

# **GREEN** **MEANS** **GO**

**MAKING NOVA SCOTIA  
INTO A HAVE PROVINCE**



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**DR. THOMAS TRAPPENBERG  
& JESSICA ALEXANDER**



# GREEN MEANS GO

Making Nova Scotia into a have province

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Green Party of Nova Scotia

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## **Dr. Thomas Trappenberg**

A trained physicist, karate instructor and professor at Dalhousie University specializing in artificial intelligence and computational neuroscience, Thomas has dedicated his life to learning.

A champion of science, discipline and self-reliance, Thomas believes that Nova Scotia can take advantage of Green economic opportunities to rise above the current crises, and become a sustainable, just and progressive powerhouse.

Facing the overwhelming evidence of global warming but also the destructive impotence of our current politics of division, Thomas decided to act. He has been the leader of the Green Party of Nova Scotia since 2016.

He lives with his family in Hatchet Lake, between Halifax and Peggy's Cove.



## **Jessica Alexander**

A natural problem solver with a sense of humour, Jessica has fought for the public good for decades at multiple levels of government in two provinces.

Born in BC to immigrant parents, Jessica has made Nova Scotia home since 1999. She has a degree in Public Policy, a certificate in Sustainability Leadership from Dalhousie University, and studied post-conflict development in Kosovo.

Jessica performs restorative justice as a volunteer through the provincial Department of Justice processes, and was on the public Research Ethics Board of the Nova Scotia Health Authority for two years. She has been the deputy leader of the Green Party of Nova Scotia since 2016.

Jessica has four adult children and one small dog, and unwinds by surfing.

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## **Preface**

The Mi'kmaq have called the land of Mi'kma'ki their home for uncounted generations. They have traditionally been stewards of this land and these waters to ensure a livelihood for generations to come, and to honor their ancestors. We believe that a dignified and sustainable life together is both possible and necessary.

We, Jessica and Thomas, are currently the leadership team of the Green Party of Nova Scotia. Both of us made Nova Scotia our home for good reasons, and we want Nova Scotia to be a place where all of our children can live in peace and prosperity.

We have written the essays collected here to share our thoughts on the state of our society and why we think it is time for a new era of politics. We want to introduce ourselves to you and share why we think politics needs revital-

ization, and how we think this can be done.

We work together as the current leadership team of the Green Party of Nova Scotia, yet we have very different backgrounds and often different approaches. Our values and ideas for a modern Nova Scotia brought us together and brought us to the Green Party of Nova Scotia. We want to illuminate some of the values behind our motivation and advance some ideas for further discussion.

The Green Party of Nova Scotia, including the leadership, is made up of volunteers. Our policies are driven by members of the public, even if they are not members of the party, although policy proposals are considered and voted on by the membership. Hence, if you do not agree with the personal thoughts presented here, we truly invite you to help us to find better solutions. We want to give you a taste of discussions that go on within the party and show you that we are individuals who are willing to ask the right questions, contribute our ideas, and listen intently to others. We hope to emphasize the point that the Green Party is about finding good solutions to intense challenges rather than following a single ideology that seems so dominant in other parties. We hope that our views and examples will spark some interest and discussions.

In addition, we wish to promote respect for a diverse society, including the thoughts and expressions of all demographics. Our society faces many challenges, but we also think there are many untapped solutions. Our centuries-old colonial system is failing Nova Scotians, as it does not represent the future that many people envision for our home province. We believe that all Nova Scotians, not just a few



privileged ones, deserve to thrive. We, as a society, should not be afraid to make changes that are long overdue. Many good things are possible if we work together.

We would like to thank Michael Uhlarik who has encouraged us to write down our ideas that we discussed together, June Trenholm for important edits, and other members of the Green Party of Nova Scotia for their input and discussions.

Jessica Alexander & Thomas Trappenberg

Mi'kma'ki, April 2021

# 1

## Why Green?

We have Red, we have Blue, and a little bit of Orange too. Do we really need another colour? Do the people of Nova Scotia need another political party?

Clearly, we will argue that yes, this is the case, and by doing so we hope to highlight and explain our values. We also want to explain why the myth that paints us as being eco-anarchists is not reality. Greens are forward-thinking members of every community in Nova Scotia. We love democracy, we get excited by technology and innovation, and we demand progress. We are excited about the opportunities that exist in Nova Scotia today, to build a prosperous and inclusive society for all of us, regardless of political leanings. This book is here to show how that vision can unfold.

Green political parties are not new. The awakening to ecological problems and the importance of more environ-

mental wisdom spurred new parties to seek elected office more than 50 years ago. One of the first is attributed to the United Tasmanian Group in Australia, with similar strides being taken in New Zealand around the same time. The first Green politician of a national assembly was the Swiss mathematician Daniel Brélaz in 1979, who later became a long time Mayor of the city of Lausanne. The Green parties of Germany and Finland were among the first with governmental cabinet positions, made possible by modern democratic systems with proportional representation.

Of course, we should recognize that Canadians were among the first to be active in the green movement. The first ecologically-oriented Canadian partisan group was made up of 11 Candidates, mostly from the Atlantic provinces, that ran independently in the 1980 federal election under a banner they called the Small Party. Elizabeth May was one of those candidates and one of their main organizers. The Green Party of Canada was officially formed in 1983. The Green Party of Nova Scotia (GPNS) was formed in 2006 and has run Candidates in all provincial elections ever since.

Green parties are not single-issue parties and have well-formed policies in all aspects of political life in our society. While green parties are rooted in environmental and peace movements, it became immediately clear that an environmental perspective gives insight that is valuable to our whole society, encompassing inclusive economics, healthy societies, and social justice.

So now the question of why we need another party. All the other parties have environmental platforms, and of course, social and economic proposals. What makes the

Green Party unique is the central importance of sustainable thinking, of conserving resources to lay a healthy foundation that can support sustainable prosperity.

It should be obvious that you can't build anything long-lasting and strong unless the basic resources you depend on are stable. Canadians have seen, too many times, what happens to communities that become overdependent on one pillar, such as a single resource or one revenue source. When that resource gets depleted or the market for it gets beaten out by a foreign rival, or society's needs change, that pillar crumbles, causing local economic collapse and whole communities, together with the lives of thousands, to be ruined. The tar ponds in Sydney left behind by the Sydney Steel Corporation is an example of this. Not only are the lives of the families involved disrupted after the collapse, but the government was left to clean up the mess left behind by industry. Cleaning-up A'se'k (boat harbour) from the mess that the internationally-owned Abercrombie paper mill left behind, will be another ongoing challenge.

You can't draw water from a well faster than an ecosystem can refill it. That is plain common sense. It turns out that economies, companies, communities and even individual people share the analogy: they all need to be fed and protected in order to not run dry, overheat, and burn out.

The insight of Greens is that there is no necessary trade-off between the environment and jobs, between social investments for a sustainable society and fiscal responsibility. Protecting the environment creates long term employment. A growing economy is not one that tries to optimize short term payouts for some, but instead, one that sustains all citi-

zens. Healthy communities, like businesses or families, are only as strong as the weakest members and their ability to participate in society.

The 21st century is a time when we face the extraordinary difficulties that come with a global pandemic, shifting power structures and the climate crisis. Most Nova Scotians are worried and questioning everything, from the way we work, teach school, attend to our seniors, and how we manage limited resources.

All other parties have adopted some Green policies, which is excellent. But Nova Scotians need an alternative that has a long-term vision and clear-headed focus; that is not saddled with the cynicism of old wounds or trapped by the ideas and methods of the past. We will not be successful in meeting our climate targets in a sustainable society by recycling a new version of an old deal, or pasting a token constraint on carbon, or lowering taxes a few points again, without attending to the needs of our most vulnerable.

The future demands innovation, and that means innovative politics too.

# 2

## Our values

Our values are essential for us, and there are many reasons as to why. Everything we do is because we believe in a just and sustainable society, and it is important to describe in more detail what this means. Indeed, we believe it is more important to explain our beliefs than just providing election promises.

Our recent history shows us that many election promises are abandoned as quickly as the airwaves have aired them. We do understand that circumstances might change from the time the promises were made to the time when decisions are made, but it seems that many election promises are made just for opportunistic reasons without a value system behind it. Explaining our goals is thus more important for us than making promises to just get elected.

To illustrate this point, let us discuss an example. As pointed out before, energy is a very important factor for our

modern society. With enough energy we could solve a lot of environmental problems such as filtering water. Energy production is a key element in our plan to give municipalities additional means of income. The goal of the Green Party of Nova Scotia is to foster the best way to produce energy in terms of sustainability, minimizing environmental impacts, and allowing communities to participate in its wealth creation. Of course, an important question is what form this energy production should take.

At this point, it is interesting to note that the Green Party in Germany had its roots in the anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s, known as the “Atomkraft – Nein Danke” (nuclear power – no thank you). It should thus be no surprise that The Green Party of Nova Scotia had a corresponding policy some time ago of not supporting nuclear power, even though we do not have a nuclear power station in Nova Scotia.

Now, we have several engineers in our active membership, including former candidates, who have rightfully questioned this policy. Their argument includes the points that nuclear technology has advanced substantially since the 1980s, and that in light of our climate emergency this might be the better choice. Indeed, France is among the lowest CO2 emitters in Europe, largely thanks to their long-time investment into nuclear power generation. However, there are many arguments against it, such as the question of radioactive waste management, and that there are potentials for misuse of the technology or the related materials.

This is not the place to bring this discussion to a conclusion on nuclear energy, but we wanted to mention this

example to show that we are not just blindly standing in opposition, but that we are deeply entrenched in evidence-based decision making and seek widespread discussions, especially dissenting views, on the way forward for our province.

The urgency of the climate crisis gives a new weight to nuclear power generation. Although we concluded at this time that there is plenty of evidence for better solutions being available to us in Nova Scotia, our position is to always be open to new information, differing points of view, and healthy dissent as we proceed.

## **The Green promise is integrity**

The example of nuclear power was discussed to demonstrate how important it is for us to explain our goals and our values. It is not that we stand against things solely for ideological reason. Our point is that technology and resources need to serve our whole society and should not just be used to make a few people extraordinarily rich. Policy decisions must be viewed in the stark light of unbiased evidence.

It is this goal, finding the best possible solutions at a given time and not just simply following promises that are mainly made to win elections or to benefit our friends, that we want to work on in the legislature. Our goal is to advance our society according to our values.

The values of the Green Parties around the world are summarized in the 6 international Green Principles, which are:

1. Ecological wisdom



2. Social justice
3. Participatory democracy
4. Nonviolence
5. Sustainability
6. Respect for diversity

These principles are included in the constitution of the Green Party of Nova Scotia. During the lock-down in the spring of 2020, several of our members took some time to meet online to relate these principles to better fit the values of our members here in Nova Scotia. This resulted in the value statement attached in the appendix. Importantly, we are always happy to define these statements further. Of course, these values will be put into more concrete contexts when we participate in the legislature.

