

**IPOANS
Party Leaders Election Survey
2021**

- 1) Recommendation 3 of the Affordable Housing Commission's report calls on the Nova Scotia government to modernize and improve the *Residential Tenancies Act* and supporting regulations. **How will you ensure that the Nova Scotia government listens and consults with rental property owners before undertaking any legislative or regulatory changes that affects the delivery of housing in the province? How will you ensure that any legislative or regulatory changes in housing policy in Nova Scotia are based on evidence and verifiable data?**

Liberal Party

The Nova Scotia Housing Commission came to this important recommendation based on public input and extensive consultation. The Committee itself has diverse voices and expertise that helped inform the report and recommendations. The Liberal Party has included industry partners in consultation regarding legislative or regulatory changes that affect the delivery of housing in the province and will commit to continued consultation and engagement in the future.

PC Party

We look forward to consulting with stakeholders in these sectors upon forming the government before making any decisions on how housing is delivered in Nova Scotia.

NDP

An NDP government would lead all decision-making with evidence and data. The NDP agrees with the Affordable Housing Commission that the planned update of the Residential Tenancies Act is an ideal time to advance the Commission's recommendations related to enhancing renter protections against evictions due to renovations. An NDP government will give high priority to the consultation on legislative improvements recommended by the Commission so that the recommended legislation can be enacted as soon as possible.

- 2) Eliminating fixed term rental leases will negatively impact the way housing operates, with economically vulnerable renters the most affected by the removal of fixed term leases, including first-time renters, persons with a poor credit history, students, and new Canadians. **Will you commit to maintaining the current provisions for fixed term leases?**

Liberal Party

Any changes to the residential tenancies act will be based on their commendations of industry professionals, community groups and shareholders. We see the opportunity to strengthen landlord-tenant relations as one that will serve to improve the housing industry in Nova Scotia. We are open to continued dialogue with tenants, housing advocates, and landlords regarding educational campaigns and fairness for all.

PC Party

The PC Party will engage with all stakeholders before making commitments on fixed-term leases.

NDP

Through the recommended review of the Residential Tenancies Act, an NDP government would work to ensure that all provisions that govern lease type and duration protect tenants' rights and reduce unnecessary evictions. An NDP government agrees that it will be necessary to involve rental property owners in this process.

- 3) The Nova Scotia government is recommending a landlord renovation verification and tenant displacement compensation program. Depending on the design of the program, unintended consequences of such an approach include preventing investment in improving housing stock, reducing existing affordable housing stock, and scaling back projects that would have improved and expanded housing options for Nova Scotians. **What steps will you take to ensure rental property owners are consulted on the program to mitigate the unintended consequences from putting in place a landlord renovation verification and tenant displacement compensation program?**

Liberal Party

It has long been a goal of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party to increase housing stock. We understand the concerns of investors and developers and strive to strike a balance in encouraging new development while respecting the rights of tenants. We will ensure that protections for renters do not result in preventing investment in improving housing stock or reducing existing affordable housing stock.

PC Party

A PC Government is committed to ensuring that rental property owners are consulted so that we can grow our housing market. We know that with the current housing shortage, there is no magic wand, but we absolutely need more housing stock.

NDP

An NDP government will take seriously its duty to protect people's right to housing, and the Affordable Housing Commission's advice that the province must maintain the existing stock of affordable quality housing from investor pressure to upgrade and charge rents that are no longer affordable for most people who rent. The NDP agrees that rental property owners must be consulted on how Nova Scotia will protect tenants of affordable housing from unwarranted eviction due to renovation, including review of such laws in other provinces.

A re-elected Liberal government will rebate the provincial portion of the HST on

construction costs for new affordable housing units. The goal of our Affordable

Housing plan is aimed at incentivizing investment in building affordable housing units and attracting new development that increases affordable housing stock across the province.

- 4) Two years ago, British Columbia created a five-person compliance and enforcement unit for that government's residential tenancy branch that focuses on dealing with landlords and tenants identified as repeat violators. Do you support establishing a similar unit in Nova Scotia, as part of other measures to ensure compliance with the Residential Tenancies Act by either landlords or tenants?**

Liberal Party

We are open to dialogue on the need for an increase in funding to the Residential Tenancies Program as the population of the province grows and there is more rental housing stock on the market. Currently, there are steps in place in the Residential Tenancies Guide for conflict and dispute resolution and enforcement of the decision of the Director.

PC Party

COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on the issues between landlords and tenants. As we are committed to process and outcome improvement in all areas of government, we are happy to discuss what this could look like in Nova Scotia.

