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**African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition  
2017 Election Questionnaire**

**NDP Response\***

*\*The responses below have been prepared by the Nova Scotia New Democratic Party in consultation with our candidates running in the 2017 provincial election. We respectfully submit them on behalf of our leader Gary Burrill and all 50 of our candidates, who support this unified response.*

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?

*Environmental racism causes serious health problems for individuals and families. It disrupts food security by introducing problems with the communities' water and soil. It interferes with their children's capacity to play outdoors. It undermines communities' confidence in government's ability and willingness to create the conditions for health and well-being. And it violates our province's legal and moral obligations for equity and fair treatment.*

*If elected government, the NDP commits to passing the following legislative actions which we previously introduced to the House: the Environmental Racism Prevention Act, the Environmental Bill of Rights, and a Bill to modernize and democratize the environmental assessment process. We will work with African Nova Scotian communities and advocacy organizations in the implementation of this legislation to ensure it reflects the needs and priorities of the affected communities.*

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

*Yes, we fully support the North Preston Land Titles Initiative. We commend the Nova Scotia Barrister's Society for taking the lead on moving forward with this very important issue. The NDP recognizes that historic title problems in North Preston create challenges for African Nova Scotians that go far beyond land claims. Property ownership provides many benefits that people in North Preston rightfully deserve.*

*We do not believe that this issue should have to be resolved through the courts. Barristers and community members have come together to address this issue. An NDP government would take an active role in this partnership to ensure that those working to resolve land claim issues are able to navigate the system and are supported with the necessary resources.*

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?

*The NDP and leader Gary Burrill recognize the importance of specialized employment programs in countering the institutionalized racism that creates barriers to economic opportunities for African Nova Scotians. In overhauling these programs, Stephen McNeil and the Liberals failed to recognize the importance of this specialized programming. An NDP government will restore funding to organizations, such as Watershed Association Development Enterprises (WADE), which are critical in opening the doors to economic opportunity for African Nova Scotian communities.*

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?

*Yes. The NDP fully recognizes the presence of institutionalized racism in our public school system. Under an NDP government, the Department of Education would be an active partner in finding ways to better support African Nova Scotian students, reduce the suspension rate, and ensure student success. An NDP government will make significant investments in classrooms to support learning conditions, including the hiring of more classroom specialists, implementing P-12 class caps, and funding school-based anti-racism initiatives. Together, we can foster an environment in which racism is no longer a barrier to learning.*

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?

*Yes. We recognize that the health of Nova Scotians is affected by a number of social determinants, and the NDP is committed to addressing and improving these social determinants—by taking action to reduce income inequality, invest in economic opportunities for marginalized communities, create a more robust and equitable health care system, counter environmental racism, increase affordable housing, and make the right to a good education a reality for all.*

*An NDP government will invest to expand primary health care services, offer better care to seniors, improve access to mental health and addiction services, and create a better emergency care system. In the context of making these investments, we will work with Nova Scotia's diverse communities and the Department of Health and Wellness to ensure that discrimination is not a barrier to accessing health care services.*

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?

*Yes. We recognize that one of the effects of systemic racism is the overrepresentation of African Nova Scotian children and youth in Child Welfare. By making the broad social investments described above, we would endeavour to address the social factors that contribute to the marginalization of families and children in racialized communities. An NDP government would fast-track the Employment Supports and Income Assistance Transformation, and in the context of doing so, work with African Nova Scotian communities to identify ways to better support families and reduce the rate of children being involved in the Child Welfare system. Disaggregate data will play an important role in informing this conversation and the path forward.*

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?

*Yes. We are aware of the troubling figures that show the over-incarceration of African Nova Scotians and the disproportionate number of African Nova Scotians subjected to street checks. These numbers paint a very clear picture of the extent of systemic racism, and point to the pressing need for an action plan to address racial inequities within our justice system. We support the initiative undertaken by the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission to hire an independent party to research the incidence of street checks by Halifax police. We also welcome the appointment of Carlos Beals to the Halifax Police Commission, and the work being undertaken to strengthen that oversight body. We welcome the recent judicial appointments of Samuel Moreau and Rickcola Brinton.*

*We'd like to work in partnership with the African Nova Scotian community to determine next steps at the provincial level to address underrepresentation in roles throughout the justice system, and to establish a path forward for addressing racism in our justice system. Issues to be addressed include the prohibitive cost of maintaining family and community ties while incarcerated, which differentially impacts low-income and African Nova Scotia inmates; the impact of poverty on the remand population; the challenges faced by former inmates when they are released, as a criminal record is often a barrier to securing employment; and insufficient reintegration services.*

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

*Yes. Nova Scotia judges regularly request Gladue reports, which encourage judges to be sensitive to the systemic racism faced by Aboriginal people, and to consider alternatives other than incarceration when sentencing. Similar assessments for African Nova Scotians could help ensure that the courts also take their past experiences into consideration. That being said, the NDP recognizes that cultural assessments alone will not result in a culture shift that reduces the number of African Nova Scotians in incarceration. We need dialogue, education and the necessary social supports to give everyone the opportunity to be strong individuals who can achieve their goals and give back to their communities.*

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?

*10% of Black people in NS are new Canadians, coming primarily from African countries, the Caribbean and the USA. with a diverse range of experience, education and skills. We need to ensure that we provide all new Canadians with the support they need to feel welcome and to see Nova Scotia as a place where they can make a long-term home. An NDP government would partner with nonprofit organizations such as Immigration Settlement Association of Nova Scotia, African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes, the African Community Investment Cooperative of Canada, to bolster their work in settlement, integration and community economic development. We would also work with the federal government and the African diaspora community to identify needs and build capacity for family-linked refugee sponsorship.*

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?

*Nova Scotia is considered a leading jurisdiction in the area of restorative justice and some practitioners are using restorative practices at a community level. If elected, an NDP government would be committed to having a conversation with the African Nova Scotian community about how to repair the consequences of past injustices.*