## **I'm a progressive-liberal-left-conservative**

**Thomas**

Before I discuss my thinking about our political spectrum in Nova Scotia, let me be clear that I firmly believe that all parties and their party members have good intentions for our province in mind. What differs, however, is usually some central emphasis of certain values, and the methods used to achieve a greater good for our province. Furthermore, I want to make sure that when I talk about the other parties, I am referring to my perception of the party based on common statements of the leadership, some conversation with their party members or supporters, and maybe some misconceptions on my side. Thus, my thoughts below illustrate my thinking, and I cannot claim that I cover all nuances of other parties. Also, I want to make it clear that I do not think that every supporter fully agrees with a single party

or all their statements and policies. So please keep this in mind while reading my following evaluation.



Let me start with the Conservative Party as this seems to be a very clear cut. The Conservative Party seems to think that when we make business successful, then all of us benefit. Clearly, this view is shared by many business owners. Interestingly, this view is also frequently shared by workers; after all, if the business is doing well then there are stable jobs. Where it becomes dicey is when it comes to the wider benefit to the society. A common conservative stance is to minimize taxes. However, this would even hurt the businesses as these taxes are paying for the common infrastructure, such as the roads that the company's trucks are using or the law enforcement that keeps us safe. Another hallmark of conservatism seems to be some form of

minimal government, even libertarianism, that believes the government should get out of our way. On the other hand, there seems to be a form of social conservatism that wants to tell everyone else what the right way of living is.

It seems to me there are two types of conservatives, which is apparent from witnessing common struggles within the party. There are the social conservatives that believe in old-fashioned family values, commonly based on questionable fundamentalist religious beliefs, and even some fractions with racial superiority bias. Clearly, I find this far-right fraction unacceptable and dangerous. On the other hand, I do value and appreciate the other fraction, sometimes called Red Tories, the ones that have sometimes dominated the progressive conservative party. What I share with them is a fundamental belief in not burning but conserving our assets, in the power of entrepreneurship and good business, and some form of streamlining governmental efficiency. I know that many of these conservatives are green at heart.

On the other side of the political spectrum, there is the New Democratic Party, a party with roots in the labor movement. If the conservative party believes strongly in individualism, then the NDP believes in the power of a united society, a society where the government makes the decisions for all of us. This is apparent in labor negotiations, but also in the common social services approach where benefits are scrutinized with large government overhead. This micro-managing of poverty seems to be preventing real progress.

The strong conviction of NDP supporters in their vision and support for more social equality and an inclusive soci-

ety resonates with me. Not only does it resonate, but it is also a driving force in my thinking and my motivation for political actions. Why do so many people including kids have to live in poverty in Nova Scotia? We have so many children that are going hungry to school, so many families that are under enormous financial stress, and the perspectives for the future are depressing. Yet, Halifax has one of the largest density of millionaires in Canada, and watching some of their palaces going up on the North-West Arm seems like a slap in our face. Nova Scotians do care, they actually care a lot. So, I totally understand NDP supporters in choosing the only party that seems to make this a focus.

However, here is where I think there is a better alternative, and where the Green Party is fundamentally different to the NDP, not in their political goal, but in the way we believe we can achieve more social justice. For many years, the Green party has stressed the importance of a basic income that we call the Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI). GLI recognizes that every Canadian deserves their fair share in the riches of our country, and that the government should not micromanage the decision of who deserves financial support.

I can go on and talk about all the benefits of GLI over the micromanagement that have been studied and proven over the last 50 years in countless trials around the world and in Canada. NDP activists have been my strongest critics over the years, although I am glad to see that many NDP supporters and poverty activists are now clearly stating that such a step is the only way we can make progress, as the social micromanagement has clearly failed.

A similar dilemma for me with the NDP, one where I agree with their goals yet disagree with their actions, is in regard to the environment. I know that many NDP supporters are very concerned about our climate reality. In the past, the NDP had even better environmental policies on their book as evaluated by the Sierra Club. Unfortunately, their talk and the actions taken in reality are far apart. It was the NDP who gave considerable funds to the polluting aquaculture industry here in Nova Scotia, and the current leadership has supported the continuation of the Pictou pulp mill even as it creates pollution. The pattern of abandoning the bigger goal for short term goals is consistent with the NDP's fight for pipelines in Alberta, the NDP's support of fracking through natural gas developments in BC, and even the concessions the NDP government made in Nova Scotia in 2016 to Alton Gas to pass a pipeline through a wilderness area in 2016.

The Green Party has the fundamentally different stance of actually creating sustainable and fulfilling livelihood in a clean economy, rather than trying to preserve industries that are clearly selling out our future.

Again, my clear and growing differences with the NDP is not about their goals. Not even with many of their MLAs who clearly have their heart in the right place. And my critique is clearly not about NDP supporters who share our goals. However, I also see the difficulty for some NDP supporters to come to terms with new approaches after seeing the NDP as the only viable choice for so many years.

Which leaves me with the Liberals. To some extent it is much harder to put the liberals in a simple left-right spec-

trum. Again, I think that Liberals have the good of Nova Scotia in mind. In general, it seems that they believe that a strong middle class is the key to success. While this seems more moderate in many ways, I think it does miss the strong arguments of the left that the weakest need the most attention, and it misses the strong argument of the right, which is more support for individuals. However, I think the major difficulty with the Liberal party is now their sense of entitlement. Denying the Legislature to sit during the last year is an affront on democracy and a clear misunderstanding of the benefits of a pluralistic society of thoughts. Most committees were not even allowed to meet online while our kids were sent back to school. And the amount of secret back-room deals and denials to access of information of the McNeil Government is now legendary. The Liberal party has become the party of the establishment and has lost its vision of the main goal of government. The absence of any female contestants for the recent leadership race is telling. The Liberal Party is a well-oiled machine, but one that avoids accountability.

While I have laid out my understanding of the dominating political landscape in Nova Scotia, I want to stress that I do respect other views. Indeed, I think that the benefit of a democracy lies in the diversity of thoughts for discussions and not in a false majority government where a minority of Nova Scotians elect a government due to an inadequate 250-year-old electoral system and then avoid the clear promise to reform the electoral system, since it gave them an unfair advantage. I don't think that all current MLPs are evil, quite the contrary. They are usually community leaders. What I

think, however, is that we are trapped in a political situation that is now preventing us from seeing the signs of our times.



# 4

## Why I got into politics

Jessica

Many times, I've been asked why I got into politics. The answer is because I am alive and friends of mine are not. Nova Scotia gave me an amazing gift during a time of critical illness, for which I am forever grateful. I had world class health care. No one questioned the cost. I have been given time, time to spend with family and friends because Nova Scotia invested in keeping me alive. Let me back up and explain.

Late on a Friday night, on March 16, 2001, I found myself in a cancer ward in a Halifax hospital with an incomplete diagnosis for acute myeloid leukemia, one of the most rapidly fatal cancers. In a dimly lit hallway, I waited for hours for a detailed update, while all around me hung tiny plaques. Plaques were affixed to various pieces of furniture, pictures on the walls, and on the tea kettle and the toaster,

marking the battles of departed people, most of whom were dead. This ward looked to me like the end of the road. I was 30 years old with four kids under the age of 10, the youngest only eighteen months old. “No one leaves this place alive,” I thought, judging from the plaques and the hushed tones used by the staff.



I began a difficult journey to health, with tests and treatments, complications and resolutions, as any acute leukemia patient, along with their nurses and doctors will tell you are the norm for this potentially rapidly fatal disease.

“Can these plaques please be removed?” I asked, feeling as though I was in a cemetery prematurely. “The families of these patients donated them,” they replied. We were in fight for our lives, and we need to know there is a light at the end of the tunnel. We need to know that, even if not everyone recovers, some do. Some people get well after this deadly diagnosis and go on to live and to thrive.

My husband was working full time. We had only lived

in Nova Scotia for just over a year and we knew few people here. Who was going to look after my kids? We couldn't afford full time childcare. Would they end up in foster homes? My community rallied around me and around my family, adopting us and providing meals, childcare, transportation, funding, and a lot of love.

My son, then 7 years old asked me, after my first round of chemo, "Mom, are you going to die?" I looked at him and my other small people and told him that my situation was serious, and some do die from it, but I that I had to believe that I would survive. He accepted my view of things and went back to playing, and I determined myself to do whatever I could to watch him and his siblings grow up.

My sister flew into Halifax from her home in Minnesota to donate life-saving stem cells. I responded well to treatment, although it was extremely challenging. One of my doctors told me that my attitude would be crucial to my outcome, that specialists saw so often that when patients gave up emotionally the prognosis was too often terminal, so much so that the doctors found themselves wondering why they bother to treat them. Patient attitude makes all the difference. I had expected to hear this from social workers or chaplains, but my medical specialist said so first.

I became invested in contributing to positive change as I recovered. I swore to myself no one who is diagnosed would look around, and not know they can get well. People need to know that recovery is management of a set of circumstances, and that there are lots of positive examples. This gives me energy because I have been given time that some of my friends did not have. My time is precious, and

I want to squeeze everything I can out of my life. It can end sooner than we expect.

My treatment put me at higher risk for secondary cancers. I've had a high chemo load and there is a lifetime maximum of the amount of chemotherapy that a person can sustain, so if cancer returns, my options will be more limited. Knowing my life might be shortened fuels me to make a lasting and meaningful difference with all of the strength I have. I don't necessarily have more opportunities than anyone else, but I do truly appreciate why they matter.

I have reason to think that exposure to chemicals in my childhood in BC may have contributed to the illness I later had. Additionally, the rates of cancer are unacceptably high in Nova Scotia. Not all diagnoses of cancer are preventable, but some are, and I am motivated to contribute to a healthier province, the one that has rewarded me richly for making it my home.

Nova Scotia has known a history of governmental decisions that were less than optimal, that seemed workable under difficult economic realities. Someone with deep pockets sang a song, made a proposal and it was often accepted as good enough, but too often with disappointing outcomes.

People living in this province have been betrayed far too often, firstly the Mi'kmaq by colonizers, then the colonists themselves were sold short, even by confederation. Arguments have been made that it would have been more economically beneficial for this region to have become part of the USA, than to have joined Canada. Canada ultimately benefited from Nova Scotia's early contribution, and her financing of the national railroad was vital. As someone who

grew up in western Canada and chose to make and to keep Nova Scotia as home, I can say with certainty that continuing recognition and celebration of the fact that the maritime provinces played a major role in building Canada is missing in the rest of Canada.

Nova Scotian decision-makers have often made short lived, narrow focus deals with outsiders, international companies who came here to profit from us and not to contribute to Nova Scotia's long-term future. We have at times limited our economic expectations to merely survival. Bread for today was possible but not for a lifetime worth of prosperity, and we are far too accustomed to saying goodbye to younger people who need to seek opportunities west of here.

Like my journey through cancer, I see the path to prosperity in a combination of implementing a guaranteed livable income, continuing hard work, educational opportunities for everyone, investment in local sustainable enterprises, and an attitude that embraces healthy amounts of risk and a renewed vision of possibility. I see opportunities everywhere in Nova Scotia, to harness the abundant skill and tenacity of people to reach their potential and create a place of prosperity, not a place where you are required to do jobs endlessly that you hate, just for little reward. Our economy should be a place we all participate in and benefit from.

