

# All Party Environmental Debate Q&A Summary

---

2021 Nova Scotia Provincial Election

PREPARED BY  
THE ECOLOGY ACTION CENTRE



Ecology Action Centre

# All Party Environmental Debate Q&A Summary

A very sincere thank you to the EAC volunteers who helped to transcribe the All-Party Environmental Debate for the 2021 Provincial election in Nova Scotia. This event was hosted by the Ecology Action Centre and co-sponsored by Sierra Club Atlantic and the Council of Canadians. It was originally attended by an in-person audience at the Ummah Mosque and Community Centre and livestreamed on EAC's YouTube on August 9, 2021.

**Sheldon MacLeod**, journalist, and host with Saltwire.com, moderated this debate with representatives from Nova Scotia's Green, Liberal, NDP and PC parties.

Participating Candidates:

- **Jessica Alexander** - Green Party of Nova Scotia, Interim Leader and Candidate for Chester-St. Margaret's
- **Pam Cooley** - Nova Scotia Liberal Party, Candidate for Dartmouth North
- **Scott Ellis** - Nova Scotia PC Party, Candidate for Halifax Needham
- **Tyler Colbourne** - Nova Scotia NDP, Candidate for Dartmouth East

*All inaudible sections are marked with the tag [inaudible].*

## Opening Statements

Each candidate was allotted 1 minute to make an opening statement.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Thank you very much, can you hear me okay on my mike? I'd like to thank the Ecology Action Centre, the Sierra Club Atlantic and the Council of Canadians for hosting this evening, thank you very much. Thank you also to the UMCC for helping and letting us use this space tonight, thank you. I also want to thank you all too, who are engaged in fiercely protecting our land, water and air. We need everybody to be a part of the solution. We want, we want a better Nova Scotia. We want to look at our children and the children in our lives in their eyes and say that we've done the best that we can do for the environment to secure a sustainable future for them. This is my first run at office. I've been longing for a government that will put action behind words and I believe the Ian Rankin Liberal government has done that. And with new ideas and new approaches, a liberal government that has a comprehensive plan that will continue to put actions into place, that will meet the challenges like building the economy married with our air, land and water.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** Hi there, good evening. My name's Jessica Alexander and I'm the current leader of the Green Party of Nova Scotia and I've been co-leading the Green Party of Nova Scotia for the past five years. I'm a human resources professional and this is my third run for public office. I'm a surfer in my free time and I love to spend time on or near the ocean. Green Parties around the world have six principles that are universally held: ecological wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy, non-violence, sustainability and respect for diversity. Respect for diversity is more important than ever. Power and wealth are concentrated into fewer and fewer houses and this province is not immune from that dynamic. The system is bent and these institutions we've set up to govern ourselves have left too many people out of the circles of power. We need to be creating resilient and liveable communities as we adapt to and mitigate climate change. There's no planet b, we need to take action now.

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** My name is Scott Ellis and I am the PC candidate for Halifax Needham. All through growing up, the environment was something that followed me; it was a passion, it was something that I loved. I loved to be outside. But even as a young child, I could see that the environment around me was quickly changing. When I was fishing, there were different species disappearing, the forests around me were being cut down on massive scales and the heat was getting more intense every single summer. It doesn't take a scientist to know that our planet is in serious trouble and it doesn't matter with party is in power. We need to take action. We are facing a climate crisis like this planet has never seen before since the last extinction. So today, I am putting my name forward, so that we have a voice on climate action in the PC party. And the PC party has always been a strong player in the environmental protection of Nova Scotia.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Hi thank you for having me, I'm feeling very grateful and privileged to be here- a white cis-gendered man and I'm a settler on this land of Mi'kma'ki and I'm queer. Let's get into it. The Nova Scotia New Democratic Party is the party in my opinion that is committed to sustainably cultivating the sociable and

physical infrastructure necessary to help us navigate the climate emergency. And I believe that they are doing- we are doing through empowering those groups most impacted. This is a monumental election, its, we're running out of time essentially and we need to prioritize climate action that also holds social justice at its core. For too long we have had politicians who have been protected and shielded from the negative impacts of the legislation that they enact. We are here to respond with the speed and scale necessary to respond to the climate emergency. The NSNDP and the people in this province will do things differently so that we can share the wealth that we all produce and the opportunities for new jobs, a just transition, principal action on climate justice and also truth and reconciliation. I think the NSNDP is your best shot, it's my best shot and it's our best shot.

## **Open-ended Questions**

In this series of questions, each candidate was allotted 1 minute to respond to each question.

### **1. In order to meet our legislated greenhouse gas emission reduction, target we need a bold climate plan that leaves no one behind. What will be in your plan?**

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** Some of what would be in the Green Party's plan does actually not fit just into one minute. We would immediately declare a climate emergency focusing on all government departments on climate change as a priority. And this would include educating the public and our children about climate change and its impacts. We would reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 70% of 2005 levels by 2030 and achieve a net-zero carbon economy by 2045. We would require that all of Nova Scotia's electricity would come from carbon-neutral sources by 2030, and all provincial subsidies to fossil fuel sectors and exploration drilling and extraction of fossil fuels including exploratory fracking in Nova Scotia. We would provide \$50 million per year in funding to Housing Nova Scotia so there will be energy efficiency retrofits on all social housing units, to bring them into net-zero energy ready standards and increase the solar homes program accompanying it with rebates to a dollar a watt.

