

Housing IS A Provincial Election Issue!

The South Shore Housing Action Coalition uses each election campaign (municipal, provincial and federal) as an opportunity to build awareness about the housing challenges and issues our communities are facing. This involves creating and distributing a fact sheet among our networks and encouraging people to ask candidates about housing when they have the opportunity. It also includes approaching candidates to learn more about their understanding of the housing challenges in our communities, their commitment to support and taking action locally as our representative(s), and to learn what their party will do to take action, should they form government. This year, we worked with the Shelburne County Housing Coalition to raise awareness in our communities about housing challenges and to approach our candidates.

We are pleased to share with you the responses we received from candidates along the South Shore, which includes the ridings of Chester St Margaret's, Lunenburg, Lunenburg West, Queens Shelburne and Argyle Barrington.

Visit <http://sshac.ca/2017-provincial-election/> to view our fact sheet. Here you will also find the responses from party leaders regarding their plans for poverty reduction, which includes housing and homelessness, as requested by End Poverty Nova Scotia.

Candidate Responses

1. In your opinion, what are the housing needs of people living in your riding?

 <p>DENISE PETERSON RAFUSE <i>New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia Chester St.Margaret's</i></p>	Housing is a major issue for a significant number of people on the South Shore, including individuals and families living in poverty, seniors, youth, single-parent households, and individuals who are precariously employed. As the Fact Sheet provided by the SSHAC and SCHC indicate, between 31% and 56% of household on the South Shore are without adequate, suitable and affordable housing. We know that too many Nova Scotian families are forced to make the impossible choice between paying the rent or mortgage, heating their homes, or buying groceries. Housing insecurity especially affects women, who are sometimes forced to stay in unhealthy or violent situations due to poverty and the cost of housing. It exacerbates the vulnerability of children, people with disabilities, and other socially marginalized groups. We see housing insecurity as a crisis in Nova Scotia, intrinsically linked to the crisis of poverty, that requires an immediate and substantial intervention by government.
 <p>MARC BREAUGH <i>New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia Lunenburg</i></p>	Housing is a major issue for a significant number of people on the South Shore, including individuals and families living in poverty, seniors, youth, single-parent households, and individuals who are precariously employed. As the Fact Sheet provided by the SSHAC and SCHC indicate, between 31% and 56% of household on the South Shore are without adequate, suitable and affordable housing. We know that too many Nova Scotian families are forced to make the impossible choice between paying the rent or mortgage, heating their homes, or buying groceries. Housing insecurity especially affects women, who are sometimes forced to stay in unhealthy or violent situations due to poverty and the cost of housing. It exacerbates the vulnerability of children, people with disabilities, and other socially marginalized groups. We see housing insecurity as a crisis in Nova Scotia, intrinsically linked to the crisis of poverty, that requires an immediate and substantial intervention by government.



SUZANNE LOHNES
CROFT
*Liberal Party of Nova Scotia
Lunenburg
Lohnes-Croft, con't*

In rural ridings like Lunenburg we are confronted with a number of demographic trends that impact housing needs and availability. We have an aging population of residents who have owned their own homes for many years. Many of these residents will need financial and medical support to stay in their homes. A sub-set of these older residents decide that their homes are too far removed from the amenities that they need. These residents typically move to Lunenburg, Mahone Bay or New Germany, where they can be closer to shops, doctors, dentists and activities. They are often looking for quality and affordable rental accommodations. In light of our aging demographics, we need to take steps to attract and retain young people, as they add vibrancy to our communities and economy. One of the biggest hurdles these younger families must overcome is saving for a down payment on a home. Finally, in this area we are confronted with many homes that were built more than a century ago. Everyone knows that older homes require lots of upkeep and it can be challenging to finance these upgrades. We also know that older homes are less likely to be accessible for people with disabilities. For both of these reasons, homes across rural Nova Scotia need attention.



LISA NORMAN
*New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia
Lunenburg West*

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MARK FUREY
*Liberal Party of Nova Scotia
Lunenburg West*

I know that affordable housing is an issue for many young people and working families in Lunenburg West. There are definite shortages in Bridgewater as well as the surrounding area. During my door-to-door campaigning I am also hearing about the need for affordable housing. There are also waiting lists for seniors seeking subsidized housing.



