERNMENT?

The NDP will support striking a new electoral reform commission. The NDP is focused on outlining the 7 key commitments to build a better future, and answering questions like these about what the NDP will do in government after the election, rather than addressing hypothetical questions.

- 6) CURRENTLY, NOVA SCOTIA ELECTORAL LAW DOES NOT REQUIRE CANDIDATES AND POLITICAL PARTIES TO RELEASE ELECTION CAMPAIGN FINANCING INFORMATION IN ADVANCE OF ELECTION DAY. AS PARTY LEADER, AND IN THE INTEREST OF TRANSPARENCY AND VOTER AWARENESS, WOULD YOU DEVELOP OR SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT WOULD REQUIRE ALL POLITICAL PARTIES TO RELEASE ELECTION CAMPAIGN DONATION LISTS BEFORE ANY ELECTION DAY?

Nova Scotia now has among the strictest limits on political party contributions in Canada. While some parties still try to sell access to their leader, the ban on business, labour, anonymous and out-of-province contributions goes a long way to limiting the kind of abuses that once took place. Any law of the nature proposed can be avoided with last minute donations, making its value questionable.

7) IN THE INTEREST OF TRANSPARENCY AND VOTER AWARENESS, WILL YOU AND YOUR PARTY'S CANDIDATES VOLUNTARILY RELEASE YOUR CAMPAIGN FINANCING INFORMATION IN ADVANCE OF THE OCTOBER 8TH 2013 ELECTION?

The NDP believes that voters are best served and opportunities to mislead voters are minimized when the same election and election finance rules are applied fairly to all parties.