I have been cancer-free for twenty years this spring, and I am reminded of this when I see a quilt made by some friends in my community that my children decorated with fabric pastels. Those children are mostly grown up into amazing, independent minded and creative people, and I

have been alive to witness that because Nova Scotia invested in me. Nova Scotia gave me the very best of herself and has rewarded me for my decision to move here with my family in 1999. She has rewarded me with a chance to not only live, but to live well.

There is a lot of work to do to continue to grow this beautiful place into somewhere where everyone gets a similar chance at prosperity, not just the lucky few or well-connected. We need to change expectations of ourselves and see that our value is greater than what is being sold to us.

Nova Scotia needs to not be a hall full of plaques commemorating the past and the dead, but a tunnel towards a bright future.

## Why I don't want to be a politician

Thomas

Fist published in [www.novascotiavoice.com](http://www.novascotiavoice.com)

A friend told me that being a political candidacy is a like a big job interview. Maybe it is. But the strange thing is, I don't desperately want this job. So why am I asking all of you to work even harder to get elected? Here is why.

Like many in Nova Scotia, I was brought up with some sense of civic duty. This means, at least, staying engaged and following what is going on in Nova Scotia. And certainly, speaking up when I think something is wrong. A wonderful trait of Nova Scotians is that they usually go further, and that we really care when people are in need.

At the same time, I understand that Nova Scotians are fed up with politics. Do the words of politicians mean anything? Some are clearly great speakers; they fire us up with statements like, 'this will be the last first-past-the-post election,' as our prime minister did, then give up after being elected; or state that 'we will be the most transparent gov-

ernment' and then go on to make backroom deals and deny access to information, as our former Premier constantly did.

These things bug me. However, what bugs me even more is that we leave people behind. The rich get richer and the poor fall off the cliff. I do believe in a market economy. Indeed, I believe that a market economy, in particular the right one, is strong enough to push things forward. However, it is my strong conviction that it is the government's role to look out for all of society.

This is where I differ from the conservatives. Conservatives think that making some people rich will in turn help the rest of us. I have no problem with people getting rich, but the wealth can and must reach us all.

So, instead, should the government run it all to fit the values of the Left? Certainly not. This is where I increasingly disagree with communism. I believe in people and their diversity of thoughts and skills. I believe in a dynamic environment where people thrive given the opportunity. I do not think that some righteous leader should prescribe what everyone should do. And while the NDP is certainly not a communist party, their view of supporting labor against big companies also makes the world black-and-white.

Why is it always us-versus-them? Why does the left have to back polluting industries? They have to support them because they have the jobs of today and forget to work on building sustainable jobs of the future.

I think many of us know that there must be a better way, so why does nothing change? Why do people elect the same old puppet heads that are squawking meaningless sentences without simply answering a question? I think there



are many reasons, and everyone must answer this for themselves. My answer has been to run for office over the last 15 years.

Clearly, so far, I have not been elected. So why am I doing this? Maybe it is just a selfish attempt to relieve my conscience by not standing idly by, watching us head towards a cliff.

I admit that until last year I was never under the illusion that I would be elected. I was always hoping to find someone else to carry this cause forward. Unfortunately, this has not yet happened at this point, but now the situation changed for me.

It is now very clear that Greens, and maybe I, have to be elected to step up our efforts. Why? Because we have no time to lose. Hollow politicians are only squawking that they will do something about climate change by 2030, 2040, or maybe 2050.

Sure, you can promise anything down the road 30 years from now, but promising to do something later is promising nothing at all. We elect leaders to lead now. To take council, make decisions and act.

I have a good job, a job that I love. I always wanted to be a scientist, and I am a scientist with all my heart. I am not a good public speaker. I am especially bad at pretending, I do not have a good memory for people, and I do not like to sit in committees. I also get paid twice the salary of an MLA to do the job I love.

So why did I spend the last 5 years working countless hours as leader of the Green Party, without any pay, so that I get elected to lose half of my income? Because some-

one has to say difficult things, challenge stupid decisions made by hollow politics, and hopefully change our course. I am willing to make drastic sacrifices at this point, and my lovely wife supports me on this path. I want to do this to represent a different idea of politics. I want to be able to communicate what is really going on behind the currently closed doors. I want to tell myself everyday why I am doing this.

I will not sacrifice these values to be re-elected.

Unfortunately, the reality is that all the bad behaviour of the old politics pays off. People are still drawn by nice words, nice suits, and nice hair. It is easy to incite the fear that change will be bad and the idea that only people belonging to the old parties can lead a government. Maybe it is true that they are much smarter than me, getting involved in a political brotherhood early on, rather than wasting time studying and getting a PhD in Physics.

It also doesn't help that money matters in politics. The old parties have all the money, in addition to the benefit of 250-year-old electoral system that favours the establishment on the left and the right, and the loyalty of people who have voted this way for generations and who don't even ask questions anymore. It also does not help that many people are so disgusted by our political behaviours that they would not even vote anymore. Unfortunately, this strongly benefits the status quo.

But I believe in people. I believe that the tide can change rapidly, and I see that the time is ripe. I see how the pandemic has reminded people what is important to us and that ways can change faster than we think. We have seen that

large investments are possible, and I see that we could direct them to bring Nova Scotia forward. Indeed, I feel more positive and excited than I have for years. I see how the new green economics kicks in and gives new perspectives. I am encouraged to see the younger people saying that they do not want to live in a racialized world. And I am excited that we have everything we need to save the beauty of Nova Scotia while building a modernized economy that leaves no one behind.

I am willing to work on that, with everyone, with all of my heart, even though I don't want this job, and I'm asking for your support. I'm not doing this because I think politics is fun or because I have all the answers, but because I want to make a difference and I believe it's my time to serve.

# 6

## **A small voice with a big impact**

**Jessica**

There is a misconception in politics that real change only happens from a place of absolute power, that smaller or historically ignored voices can never see progress unless the capture total political authority. This is not true.

I ran as a Progressive Conservative candidate in 2009. The party was a decent fit for me at the time. They had a well-run organization and a grassroots political ethic that I really admired. The people in the party were friendly, generous, and helpful. They made a space for me, and I learned so much about how the system works, how voters think, and how they come to trust a candidate.

Earlier, I had gotten involved with the PC's partly to advance the issue of greater access to midwifery for Nova Scotia women. This is an issue I have cared deeply about since having some sub-optimal labour and delivery experi-

ences. For my youngest child's birth, the BC government adopted midwifery care as part of the healthcare system, which made it accessible to families like mine. I was able to find a team to provide care for us, and my spouse and I agreed that since I had a higher risk for complications, we would have the baby at a hospital with the midwife team in attendance. Labour needed to be induced, and an ob-gyn managed that piece of my care, but other than that, my midwives took care of everything, including coming to my home for postnatal newborn checkups, which is standard practice.

I had a beautiful experience with that delivery. Not quick, nor painless, but a midwifery approach considers that birthing a baby can be a non-medical event. It can be a natural experience within a safe environment with skilled practitioners. We had music playing, and that was fine. We had dim lighting, also fine. One of the midwifery team massaged my back while I laboured in the shower, not caring that she was getting sprayed head to foot. When I asked for music, and was sad that I hadn't brought any, she went to her car and brought a boombox and cassette of Liona Boyd. My stress level was low. This mattered so much, and I didn't know what a low-stress birth was until those precious hours over 20 years ago.

After moving to NS I joined the NS Midwifery Coalition. I attended numerous meetings and read all the background material I could find about this advocacy group's efforts. I met everyone I could and knew that I could push a bit harder than many others could or would. I wanted to take this matter into the political arena, where real decisions

are made about real issues. My babies had nearly become adolescent and were gaining independence. I had energy, wits, and a bit of time. I had little to lose, and assets to use. I also had community connections. My spouse was on the executive board for a PC Party electoral district association, so I tagged along to some meetings and met the locals. I used the grassroots policy process of that party to bring the issue up. I successfully had my issue pass the vote at the EDA level, which meant I could then make the proposal at the province-wide policy meeting. If a proposal passed there, it would be presented to cabinet, who was obligated to consider the proposal but the final word on whether to adopt an idea or not was theirs's to make.

I was one of few women at that provincial policy meeting, but the men in the room were listening, deliberating a bit, when I argued that this version of women's health care generally leads to better and more personal care at a much lower cost than under the care of an ob-gyn attending every birth. Interventions are used sparingly but are not excluded. Women care about this, gentlemen. Women vote. Support this measure. Benefits exceed costs.

The vote for my proposal was unanimously in favour, and I was buoyant.

I knew that attention was paid, and it wasn't my place to force my proposal further than that, when democratically elected officials need to also respect their own government, party, and personal concerns. They are generally capable and conscientious people.

I stayed with that party for a few more years, and was at an event with a few local representatives and their staff.

Someone approached me asking for a political issue that could be advanced that would appeal to women.

Oh, wow!

I have something for you, and by the way, I already passed it through the right channels. Please, let midwifery care be included in the public health care system. He liked the idea. Of course he did, it was a good idea. Less than half a year later, the government implemented it, and the uptake of midwifery care in Nova Scotia continues to be robust.

Political life can be as much about influence as it is about power. Remaining active and expressive from within the political arena means one has the ability to speak to powerful people, even if holding power oneself is an elusive target.

## **Our time – Our opportunities**

The experiences from COVID-19 and the tragedies of mass shootings, acts of brutality, the loss of Nova Scotian service members overseas, and severe drought in parts of the province have been soul-crushing. We might ask ourselves, "was 2020 the worst year in our history?"

After some reflection we could come to a conclusion that we have experienced worse years.

Historians generally point to the year 536 as a very bad year. A supermassive volcano eruption in Iceland threw so many pollutants into the atmosphere that it darkened much of the sky across most of the northern hemisphere. The climate change that resulted caused massive crop failures and widespread famines, destabilizing societies and beginning the Dark Ages. The old-world order collapsed because it didn't have the tools to prepare and rebuild. But it doesn't always have to end like this.



## **Investing in the future**

There are many examples of devastation in history, but not many where a clear comparison can be drawn between similar people responding differently to the same crisis. One such example would be the reconstruction of East and West Germany after World War II.

In 1945 after the war, Germany lay in ruins, divided into a non-communist Western part and communist East, all of its cities and industries destroyed, mass unemployment, and unable to produce enough food for its people. But by the 1950s West Germany was an economic powerhouse relative to the Russian-led East. This transformation, often called a miracle, was the result of the brilliant U.S. Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, who knew that building a strong economy was the best defense against tyranny and depression. While communist East Germany struggled, using old models of centralized planning with declining industries, West Germany was given a modern democracy and the investment to modernize, making it the world's fifth largest economy and a key contributor of global stability and innovation.

We now face a climate crisis and a big chunk of our economy being severely stressed due to COVID-19. So, what will our future be? Will it be a new dark age or an era of economic miracles? We believe that this is a choice, not a hope. We, as citizens of Nova Scotia, need to choose to invest in a new future and not just follow the old models, hoping that this time they will work.

