

Youth unemployment is high, especially in Nova Scotia. What is the best approach to keeping educated youth here in Nova Scotia?

NDP: The youth unemployment rate is even higher than the general rate — some 22-24 per cent for people ages 16-22. Again, we want to provide a lot of employment opportunities for them. I think there are one or two university programs which are co-operative and give students the chance to work and learn at the same time. The government does put some money into job creation, and we'd like to see that extended.

LIB: The only way we can provide youth employment opportunities is through education. The entry level jobs are difficult [to get], there's not as many as there used to be because the economic infrastructure is changing. But we have to start with people being properly educated. We're not just talking university. We have to remember that we are losing about one third of high school [students] to dropping out. Once they are educated, we have to have an economy that can support them. The way we do that is by fiscal responsibility. The climate for investment in new jobs is there, and nowadays governments are pretty much getting past the stage where they try to create jobs themselves — that hasn't worked. It's the private side of the economy that creates the jobs, especially the small business sector.

PC: That kind of ties into the last question as well. I think most young people in Nova Scotia would prefer to stay at home. They leave because they don't see the job opportunities here and they don't see themselves as being able to be as successful as they would if they moved out of province. I think it is vital to keep educated youth here, and the way to keep them is to provide employment. We've come up with a number of job creation strategies for young people and those will be tied into the student loan programs.

Aside from education, describe three of Nova Scotia's most important challenges for the future?

NDP: Well the healthcare dilemma is a big concern, probably the number one concern of all Nova Scotians today. Mr. MacLellan has only one plank on his platform and that is healthcare. He devised his strategy the day of the debate. He's going to throw in another \$80-million for the next four years. But healthcare is a key concern to all parties, certainly number one to ours. It was the CCF in Saskatchewan that actually established healthcare in the 1960s. So, I think people tend to believe us when we say "we want to do something about healthcare" over the other parties, because they know of our long-standing commitment to healthcare.

LIB: I find it so hard to rank them because they are so interdependent. Healthcare is number one. Poverty and job creation is number two. You don't hear as much talk about the environment because everyone is feeling the effects of these cuts and we're trying to regroup now. But the environment is at the backbone of so much of our decisions. We've seen [the marine environment] devastated. Hopefully it will recover, but we've seen [that] without a sustainable plan, we can destroy our environment. I think we have to take a greater share of the responsibility for regulating our marine environment. But now we're concerned about the forests — whether we're doing sustainable development. 70 per cent of the land in Nova Scotia is private land. Crown land only accounts for 30 per cent, but this land can be regulated by the government. They perhaps aren't doing as good of a job as they should be. We are trying to register people who buy and sell wood products so we have some kind of idea what is being done to the forests. And the next step, which will have to come along fairly quickly, is sustainable forest management. If we can't do that, we're going to have to legislate the large amount of land which is privately owned. I think there is great support for that even among those who work in the forest industry.

PC: I think one of the biggest challenges, it's an issue on a broader scale, is having a government that listens to the people, that is accountable, and that consults with Nova Scotians on what is important to them before it embarks on change. The current Liberal government has — on healthcare, on education, on family, on municipal amalgamation — rushed ahead with initiatives the public clearly said it did not want. I think we have to get back to the idea that representatives are just that — they represent the views of their [constituents]. We have to get back to that idea of government. The conservative party has been doing that and I think our platform reflects solutions we're hearing from voters out there. The next one is to provide employment for our young people, ensuring that the education system in the province is preparing young people to lead fulfilling and successful lives in Nova Scotia. The third challenge is to make our healthcare system what it once was. There have been a lot of changes over the last five years to our healthcare system, and I've certainly been hearing a lot of horror stories in the last three, four weeks that people are not getting the care they once did. I think the focus has shifted away from care for the patient, and it's become more of a bureaucracy. A lot of money is going into the administration of healthcare and not enough into front-line patient care.

Take a moment to rank, in order from one to ten, the following words or phrases based on their significance to Nova Scotia in the coming year. (Please note: we are not looking for value judgements, simply predictions of prominence)

