



NSTU
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Question #1: *Nova Scotia is experiencing a deepening teacher shortage which has placed considerable strain on our public education system. What is your plan to address this shortage and ensure that every student gets the support they need?*

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Our party is focused on addressing the teacher shortage in Nova Scotia through meaningful engagement with educators and education leaders. Our government has been working closely with the NSTU, Regional Centres for Education (RCEs), CSAP, universities, and other partners to find innovative solutions that address the challenges in recruitment and retention.

Right now every classroom in Nova Scotia has a teacher, and we have been actively recruiting since last year, offering jobs to all graduating B.Ed students in the province. To further support recruitment, we've increased the number of provincially funded B.Ed. spaces, created accelerated and virtual B.Ed. programs, and streamlined pathways to enter teacher training. We are also working to align teacher specialties with hard-to-fill subjects and attract a more diverse workforce.

To support retention, we've implemented initiatives such as offering early conditional teacher's certificates to graduating students, hiring long-term substitutes to address daily absences, and increasing the number of days retired teachers can work without pension implications. Additionally, we are promoting Nova Scotia as a great place to live and teach, at out-of-province job fairs.

These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to ensuring that every student in Nova Scotia has access to a qualified educator and

the support they need to succeed. A re-elected PC government will continue working with relevant partners to build resilience in our education system.

LIBERAL PARTY

A Nova Scotia Liberal government will invest in hiring more educational staff, including teachers, to ensure schools have the personnel they need to run smoothly and provide a high quality education. We also must invest in improving our classrooms, to improve working conditions for teachers and retain the teachers we have.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

An NDP government will work closely with the NSTU on finalizing the development of and implementation of the teacher recruitment and retention strategy, in particular ensuring that there is a long-term plan and that the plan has the multi-year funding required to achieve its goals. The current government highlights the new teacher training opportunities, but the NDP recognizes that over-crowding, the shortage of substitutes and school violence make it challenging for teachers to stick with a profession they love. The Education budget must increase more quickly than enrolment to provide the support needed for teacher retention.

The NDP also recognizes the intersectionality of properly funded and resourced inclusive education and of addressing school violence in the ways outlined by the Auditor General's report on school violence.

Examining the caseloads of school counsellors and school based specialists to determine how many more are needed to

ensure each of these professionals can provide impact within their complete scope of practice is a necessary shift. Enhancing and increasing these resources supports classroom teachers and improves teaching and learning conditions.

Question #2: *Rising levels of school violence have had a profound impact at every school across our province. Last spring, the Auditor General completed a comprehensive audit on the issue and determined that “school violence has severe and lasting consequences on the mental health, well-being, and education of children.” The audit also found that “current policies have significant weaknesses to address the increasing school violence.” If elected, what is your plan to ensure that our schools are safe for students and teachers.*

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Addressing violence in our schools is a top priority, and we are committed to creating a safe, supportive learning environment for all students, staff, and communities. Our approach is comprehensive and trauma-informed, ensuring that the mental health and well-being of students remain central to our efforts.

To combat school violence, we’ve updated the Provincial Code of Conduct Policy and introduced a new behavior strategy to help educators manage violence. Recognizing the importance of swift action, we have also directed our staff to accelerate timelines on initiatives that address school safety directly. Additionally, we’re improving incident tracking and reporting to ensure we have clear, accurate data to guide our strategies.

To provide more hands-on support, we’re hiring up to 47 specialized staff, including student supervisors, security personnel, Child and Youth Care Practitioners, Educational Assistants, and experienced teachers with expertise in behavioral and classroom management. These roles are designed to support students in a way that prioritizes both immediate safety and long-term, trauma-informed care.

We’re prioritizing direct collaboration with educators and stakeholders to ensure our strategies are effective and responsive to real school needs. Unlike the previous Liberal government, which strained relationships with educators, we are actively rebuilding trust by consulting with the Public School Administrators Association, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and other key partners. Additionally, we’re engaging directly with CUPE, NSGEU, and SEIU leadership through surveys and in-school meetings, ensuring that insights from all school staff guide our approach.

While these initiatives are a strong foundation, we recognize there is more work to be done. Our commitment to school safety is ongoing, and we are prepared to take additional steps in the future. We remain dedicated to adapting our approach to ensure that all students and teachers have a safe, positive, and supportive learning environment.

LIBERAL PARTY

A Nova Scotia Liberal government will implement a province-wide strategy to address violence in schools, following the recommendations outlined in the 2024 Auditor General’s report. We will also implement a course in high schools with a focus on developing strategies and skills for improving and maintaining mental health for students. Building on coping mechanisms will help students to choose alternatives to violent behaviour in school, ultimately making schools safer places for everyone.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The rising levels of violence in schools is very worrying. The NDP is deeply concerned about the health and safety of staff, teachers and students in this increasing hostile environment. New schools don’t keep kids safe, and neither do policies based in consequence or policing or enforcement.