The response to the coronavirus threat, with the unprecedented closing of our country and shutdown of busi-

nesses, provided us with a massive reset. We have been lucky in Atlantic Canada that we were spared, so far, of widespread infections, with the notable and important exception of the tragedies at Northwood. There are many lingering problems that evolved as a consequence of the COVID-19 response. Domestic violence and mental distress situations have spiked, and emergency funds did not reach all citizens who so badly needed them.

All that we know for certain is that our economy has been hit hard with consequences that will last for years. However, COVID-19 is creating huge opportunities to get ahead in Nova Scotia. Opportunities that we as citizens of Nova Scotia can expect with a forward-thinking government.

What we are talking about is a vision reminiscent of the Marshall plan. Now is the time to invest in a future which brings new and sustainable wealth to Nova Scotia, in which all Nova Scotians can participate, not only those with assets or monetary privilege.

To highlight this, we will show examples of just some of the opportunities that lie ahead of us. We want to start demonstrating what a Green economy looks like for Nova Scotians, what that means for fisheries and aquaculture, local energy production, transportation, and a guaranteed livable income. These are not blue-sky dreams, but practical, achievable projects that have the potential to be life-changing for thousands of families and individuals all across Nova Scotia.

In our democracy you get to choose your government. We are living in a crisis we did not foresee and didn't choose,

but we do get to choose how we get out of it. Investing in a sustainable future is clearly the best choice.

## Green means GO

Some think that the Green Party of Nova Scotia is only against things, that all we do is say “no.” No to economic development. No to technology. No to modern life. This is opposite to the truth.

The first proof is in the current leader of the Green Party of Nova Scotia, Thomas Trappenberg himself, a scientist, published expert on artificial intelligence (AI), motorcycle enthusiast, and serial entrepreneur. Thomas does not fit the stereotype that some people want to paint, and neither do many other greens. Here are some examples that will hopefully illustrate our forward looking nature.

### **Examples of a solution-oriented ideology**

Thomas welcomed the opportunity to dive into the food production industry when he was asked to help build an agricultural robot business in 2017. In the months that followed,

they designed and built an international award-winning prototype weeding robot on a shoe-string budget, with the help of government funds, that beat out highly funded competitors from across the US and Canada.

Through robotics, Thomas discovered the role that automation will play in the years to come, and how important it is to think more about the challenge of food security. So, when two students approached him in 2018 to help them start a company applying AI to social media, he convinced them to focus instead on the aquaculture (fish farming) industry.

Thanks to support from the Nova Scotian Ocean Frontier Institute, and the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship (COVE) in Halifax, discussions with the industry, including Cermaq, Cooke, and even operations in Scotland and Tasmania, Thomas and his colleagues realized that there are big problems with aquaculture as it is and looked to apply technology to the solve them.

Through this industry interaction and further research, Thomas discovered that sea lice infestations in open-pen salmon farms, and widespread risk of viruses were being treated with heavily medicated feed that leaks into oceans causing long term problems. Health experts even recommended limiting the consumption of farmed fish as a result. However, fish farms are often perceived as necessary given the depletion of wild salmon stock, as well as the stock of other species, that have been a foundation of our fisheries in Nova Scotia.

Thus, rather than just reject aquaculture entirely as part of the food security mix, Thomas' attitude was to find so-

lutions and he learned of a Nova Scotia startups company that is developing on-land salmon farming. This company was actually able to measure stress hormones in the fish and showed that if they can keep the fish stress free, it can eliminate the need for heavy medication. Land-based fish farming can also harvest fish waste, which when filtered can be used as fertilizer. Another huge opportunity is to produce fish feed from insect protein which would eliminate the need to impoverish our oceans for feed.

There are still challenges in the fish farming industry, such as the huge amount of energy required. However, these kinds of problems are solvable. Nova Scotia is full of energetic entrepreneurs, people with fisheries skills, maritime engineering knowhow and capital looking for opportunity.

On-land aquaculture, using AI technology to reduce antibiotic use, insect-based fish food – these are examples of Green industrial development. They provide local solutions to problems, inefficiencies and dangerous practices, that are sustainable in the long run because they allow producers to profit and innovate without taking something away from others.

Thomas is a typical example of Green party culture: he looks for opportunity, studies with open eyes and looks for both challenges and solutions rather than support for blanket judgments. Green doesn't mean no, and it doesn't mean go only if it fits an ideology. It is a go forward attitude based on evidence and values.

## **Seeking power to shape the future**

A crucial part of a green economy is energy production. In the age of automation, sustainable energy will be essential to power the solutions to many of our problems. Automation uses technology to replace labour, muscular and mental energy with electrical, chemical and mechanical energy. As we see in the tech industry, the demand for electrical power with each new generation of device and service increases dramatically. Everything from automated manufacturing, electric vehicles and even internet businesses, like streaming and gaming, require vast amounts of power.

This leaves us with two challenges: how can we produce enough energy to power what we know is coming, and how are the majority of people getting paid if much of the work they do today, or did before COVID-19, is performed by machines?

There are solutions to both problems. Let's start with energy. Burning carbon compounds such as coal, natural gas, and wood is clearly out, not only because destroying our planet's life support system and poisoning our atmosphere is not a sustainable solution, but because carbon-based energy is far more expensive than the modern alternatives. It makes no sense anymore.

However, we have huge amounts of substitute energy resources available to us.

The sun is a massive nuclear fusion reactor that we can harness cheaply and easily. Nova Scotia can be a leading province in Canada for low-cost solar power installations, with enough light year-round to make it viable for many rural and suburban homes and businesses. Installed wind

power is now the cheapest form of new electricity generation in Canada. Denmark is a modern industrial country about the same physical size as Nova Scotia, but with six times as many people and with a modern economy ten times as large as ours. Denmark is almost 60% wind powered, and its leading wind turbine manufacturer employs 25,000 people.

Energy that does not produce greenhouse gases is a great example of the economic renewal we need. Building solar farms, adding more wind farms, micro-hydro systems and retrofitting older homes and commercial buildings requires significant investments in local, skilled jobs. Each new power generation system adds capacity while also reducing inefficiency, which means the investment cost pays off within 10-12 years, after which power production continues for almost nothing because the energy sources (sunlight and wind) themselves are free.

In 2019, Nova Scotia sent nearly \$400 million dollars out of province to pay for foreign-sourced energy. That's \$1500 per household every year, earned by working people that leaves Nova Scotia and never comes back. Energy independence would keep most of that money here in the provincial economy, and drastically reduce power prices.

As energy will be a major wealth creator in the future, it is critically important to keep these energy production assets local and in the hands of communities. Neighbours should be able to get together to build small scale common wind turbines, and municipalities should benefit from their own utilities. Of course, private companies could also step in where needed, as market demands in a free economy



allow, but with sustainability constraints. Most communities and many individuals may choose to tie into a common electrical grid, which will allow access to power when generation in the community wanes and shares electrical energy with others in times of plenty.

Every economic boom in modern history has been accompanied by low cost, plentiful energy. By becoming a self-reliant leader in clean energy production, Nova Scotia will not only make life better for families and individuals, but also business. The digital economy demands reliable, affordable power. With massive sustainable electricity supplies at fixed costs (unlike carbon fuels whose price fluctuates beyond our control), Nova Scotia businesses will be competitive with many parts of the North American market.

## **Getting Nova Scotia moving again**

Another vision for the future that starts now is transportation. Instead of twinning highways that are not congested and where different safety measures are possible, the money might be better spent providing free public busses all over Nova Scotia, as a steppingstone to building a flexible and modern transportation system.

At the moment, Nova Scotians have to depend on private cars to get anywhere outside our cities and sometimes multiple cars to accommodate different family needs. This is a tremendously inefficient use of capital, and an expensive burden for families that disproportionately affects rural citizens and the working poor.

It should come as no surprise that many rural and small community Nova Scotians resent Halifax and our large cities

for all the taxpayer benefits they enjoy. Seniors, students and people without the physical or financial means to own a personal car are disadvantaged when they don't have access to public transportation options. The cost of new generation, made-in-Canada electric and hybrid buses, and operating them is trivial compared to the increased economic output that opening up the province will provide.

### **Why electric? Isn't that an expensive and technologically limited dream?**

The electric car is not just coming, it will be the only option in ten years thanks to market forces. Three out of four of the world's largest auto markets will ban the sale of new gasoline powered cars by 2030, meanwhile Tesla's electric cars are outselling gas-powered rivals in their class, making Tesla the world's most valuable carmaker, while most other brands declined in sales and value. VW, the world's largest auto maker, stopped combustion engine manufacturing at its biggest plant in May, and is investing \$114 billion into purely electric vehicles. All car makers are rolling out new models to feed the global electric vehicle adoption, which is growing at a rate of 15% per year.

After more than a decade in Quebec, the region with the second highest electric vehicle adoption rate in North America, and Norway, the world's biggest electric car market, electric cars have proven beyond any doubt that they work in sub-zero temperatures and provide better traction than combustion powered cars in winter conditions. Fears about battery life have also been discredited, with most hybrids and electric cars charging to over 70% after 250,000

kms. Battery costs have dropped more than 90% since 2010, while getting stronger and lasting longer too.

Electric vehicles have several advantages. They have much fewer moving parts which will not only increase the reliability of the cars but drastically reduces operating costs and maintenance, which is why many Canadian and US municipalities, including the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (Nova Scotia's French school board) decided to replace diesel buses with made-in-Canada electric ones. They are cheaper and easier to operate.

Charging is mostly done at home, overnight, using the vehicle's built-in charger. Nova Scotia has started to install high speed electric car charging stations around the province, on every major route and in every region. With the cost of a level 3 high speed charger being a few thousand dollars, the number of fast charging stations is increasing rapidly as major retailers, including Tim Hortons and Shell, are adding them to their locations.

Self-driving abilities, commonplace even in combustion cars, will not only add another layer of convenience but will enable a whole new way of using individual transportation. This vision for the future is not new, it is what Ford, GM with Lyft, and UBER are already rolling out in cities in the US and plan to expand on in the future. Electric self-driving cars can be called anywhere, anytime from a phone app to bring us from point A to point B. No more searching for parking spots, no more expensive equipment sitting idle in our driveways.

## **Green literally means go**

If the market is delivering all these innovations, what does a political party need to do? The answer is to make the transition to a non-greenhouse gas future easier, so it gets done quickly, and evenly across the province to everyone's benefit.

As MLAs, we want to find ways to provide funds for municipalities and communities to install chargers and tie them into their local grid, thereby creating another source of revenue for them. Legislation can update the Nova Scotia building code to require charging infrastructure in all new commercial and residential buildings.

It may surprise many to discover that Nova Scotia is already a leading research node in electric vehicle technology. Tesla itself has an advanced battery laboratory in Dartmouth (the only one outside the US), and Dalhousie University is home to a famous battery scientist. The energy storage industry is only beginning to evolve, and Nova Scotia can be a serious partner in the global supply chain, if we invest in it. Such investments would help a business climate that encourages startups.

