

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Provincial election survey addresses important matters
in African Nova Scotian communities**

Note: A copy of the survey is included below.

May 15, 2017 — African Nova Scotian community organizations are calling on all candidates in the May 30 provincial election to identify how they will approach matters of importance to African Nova Scotians in their ridings and across the province.

An online survey sent to all candidates today, May 15, asks candidates to respond to issues that affect African Nova Scotian communities, including inequalities in education, access to justice, sustainable employment, and environmental racism.

Candidates are asked to complete the survey by May 24. Responses will be shared with African Nova Scotian communities across the province and made available online.

The survey is compiled by members of the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition in collaboration with the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers. The coalition was formed in October 2016 following a meeting with the United Nations Working Group of Experts for People of African Descent. The coalition seeks to facilitate a mutually supportive network of African Nova Scotians across the province to establish a new relationship with government that recognizes African Nova Scotians as a distinct people and works collaboratively to support African Nova Scotian communities in a new and more productive way. Participation is open to organizations across the province that serve the interests and needs of African Nova Scotian people and communities.

The United Nations has declared the decade of 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent.

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NOVA SCOTIA PROVINCIAL CANDIDATE SURVEY

AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIANS: A DISTINCT PEOPLE

African Nova Scotians have helped develop this part of Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia) for over three hundred years (twice as long as Canada has been a country). As such, we are a distinct people with unique cultural, spiritual, and community traditions, tied to land bases throughout the province. African Nova Scotians from our original 52 communities have been joined by other people of African descent from the Caribbean, United States and African countries who have further helped build the province. Despite enduring slavery and segregation its legacy in the form of systemic and individual anti-Black racism, we are defined by our extraordinary strengths and contributions as evident in part by the myriad institutions we have built - including those organizations represented by this coalition.

The African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition (ANSDPAD) is comprised of 17 (and growing) African Nova Scotian organizations who made submissions to the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (UNWGEPAD). ANSDPAD has partnered with the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers to create this important candidate survey. Black people are the largest “racially visible” group in Nova Scotia, with over 77% of us being of three or more generations Canadian. Our community has a higher percentage of young people and we are integral to the future of Nova Scotia -as we have been to its past.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses to the questions below will be shared widely with voters. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to email or call.

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ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

What's environmental racism? Environmental racism is racial discrimination in the disproportionate location and greater exposure of Black and Indigenous communities to contamination, pollution, and toxins from polluting industries and other environmentally hazardous activities; in the implementation of policies that sanction the harmful and, in many cases, life-threatening presence of poisons in these communities; in the disproportionate negative impacts of environmental policies that result in differential rates of cleanup of environmental contaminants in these communities; in the lack of political power these communities have for resisting the siting of industrial polluters in their communities; and in the history of excluding Black and Indigenous communities from mainstream environmental groups, decision-making boards, commissions, and regulatory bodies. The ENRICH Project helped to develop An Act to Address Environmental Racism (Bill 6; formerly Bill 111), which was introduced in the Nova Scotia Legislature on April 29, 2015, but eventually failed to pass into law. The ENRICH Project also helped to develop a non-partisan Environmental Bill of Rights for Nova Scotia, which was launched on April 21, 2017, with the hope that it will be supported by all political parties.

For more information, refer to "The Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities & Community Health Project (ENRICH Project)", at www.enrichproject.org

1. If elected, how will you work with your constituents, political party and fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly to ensure African Nova Scotian communities are protected from the negative consequences of environmental racism?

LAND CLAIMS

The Nova Scotia Barristers' Society, as part of its work to enhance access to justice for Nova Scotians, has involved a number of lawyers who work pro bono supporting the North Preston Land Recovery Initiative. This work advances landowners' claims pursuant to the Land Titles Clarification Act, administered by the Department of Natural Resources. This legislation is intended to furnish members of African-Nova Scotian communities, including North Preston, an efficient and inexpensive regime in which to clear a landowner's titles so they can enjoy the benefits of land ownership, such as access to municipal services, mortgage financing and estate succession. Historic title problems in North Preston perpetuate the cycle of poverty in which some residents of the community find themselves entrapped. For more information, refer to "Untitled: The Legacy of Land in North Preston," at <http://northprestonland.ca>.

2. Do you support the North Preston Land Titles Initiative?

SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

While our primary goal remains to build a dynamic and vibrant Black business community, we must adapt to an ever changing and challenging economic reality. A historically marginalized business culture within the African Nova Scotian community, deepened by a lack of information around business assistance programs as well as an insufficient number of Black and non-Black business role models and mentors, has made it difficult to create sustainable business entities originating from within the African Nova Scotian community.