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** Under a PC government, Nova Scotia will become a leader in protecting the environment and fighting climate change. During the first legislative sitting, we would introduce a very ambitious bill, called the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Production Act. This act would ensure that 20% of our land and water is protected by 2030, which will include Indigenous protected areas in certain areas, update the existing environmental decision-making process to include diversity, inclusion and equity. Eight percent of our electricity must be supplied by renewable energy by 2030, which would include the elimination of coal by 2030. Having at least 30% of vehicles sold by 2030 to be zero-emission and funding 50% of the cost of the installation of electric vehicle charging stations and all provincial buildings must be net-zero. And that is just the start. We are planning to build off of 2007 legislation to make Nova Scotia a world leader in clean, green energy.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** So, in regard to the plan, our plan allows for approximately the equivalency of 240,000 cars to be taken off of the highways; so, it's not actual cars, but that is the kind of emission targets that we are driving for. And as a teenager I dreamed of having a car, I thought cars meant freedom. But what I recognize now is that freedom is actually divesting from fossil fuels, and moving away from fossil fuels and corporations, and subsidies, etc. A sample of what our party is committing to is setting a new target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 50% below 1990 by 2030. Initiating a just green transition for carbon-intense workforces including through the NSCC tuition, and dedicated training streams for energy efficiency and renewable workforces, but with community support so that people can actually have the opportunity to participate in these programs. We are going to develop a deep retrofit strategy, we are going to triple Nova Scotia's energy efficiency targets, and finally we are going to make the provincial investments into research and development for battery storage and renewable technology.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** In answer to this question, it's complex in implementation and yet a simple concept. Our plan is to reduce emissions while developing a green economy through an ecological and equity lens. We are committed to reducing Nova Scotia's emissions to 53% below 2005 levels by 2030 and to net-zero by 2050. By 2030 we've committed to getting off coal and to be using 80% renewable energy ten years earlier than planned. Renewable energy, we have announced a progressive proposal of projects to create 350 megawatts of renewable energy. This is expected to create \$550 million in construction and create more than 4000 jobs. We have put historic investments into active transportation as well as transit and electrifying busses and various municipal vehicles. Cap and trade auction generally generates approximately \$50 million every year, it goes into a donation green fund to support industries to help them move their operations to green tech among other green initiatives. There is just too much that we are doing that I can say in one minute.

## **2. All your parties have agreed we are in a climate emergency. How much would your government be willing to spend on climate change, conserving biodiversity, and addressing environmental racism?**

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** Look, well there is no price today that we can put on our climate. The truth is that we rely on the planet for everything we do, every single day. Now, we are going through with plans that have cost out some of our starting initiatives for climate change with transportation, how much we would invest in new jobs, in internships for students, but the fact is that we are going to listen to Nova Scotians. We are going to look at the environment, see how we are affecting it, and make a plan that actually meets the climate targets. Make sure that we reduce our emissions while creating jobs and having a thriving economy. So, as a party, we are not going to put a price tag on helping to save the planet.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Yeah, the short answer is, we'll spend what it takes. The NDP government will systematically address environmental racism not just relieve

the symptoms. We can't throw money at complex social challenges and expect the simple solutions to make a difference. Social justice and the planet are interconnected and entangled. The people who are most impacted by the climate emergency are those who already face systemic barriers and oppression such as racism. Some of our initial investments will be in immediate measures exceeding \$28 million for commitments like local climate change adaptation funds, building retrofits, and PACE programs for renewable energy. We will also spend over \$100 million in capital investments over the next 4 years; things like building retrofits, and active transit networks, increasing funding for silviculture work, and emphasis on restoring biodiversity and we know this is just the beginning. Our commitments result in important investments and thousands of jobs, saving money later from having to adapt less to the climate emergency. We can not sustain any more incremental changes; we need bold solutions.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Thank you, Sheldon. It's not only about how much we will spend but it also about where it is being spent. And as I said in the last question, there is just a myriad of things that we are already spending on. In relation to biodiversity, we have had our first Biodiversity Act in North America. And among other things, we will be piloting biodiversity matching zones to prove and show and model another way to use private lands and Crown lands in a way that will protect biodiversity. Environmental racism, Boat Harbour; the Liberals made that decision. We are investing \$8 million over the next 4 years that will allow us to deliver a targeted solar community benefiting projects to areas that have experienced environmental racism, have higher rates of poverty or have been historically marginalized. We are investing in training people for BIPOC people in a clean energy training program, where people can get hands-on experience and paid internship positions. And we know that there is a lot more work that we can do.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** We agree that in an emergency, how much we would spend might not exactly be the perfect question, but we would spend at least as much as the government has been paying to fossil fuel subsidies. We would also pass the Environmental Racism Bill and work with other parties to implement it. We are opposed to chasing jobs and in favour of a guaranteed livable income for everyone. Employment is something of a previous millennium. It is going that way because jobs are being automated, and that is a big change. What we need to do is equalize everyone's income levels so that it is no less than \$18,000 per year and rising over time with inflation. So, we would not be looking to create levels of employment that may or may not stay, that may or may not be sustainable. We are looking to equalize everyone's income levels so they can create their own opportunities.