All of these innovations in land-based aquaculture, wind and solar energy generation, automation, and electric vehicles, are practical and exist locally in Nova Scotia. None of them requires a breakthrough, or multi-billion-dollar long shots to work. They already work, but are limited in scale and support because successive Nova Scotian governments didn't have the vision, or lacked the political courage to make the investments needed.

Instead of investing in our own innovations, we show-

eled millions into sunset industries like pulp and paper, coal mines and into reckless outdoor resource exploitation like open-pen aquaculture. We handed unsecured loans to private companies, often from away, on the promise that it may deliver jobs. Inevitably the policies of the past always delivered mediocre results, and even those were short term.

Green politics means using the tools of sustainability to see the evidence, without ideological bias, and having the boldness to say to Nova Scotia: “this is what is happening, and what our best options are to get to the future safely.”

Green Means Go is a green light to finally make good things happen, that will actually change life in Nova Scotia so everyone can live without fear and be the best version of themselves, knowing that the government stands with them as a reliable partner.

## **The basis for economic solutions**

The most important question is how to pay for all these proposed investments? It is easy to say what you want to do, but quite another to find the resources to make it happen. Our sustainable economic plan differs from traditional party theories, so here we will demonstrate how it works, and how we can earn both voter confidence and maintain confidence in the markets.

### **Sources of money**

Fiscal responsibility has long been a hallmark of Nova Scotia's Green party platform. However, this does not mean austerity. The difference is that we do not just want to throw money onto things, but that we want to invest into infrastructure and invest in people which will ensure the sustainability of our society for years to come. We share with many Nova Scotians that now is the time to invest.

Here we will argue that a smart investment is an investment into our future and into a new economy that we know is on the horizon.

When talking about investments, let us first ask where the money is coming from. Providing money is not really the problem in the short run, as we have seen during the COVID-19 crisis, and during the Great Recession of 2008, when Canadian provincial and federal governments found hundreds of billions to dump into private banks. It seems as though governments can find any amount of money whenever they need it. This is actually true, although there are financial consequences.

The federal government can loan money to itself (via the bank of Canada), practically without interest by increasing the available money pool (“printing” new money). This quantitative easing, as it is known in finance, is why \$1 dollar in 2010 is worth only \$0.84 in 2020.

The province can also borrow money by auctioning government bonds on the international debt market (known as LIBOR), where investors from around the world buy debt in exchange for a safe place to park their money and earn some interest.

Then of course there is the provincial government’s income, which is money raised from taxes and fees, and equalization payments as legitimate compensation for the hit that the Maritime economy took when joining confederation. The later source of income for Nova Scotia comes as direct transfer from the Canadian federal government in the form of equalization payments, loans, and grants. Equalization payments came about because Nova Scotia gave up bene-

ficial trade with other parts of the world, such as the New England states, in favour of creating a stronger country with industry based inland and supported the building and maintenance of the St Lawrence Seaway, which would bypass Maritime ports that were used to import and export goods to and from inland parts of what was to become Canada.

## **Government debt vs personal debt**

We often hear people worry about government debt. There is a popular idea that describes government debt like household debt, and that all these millions in overspending are being left to burden our children. Many conservatives and even NDP supporters believe that governments should enforce balanced budgets by law because responsible people have to live within their means.

Such analogies sound reasonable but governments are not people. A loan collects future earnings to pay for something today. When you ask a bank to borrow money, you are asking for credit. You must prove that you can repay that money by demonstrating income, your overall expense load, and personal history of paying back other loans. The word credit comes from the Latin word meaning “to believe.” You are asking the lender to believe you will pay them back. The risk of you not repaying is covered by the interest.

A person can only live so long, and only earns money for a part of their life. That is why children can't get loans, and why it is so difficult to get a mortgage over a certain age. In later years a person may have accumulated lots of stuff, like a house and cars and savings, but they earn much



less and may start spending much more.

A government like Nova Scotia is in a different situation than an individual person because it can demonstrate that each decade since 1970 it has earned more, built more assets, and will continue to expand earnings well into the future. The government is like a super person at peak earnings potential that lives forever.

Nova Scotia has borrowed money every year since 1945 and always paid it back. The global debt market (and Bank of Canada) seems to trust Nova Scotia, which is reflected in the fact that the interest rate on provincial government debt has gone down from 9% in 1990 to 2% today, and why Nova Scotia enjoys an AA credit rating. Every Nova Scotia government debt bond is oversubscribed, which means that international investors are falling all over themselves to lend us money. Canadians are just that reliable.

So while borrowing \$75,000 to buy a luxury pickup truck on your 75th birthday is likely to pass most of that debt to your children, the government borrowing 75 million dollar to build a highway is not. That government debt will be financed by a 10- or 20-year bond at a laughably low interest rate. By the time it's paid off, government income will have grown, inflation will have taken a bite out of the principal, and the bonus is that Nova Scotia will still have the infrastructure, adding value to the economy every day.

Maybe the most important thing to realize is that when the government provides money to the public, this money gets used and is passed around. The depth on the government side is mainly a number. It is not something that really needs to concern us directly, as the government is not starv-

ing to death. The main drawback of the government providing too much money is the possibility of causing inflation. However, it has proven to be less of a problem in practice, and there are other mechanisms the government can employ to minimize this risk.

## **Smart debt vs stupid debt**

Nova Scotia is well positioned today with an excellent international credit rating and one of the lowest overall debt loads in Canada. With historic low interest rates and the Government of Canada signaling that it will underwrite provincial borrowing to kickstart the economy, now is the time to borrow cash to build permanent infrastructure assets that will continue to deliver value and economic returns long after the loans are repaid.

In Canadian politics, the left is described as a “tax and spend” ideology where new money comes principally from raising taxes on individuals and businesses. The right is described as “fiscally conservative” which means cutting taxes and restricting public services to compensate for the lost revenue. Both ideologies borrow heavily, they just spend it on different things.

Our government in Nova Scotia is already spending a lot of money on both private and public investments, and the point Greens are raising here is how is this investment positioned? The value in any investment is that it has to pay off in the future.

Borrowing to build equity, like investing in a house, or highway or hospital, is what smart people and businesses do. That is smart debt, using debt as a tool to build wealth.

By focusing debt spending on public, long-term modernization in infrastructure, healthcare and education, Nova Scotia will grow more efficient and generate more than enough economic activity to pay off debts.

This is not “running up the credit card” as some fiscal conservatives dramatically call it, but more like responsible borrowing at historically low rates to invest in a new roof and energy efficient windows that will save money in the long run.

The credit card analogy is more like borrowing to cover living expenses, or investing in private sector projects for no equity, something that Nova Scotia governments from all three other parties have done in the recent past. This is stupid debt. When Nova Scotians pour millions in loans and grants into companies like Northern Pulp, Cooke Aquaculture, or the Halifax Convention Centre, we get nothing back. No part ownership. No share of the profits. No oversight in how money is used. We act like investors except we have no rights.

Avoiding unnecessary debt spending is a principle everyone in Nova Scotia can get behind. The free market offers many excellent lending opportunities for sound private sector business projects and public work projects alike. Provincial government debt must be focused on financing credible, public asset-building projects only. Our government must be held accountable for their spending and lending in ways that are transparent, and the culture of redacting Freedom of Information request has to stop.

## **Growing a self-sustaining economy**

The path to a healthy economy that works for all Nova Scotians lies in a self-sustaining model. We have talented people here in Nova Scotia and lots of resources, and we need to use them more wisely for our benefit. We established already that the government should invest into our future, and here we would like to discuss that the way of investing can make a big difference.

To illustrate this, let's imagine two characters, Mike and Lisa in a hypothetical scenario, and game out different paths for each of them. Both are currently out of work. As a caring government, let's suppose we will spend \$100,000 on each of these individuals, but in different ways.

Let's start with Mike. Mike is a frugal guy. He only needs around \$2000 a month to get by. So he puts the money aside (the whole \$100,000) and figures he can live on this for around 4 years.

Lisa, on the other hand, decides to invest her money by opening a childcare service for special needs kids in her community. Her enterprise fills a need in Nova Scotia, offering relief for parents, and an opportunity for such outstanding children to flourish. The parents become more available to the labour market. Those kids have access to specialized resources to help them grow into the best versions of themselves. In addition to helping families and her community, Lisa has created an income for herself, paying back to society multiples of the amount she received at the beginning in tax revenue and increased economic activity.

Of course, the third option is not to provide any money, leaving Mike and Lisa to struggle and likely open to des-

perate acts. More than a century of study has shown that poverty costs developed economies far more than most poverty-fighting initiatives. For example, poverty is very expensive to the healthcare and justice systems.

So, doing nothing is not a real solution. Mike's strategy also leads to nowhere. Lisa's idea is the better one. Using the money to build self-sustaining systems is the smart move.

## **Guaranteed Livable Income**

It is understandable that not all Nova Scotians have the drive to start their own business, nor should they have to. Many prefer to work for someone else, or for themselves as tradespeople or professionals. Furthermore, we are entering the age of automation where many jobs will disappear, especially in the manufacturing sector.

Giving every individual who is out of a job a stack of money is unrealistic. The crucial part is to give Mike and Lisa security so that their basic needs for living are covered, so that they can start thinking about the future and invest their energy into new ventures. Healthy people do not just like to sit at home and do nothing.

Thus, a second crucial point of our plan for a sustainable and inclusive economy is Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI). The basic idea of this is to provide everyone with their fair share of our common wealth in Nova Scotia.

This would not be a handout; this is a hand-up and would become a right that represents each citizen's share of the total economic output that public services, assets and infrastructure have generated. It is similar to our current set

of social programs because it acknowledges that a society is measured by how we treat the most vulnerable. But it is different than our current social strategy because it does not micromanage poverty, where every dollar spent requires approval and where the amount of money allotted to a person is not enough to meet the basic costs of living. Thinking of social programs as social rights is a key element of the idea, and by providing people with enough money to meet basic needs, we maximize the efficiency of case workers and others involved in the circle of care so they can attend to other obstacles people face in attaining a good quality of life. It also doesn't leave workers at the mercy of the market, often scrambling during economic upheavals or industrial changes. Supplements to workers can end the notion of the "working poor," as there should be no such thing.

It is interesting to see that the idea of a basic income is now shared by many Conservatives, Liberal and NDP supporters. The term Universal Basic Income (UBI) has become to some extent a synonym for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) issued during COVID-19. However, there are some important differences between UBI, CERB and our version, that we call a Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI).

The term UBI somewhat implies that everyone gets a certain amount of money, say \$2000 month, regardless of their need, regardless if you have a family with 6 kids and just lost your job, or you are a millionaire. In our vision of Guaranteed Livable Income, we guarantee everyone has, at least, a basic income. The specific amount needs to be adjusted to reflect living costs in different regions and cir-

cumstances. People with no or low income would receive more money from GLI than those already making higher incomes and, at some level of earning, those with a high enough income would not receive direct financial benefit from GLI.

To elaborate with some examples, groceries in the North are considerably more expensive than in big cities. This is the ‘guaranteed livable’ part. We do not use the term universal to point out that higher income people would not get it since they are already participating in the Canadian economy in a sustainable way; and that “livable” means different things in different regions.