- An NDP government is committed acting decisively to address violence in our schools, and will:
 - o take urgent action on all AG recommendations, moving forward implementation dates where possible, including increasing supports like lowering case loads for school counsellors and school-based specialists by hiring more of them so they can deliver on their full scope of practice, especially for our most vulnerable learners.
 - o engage all relevant unions and school communities in development of a comprehensive school violence strategy,
 - o publicly release a plan for implementing the recommendations from the Commission on Inclusive Education and report annually on progress,
 - o address staffing concerns to create safer school communities- including adequate staff supervision and classroom supports, and
 - o The NDP will work with school staff to address workload pressures and improve working conditions to promote this kind of connection for all students as a foundation for addressing the underlying causes of school violence and making classrooms safer, more inclusive spaces where students and staff can thrive together.
 - o We will continue to support the trauma-informed training school staff are doing that helps remind staff that students who feel connected to and seen by caring, professional adults find more constructive paths to dealing with anger, trauma and struggle instead of resorting to violence. This includes connecting schools and school staff to resources in other systems (Social Work, Nursing, Mental Health and Addictions, ISANS and newcomer supports, others) to ensure that “trauma-informed” practices go beyond one size fits all video PD to the granular level for each school community. The NDP knows that school staff are experts on the communities they serve, and deserve resources to

provide the supports that are needed by their students and communities, noting that each school community presents a unique combination of needs to be addressed.

- o We will work with communities to restore a school board model

that it will act, in every circumstance, to protect and advance 2SLGBTQIA+ rights and equality, and that it will support school staff to do the same for their staff, students and families and community.

Questions #3: *The Nova Scotia Teachers Union believes strongly that every student deserves an inclusive learning environment where they can feel safe expressing their true selves. In recent years, other provinces have adopted policies that many experts warn place 2SLGBTQIA+ students at risk of harm. The NSTU is appreciative that this is not currently the case in Nova Scotia. If elected Premier, what steps will you take to ensure that all students can attend school and express themselves freely knowing they will be protected from harm?*

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

We believe that every student in Nova Scotia deserves to learn in an environment where they feel safe, respected, and supported. Our party is committed to ensuring that all students, including those who are 2SLGBTQIA+, can express themselves freely without fear of harm.

Our government has invested in curriculum resources, provided training for school staff, and worked with school and community groups to support the well-being and safety of our 2SLGBTQIA+ students. Our focus remains on creating inclusive environments where all students can thrive and exercise their right to freedom of expression with confidence.

If elected, we will continue to protect these rights, ensuring that every student can attend school knowing they are safe and supported.

LIBERAL PARTY

Zach Churchill and the Nova Scotia Liberal party are strong supporters of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and do not support policies that place any students at risk of harm. A Nova Scotia Liberal government will continue to meet with, and listen to, 2SLGBTQ+ advocates, specifically in the education sector, to ensure our policies keep students safe and cared for in school.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

- The New Democrats believe that every student deserves an inclusive learning environment where they can feel safe expressing their true selves. The current divisive actions by some other provinces are harmful to our children and create an environment that makes it harder for teachers to educate them in a positive and supportive environment.
- An NDP government will foster programs and policies that promote understanding and acceptance and thus a safe environment in our schools.
- An NDP government will publicly and consistently convey to the broader public that NS is an inclusive place, and

Question #4: *Nova Scotia has experienced substantial population growth in recent years. While there are many benefits to population growth it has placed strain on our public education system while exacerbating the teacher shortage. Population growth has also made our classrooms more complicated and increased the need for educational specialists and school counsellors. The most effective way to ensure that every child gets the support they need to thrive at school is to reduce class sizes. If elected, what is your party's commitment to creating healthier learning environments by reducing class sizes?*

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

We recognize the impact our population growth is having on our schools and the need for more resources to ensure every child can thrive at school. To create healthier learning environments and address the challenges of population growth, our government is making significant investments in school infrastructure. Through our over \$1 billion multi-year school capital plan, we are not only building new schools but also upgrading existing ones to ensure they meet the demands of our growing population.

We are focusing on growing communities, with four new schools being built in the Halifax Regional Municipality, including Timberlea, Middle Sackville, Port Wallace, and Bedford. Additionally, a site has been selected for a new school in Clayton Park-Fairview. To meet immediate classroom needs, we are also using modular classrooms to provide safe, comfortable spaces for students and teachers.

Furthermore, we have increased the school capital repair budget to \$30 million—up from just \$6 million under the previous Liberal government—to accelerate renovations and improvements to schools across the province.

These actions demonstrate our commitment to improving educational spaces and ensuring that Nova Scotia's schools are prepared to meet the growing needs of students and teachers.