**3. EAC staffer Guru Gurumurthy asked the following question during the CBC Leaders debate last week. It was not answered then or in our follow-up tweet. So, they are asking it again: Our communities are already dealing with the impacts of climate change in the form of extreme weather, rising sea levels and more. What will you do to ensure our communities remain resilient and can adapt in the face of the climate & biodiversity crises?**

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** See I knew there was an answer, so that's why I was so eager to answer it. NSNDP is committed to shifting the systems and empowering

communities and people. We need to build resilience but also, we need to cultivate a system that doesn't force or require people to be resilient. We need community-led solutions that are contextual by empowering communities through consultation and through social licencing. We will start with investing in local [inaudible 00:24:54] and local climate adaptation funds, while we prepare for our longer-term plans in municipalities. This quadruples the existing low carbon communities fund. We will protect coastal areas so that it isn't only the rich and privileged who have access. We also know that caring jobs are green jobs, which is why we are committed to raising the wage for ACEs and CCAs since this is a specific portion of our green future. In 2011 fulfilling a recommendation from the 2009 climate plan, the NDP government directed municipalities to form municipal climate change action plans in order to receive the federal gas tax. These plans laid the foundation for future action- especially for protecting coastal areas from flooding.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Thank you, Sheldon. The Liberal government understands that local communities can't prepare for climate change alone. We must adapt now to protect our roads, schools, farms, businesses, parks, historic sites, from the devastating effects. An investment of \$25 million to upgrade 60 km of dykes to protect communities, including our highly productive and valuable agricultural land, increasing food security. We are committing \$12 million towards the sustainable community's challenge fund, which will incentivize municipalities to develop and pursue local climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. The SDGA, climate change, the Climate Act plan will be implemented by the end of the year, and the Climate Act plan consultation is expected to finish late this summer. So those are the things that we feel are, that investment and consultation are our way forward.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** I will work to try and fit this into my minute. Guaranteed livable income means everyone has to have enough to survive so that our actions of desperation are reduced. With local small-scale agriculture within a walking distance of smaller communities, we all need urban agriculture. We need free public transit, we need to manage our coastal development, ocean setbacks, we need to protect our transportation routes and increase buffer capacity of our coasts. We need to support the creation of financially accessible and culturally appropriate mental health resources, and services for young Nova Scotians experiencing the mental ill effects of the climate and ecological emergency. We need high-speed internet in every community, and we need walkable and runnable communities.

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** The PC government will work with towns, communities, and municipalities to build resilience, to protect and respond well in our communities. We see all around us that there are vulnerable people with climate change, and some are more vulnerable than others, through environmental racism or our older folks in long-term care. We see the strong effects of climate change, rising sea levels, extreme heat, and it reminds me of my own constituents in Halifax Needham. Here there are seniors living in buildings without proper ventilation. That's going to be a huge risk when it comes to climate change. What are they going to do in these extreme heat events? They need access to air conditioning, buildings, healthcare is one of the biggest ways to mitigate some of the effects of climate change on our most vulnerable population, but also biodiversity protection. Protecting our land helps build resilience. It buffers some

of the worst impacts of climate change and we are committed to protecting 20% of our land and water. A target that I believe is actually achievable.

#### **4. You've all said you'll implement the Lahey report calling for a new "Ecological Forestry" system on Crown lands. By when and how? And Pam, you will respond first.**

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Thank you, Sheldon. The Liberal government worked with ecology and industry experts to outline the best practice for harvesting, biodiversity, conservation, lower impact forestry, and high productive forestry. This work was used to develop two transformational forestry guides - the silviculture guide for the ecological matrix, and the high production guide. These guides will shape the forestry practices of the future. We are training skilled people in ecological forestry now, and the guides are expected to be fully implemented by this fall. \$5.25 million has been put into assisting the transition to ecological forestry, including \$1 million in training for our skilled workers and implementing the new guides. \$6.1 million investment through the forestry innovation transition trust, in the Centre of Forest Innovation and the Nova Scotia Community College in Truro. This new facility upskills existing forestry workers, develop new skilled workers, and support this ongoing development of cutting-edge ecological forestry practice.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** By when? As soon as is reasonable, but I would like to say it was 3 years ago when that report came out. We would encourage Mi'kmaq stewardship of Crown lands. We would ban glyphosate and clear-cutting on Crown lands, that's actually not part of the Lahey report, that's something that the report our party is calling for. The Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act would be fully and rigorously implemented in respect for both Crown and private land because currently, it is not. The irrelevancy of land ownership to ecosystems and biodiversity needs to be understood. The Biodiversity Act should be restored to its original form. Ecosystems do not care who has title to a piece of real estate. Nova Scotia should be accessing carbon credit banks so that we can profit from leaving trees standing. We need to rethink how we approach forestry and whether trees actually need to be removed in order to be profitable. We would pursue higher-value wood products, rather than pulpwood used as fuel to burn.

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** Our forestry industry is very important to many Nova Scotians, especially those in rural Nova Scotia. But it is becoming clear, that clear-cutting our forests down at the scale that we are doing it is not very sustainable. And we have been doing it for decades under several governments. Now, this report came out three years ago, this is not new information. This should already have been implemented, and we shouldn't even be having a discussion about this right now, but we are. So, a PC government, during their first legislation, they will implement the Lahey Report fully, because it is what is needed to be done to protect our forestry industry, but also to protect biodiversity in our forests, to make sure that we have a sustainable forestry industry that can actually grow, that supports workers, that supports wildlife, that supports our water, that supports our climate goals.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** I'm going to go with Jessica on this one and say as soon as possible, with a moratorium on clearcutting on Crown lands in the meantime.

Again, this election and every election after this will be about re-envisioning our relationship with each other and with the land; we can't wait, and we must protect the rights of the land in the same way that we need to protect the rights of the people. The land is valuable beyond exploitation, beyond development, beyond resource extraction, and we need to treat it as such. The Liberals refuse to do this, we have not [inaudible, 00:32:42] incrementalism. People in leadership positions acting as if they don't understand what is happening in this province. There are plenty of resources in this province, and we can share them equitably and sustainably; we just need to have a little courage.

**5. In addition to forestry and protected areas, there many other activities on public Crown land - mining, tourism, large-scale wind farms, recreation, biodiversity conservation, traditional Mi'kmaw uses, and more. There has never been more pressure on our public lands, yet there remains no comprehensive land-use planning for public lands that considers all uses and users. If elected, will your party institute a comprehensive Crown land planning process to ensure that we get it right?**

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** Short answer is absolutely. The longer answer is that with Greens in government, Owl's Head would not be sold to private interests and neither should any other substantive land parcels. Crown land should not be leased or sold without meaningful Mi'kmaq consultation and public input, as well as a tendering process. And we should always be aiming for the highest and best use for a piece of land and respect the biodiversity and have respect for the local community. Thank you.