3. If elected, how would you support the inclusion of economic development initiatives aimed at African Nova Scotian communities as full participants in the supply chain across the province?

EDUCATION

African Nova Scotian learners are experiencing systemic racism and a lack of social inclusion in the classroom, beginning at an early age. Black students are disproportionately subjected to suspensions. In addition, achievement gaps in literacy and math persists among this group of learners. Inadequate distribution of funds and resources are a major challenge to fostering equitable opportunities for African Nova Scotian students. A recent study by CBC News looked at data from 5 of 8 school boards in the province and found that Black students receive out-of-school suspensions at a rate of 1.2 to 3 times higher than the overall population of African Nova Scotians in the student population

[\[http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/african-nova-scotian-students-suspension-number-s-1.3885721\]](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/african-nova-scotian-students-suspension-number-s-1.3885721)

4. If elected, would you advocate for a province-wide response to ensure success for African Nova Scotians, in all levels of the education system, that takes a collaborative approach to solution finding between and amongst community, schools, school boards and the education department that, among other things, ensures access to disaggregate data across education structures?

HEALTH

The healthcare system in the province has yet to adopt culturally competent training that reflects the needs of racialized groups accessing health services. There exists an under-representation of health professionals from communities of African descent working in healthcare, creating further barriers for marginalized groups navigating a complex system.

5. If elected, would you support the collection of empirical health data with race, ethnicity and language identifiers as well as investment in health research that examines the intersections of race, ethnicity, culture, gender identity, income, citizenship status, sexual orientation, language and disability?

CHILD WELFARE

A considerable body of research shows that African Canadian children and youth are more likely to be involved in the Child Welfare system compared to their representation in the general population. In Nova Scotia, African Nova Scotians make up about 2.3% of the general population but over 10% of African Nova Scotian children and youth are involved with Child Welfare. This overrepresentation in the Child Welfare system has multi-generational impacts on African Nova Scotian families resulting in their negative involvement in the health, education and justice systems with poor outcomes for African Nova Scotian children, youth and families.

6. If elected, would you support the use of disaggregate data to prevent and reduce the overrepresentation of African Nova Scotian children and youth in the Child Welfare system? And if so, how do you envision leveraging that support?

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

African Nova Scotians seek both a just criminal justice system and justice in a broader sense. Over-incarceration and anti-Black racism (systemic and individual) within the criminal justice system and corrections arise in part from the legacy of enslavement and segregation. Over-policing and surveillance was most recently documented by the street check statistics released by the Halifax Regional Police and the RCMP.

[\[http://halifax.ca/police/documents/Streetcheckdataprelimanalysis.pdf\]](http://halifax.ca/police/documents/Streetcheckdataprelimanalysis.pdf). The HRM report reveals that African Nova Scotians in Halifax are 3 times more likely to be stopped and checked by police than white individuals. African Nova Scotians have the right to move and live freely in this province without being subject to racial profiling on the street or in stores or other places [\[https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/crp-report.pdf\]](https://humanrights.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/crp-report.pdf).

7. If elected, would you support the implementation of an African Nova Scotian justice strategy to address: (1) street checks; (2) overrepresentation of African Nova Scotians in the criminal justice system; (3) underrepresentation of African Nova Scotian criminal justice personnel (Crown Prosecutors, correctional officers) and judges; and (4) the need for African Nova Scotian corrections and reintegration services?

8. If elected, would you support the systematic use of African Nova Scotian Cultural Impact Assessments?

For information on Cultural Impact Assessments check out this helpful resource <http://www.robertswright.ca/upload/385169/documents/D0DF4E3F969480DD.pdf>

IMMIGRATION

10% of Black people in Nova Scotia are new Canadians, coming primarily from African countries, the Caribbean and the U.S.A. with a diverse range of experiences, education and skills.

9. If elected, how would you ensure that provincial immigration, refugee and migrant worker policies and programs respond to the concerns and recognize the talents of newcomers of African descent?

REPARATIONS

The global reparations movement advocates to recognize the wrongs of the past (enslavement, segregation and racial exploitation) including present systemic, institutional, economic, psychological and environmental racism and its effects on Black communities. Reparations serve to acknowledge that there is an obligation on governments to repair the consequences and violations of the Atlantic Slave trade and related injustices.

10. If elected, do you agree that the Nova Scotia government must incorporate issues of restoration for injustices against the African Nova Scotian community into government plans?