



2017 Survey of N.S. Political Party Leaders *Liberal Party Responses*



TOPIC: APPRENTICES REQUIREMENT ON PUBLIC PROJECTS

Background: Apprentices can only complete their apprenticeship and level training hour requirements when they have the opportunity to take technical training and on-the-job experience on the jobsite. In the private sector, there are examples of project owners such as Shell, Suncor and Syncrude who require their subcontractors to employ a minimum 25% of the workforce as apprentices. In July 2015, the B.C. Government implemented a policy requiring prime contractors working on any major public construction project to employ apprentices through the entire project, and report on their on-project use prior to receiving their final payment. Currently in Nova Scotia, the only apprentices requirement on public projects is through a pilot program involving new schools construction. Implemented in January 2016, the pilot program is a good first step. But it only requires contractors to be “engaged in the apprenticeship program” in order to be eligible to perform work on these projects.

Apprentice Requirements Questions

Would your government support or oppose the expansion of the pilot program requiring contractors to employ apprentices for all government procurement projects involving apprenticeship-able Trades?

Strongly Support Support Oppose Strongly Oppose

Our government would be open to expanding the pilot project, however, we cannot commit to an expansion until we review the results of the current pilot project. We want to ensure that the pilot is both successful and that we do not unintentionally harm smaller companies in the industry.

Would your government support or oppose a requirement to define accountability measures and report to monitor compliance of apprenticeship and employment on the project?

Strongly Support Support Oppose Strongly Oppose

Additional Comments:

Yes. A re-elected Liberal government would ensure that if the pilot project was successful, an expanded program instituted would include the proper accountability and reporting mechanisms.

TOPIC: VALUE BASED PROCUREMENT VERSUS LOWEST BID

Background: Experience has demonstrated that applying price-only criteria to public procurement contributes to price wars and destructive competition in the construction industry. While price-driven procurement implies accountability to the taxpayer, it rarely delivers best value to the taxpayer and our economy as a whole. The Public Procurement Act identifies “best value” in its purpose, and in 2009 Nova Scotia passed the Sustainable Procurement Policy including the consideration of social factors such as “inclusiveness and fair wages”. However, the Office of the Auditor General report in June 2015 identified that there is limited monitoring carried out and there has not been a good job of assessing effectiveness of the procurement process in meeting the objectives of the policy. Best value procurement prevents ‘wage dumping’ (offering wages lower than is normal in an industry) and fosters the participation of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises). Effective best-value procurement requires an investment up-front to establish transparent and consistent criterion with monitoring and evaluation.

Procurement Question:

Would your government support or oppose a review of public procurement with the objective of ensuring best-value procurement meets its objectives with appropriate monitoring and evaluation?

Strongly Support Support Oppose Strongly Oppose

Additional Comments:

A re-elected Liberal government would be willing to sit down and discuss the details and needs related to this issue. We would also need to determine the impact of any potential changes on our trade deals and agreements.

TOPIC: FAIR WAGE POLICY

Background: There are many factors that determine fair wage rates including capacity of the industry to pay, prevailing wage rates, labour market conditions, cost of living, and which part of the country you live in to name a few.

Nova Scotia has no “Fair Wages” legislation that requires contractors or subcontractors bidding on public procurement to pay at least a prevailing wage.

There are many jurisdictions in the U.S. and Canada that have Fair Wage policies in place. In the United States the most prominent legislation is the Davis-Bacon Act, first enacted by the Hoover Administration in 1931. There are some 30 U.S. states which as of January 1, 2015, have what is referred to as “state prevailing wage laws” applicable to government construction contracts.

In Canada, some provinces do have fair wage requirements including: British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec, as well as the Yukon Territory. Earlier this year, it was announced the province of Ontario would conduct stakeholder consultations on their province’s Fair Wage policy.

The rationale for a Fair Wage policy:

- To address the issue of low wage, cut-throat competition prevalent in the construction industry;
- To reduce, or eliminate competition based on unacceptable low wages;
- To attract a more skilled, better qualified workforce that is adequately trained in accordance with the prevailing apprenticeship and journey person statutory/regulatory provisions;
- To avoid the practice, as happens in jurisdictions not subject to Fair Wage, where contractors habitually avoid the training costs to enhance their competitive positions to the detriment of workers, the client and the public.

A Fair Wage policy has the potential to shrink the underground economy, level the playing field for legitimate contractors, boost skills training and productivity, improve health and safety and support the middle class.

Fair Wage Question

Would your government support or oppose establishing a review process to consider a fair wage policy for public procurement in Nova Scotia?

Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional Comments:

A re-elected Liberal government would be willing to sit down and discuss the details and needs related to this issue and determine if a review is necessary. As a government, it is our responsibility to balance all issues within the procurement process and we are always looking for ways to ensure Nova Scotians are paid fairly. As stewards of taxpayer dollars, we are also looking to get value for Nova Scotia taxpayers.

TOPIC: DEVELOPMENT OF NOVA SCOTIA’S NATURAL RESOURCES

Background: We believe the development of Nova Scotia resources should optimize the economic benefits for Nova Scotians. This includes the workforce required to build the infrastructure for the project. By employing Nova Scotian workers, they support our tax base and our communities.

To ensure projects are delivered successfully and safely, and in a way that optimizes the benefits for Nova Scotians, we would like to see the establishment of Industrial Benefit Plans.

This is not a unique or a new approach, but a long established practice in many jurisdictions across Canada. The Canada-Nova Scotia Benefits as outlined by the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board is our own local working example of a Benefits Plan.

Simply stated, first consideration for employment should be given to qualified residents of Nova Scotia for both the construction and operations phases of projects involving Nova Scotia resources.

Resource development is still a controversial area of economic growth and it is important to continue to be diligent in garnering public support. Benefit Plans are a way of demonstrating in policy and action the commitment to economic benefits for Nova Scotians.

Natural Resource Development Question

Would your government support or oppose an Industrial Benefits Plan as part of a resource-based project approval process?

Strongly			Strongly
Support	Support	Oppose	Oppose
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional Comments:

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal already does this on a voluntary basis with some highway projects and will continue to do so under a re-elected Liberal government. Now, we are not prepared to mandate this as a requirement of the procurement process as getting best-value for taxpayer money is also a primary objective of the process. We need to balance all objectives to ensure the best results for Nova Scotians.