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** Yes, for sure. We need to look at how we are managing our Crown land. Of course, there are many activities that I've said, mining, forestry, recreation, or camping. We, of course, need to manage them responsibly because without managing them responsibly they will quickly disappear and be depleted. So, we will always look and listen to Nova Scotians and see how they want their land to be managed because Crown land of course we all know is public land. And the public should be a part of these decisions.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Just, uh, going off script a little bit but the idea of Crown land on unceded territory is a bit ridiculous. We need an Environmental Bill of Rights. Our current operating on lands stems from Liberal and Conservative values over 150 years of colonialism in our current system. Meaning we most often view the land as value that is exploited and as resources to extract or be developed or when it is politically advantageous that is what we are seeing with Owl's Head. We need to do our part in Nova Scotia to respect global targets by protecting 25% of the Province by 2025 and 20% of the Province by 2030. But I fully believe that we need to be working towards an understanding that the land is intrinsically valuable. We should not be creating parks. We should be the Province as one large park.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Thank you, Sheldon. We have land-use planning now however, we are always open to new ideas. We're not opposed to it. We just need to understand whether all the other processes that we've got in place and how it fits with the other processes. So, always open to new ideas. Always open to a

new and [inaudible, 00:35:58] approach. We are working on the implementation and recommendations of the Lahey report. We are committed to ecological forestry, increasing the protection on lands from 14 to 17%. We are increasing planning and adaptation for both municipal and provincial governments. And we are requiring climate action plans from the provincial departments and we look forward to learning more what a comprehensive land planning process might look like.

**6. We invited questions from the EAC community. We'll start with a question from Marshall in Halifax: With Justice Christa Brothers dismissing the application for judicial review over the handling of Owl's Head Provincial Park, and stating "the issue should be decided at the ballot box, and not the courts", does your party intend to allow for the proposed golf course to move forward for the privileged few to enjoy, or protect the natural habitat and environment for many more, an obvious greater long term good?**

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** Now is not the time to be delisting protected coastal, sensitive, ecosystems from our protected areas. That should have never ever happened and would never happen under a PC government. We will immediately freeze the sale and hold a public consultation for the public to decide. Now with thousands of signatures and the amount of support I see even in my own constituency, it's not hard to see where that decision may go. But the PCs have a whole plan to protect more of Nova Scotia along with hopefully Owl's Head as well because we need to protect 20% of our land by 2030 and I noticed several other parties - the Green Party is committed to that - and I know the NDP has committed to a bit of a higher target. I don't think it's realistic, but it's very ambitious and I'll give them that, their hearts' in the right place. And the Liberals have committed to protecting 17%. It's going to be hard to hit 17% when you keep on delisting properties from protected areas.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** I mean this isn't really an option but I mean, no and mic drop but we don't need more golf courses for the privileged and we are committed as a party to aligning our party, our process and legislation with the respective targets. I feel privileged to be working alongside someone in the community of Dartmouth East who's been walking every single day for Owl's Head. She's so committed to it. Her name is Ms. Sandra. She's really active, 42 days at this point. She goes to Cole Harbour daily with a ten-foot sign and when I first got nominated, she messaged me and she was quite spicy and very passionate. I hope she's watching, I told her this was going to happen. But we talked it out, because really this is about, it's not about Owl's Head, it's about our relationship with land. It's about having a values-based, principled approach to how we view Nova Scotia and Mi'kma'ki long term. And so, Owl's Head right now is politically advantageous, but we need to do better. Um, way off script for a little bit. But yeah, she and many other who are committed to Owl's Head are starting to see that as much as it's about this park and as much as it's about de-listing, it's about our relationship with the land overall.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Thank you, Sheldon. I'm sure everyone is anticipating my answer. I'm glad this topic has come up, but I'm not surprised. Whoever's done this awareness campaign has done a good job. Unfortunately, some of it's got a bit of misinformation and is based on fear. This is what I call conflict of interests. In a true, mature democracy, you've actually got to listen to

people. Simply put, we must consider both the economic impacts for the residents in Little Harbour as well as the desire to protect Crown land. This is an ongoing dilemma for all time, and we have an obligation to hear all sides. There is still to be a rigorous environmental impact assessment done, a public engagement process it has to go through, and it has to go through consultation with the Mi'kmaq. I want to be clear; I want to be clear to everyone watching, this is not a done deal. And I will make sure everybody understands that.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** The short answer is "absolutely not". And the longer answer is that an ecotourism strategy could be a much better economic driver for the Eastern Shore. With bike routes, campgrounds, ocean kayaking the Eastern Shore should be a destination for locals as well as travelers. Ecotourism encourages people to stay and to have a lower impact than travelers than such as, well, I haven't played golf nor have I been on a cruise but people, cruise ship passengers don't stay very long, they spend their money near the terminal and that's often it. So, we are looking at a leveled ecotourism strategy for the Eastern Shore to benefit them in ways that are not seasonal, that are not, that don't depend upon, um, currency exchange rates to be favourable for rich Americans to travel north. Um, this is, this would be a destination for people that are local to Nova Scotia and the Maritimes.

