

August 11, 2021

NSNDP RESPONSE - NSFM

Municipal Funding

As costs continue to increase for municipalities, having reliable revenue sources for emerging projects remains foremost on the priority list for many communities. For those regions that receive funding through the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant, the need for continued provincial support cannot be understated.

Question for the candidate: Are you willing to increase the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant, frozen at 2015 levels, by \$20 million over the next three years?

An NDP government will immediately invite NSFM to participate in a joint review of this unconditional grant in the context of other changes in the provincial-municipal fiscal relationship, to ensure that the capacity grant is meeting its objective of equalizing municipal services to the fullest extent possible.

Increasing accessibility is a goal shared by municipalities across the province. Our members are concerned that the requirements laid out in the provincial Accessibility Act are accompanied by funding support.

Question for the candidate: Will you cost share 50/50 in all municipal projects required to comply with the Accessibility Act, if those projects do not receive other funding?

An NDP government will first ask the Accessibility Directorate to work with municipalities to ensure that clear standards are established and the work plan to achieve them is developed. This should establish a firm list of required projects and their initial cost estimate. That will provide a basis for a well informed discussion of this request.

Finally, municipalities need more than project-based funding. We require new revenue streams to continue to support communities on the ground. As the provincial government continues to see increased revenues from cannabis sales, Nova Scotia



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municipalities want to know if the government will commit to the spirit of the initial federal/provincial agreement and share those revenues.

Question for the candidate: Will you commit to providing municipalities with a substantial share of the revenues being generated by the sale of cannabis?

An NDP government will anticipate providing a substantial share of cannabis revenues to municipalities.

Housing

The government recently received various recommendations from the Affordable Housing Commission related to increasing the supply of affordable rental housing in Nova Scotia. NSFM, as the voice of municipalities, was not given a seat at the table. There are concerns the Commission will continue to act in an advisory capacity without proper municipal representation.

Question for the candidate: Given that many of the Commission's suggestions will have a significant impact on local government, how will you engage municipalities in a review of recommendations prior to their potential implementation?

An NDP government will make it an early priority to seek municipal views on the Commission recommendations, through the NSFM. The province must be a partner for municipalities that want to ensure there is more affordable housing and more community housing. For example, the NDP has long pushed to allow municipalities the power to enact inclusionary zoning. The 2012-13 Affordable Housing Strategy outlined an innovative approach, spear-headed by hundreds of units of mixed housing. Such innovation is overdue and is done best with municipal engagement.

Overall, the right to adequate housing is fundamental to an affordable housing strategy, as the Liberals' own commission recommended. Our NDP caucus has introduced legislation to this effect in the past. The NDP is committed to three immediate steps on the path to a housing strategy:

- *Permanent rent control*



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- *Construction of 1,000 new units of affordable housing in the community sector within the next four years*
- *Setting 2030 as the year that Nova Scotia eliminates homelessness, through the proven combination of adequate income, enough affordable housing and enough supportive housing*

Municipalities throughout the province can and will be partners in planning the implementation of these goals.

Environment (EPR)

The environment is an issue of concern for residents across the province. Part of the solution will be requiring producers of plastics and other waste to be responsible for their end-of life management. NSFM has provided issue and stakeholder research to the government to help Nova Scotians join the 80% of Canadians who live in areas with Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

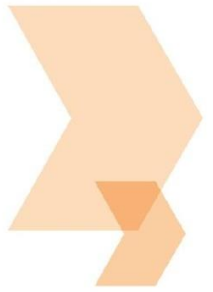
Question for the candidate: What plans do you have to expedite the introduction of EPR legislation, given the extent of research and stakeholder engagement that has already been completed?

An NDP government will proceed to enact EPR legislation early in its term, after consultation to resolve the outstanding questions like those described by NDP MLA Kendra Coombes when she addressed the NSFM's 2021 virtual spring conference.

Climate Change

Lastly, our members have clearly identified adapting to the impacts of climate change as a significant issue. Independent research completed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) showed municipal costs associated with climate change to be higher in the Maritimes than anywhere else in Canada.

Question for the candidate: How will you work with municipalities to update their Municipal Climate Change Action Plans (completed in 2013) and what funding and



support will you provide to ensure local governments are prepared to mitigate and adapt to projected changes in our climate?

An NDP government will immediately quadruple the budget for Low Carbon Communities projects and budget more to cost-share other climate adaptation projects, while engaging with NSFM to finalize the details of a \$50 million Municipal Climate Adaptation fund. These provincial funds will be over and above support for climate adaptation from the federal government and other sources.

An NDP government will expand and ensure municipalities' abilities to support retrofits and renewables in homes through province-wide Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs.

Municipalities will be an important partner of the broad-based Green Jobs Plan task force that, with an NDP government, will help guide the transformative steps to ensure Nova Scotia meets strong climate change goals while creating new jobs across the province. Updating of the municipal adaptation plans is an example of steps that could well be part of the Green Jobs Plan.

Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation have been increasing. Municipalities and community-based transportation groups like the Community Transit Network and Rural Transportation Association can be part of an NDP government's effort to reduce emissions from transportation. The NDP's approach goes far beyond the connection projects now eligible for Low Carbon Communities grants. Within the framework of a Green Jobs Plan the NDP is committed to:

- *Moving to a well-connected public transit network across the province that is affordable or free.*
- *Providing sustainable funding to make community transit affordable and connected.*
- *Considering options for commuter rail.*
- *Prioritizing public and community transportation in COVID-19 recovery spending.*



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- *Developing an electrification strategy which would include the electrification of public and private transportation as well as freight*