Implementing this idea is fairly straight forward within our tax system. The basic idea is to make sure everyone has the livable income, say the equivalent of what you would expect in Nova Scotia from an income with \$2000/month. Thus, instead of not paying taxes if you do not have income, you would receive taxes if your income is less than \$2000. There would not be a hard cutoff. If you decide to work a little bit while receiving Guaranteed Livable Income, then this would add to your available money each month.

As described by the former conservative senator Hugh Segal and earlier pilot studies, the work income could be taxed at 50% while the UBI/GLI stays constant. While this seems like a high tax rate, the GLI more than makes up for the taxed amount in the lower and mid income ranges. And high-income earners already pay a marginal tax of 50%. Of course, your tax rate will also increase as it does now with increasing income. .

## **So, can we afford this and how do we pay for it?**

The Basic Income Canada Network, of which Basic Income Nova Scotia group is a member, has worked out several options for basic income, all which can be fully funded from existing sources. These citizen groups that include scientists, economists, and civil servants, have been working for many years to show what is possible. We welcome such initiatives, providing details and well-researched arguments that help us to make fact-based decision. This is the work on which we want to base our efforts as members of the Nova Scotian legislature.

What is also important to realize is how much such a solution is more sustainable though smaller overhead and huge potential in growth. An immediate benefit is getting away from micromanaging poverty, which can free up Social Workers' time to solve more complex problems, for example giving assistance in budgeting to those who would benefit from it. Right now, an alphabet soup of government programs, often with overlapping or competing responsibilities, and an inefficient bureaucracy, tend to the poor. Streamlining government programs offers a massive direct savings potential while adding increased economic activity to our province. We can't afford not to do this.

Furthermore, there is a well-established, enormous effect on the dignity of the person who receives their fair share rather than being told they are at the mercy of some hand-outs from the rich. The positive effects of a dignified life are far reaching.

Finally, it is well known that the state of stability that this guarantee would bring is crucial for entrepreneurial de-



velopments. People would be free to think about their long-term future and not just how to make next month's rent. We all love the story of the scrappy individual who pulls themselves up by their own bootstraps, but you can't do that if you have no boots.

## **Minimum wage effects**

Let us make one more point regarding Guaranteed Livable Income versus a minimum wage, although we know that this is controversial. We have sometimes stated that a \$15 minimum wage is problematic, at least when used as the main vehicle to stop poverty. Not only is it important in this context to call at least for a livable wage, there are many problems associated with it that deserve some further thought. For one, you do have to have a full-time job to be able to live on the wage. When we say that a minimum wage has problems, this does not mean that we are not socially minded. While we fully understand that some form of progress could be made by an increased minimum or livable wage in the short term, at least in some context, our approach is to focus on solving the problem of poverty much more fundamentally.

To illustrate our thinking, we would like to relay a story from Thomas Teuwen, a critical thinker in our Green movement. Thomas recalls that his first minimum wage job in 1970 paid \$3 per hour, at a time when a new car cost \$3000 and a house was \$30,000. Today the cost of the house and the car have increased ten-fold, while minimum wage has grown only four times. To offset the inflation in the cost of living, minimum wage today would have to be an eye-

watering \$30 per hour.

Adding even a modest \$5 to the minimum wage would help short term, but incentivize employers to accelerate automation and offshoring, killing local jobs. Most small businesses in Nova Scotia are owned by private individuals with limited access to credit and that operate on thin margins. They are not greedy, faceless multinational corporations.

Moreover, a higher minimum wage is less necessary with a Guaranteed Livable Income. The Guaranteed Livable Income would allow a person to cover their basic need, and if they decide to take on some part time job because they want to work, say, in a flower shop for \$10 because they love it and it would give them some extra spending money, then why should we prevent this. On the other hand, jobs that nobody want to do can now only be filled with adequate pay as otherwise people would not take it.

Greens want to build the economy through entrepreneurship and innovation, not throttle it to death by forcing small businesses to almost triple their human resource overhead. It is time to find better solutions, and Guaranteed Livable Income can be a game-changer

# 10

## **Social enterprises**

**Thomas**

I believe in business. We need business to create the things which keep us alive. We are no longer hunter-gatherers; we have evolved into a society with specialization, and we use money to facilitate exchange. At least so the theory goes.

In practice, we are also greedy. Once you see the perks of money, you want more. I was long puzzled when banks are laying off workers while reporting increasing profits. The companies argue very clearly that their responsibility is to maximize profits for their shareholders. This is what their clear objective is. Of course, a fundamental trait of conservative ideology is that this wealth will trickle down to the commoners. I am always stunned by how a lot of workers with minimal income support tax-cuts for business owners. Clearly, they think that this will help them, as the business owners tell them this every day.

I believe in business. I actually think that the force of growing wealth is strong and that it is the role of Government to provide the anti-force, to provide the oversight to look out for all of our society. I know that some business-people do not like this. They think that the government should be there to protect the business, arguing that they in turn will provide for society. So, protectionism seems to be good for business.

I argue that this is true for some at the expense of others. Some rich and powerful companies have the lobby to bend favors their way, while many small entrepreneurs and middle-sized corporations are often easily swallowed. So, I bet there are many business-minded people who are not happy with this. I understand that some people think we need to support the oil industry now. However, I wish people would realize that we are missing out on opportunities for new industries here in Nova Scotia while knowing that the oil industry is on a diminishing path while still demanding subsidies.

But what if this hope for trickling wealth is not as effective as we think? What if there is a more direct way that we can benefit from a business? What if there is a way that we all share in the wealth of our country?

Some people have taken a different approach, that of a social enterprise. There are small, and sometimes even large companies that made the decision that maximizing short-term payoff is not their main goal. These are, at this time, often smaller companies started among friends who made it clear that they want to provide a stable livelihood for their families and their workers. So, the question is not

if a worker should be fired because there might be a person who could do the task slightly faster. Instead, the sustainability and social responsibility takes center-stage at these social enterprises.

Unfortunately, this is not the main approach our government takes. I know this firsthand because I was fortunate enough to be at the receiving end of government support for several startup companies that I have helped to create. My students and I benefited from several programs, including one that allowed an early commercialization fund that is critical as a first step because lab ideas are usually far from a commercialization stage. When some of the companies grew in their development advancements, we got into a program that provided funds to accelerate progress. And not only this, but the program also included huge educational opportunities with specialized seminars and the access to experts.

All this was good, and I am thankful for the help we received. My concern is that most of the programs are targeting venture capital. The idea of venture capital is to attract big investment firms to the business only to sell it a few years later for a huge profit margin. This is usually very attractive for founders, as they can become millionaires basically overnight.

However, we might want to keep in mind that the wealth created at this stage is not based on a profit bearing company, but on speculations down the road. True, we could say that at the very end we might end up with a large company that employs many people, but then we are back in the profit-optimization that dominates our current economic theory.

What some of us noticed, is that some of the companies likely failed because they have been mainly positioned to attract large-scale investors.

It might not come as a surprise that some companies fail, but some of those companies would have provided a steady and fulfilling business for several families in Nova Scotia. Getting money to bring them to this stage is often difficult to secure, as the government thinks they can get bigger returns from the venture route. Again, the government can be hooked to the short-term monetary return ideology without seeing the bigger picture.

Of course, every business is different, and we need venture capital to enable big projects. We won't build the next Tesla competitor with a family-enterprise in Nova Scotia. But we can build a lot of advanced marine technology here in Nova Scotia, and we can keep the profits here if we do not sell out our talents and ideas to international sharks for a quick buck.

# 11

## **Honesty and transparency**

**Thomas**

The secret dealings of the Liberal government are now legendary. Backroom deals to sell our bays to private aquaculture operators, who themselves are not forthcoming when problems arise, is one example. The secret sale of Owls Head protected lands on the eastern shore was another. Ignoring their own laws by not responding to the presence of species at risk when permitting clear cutting and not responding to the increasing number of concerned citizens, is not what a government should be about. Requests for public access to information are often stalled or information is redacted (blacked out) for so-called privacy concerns.

In camera meetings (meetings that are closed and unrecorded) are common in government and partisan groups. We only had one in camera executive meeting in the Green Party of Nova Scotia during the last four years. I believe

that our discussions should be public because we are here to serve the public.

I am always astonished by how deep our acceptance runs for lies and deceptions. It hit me personally when watching a commercial for a financial institution who showed a family with diverse looking ethnic background explaining how the bank helped to manage their debt, which included specific monetary numbers. What was interesting specifically was that the mother in the family is a close friend of mine, but this was not her family, this was not her husband, and the kids in the show had different parents than claimed. When I talk about this with people, they often say something like “of course it is not supposed to be true, it’s advertisement.” While the message is not a lie, the story is deceptive and misleading, as it comes across as a testimonial from a real family. There needs to be a clear distinction between advertisement and what appears to be a real story involving the actual people and circumstances. All too often this line is being blurred and can make the ad look like a true testimonial or more believable than an obvious ad.

### **Trick or treat?**

When it comes to price tags, we might want to consider that consumers must be told what they have to pay. When you see a nice jacket in a shop for \$70, this is not what you have to pay. At the counter the jacket would actually be \$80.50 because of added taxes. Of course, we can calculate this, although even this can sometimes be tricky when it comes to food and other exempt items.

It becomes even more problematic when acquiring big



ticket purchases. Take a cell phone. How many extra charges are there, like emergency call fees or possibly roaming charges? Cars are advertised for one price, but then there is a long list of additional fees such as freight and delivery inspection that the dealer may not mention until you have sat with them for an hour. The most infamous example was with airline tickets, where hidden add-on fees and taxes were used to outweigh the advertised ticket price considerably, until government regulations made that practice illegal.

These practices are fundamentally manipulative because it is human nature to be unconsciously lured by the promise of opportunity. If we have \$20 dollars in our wallet, we only have \$17 to spend if taxes are not included in the advertised price.

Sometimes I hear arguments that it is good to know how much taxes we pay. I agree, but shouldn't we then also know how much of our money goes to the original manufacturer, or the distributor, or the shipping company? My point here is that our first concern must be to be clear about the total cost of an acquisition. Of course, there are some situations where a breakdown of the price is reasonable. For example, an online seller might have a promotion where shipping is free for orders totaling over a certain amount, or people may buy into an upgraded customer plan where shipping is free.

However, in many instances the total price is pre-determined and could be up front on the price tag. Having "save the tax" sales could be changed to "percentage off" sales. Details that break down the item value, tax and shipping could be on the receipt. This way people can see how they

accrued loyalty points and be able to fill out business income tax forms where the value of the item is asked for. My main concern here is that people make good decisions based on what they can afford before getting the item rung in.

Nova Scotia liquor stores are an example of this, as the advertised price is the final cost with taxes and fees integrated. Deals between businesses or with governments are negotiated to the “bottom line” because that is the number that matters the most. By requiring transparency in retail pricing, we are demanding nothing more than for regular citizens to enjoy the same standard of commerce that their government and the corporate sector enjoy.