NDP

An NDP government will review the data about landlord-tenant disputes that are brought to the Residential Tenancy program to determine whether the volume of disputes and the proportion from repeat offenders would justify creating a compliance and enforcement unit.

- 5) Will you support the creation of an independent Tenant Rights Office (TRO), funded by the provincial government to help build trust and understanding of the Residential Tenancies Act among tenants? The TRO will help tenants living at risk of losing their rental unit, navigate the residential tenancies process, providing outreach, education, and advice along the way.**

Liberal Party

The Rankin government recently announced \$25 million to address immediate investments recommended by the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission to increase affordable housing. This investment will support new affordable housing units, repairs to public housing and building upgrades that will reduce emissions. It will also create an independent housing entity and look at modernizing laws and regulations around housing.

PC Party

We are committed to ongoing efforts to educate tenants on their rights and entitlements under the RTA.

NDP

An NDP government will first reinvigorate the Residential Tenancy program by restoring its capacity for outreach, education, and prompt dispute resolution, all of which will be particularly important when Nova Scotians again have the protection of rent control.

We understand that building an understanding of the Residential Tenancies Act will help tenant-landlord relationships. We ensure all groups that there will be additional dialogue on the creation of an independent housing entity.

- 6) Will you support the Nova Scotia government increasing social housing capacity by providing greater support to the not-for-profit sector to become more active and involved in the delivery of affordable housing options?**

Liberal Party

Absolutely, a large portion of the recent investment in affordable housing, \$20 million, will support new affordable housing units in Nova Scotia. Another \$2.5 million is allocated to a fund, to be co-created with community housing organizations, to help grow the community housing sector and to add more affordable units.

PC Party

Nova Scotia needs a multifaceted approach to address market and non-market housing. We are excited to examine the role that the provincial government will play in making housing accessible. We were disappointed that affordable housing was left days before an election before seeing any movement from the government on this file.

NDP

Yes. An NDP government will start work immediately to establish a much more significant community and non-market housing sector across Nova Scotia, starting immediately by providing the political leadership and investments necessary to achieve this and other goals of the Affordable Housing Strategy that was endorsed eight years ago by the Liberals then ignored. An NDP government will build 1,000 new units of housing in the next four years by reinvesting in publicly-owned, cooperative, and non-profit housing. An NDP government will also establish a

permanent Housing Trust that non-profit housing providers can access quickly in order to acquire and provide affordable housing, among other measures.

7) Will you commit to a feasibility study of a establishing an Emergency Rent Fund? This would be a government sponsored initiative for tenants to access missing rent payments or the unpaid portion of rent, directly payable to landlords.

Liberal Party

We are constantly looking for new ways to support Nova Scotians in need. A Liberal Government would continue to look for opportunities to support Nova Scotians in need.

In the most recent budget, the Liberal government announced the biggest investment in our province's history toward supporting vulnerable Nova Scotians. Specifically, the government provided \$100 more per month to every adult receiving income assistance. Seventy-five per cent of the caseload will see an increase between 12% and 20%, which represents the people with the deepest need for Employment Support and Income Assistance.

We invested \$1.3 million to help ensure vulnerable Nova Scotians got the food they needed during the third wave of COVID-19. This funding was provided to Feed Nova Scotia, smaller food banks and charitable organizations, and Family Resource Centres across Nova Scotia.

PC Party

A PC government is committed to making housing more accessible for Nova Scotians as soon as possible. Before committing to any feasibility studies, we need more engagement from the sector.

NDP

An NDP government would first discuss this with you and other representatives of rental property owners to determine whether a study is needed and what would be its terms of reference. An NDP government would be open to ideas that are intended to protect people from losing their housing.

8) A 2018 report from Turner Drake concluded that the Nova Scotia Capped Assessment Program (CAP) resulted in rents \$7 to \$17 higher per rental unit. It also noted that low-income renters are impacted disproportionately and that the longer the CAP remains in place, the more it will add to rental prices that tenants pay. To make rental units more affordable for tenants, will you either eliminate the CAP or extend it to include rental properties?

Liberal Party

We have heard the concerns of stakeholders such as the IOPANS and NSFM and value all input on the topic. We will continue to examine the program for potential improvements.

PC Party

A PC government is committed to maintaining this cap. However, we will work with municipalities to ensure that the CAP is reaching its intended effects, and will examine potential changes to improve housing affordability.

NDP

The NDP supports the principles that informed the Capped Assessment Program's inception, and would be open to a process that includes broad-based public and stakeholder input on making changes to the CAP. Such a program is particularly important right now when homeowners, particularly those on low and fixed incomes, would be at risk from the unprecedented increase in housing prices and the property taxes based on the value of their home.