**7. A question is from Seth in East Lawrencetown. The McNeil Liberals finally shut down the pulp mill after too many years of allowing industry to ravage the environment. Now an interested party is hoping that the government will consider reversing that decision. Why hasn't 'NO' been enough? What are the various party's position on the re-opening of the Northern pulp mill and pumping toxic effluent into Boat Harbour?**

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** I just want to point out that I didn't jump the gun [laughter]. Um, so we'll ensure the highest level of environmental scrutiny on any plan moving forward for Northern Pulp to restart operations. The NDP has pushed for Federal assessment of Northern Pulp's most recent effluent proposal that resulted in the closure of Boat Harbour and we'll do so for any future proposals. An NDP government will enact an Environmental Bill of Rights that would give communities greater voice in decisions that impact the environment as well as enabling improvements our environmental assessment regime. So, we are asking that projects with an impact on the environment should and will receive adequate and full community consultation and social licensing. This is the principle by which an NDP government will assess the effluent treatment plan for Northern Pulp. We will not allow Northern Pulp to do to Pictou Harbour what they did to Boat Harbour. Anything but will just produce loopholes. And I guess I'll say with my few minutes left that again it is about re-envisioning how we are caretaking this land. It's not mine as a settler and we need to do better. And it's not about treating the land and the resources as being valuable only when they are exploitable.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Thank you. And thanks Seth for the question. As a government, we welcome industries to come invest in Nova Scotia but they have to meet the stringent environment processes we put in place. Northern Pulp's parent company is planning on attempting to meet these processes and the project proposal will undergo a stringent Class 2 environmental assessment. The Class 2 assessment will be a very thorough review and an independent panel will be appointed to conduct

the review and it could take up to two years for that work to be completed. The recommendations will be brought forward to government at that time. It also has to go through the consultation process with the Mi'kmaq. So, these processes are the processes that we have in place for Nova Scotia. We have to follow them and if they're not good enough, we change them. So, I want to clear. We have not given the green light to this company.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** Pumping toxic effluent into Boat Harbour or the Northumberland Strait is completely unacceptable. If Paper Excellence redesigns their [inaudible, 00:44:47] into a closed loop system with little or no effluent, it could be a proposal worth considering but we haven't seen that as of yet. We also need to be considering the amount of electricity that the plant uses and the sulfurous odor that is emitted, the air quality in Pictou and we also need to be considering the highest possibility for Nova Scotia timber. We really should be creating more lumber rather than craft pulp because forests are not for flushing. Forests are not for burning and if we continue to think that um, this is an adequate way to use the Acadian forest than I think we [inaudible, 00:48:29].

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** Boat Harbour was one of the largest cases of environmental racism in our history, both in Nova Scotia and in Canada. We need to make sure that we are protecting the environment at the highest level possible. Now we do welcome industry jobs in Nova Scotia and like Pam says, we will welcome a proposal that goes through very stringent environmental assessment so a Class 2 to make sure that there is not harm being done to the ecosystem, [inaudible, 00:46:12], high impact. But only until it goes through that long process and consultation will we look at it. And I will say this, a PC party will not be giving a dime to Northern Pulp.

**8. A question from Jennifer in Pugwash: if elected would you be willing to introduce 'Extended Producer Responsibility for Printed Paper and Packaging' legislation in order to reduce the volume of solid waste being transported to landfills in the Province? And Pam will kick it off with your answers and responses.**

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Thanks Sheldon. I also wanted to add to my last question that also the Liberal government will not put any money into Northern Pulp. Waste is huge problem for our lands and our waters. And yes, we are looking into this. We want to make sure that there isn't any undue burden to small businesses, but I am personally committed to finding a path forward on [inaudible, 00:47:19] by reducing packing waste, diverts more from the landfill and promises a secure economy, that protects small business and reduces cost to municipalities. I also want to expand to climate solutions for other waste as well. Particularly textiles since this is also not something this is being taken care of right now.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** The Green Party of Nova Scotia is a massive supporter of Extended Producer Responsibility. We have not necessarily just limited that to paper and plastic packaging. Clamshell packaging needs to be looked at, CFL lightbulbs that have mercury inside of them could also be um, deposited with glass. There are so many substances that could be treated the way that we treat refundable bottles. So, we return them, and we get our money back but actually we

don't get all of our money back, we get a cut of that. So, a deposit should be 100% returned to the consumer at the producer's expense and also at the retail seller's expense because that is where the income is generated for the sale of the product. And it should not be on municipalities. And it should not be on consumers to mitigate that cost.

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** Uh, a PC government will look at Extended Producer Responsibility for printed paper and packaging. We will work with businesses in communities to make sure that they are supported through this but we also do realize that addressing waste in our society is a huge step in fighting climate change. I'm sure most of you know that when you walk into a grocery store and look around the only that you can see is plastic. And we need to make sure that these materials are being dealt with in a safe and environmentally friendly way that won't affect future generations on Earth. And so, the PC party is fully willing to implement this to reduce waste across the province.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** I'm sure you can guess my answer again. Um, [inaudible, 00:49:32], thinking that if I just made better choices as an individual, I could do my part to protect the environment but what I have come to know and what many people in this room have come to know is that it is about systems and capitalism. Individual's consumerism is not the answer. For too long, we have had policies and legislation and environmental movements that focus on individual choices and consumerism. We need better. The NDP sees these things as interconnected and we know that problem-solving at the individual level that problematizes those face barriers, for example straws, and gives preferences to those who already have the resources and capacity to make choices. [inaudible, 00:50:08] Extended Producer Responsibility in municipalities for years and the NDP has been working towards making this happen. The NDP pushed the government to introduce a plastic bag ban and because of this we know that solutions happen at the systems level.