What this topic demonstrates is the deep rift between the operational attitude of our government, and what it should be. The role of government is first and foremost to protect its citizens. All of us. The government should be there to tell us the truth and demand that third parties deal with their customers fairly.

## **Only a transparent government is a true government for people**

The government is there to educate itself, on our behalf, on the problems, opportunities and risks that our society faces. Thereby, the government is able to use powerful tools and resources that none of us have access to individually, such as professional experts and equipment. The government is supposed to uncover evidence and defend citizens from harm, such as spraying glyphosate on our land or allow open-pen fish farming.

However, we have grown accustomed to government being the biggest spin-doctor of all. It is common for a politician to go on TV in a developing emergency to calm down viewers, before they really know what is going on themselves. The continuous downplaying of possible dangers, of risks or negative consequences have eroded citizens faith in institutions our society depends on. The importance of reinforcing the role of an institution has become very clear in the last few months with the call for defunding the police. We need police. The deeper thoughts behind this call, if people approach this with an open mind, is that we must approach the problems of policing today with open eyes, and look for evidence-based solutions instead of reactions formed by sentiments.

An excellent example of an institutional authority developing a better attitude is that of Camden, New Jersey. Camden realized there were problems both with police personnel and the way in which police services were being delivered. It dissolved its police department in 2012 and re-hired a police force with an attitude change, greatly increasing the size of the force and the number of positive interactions with the public. This included a strong component of evaluating the applicant's attitude based on their role as peacekeepers, and to embed the police closer with the community. This included additional training in de-escalation and frequent public outreach events, such as BBQs, so the public could get to know their officers. In the following years, crime in Camden fell by nearly half and public trust in police was on its way to being restored. Our local police forces have been involved in similar processes for a num-

ber of years without being dissolved. There may be more improvements to come.

The government does not need to hide bad news from the public. The police could let people know about known threats. Nova Scotians, like most people, are much tougher and more resilient than that. The public has proven time and time again that it can take really bad news, such as the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, with stoicism and in good faith. Public authorities need to trust citizens with honesty if they themselves want to earn that trust back. Transparency is the only way.

### **Who watches the watchmen?**

The only authority people will trust fully is one that demonstrates a willingness to be criticized. As a democracy we have the right to vote out any government we no longer want. Of course, breaches of the law are vulnerable to legal actions, but citizens must have more authority over the conduct of institutions if we want to build a society of equity and trust.

Being in power, whether as an employee in the bureaucracy with control over hiring practices, or a law enforcement officer, or a legislator with the power to create or eliminate laws and regulations, is a position of trust with the public. Anyone in those positions must recognize that their responsibilities and actions are a privilege, and that breaching the trust offered to them by the public is a heinous act of dishonesty.

Being in business in Nova Scotia is also a privilege, one that comes with incredible public service benefits that

billions of people and most businesses in the world today do not enjoy. A well-trained workforce educated by public schools, safe and clean communities protected by public law enforcement, and most vitally, courts and laws that protect companies and business owners from broken contracts, cartels and criminals. Our economic prosperity depends on being able to trust that authorities remain honest at all times.

Service is a privilege. So is the right to vote and chose our government. It is therefore the responsibility of everyone to be honest and transparent if our democracy is going to continue to thrive. These are the type of attitudes that we need to foster in Nova Scotia, and the attitudes Greens will recall every day, and when we ourselves earn the privilege to serve.

## **Transparency and public service**

There are so many issues in Nova Scotia, and I am in contact with many citizens that are willing to stand up for important things like stopping the ecocide and eliminating poverty. I could provide a long list of such examples, and also a long list of ideas as to how we might solve these issues. To be fair, I think that most people would be on board with this, even many of the elected politicians. So, what is holding us back? When thinking about such issues it always brings me to a fundamental approach that I believe is crucial, that of a true transparency.

A lot of politicians talk about, and have promised, transparency. Most ironically, this was the platform McNeil ran on when he became leader. It should be a no brainer, a public service is for all of us, so we should all know what is

going on, at least when we ask. This seems obvious, since we, the taxpayers, pay for the government, and even those who don't pay taxes but still belong to this land, should be told what the deal is. If the government thinks we should sell properties to foreign investors, we should know why. If we should spray our forests with herbicide to kill hardwood growth, we should know. If we should pump considerable chemicals into our pristine bays to accommodate subsidies business, we should know.

However, when it comes to the actual work, there seems to be different opinions if government dealings should be public. The McNeil government has been a prime example of secrecy and backroom dealings. While there have been continuous calls from the Nova Scotia's information and privacy commissioner, Catherine Tully, to overhaul the privacy act and to open up information, McNeil boasted that he would even call people so as to leave no public trace of what he was discussing.

Most of us did not know that Owls Head was delisted as a future provincial park site, and there is practically no way to know the deals we have with many companies, from the Yarmouth ferry to the Pictou Paper Mill and the fish-farm industry. But premiere McNeil was quick to accuse a high school student of stealing information in the spring of 2016 even though he just downloaded publicly accessible information. Is this how governments or any other organizations that seeks public approval should act? And what is the thinking behind keeping things secret?

I personally ran into an interesting case during the work-to-rule campaign with the teacher's union in the fall of 2016.

Teachers have traditionally been very apolitical, though the union-busting attitude of the McNeil Government brought the pot to overboil. Having two kids in high school at this time, and having many teacher friends, I have been outspoken to support teachers from the outset. It was hence wonderful to be invited to start the 'parents for teachers' support group with a small group of well-known personalities with a strong tie to unions. I remember an in-person meeting at St. Mary's University where I asked the Teachers Union's leader what exactly their 'asks' were so we could back them up better. The response was simply that these are secret, as they were bargaining issues. This was a bit of a shock to me. Even further, at the same time my son was in his last year of the International Baccalaureate program which has program components outside the regular school hours. Hence, I dared to ask at some point what actually the work-to-rule rules were in order to help him to navigate the extended requirements. However, this triggered a flurry of hostility in the group, and I had seen others also being bashed for asking innocent questions. I guess I was naïve, but seeing this hostility from people who I thought were on my side, was shocking.

It is the common quick answer of this government to cite secrecy for bargaining issues and or commercial interests. Let's think about this a bit more. I can of course see that hiding the truth can lead to personal benefits. Maybe one can deceive the opponent and hence gain one-sided benefits. Of course, the question is if this is what we want in our society. And I still cannot understand why the business deal was hidden from the Yarmouth ferry operators. If this

deal could not survive public scrutiny, then how could it be good?

Of course, the reason we have legislature sittings with question periods is to keep the government accountable. Ah, wait, of course, we do not have sittings of the house at the time this was written in early 2021. Premiere McNeil did not even allow sittings to happen virtually, even though we teach a full load of courses at universities online, and school children go to regular, in person, school. So, it is clear that the Premiere thinks that a democratic oversight is detrimental for the unfair advantage this false majority government receives. And let it be very clear, all his caucus is supporting this too and is hence equally guilty as charged. We are the only province which had practically no sitting of the house or most committees during 2020. I strongly think that a vote for liberals has to be considered as a vote for a fundamentally anti-democratic party. I understand that most people do vote for personal advantages, but they must see that it is them who ultimately support the undermining of our democracy.

I dream of a different political culture. I dream of a time when a group of people get together to figure out how to solve problems. And they do this by asking everyone for their ideas, by considering real facts, and considering open values that support our whole society. I actually think that we are, to some extent, at the end of party democracy. Parties were helpful to quickly understand the approach of different ideologies, but we now know that there are many more factors that these old ideologies do not even cover. We understand now that many problems are much deeper



and more complex than originally thought, and that this requires an unprecedented level of cooperation. And we need to bring this important debate on the future of our society and humanity into the open. We need a true transparent discussion, and we need to truly evaluate if our historic approaches and affiliations are not holding us back more than making us stronger. Time for some necessary and honest reflections.

# 12

## **Socialism, neo-liberalism, and all this political jargon**

A lot of Nova Scotians don't know if Greens are left or right, if we are socialists or neo-liberals or conservatives. And we can't blame them as we are all of the above and none of them at all. We discussed already how our values define us, and here we want to take a moment to put this into the context of our existing traditional left-right political spectrum.

The left is often equated with "big government" and with a strong focus on social justice. However, just saying this is probably a slap in the face of red Tories who identify strongly with fiscal responsibility and social justice. The right, lately called neo-liberalism just to add to the confusion, is equated to a belief in free market solutions and sometimes to the libertarian idea of "limited government."

Maybe the main difference is how the different ideologies want to help people. The left end of the spectrum is

often equated with socialism, the idea that the government is responsible to centrally provide equity of outcome to all citizens, whereas the neo-liberal ideas on the right offer that a free and strong market economy will provide enough support for everyone and that all have equal opportunity to participate. So it is a bit like micromanaging people versus total hands off leadership. Quite frankly, both are extremes and a bit naïve.

In the process of optimizing profits for investors, those who own assets and have access to credit, the social consciousness of corporations, may take a back seat while big social programs run by governments continue to be underfunded and underdelivered.

The breakdown of these political concepts as represented by our traditional parties can be seen in so many places. Take labour as an example. Unions continue to work hard to fight for fair, safe, and respectful work environments, while large corporations and even our government (the biggest union sector employer), are on a crusade to break this stronghold with the argument that the overhead is not sustainable.

Labour negotiations are often black-and-white. The unions argue that workers continuously fall behind as employers make record profits, in the case of business, or save tax dollars via keeping labour costs down, in the case of government employees. Meanwhile, executive boards counter that they have no wiggle room to stay competitive in global markets with lots of external pressures and government managers say they will need to lay people off if wages go up.

At this point it seems that traditional labor relations are dysfunctional. It's even gotten to the point where the po-

litical left is forced to support environmental polluters like Northern Pulp, oil pipelines, or fracking in order to sustain union jobs, despite the fact that these are businesses that the left describe as being neo-liberal. The businesses are welcoming of the free money, sometimes insisting on it, but resist the oversight that should accompany that. This is a case of left-influenced government measures being used to provide jobs, advantaging some businesses over others. Meanwhile the workers are more dependent on the business being propped up by government and cannot vote with their feet when it comes to wages.

Examples of alternative approaches exist. For example, there are big differences between our North American labour relations and that of other leading industrial countries, which require union representatives to be part of corporate leadership. This means that unions are a regular part of the company executive, contributing to every business decision and every restructuring plan.

These unions often help companies in difficult times while constantly striving to maximize improvements for workers. In South Korea and Germany for example, major industrial firms like Samsung, Hyundai, and Mercedes equally reduced work for all employees rather than implement layoffs during the Great Recession of 2008. Not only did this keep valuable, skilled workers at least partially employed, but they were motivated and enthusiastic collaborators with their employers when production returned. The private sector wins, and the public is served too. Win-win.

Another trend that is increasingly visible are social enterprises. That is, an increasing number of small and medium-

size companies are not simply there to maximize profits for investors, but rather have a goal to provide a sustainable and enjoyable living for their employees which are often co-owners in the company. This is one kind of business structure that we would like to be encouraged and supported by our government.