VERNON OICKLE
*Liberal Party of Nova Scotia
Queens Shelburne*

Access to safe and affordable housing is the foundation for a strong economy and better social outcomes. There is no doubt that we have housing needs in the riding of Queens-Shelburne. The demands for proper and adequate housing in this riding are diverse and reflect a variety of needs including family size, income levels and mobility. For far too long we have heard examples of people of all age groups, social needs and physical challenges having to leave their community in search of more affordable and better accessible housing. The wait list that some people have endured in finding suitable housing compounds the problem. The biggest need is for low income housing especially for seniors and young families. The need is great and there are many people who live in housing that does not qualify as "warm, safe, and dry" which is the standard community services uses.

2. In your role as MLA, what steps and actions will you take as our representative to address housing challenges locally?

 <p>DENISE PETERSON- RAFUSE <i>New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia Chester St.Margaret's</i></p>	<p>I am proud to represent the party that introduced Nova Scotia's first Affordable Housing Strategy. As part of an NDP government, I would support our plan for investing to improve and expand affordable housing for our province's citizens. I would consult with affordable housing advocates in my constituency to determine the need, priorities, and next steps for addressing the housing crisis here at home, and I would work to ensure our communities are represented in the provincial housing plan.</p>
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 <p>SUZANNE LOHNES CROFT <i>Liberal Party of Nova Scotia Lunenburg</i></p>	<p>I was proud to announce funding for the construction of affordable housing units in Mahone Bay. This is an investment of \$1.3 million in conjunction with the private sector. A development with 26 units, to be called Brookside Apartments, will be built by M.A.D.E of Mahone Bay for seniors. In March, I was also pleased to confirm that the provincial and federal governments are investing nearly \$375,000 to provide 13 rent supplements at Brookside Apartments. These investments support older adults with lower incomes find suitable accommodations.</p> <p>I want to continue building on the good relationship between the municipality, the province and the federal government. I also value the important work of community groups, like your coalition and the Seniors Committee, and want to continue our work together.</p> <p>I'm especially interested in seeing how all partners can work together to maximize the use of underutilized and vacant buildings, regardless of which level of government owns them. I believe there is more work to do in this regard.</p> <p>With the passage of the Accessibility Act in April 2017, government has set a goal of achieving an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030. I want to work with all partners to ensure that the regulations to be developed respond to local needs and that funding supports are in place so that local facilities can become fully accessible.</p> <p>Finally, I want to continue assisting individuals who are registering with the local housing authority and navigating government programs, like the heating assistance rebate program, the home repair assistance program, and Efficiency NS programs.</p>
 <p>LISA NORMAN <i>New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia Lunenburg West</i></p>	<p>I am proud to represent the party that introduced Nova Scotia's first Affordable Housing Strategy. As part of an NDP government, I would support our plan for investing to improve and expand affordable housing for our province's citizens. I would consult with affordable housing advocates in my constituency to determine the need, priorities, and next steps for addressing the housing crisis here at home, and I would work to ensure our communities are represented in the provincial housing plan.</p>

 <p>MARK FUREY Liberal Party of Nova Scotia Lunenburg West</p>	<p>I have been working with the Minister of Community Services on a pilot project for this area through a Housing Support Worker program which helps individuals who require support beyond financial assistance to find safe, affordable housing. This 24 month long pilot will create 2 positions in Bridgewater to conduct this program.</p> <p>Our government remains committed to working with municipalities and towns, the federal government and private partners to addressing the need for affordable housing.</p>
 <p>VERNON OICKLE Liberal Party of Nova Scotia Queens Shelburne</p>	<p>Under the NDP Dexter government, \$42 million in Federal money was left unspent. They were saving it for a rainy day. When we came to government, we committed to unlock that \$42 million from Ottawa. Because the Liberals under the leadership of Stephen McNeil knew for thousands of Nova Scotians it was raining today.</p> <p>That investment, along with a new \$75 million cost-shared agreement with Ottawa, will have allowed Nova Scotia to reduce the wait list for housing by 20% through 2017-2018.</p> <p>As your MLA, I will work with stakeholders and all three levels of government to ensure our area receives funding for services we need and develop a long term strategy for growth and development. I am proud to run for a party that has made housing a top priority.</p>