**9. Wrapping up this set of questions with one from the organizers: A recent study released by EAC, Sierra Club, and Council of Canadians found that 85% of Nova Scotians supported a shift away from fossil fuels and 78% agree that groups made vulnerable by the current economy - especially Indigenous people, people of colour and women - should be the priority. How will your party ensure a just transition and the growth of green jobs?**

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** Let me talk about the importance of livable income once again because when people have enough income to survive, they can engage in activities that make sense to them. Whether that is caregiving of elderly relatives or children. Whether it's starting a business, whether it is making music or doing cultural events or um, an artistic venture. We need to be getting out of the job mentality. The labour market is failing us and it's going to continue to fail us. However, if we ban fossil fuel subsidies and make those investments into green technology such as solar power, wind and we work on attracting service industries. Combined with universalizing the internet, which all government over the past sixty years have promised and failed to deliver. Uh, the people will have access to global markets and create their own beautiful realities. Thank you.

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** We need to do a better job of making sure the transition is equitable because for too long these groups haven't been supported at the level they should be. In particular, coming out of the pandemic, women and POC are experiencing the largest loss of jobs statistically speaking and we need to make sure that they are supported. Indigenous people have been leaders and caretakers for the land long before we were here, so they need to be included in the decision-making process while transitioning into a green economy. And we will do in our power to make sure that the recovery is inclusive by saying, "How can we help you?" There is a list of things [inaudible, 00:52:42]. Seeing what they need, how we can support them going into new jobs, how we can make that transition easier for them. How we can make life affordable for these people who have often times been forgotten about.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** I'll just say that the time, the time for listening is over. We have been listening for a very long time and it requires that the people that are most vulnerable and who are experience the most barriers to do the work. To demonstrate to people who have power that they have needs that are worth addressing. And so, our Green Jobs Task Force proposals in our vision document highlight [inaudible, 00:53:17] opportunities like free tuition at NSCC for trades and other jobs but also have the wrap-around supports in communities for the people who face barriers to participating in those opportunities. Again, our work is to build solutions that are interconnected. [inaudible 00:53:34] solutions of previous governments have created unnecessarily complex patchwork policies and programs that do little and cost a lot. Climate justice and social justice are intertwined. Our policies and proposals hold social justice at the core, and we have to shift systems and how power is enacted. Any future policy or legislation that does not account for climate justice or Treaty reconciliation will only uphold the status quo. This is why we have a values-based approach.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Thanks Sheldon. The Liberal government has done this work and we have already made some practical plans. We will put more money into training for the green economy. Over \$1 million over four years in Clean Foundation Nova Scotia's Clean Energy Training Program for students who identify as African Nova Scotian, Black, Indigenous, and/or Mi'kmaq to enter the green economy as energy advisors and clean energy and trade workers. This program will offer hands-on training, job shadowing, equipment, and a paid internship to deliver the next generation of environmental leaders. We will also commit an additional \$2 million dollars over 4 years to the Clean Leadership Summer Internship program to the already very popular program. There is a huge demand for youth learning and training for a green economy. Youth will learn about climate change mitigation, clean tech, waste management and food security. Youth will work in a paid, hands-on environmental, sorry. Youth will work in a hands-on paid environment, connect with mentors, will be available and access, sorry and access professional development training. Specialized training will be available for youth who identify as Indigenous, Mi'kmaq, Black, African Nova Scotian, or a person of African descent.

## **Short Answer Questions**

In this section, questions were intended to be focused questions regarding parties position on an issue. Each candidate's response was capped at 30 seconds.

### **1. We'll kick off with a question from Andrew in Riverside: Our economy needs to undergo massive changes in the next decade to meet bold climate goals. Changes that the free-market system is likely unable to accommodate. Would your party create new Crown corporations to help expedite this transition?**

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** Well Andrew that is a great question and your certainly right, our economy does need to undergo massive changes to address the climate crisis. But look, we're open to all ideas at the PC party, but we want to work with small, medium, large scale businesses and corporations to implement new sustainable practices to reduce water, energy and waste from business. But of course, like I said, we're always open to new ideas and as we make this transition it's going to be a learning for us all. The whole world has to start making that shift and we are willing to listen.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Yeah, we're committed to reach out to our Task Force and we're willing to explore new Crown corporations to do this. But we also need to encourage the use of cooperatives and other alternatives to the free market system. Historically, it's worked really well when we diverge. We can do it and we are committed to making it happen and if the free-market system would work than it probably would have. Um and to quote Ursula Le Guin, I'll just quote. "We live in capitalism. It's power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings."

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Listen, some of the best brains in the world have been working on these issues and we have some of them here in Nova Scotia. So, we're listening and we're collaborating and we're optimistic about the plan that we have in place. I'm not sure that I would put in new Crown corporation, I don't if we need it.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** We haven't discussed creating new Crown corporations but it's a possibility that has merit. We would absolutely work across party lines to make the necessary changes. We would prioritize guaranteed livable income as a labour market correction so that employers cannot have as much power over individuals but that we would put power into the hands of individual people. Picture something like the CERB program that doesn't end and creates options for people, and we would implement free public transit as well.

**This final suite of questions is about stopping the Bad Stuff that is harming our planet.**

### **2. Will you commit to transitioning open net-pen salmon farms out of Nova Scotian waters and into land-based closed-containment systems instead?**

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Yup, yes. There should be no open-pen fish farming without community license. NDP supports the transition to land-based aquaculture but

we need an approach that doesn't force communities to engage in harmful practices because that's their only belief of economic prosperity. With more social and economic supports for green jobs and a just transition, etc. you have a more equitable system. But yes.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** I spent twelve years working as a facilitator for a multi-stakeholder process for wild salmon in British Columbia. During that time still, the issue of open-pen salmon farms have been identified as a threat to the larger wild salmon industry and other fisheries. We need to go with the tide in Nova Scotia where most jurisdictions are moving to land-based. This slowing down or making plans overtime to eliminate open pen fish farms and I personally believe this is the way to go and I personally will fight for that if I get into office.