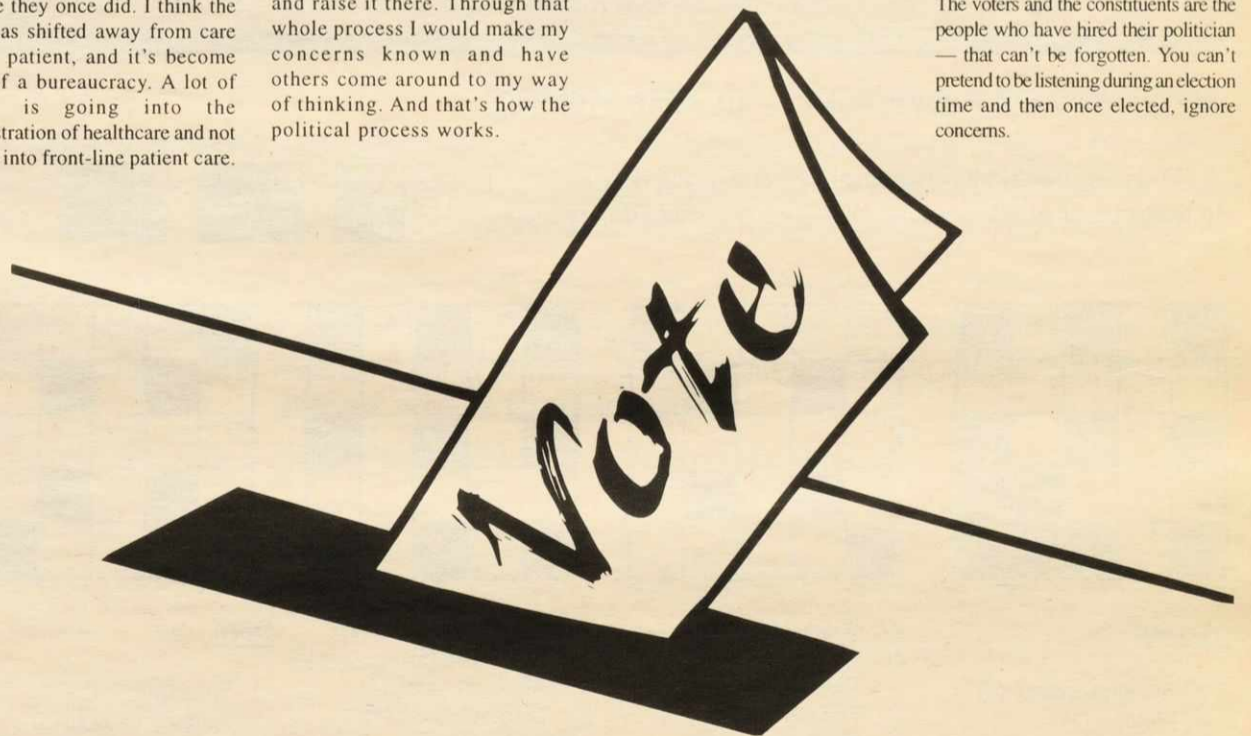
	LIB	NDP	PC
Arts and culture	7	5	9
Debt reduction	8	7	6
Environment	5	4	5
Foreign investment	6	8	7
Multi-culturalism	9	6	8
Job creation	4	2	4
Healthcare	1	1	1
Politics	10	9	10
Post-secondary education	2	3(t)	2
Public schools	3	3(t)	3

Would you fight for something against the will of your political party if you thought it was in the best interest of your constituents?

NDP: I would, of course. We have a party that is very open. There is a consultative process built into it. We have conventions, and at our annual conventions, we representatives from all the constituencies get together, and that's how we establish our policy. So our policy is not fabricated in some backroom by the "higher-ups", it is done at the grassroots level by ordinary Nova Scotians. If I was having any problems with what the party was doing, I would take it to the convention and raise it there. Through that whole process I would make my concerns known and have others come around to my way of thinking. And that's how the political process works.

LIB: I think that when you elect a representative to govern you, he/she's elected to represent the views of the people that sent him/her there. It's [the representative's] responsibility to bring those views to the government. No matter where your views fit, in terms of what current policy is, the representative has to bring those views forward. So I have no problem bringing different views to the government. I've been doing that kind of thing all my life.

PC: Yes I would. The reason I became involved in politics is because I think that government is not listening to people and not representing the concerns of people. It's been the attitude of the current government that it will go ahead with whatever initiatives it sees fit. One example of this lack of listening is the municipal amalgamation. The government has also gone ahead with changes to the healthcare and education systems against the will of the constituents. I'm not sure if the Liberal government is going ahead thinking that it knows better than the voters, but I certainly wouldn't ascribe to that view. The voters and the constituents are the people who have hired their politician — that can't be forgotten. You can't pretend to be listening during an election time and then once elected, ignore concerns.



Get enumerated

Those students living in the riding of Halifax Citadel who have not been enumerated for the March 24 provincial election can still be registered to vote if they take a few small steps to do so.

On the day of the election you can go to the polling station operated by Halifax-Citadel's revising officer. You will be allowed to vote if you have identification and proof of address — so bring your lease.

For more information, call the office of Mike Mackin, the chief returning officer for Halifax-Citadel, at 429-3250.