3. What is your party's plan for taking action on the diverse housing needs of Nova Scotians?

 <p>DENISE PETERSON-RAFUSE New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia Chester-St.Margaret's</p>	<p>In 2015 and 2016 the Liberal government underspent on the province's housing strategy by \$3.5 million. They have also underspent on social housing subsidies and housing renovation, despite a current public housing waitlist of close to 5,000.</p> <p>An NDP government will invest in new affordable housing units, and repairs and maintenance of existing units, and work with communities to address the diverse housing needs of low-income residents. We will pass a bill, tabled by the NDP caucus last fall, to enshrine the right to adequate food, water, housing, health care and social services in the Human Rights Code. We will raise the minimum wage to \$15, and set social assistance rates so that everyone can afford to buy healthy food at grocery stores and farmers' markets instead of visiting food banks. We will also fast-track the Employment Supports and Income Assistance Transformation, and begin the design phase of a Basic Income Guarantee.</p> <p>These measures will both directly alleviate housing insecurity, and reduce the problem of core housing need.</p>
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*Liberal Party of Nova Scotia
Lunenburg*

The Liberal Party understands access to affordable housing is an issue for many Nova Scotians. That is why we invested heavily into more affordable housing, home repairs and public housing. When we came into government, there was \$42 million from Ottawa that the NDP had saved for a rainy day. The Liberal government under Stephen McNeil knew that for many Nova Scotians it is raining today. That is why we invested that \$42 million and committed an additional \$10 million from the Province for a total of \$52 million at the start of our mandate for housing needs.

Since then, our Liberal Government has cost-matched on a \$75 million agreement with Ottawa to further invest in housing. The money will be invested in the following areas: 2nd stage housing for victims of domestic violence, affordable housing for seniors and families and improved public housing (maintenance and renovations), rent supplements and the home repair program.

Here are some examples:

Over 950 households will benefit thanks to the \$6.9 million investment in the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program; the \$800,000 investment in the emergency Repair Program; and, a \$100,000 investment for the Access-A-Home program. This is allowing our seniors and Nova Scotians with disabilities to stay in their homes longer; and low-income Nova Scotians to make needed repairs. We recently announced \$17.3 million to create over 400 new rent supplements, housing low income Nova Scotians.

Additionally, in our 2017-2018 budget, we increased the income threshold for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program, supporting over 5,000 more households with their energy costs.

We have shown time and again that we are committed to addressing the housing needs of Nova Scotians.



LISA NORMAN
New Democratic
Party of Nova Scotia
Lunenburg West

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Lunenburg West

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We recently announced \$17.3 million to create over 400 new rent supplements, housing low income Nova Scotians.

Finally, we partnered with the private sector to invest \$1.3 million in a 26-unit seniors housing complex in Mahone Bay.

Additionally, in our 2017-2018 budget, we increased the income threshold for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program, supporting over 5,000 more households with their energy costs.

We have shown time and again that we are committed to housing. Please stay tuned, we will have more to say on housing as our platform is announced.

Response from the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia Submitted on behalf of Progressive Conservative Candidates



JULIA CHAISON
Chester St. Margaret's



BRIAN PICKINGS
Lunenburg



CAROL HIPWELL
Lunenburg West



KIM MASLAND
Queens Shelburne



CHRIS D'ENTREMONT
Argyle Barrington

Jamie Baillie and the PC party have an optimistic, pro-growth agenda that focuses on rebuilding our province, creating jobs and getting Nova Scotians back to work. Voters are tired of governments with no vision that only focus on cuts. Housing stock in Nova Scotia is aging and increasingly expensive to maintain. A PC government will bring down the cost of living by cutting taxes, twinning dangerous highways without imposing tolls, opposing the Liberal carbon tax and raising the Basic Personal Amount by up to \$3,000 for people with incomes below \$75,000. This one move will cut taxes for 500,000 Nova Scotians.

To assist low-income seniors to continue living in their homes with dignity, we will help cover the cost of repair projects and we will enact the Safer Homes Act to make sure housing authorities make repairs to homes in a timely manner. As your MLA, I will be a vocal advocate for local housing needs at the decision-making table in a Progressive Conservative government.

If elected on May 30th, we will be committed to working together with the South Shore Housing Action Coalition to develop a realistic strategy to address this pressing need.

Other Responses from Candidates



KATHALEEN MILAN
*Green Party of Nova Scotia
Queens Shelburne*

I'd like to think we can design a holistic approach to living in our communities that would do away with the need for your organization all together. I actually believe the Green Party values and policies could make that possible. I'd like to link you to the [Green Party Community Strategy](#) section of their policies. In addition to the Community Strategies I'd like you to know we support a guaranteed income which would certainly improve the lives of many that are currently falling through the cracks. Also, our [platform](#) may give you more clarity on our commitment to affordable housing. Thank you for being such a great support for those in need. Now lets try and do away with you! :)