**Jessica Alexander [Nova Scotia Green Party]:** Yes, the green party supports an immediate moratorium on open-pen fish farm expansions and a phase-out of net pens in the ocean. Whether they do or do not wind up on land, this is the toughest stance of any of the four parties represented tonight.

**Scott Ellis [PC Party of Nova Scotia]:** We will look at, uh, slowly phasing out open pen fish, er, salmon pens into the future but right now we believe that the process needs to be changed and that process to put one offshore needs stricter environmental regulations and a process to see where these pens are actually going and making sure that they're not going into sensitive ecosystems that will disrupt our goals of fighting climate change and protecting biodiversity on land and off land.

### **3. Communities are calling for protection of their water against the impacts of a new gold rush in NS. Will you ban the destructive practice of open-pit mining?**

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** I agree we need to modernize and make mining more sustainable; we also need to keep mining for critical minerals for renewable energy projects such as solar panels, important manufacturing sectors, including communication technology and other technologies. This is again a conflict of interest. It's a conflict about what we need in order to live and a conflict of interest between the environment. We have the stringent processes that we need to go through in order to make sure that things are safe in Nova Scotia.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** We would seek to implement a more realistic royalty rate on the current 1% and we would disallow new projects. The St. Mary's River and all other waterways need to be protected. Gold is a valuable mineral but it's not a necessary one.

**Scott Ellis [PC Party of Nova Scotia]:** We need to look after the economy and the local rural residents of Nova Scotia while making sure we are protecting the environment. So, we want to make sure that this mining process is a lot more stricter, there are a lot more environmental regulations when it is taking place but we do believe that gold is a necessary mineral that we have to mine. History a little bit there, we use it for renewables, batteries and cars and yes, I know there are alternatives but how many

manufacturers use those alternatives? Not very many. So, I believe that we can find a balance.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Yeah, we often talk about the economy as if it's all about money but it's also a wealth of resources, of labour. You know, it's not just money and it's not just GDPs. It's so much more than that, just look at unpaid labour. In the riding that I'm in, it's still seeing the after-effects of 150 years of labour in the Montague gold mine in Dartmouth East. This is partly why we in the NDP are calling for an Environmental Bill of Rights that would expand community involvement in environmental assessments and increased transparency around environmental approvals so essentially, it's complex. We need more strict measures for corporations in resource extraction and more supportive measures for community consultation. We need social licensing for communities.

#### **4. Will you stop Alton gas and all new natural gas infrastructure projects, including plans by NS Power to invest in natural gas plants?**

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** We will not allow Alton Gas to brine the Shubenacadie River and we will not provide subsidies for fossil fuel infrastructure. The plans open the door for fracking to take place in our province and the movement of fracked gas. Depending on the sources of fracked gas, it can contain methane. Interests tell it is cleaner but we should be investing in a real clean future and not with this distraction. We have other low-hanging fruits such as solar power that we could be pursuing. There are five municipalities in Nova Scotia with their own utility board and they can make those decisions.

**Scott Ellis [PC Party of Nova Scotia]:** So, we will support some of these projects as we can see them as part of our energy sources within the next couple of decades from natural gas, but also, we do need to look at how some of these projects are impacting our waterways and our land. And some of these projects we need to be very careful about because they can have very big impacts near our Mi'kmaq communities. I grew up near Shubenacadie and I know the impact that some of these projects are having. So, some of them we need to look at under an environmental lens and be a lot more strict with them,

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Yeah, the NDP government will be committed to robust consultations with Mi'kmaq communities. The Liberals have been found by the courts to have not consulted adequately with Mi'kmaq communities. We are committed to changing how we use the land. So, moving away from seeing it as only being valuable when there are resources to extract and mining to exploit. Again, we need social licensing and other pathways to economic prosperity so people have more choices for their communities.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** This issue is wrapped up in a number of legal issues. The federal government is involved. The Indigenous consultation has to take place. So, we can't speak to whether I can or cannot have Alton. Or whether it will happen or not. But this has to go through a mature democratic process. This is what it is

all about but I am excited about looking at other alternatives like the biggest, the most, the um RFP that when out for 250 megawatts of renewable energy.

**5. Will you stop the expansion of offshore oil and gas, end provincial subsidies to the fossil fuel sector and stop the practice of permitting new fossil fuel exploration, transportation, and extraction?**

**Scott Ellis [PC Party of Nova Scotia]:** Just wanted to add a point on to the last one. The PC Party would not lift the moratorium on fracking offshore - that is very clear. We have not actually had the scientific reasoning; we haven't even looked into our offshore geography to see if it is the same as Alberta or Pennsylvania. So that's not something we will do until the science is saying that we can take part in those activities without them severely impacting the environment around us. But when we are talking offshore, we will not expand any offshore projects without the highest environmental scrutiny process.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Yeah, we need to move towards moving away from fossil fuels and oil and gas. The launch of an inquiry on the offshore extraction centre and to halting all explorations until it's complete. We have to divest from fossil fuels and end subsidies [inaudible, 01:08:12] federally to fossil fuel corporations.  
01:08:16

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** So, we are committed to creating a strategy for offshore wind that would include mapping our offshore winds resources and create a regulatory framework that would take a big step forward in our future, in our offshore future. We are committed to new research happening that will pull together some brilliant people to explore new green technologies for our offshore. That was the answer to that one.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** I do have this question as question 7 but I can answer it regardless of its number. We would absolutely stop the expansion of offshore oil and gas exploration and end all subsidies to the fossil fuel sector. Our lives depend on it.