LIBERAL PARTY

We recognize the negative effects that Tim Houston's population growth plan has had on Nova Scotians without the proper plans to grow our infrastructure along with it. Part of our platform focus for infrastructure is to implement a long-term plan for school building in a way that ensures that class sizes are reasonable, for the benefit of staff and students. In the meantime, we will hire more educational staff so that the ratio of students to staff is more manageable and classes are a healthier environment for all.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

As the NSTU has stated, new schools are over-crowded on the day they open. Slow and poorly planned school construction is a prime example of how the provincial government has not come to grips with population growth. An NDP government will:

- Prioritize a strategy to plan and accelerate construction of the new schools required to provide the space needed for healthy learning in smaller classes
- Engage teachers who have recently left the profession, the NSTU, universities and school administrators in developing a teacher retention strategy that will make it more attractive for teachers to stay and return so smaller classes are possible
- Dedicate professional support for recent teacher graduates and others training to teach, and new hires, to deal with the more challenging classrooms they now encounter and remain dedicated teachers
- Collaborate with the NSTU to take full advantage of the recent improvements in your collective agreement

Question #5: *Child poverty has a profound impact on almost every single classroom across Nova Scotia, and studies have shown that poverty negatively impacts the ability of children to learn and succeed in school. Unfortunately, Nova Scotia has consistently had one of the highest rates of child poverty in Canada. If elected what will your government do to reduce and eliminate high levels of child poverty in Nova Scotia?*

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Reducing child poverty is a priority for our party, as it is instrumental to our future success and the well-being of our communities. We recognize that children are the backbone of our society, and ensuring their health and security is vital.

To address childhood poverty and food insecurity, our government has implemented significant initiatives that are already making a difference. In the last budget, we allocated an additional \$7.8 million for actions aimed at reducing child poverty. We also committed \$42.5 million more in child-care funding this year, which will lower fees for families, create more child-care spaces, and enhance after-school care. This investment is fully recoverable from the Canada-Nova Scotia agreement.

Moreover, we have increased funding by \$5.1 million to raise rates and provide additional supports for foster children and their families, bringing total annual funding to \$16.7 million following our redesign initiative. These investments underscore our commitment to supporting vulnerable families through enhanced social services.

Most recently, we introduced the Nova Scotia School Lunch Program. This innovative pay-as-you-can system allows families to choose how much to contribute toward a nutritious lunch, with the option to pay as little as nothing at all. In its first

phase, this program will serve over 75,000 elementary school students, potentially providing more than 13 million lunches in the coming school year. This initiative is a clear demonstration of our commitment to combating food insecurity among children.

Through the Department of Community Services, we support families on income assistance by helping them purchase school supplies. This year, we increased the payment for children aged 13 to 18 from \$160 to \$200, and for children aged five to 12 from \$80 to \$100. Furthermore, children who turn four by the end of December and are eligible for pre-primary in the fall will receive a \$100 payment automatically included in clients' August 29 payments, eliminating the need for a separate application process.

Lastly, we have introduced the Children's Sports and Arts Tax Credit, providing a refundable credit of \$500 per child to help offset the costs of enrolling in sports and arts programs. This initiative not only encourages participation in extracurricular activities but also contributes to the holistic development of our children.

If re-elected, we will continue to prioritize these initiatives and explore further ways to reduce child poverty and food insecurity, ensuring that every child in Nova Scotia has the opportunity to thrive.

LIBERAL PARTY

A Nova Scotia Liberal government will implement multiple anti-poverty policies that will directly affect families in our province and keep children fed, housed, and supported. The current social safety net is trapping Nova Scotians in intergenerational poverty. We will spearhead an all-party committee to develop a made-in-Nova Scotia universal basic income program that will support the needs of our province.

We will implement bold housing and healthcare plans, and invest in long-term non-profit funding, which will support folks in accessing services that contribute to poverty relief.

We will work with Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities to create program models that take their marginalization into account, to more effectively support their freedom from oppressive cycles of poverty.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Children live in poverty because their parent(s) live in poverty and are struggling to make ends meet. The New Democrats know that addressing the financial burden on households on everyday basic needs, having a good paying permanent job and \$10 a day childcare will reduce and eliminate high levels of child poverty.

Among the specific steps an NDP government will take to reduce child poverty are:

- A package of steps to ensure much more affordable housing, including rent control limiting increases to the cost of living, ending fixed-term lease evictions, a major push to build affordable non-profit housing, significant assistance for first time home buyers and an

Affordable Homes Rebate for tenants and homeowners with annual household income less than \$70,000.

- Help families and individuals make ends meet by taking HST off groceries, internet and cell phone bills and lowering or eliminating fees on government services
- Action so families have the childcare they need, including collaboration with childcare providers on a central waiting list, capital funds for new childcare spaces, a pilot project building four new publicly owned childcare centres in underserved areas
- Increase access to rent subsidies, safeguard steps the NDP won to help social assistance rates keep up with the cost of living and engage the community in establishing a poverty reduction strategy for Nova Scotia.
- An NDP government will avoid the risks of bias and stigmatization of poverty by making school lunch and other school food programs available without charge.