**6. Will you acknowledge that forest biomass used to generate electricity produces more CO2 emissions than burning coal and will you remove biomass from the Renewable Electricity Regulations and ban the use of forest biomass to generate electricity in NS or for foreign export?**

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Regarding biomass, the NDP government would conduct a life cycle assessment on biomass. In the meantime, we are moving to reduce its` renewable calculations. If biomass is to be used for energy, we have to have a sound scientific basis for its use.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** Past governments, meaning the NDP have made decisions around biomass that are challenging to remove without having adverse impacts on critical industries like forestry. We need to have these conversations, but this government continues to find ways and making action for more

renewable energy. We're in favour of high-efficiency logging, which many of our environmental groups are supporting that helps us address the Lahey recommendations and advanced ecological forestry.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party Nova Scotia]:** I'm going to say this again, forests are not for flushing and forests are not for burning. We need to be pursuing our highest and best use of our timber. Burning it does not fall into that. There can be poor quality wood that can sometimes be useful for generating power but it's not necessarily our highest and best use. Am I going to ban something? I'm not somebody who is looking to institute bans, but we definitely need to be moving away from forest biomass.

**Scott Ellis [PC Party of Nova Scotia]:** I will acknowledge that burning forest biomass produces more CO2 than coal. Now our focus is getting off coal by 2030 and we believe that we can do that. And after looking at 2030 the PC party will look into different options on how we can shift away from biomass and be 100% clean energy.

## **7. Will you stop twinning highways and meaningfully support transit and active transportation?**

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** We must consider public safety and again, it's another conflict of values. The twinning of highways saves lives. We will also make investments in, the Liberal government is also, making investments into electrifying busses and provincial passenger fleets. We are investing in EV rebates and EV charging stations to help reduce emissions in transportation.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** We would complete the highway twinning projects that are currently underway and cease engaging in new ones and divert that money towards supporting transit, active transportation, free public transit and electric train routes.

**Scott Ellis [PC Party of Nova Scotia]:** We do have to look at public safety when talking about twinning our highways but a PC party will look at meaningfully supporting sustainable transportation and make it more active as well and we're always open to ideas and listening to what the people want in different communities. We also realize that transportation is going to look very different from rural communities to communities that are more urban.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** Our province is currently built around cars, there's no saving that, but it's short-sighted. We need better. Our party will commit to building the Blue Route for cycling by 2030 and we need a green jobs plan for sustainable infrastructure and growth, that is our commitment. We need mixed-use infrastructure that supports transportation from walking, biking, wheeling, public transit etc., with priority on social justice and the environment. We need to actively purchase vehicles and understand that the complexity of our current system requires us to understand that public safety will be at risk in the long term if we don't respond now.

## Closing Statements

Each candidate was allotted 1 minute to make a closing statement.

**Pam Cooley [Nova Scotia Liberal Party]:** So, I want to thank the organizers for doing this tonight and I want to thank my fellow candidates for representing their parties in this debate and again to the centre here for hosting us. We have a way to go and with all of us making this effort we can make it happen- all of you and all of us. It is time for opportunity, optimism and hope and time where we can build on the progress that the Liberal government, efforts from organizations like yours has made on the economy, on protecting the environment and on ensuring equity for all Nova Scotians. I deeply care about environmental issues and have been acting on many fronts throughout my years. These are issues that the smartest minds in the world are working on and are trying to solve, so we need to try things and evaluate, try things and evaluate. There are no easy answers, but a re-elected Rankin government and I personally am committed to finding the way. Thank you.

**Scott Ellis [Nova Scotia PC Party]:** I wanted to thank everyone for listening and for those joining us here and from home. Tonight's topic is incredibly important and you all being here shows how important that is and I hope that all of us around these tables here, no matter our political differences can sit down and listen with each other because we're going to have to listen to each other to fight this. We need everyone, it can't just be one party. We need individuals in every single party that are willing to step up, listen, learn and change how we do things and a PC party is committed to doing that. We are going to build off legislation we introduced in 2007 that made Nova Scotia a world leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and we can do it again, but we can only do this if we do it together, we can not do it divided.

**Jessica Alexander [Green Party of Nova Scotia]:** Again, thank you all for your attention tonight. Thank you for being so engaged on the issues. The challenges are clear, in these times poverty is prevalent in Nova Scotia, we propose to eliminate it with a liveable income guarantee. Polluting industries are still consuming resources and making expensive messes. We want to ensure our fishery, forestry and agricultural practices are sustainable, not merely sellable. Sustainable. Government lacks transparency in an era where sharing information should be easier than ever. We need to change the systems themselves to better inform and reflect the citizens governed by them. We still lack fixed election dates or a democracy that works for everyone. We want to end first-past-the-post, we want to replace it with a proportional representation system. We need to develop resilient and liveable communities as we adapt to climate change and mitigate it. Greens are the only party calling for an end to open-pen fish farming and an end to spraying pesticides and herbicides on our land and an end to fossil fuel subsidies.

**Tyler Colbourne [Nova Scotia NDP]:** [inaudible, 01:19:48] So how can we uphold commitments adapting and mitigating the climate emergency while also working towards social justice? We do it by electing people and that parties who take a principled approach. Every politician in this province must work towards mitigating the climate emergency and improving our democratic processes. I'm so tired of the

politics, I'm so tired of the politist debate division, I'm tired of incremental changes proposed by the PCs and Liberals and we cannot pretend that the focus on environmental review systems of resource extraction, exploitation and development will support us all equally. It hasn't and it continues to not support us all equally. The PCs and the Liberals offer band aid solutions without also acknowledging that they are responsible for most of the wounds. These parties are committed to holding on to power. We need hope, humility, principal action and we need to act with a sense of urgency that the climate emergency requires. A vote for the NS NDP in your riding will help us work towards something better. Thank you.