### **So where does eco-politics fit in?**

As our values specify, we believe that we must aim for a sustainable and resilient future in which all Nova Scotians can participate. We need a strong economy, with local companies that are here to stay, and that provide real value. We also need a strong, inclusive democracy that energizes citizens to participate.

As already mentioned, producing energy locally from renewable sources falls within this category. Not only do such forms of energy production help to stop the climate crisis and end the export of Nova Scotian money out of the province, but it would provide local jobs and cycle wealth within our communities.

There are existing technologies that provide controlled growth of vegetables that require less water and no harmful chemicals, chemicals that large international companies want to sell for their benefit, but that damage our health, our soil, and our eco-systems. Boosting Nova Scotian crop quality through smart technologies, and preserving healthy soils and sustainable freshwater systems will strengthen local agriculture products, from produce, to wines, to milk and cheeses, that bring in millions of dollars in profits for our farmers.

Furthermore, we have traditional fisheries that are sustainable if we choose them to be. If we can keep the oceans clean, and stop allowing large companies to smash marine habitats and spawning grounds with bottom trawling practices, then our world-famous lobster, fin-fish and scallop harvesters will thrive like never before. Land-based aquaculture techniques, mentioned earlier, have the potential to employ as many people as are currently involved in the traditional fishery, adding an entirely new sector to our economy.

The truth is that the quick-buck, short term attitude of previous governments has never paid off. Exchanging hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars in subsidies to lure a few big outside companies with their promises of creating jobs always flops. What we always get is environmental contamination, for which Nova Scotians are on the hook for cleaning up, loans that never get repaid, broken dreams and bankrupt families that Nova Scotians end up paying for.

Our thinking is about long-term planning, long-term finance, and long-term health for our society, our lands and seas, and ultimately our democracy in an era of global instability and crisis management.

## **You can't walk forward using only left or right feet**

Let's say it again: the Green Party of Nova Scotia has at its roots social justice that includes respect for different nations within our society. It also means respect for different voices. The Green Party of Nova Scotia wants to conserve our principle assets so that we can live off the interest and its added value.

We are entrepreneurs, scientists, artists and service providers that want to build a robust economy, not continue the kind we have now in which too many outside of Nova Scotia get rich, while robbing us and our kids of their future. We do want investment in infrastructure and assets that will sustain their value and usefulness long after they are paid for.

We want everyone able to contribute to our society; we have so much work to do, so why should there be unemployment? We value self-sufficiency, pride in oneself, but also celebrate the courage it takes to serve others.

There are circumstances that anyone of us can experience where we struggle, or fail, or start out with less privilege, so society must help to bridge those gaps. Investing in people, and assets that serve people, is not a money drain but a value-multiplier. We do not want to stop making it better for all of us; everyone should be able to afford home heating, to have access to health care, to not be held back by transportation costs, and to live a decent life.

It is decency that defines so much of the character of Maritimers; a decent people that help each other. A decent government has the courage to admit mistakes, demand accountability, not just from itself, but also from private interests.

### **So what are we? Socialists? Neo-liberals? Conservatives?**

The phrase, “not right, not left, but forward” has been used by German Greens in the early 1980, and the Green campaign slogan in the 2019 federal election was “Not left, not green, forward together.” The small addition of together

is somewhat interesting and important. While we are often painted one way or another, the truth is that we have members from the whole political spectrum. Thomas always stated that he comes from a social-democratic family, while Jessica was even a candidate for the Progressive Conservative party in Nova Scotia. We have members who have been active campaigners for the Liberal party, and even high-ranking organizers in the NDP.

Most of us realize that these historic affiliations are now a major barrier to progress. It is understandable that there are family traditions at stake, and we realize that being in a group that is a particular beneficiary of their policies is attractive. But all of us came to see that it is now about facing the true problems that have been left unsolved for so many years and that are now haunting us.

Most important, many of us are trying to go beyond the extreme partisan culture that permeated our politics too much. The realization that there is not always one simple solution, is thereby also important. There are often several paths to go forward, and we believe it is most valuable having a pluralistic society that is willing to discuss alternatives. Indeed, the idea of democracy was always to have a forum where ideas can be discussed, and not that we have a (false) majority government that closes our legislature and works in secrecy.

Many greens want to be all of the above. And why shouldn't they be?



## **Democratic renewal and co-leadership**

People (demos) rule (kratos) is a concept that was introduced in some Greek city states thousands of years ago, and democratic systems have evolved ever since. Our system in Canada is based on an old British political structure that was strongly influenced by a privileged class of nobility. While we do not strictly have this class structure any more, our system is known to favour the old establishment that often prevents modernizations, making long necessary reforms far overdue.

Democratic systems have at their root the ability of the people to elect representatives for our society that ultimately make the decisions of our governance for us. Today, Canadian politics is based on the first-past-the-post (FPTP) principle, where only the person with the majority of votes in a geographical area will be the member of the government.

In a multi-party environment that often discourages voter participation, often meaning that only a small percentage of privileged citizens have elected the representative of an electoral district.

For example, in the 2017 provincial election, voter turnout was a low 54%. That means that nearly half the Nova Scotians who could vote, didn't. About 40% of votes cast were for the winner, the Liberal Party of Nova Scotia. Simple math means that only 21%, one fifth of Nova Scotians, actually elected the current party into power. According to parliamentary rules, the Liberals won a "majority." In what universe is 21% a majority of anything?

Only the party with the majority of seats will form the government, thus, the system does not reflect a true democratic system. And even within the ruling party, the party leader has a king-like position in which they can whip-the-vote, meaning that they can dictate how the members of their party vote.

The real essence of a modern democracy is the collaborative nature of the system. We have parliaments so that many people with different voices can contribute and scrutinize our decisions. Many of us have good ideas, and there are always different angles to a problem so that discussions are essential to good decision making.

Good policies have come out of minority governments. For example, our Canadian healthcare system was introduced in a minority government. This meant that the ideas had to be discussed sufficiently enough to win a true majority by all representatives, especially and not excluding those of rival parties. Such decisions are therefore more likely

to survive in the long term and will not simply be deleted by the next government. So, collaboration is key to good government, but our current state of politics is increasingly deteriorating to a partisan charade.

## **Proportional Representation**

So, what are the solutions? It is well recognized by scholars that a proportional voting system is a major ingredient for a modern democratic system. New Zealand recently moved from FPTP system to a mixed-member proportional system, which is now seen as a major ingredient to the advancements that this country has made. Most recently South Korea moved to mixed member proportional representation as well, which resulted in dramatic increase in voter participation, more women running, and an increase in first time elected politicians. In Canada, the federal Liberals and the Nova Scotia NDP both promised to implement such electoral reforms, then abandoned it once they got elected.

A mixed member Proportional system (MMP) means that electoral districts still elect direct representatives, but that a list of people selected by each party will be used to balance the final legislature to the true proportion of votes. An interesting advantage of lists is that parties can choose representations of minorities that would otherwise not be included such as women, First Nations, Acadians, African Nova Scotians and other equity seeking groups that could contribute so much.

## **Coalitions**

However, a proportional election system is not the only ingredient for a better government. As argued above, it is the collaborative nature of the government that is crucial. Finding partners for issues, even building coalitions for specific issues, should be seen as a good democratic tool.

Coalitions in Canada have been systematically badmouthed by elite political groups, most notably by the McNeil Liberals. The recent prevention of committees to sit during the COVID-19 crisis, even online, with arguments that the premiere does not “have time” for that is a mind-boggling example of elitist thinking. In this view, if we don’t need the MLAs, why do we pay for them? Why have parliament at all?

Greens are prepared and equipped to work in collaborations with other parties. This has been demonstrated in provinces with elected green members, the most striking example being that of the Green Party of PEI. The Green Party there forms the official opposition in a nearly balanced minority government, and yet the level of collaboration between the ruling Conservative Party and the Green Party is already legendary, and is setting a new expectation in Canada.

## **Power is mean to be shared**

A major concept that the leadership of the Green Party of Nova Scotia has discussed for several years is that of a co-leadership. At this time, the Green Party constitution follows the common tenor of our electoral system with a single

official party leader (currently Thomas Trappenberg) and a deputy leader (currently Jessica Alexander).

However, you will see Thomas and Jessica often introducing themselves as co-leaders, as they have practiced a form of practical collaboration since elected by the members in 2016. Thomas and Jessica are complementary in many ways. As a scientist, Thomas is often approaching questions from a deep analytic side, while Jessica's holistic views and artistic mind reliably balances discussions in important ways.

The complementary nature of the co-leaders is not the only benefit of such a system. The sheer absence of a single person that dictates the directions, top down, is a true departure from an authoritarian system that thrives in Canadian politics today. Co-leaderships have even been official in several Green Parties around the world such as England, Germany, and New Zealand.

Studies have shown the many benefits of such a system to preserve the rights of parliament and provide a cooling second thought. While Jessica and Thomas continue to experiment with this concept, they are getting ready to bring this idea forward to the membership for a change in our party constitution. It clearly demonstrates the commitment of Green leadership to true democracy and accountability, and to transition to a form of politics that reflects what modern society can look like.

## **Nova Scotia - A 'Have' Province in 20 years**

The year is 2040, and Nova Scotia has come a long way. We know this because we finally started to monitor our real progress as a society instead of just counting the dollars. The key was to get away from a GDP-based evaluation and introduce a happiness index based on the Genuine Progress Index (GPI) that was developed many years ago in Nova Scotia by Ron and Gwen Coleman.

The introduction of a Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI) made such a difference (It seems we like acronyms to begin with a G). To start with, homelessness has been mostly eradicated, thanks to the availability of affordable housing that was part of legislating more sustainable property development, and the ability for the poorest to have the dignity of paying their own rent. The new-found security of Guaranteed Livable Income encouraged many new small busi-

nesses to open. Some people decided to care for children, loved ones and veterans in local areas without large government care centers. The security from Guaranteed Livable Income also had a strong impact on the well-being of seniors. Not only were they finally able to afford their heating in the winter, but the availability of support persons made it possible to stay longer in their own homes.

The financial security provided by Guaranteed Livable Income to Nova Scotians who used to struggle shifted our communities to one that is more collaborative and appreciative of the environment, instead of one of isolation and control.

There are now many pedestrian areas in our cities, towns and villages where people go to meet friends, have coffee, and do some local shopping. Without the noise, smell and danger of car traffic, locals walk and linger, bringing new life to city centers that used to be in decline. These open-air malls bring added safety, particularly at night, boost property values and attract tourists. The closing of Spring Garden road in Halifax to car traffic was a big step in this direction, which encouraged more towns to follow.

Guaranteed Livable Income was an important part of adapting to automation in a way which benefited all Nova Scotians. Automated food production with local aquaponics operations helped to reduce the need for many chemical additives, and have improved the overall health of our population and soil, boosting traditional crop production at the same time. Such automation, together with digital transaction taxes, helped us to finance Guaranteed Livable Income and to reduce the working hours of our population. This in

turn enabled the explosion of new enterprises for recreation and health maintenance. Spas, cooking schools, weekend bike tours and specialty seminars are flourishing.

Forests are now managed with selected harvesting of timber to produce high strength beams for construction. Moving away from concrete, due to its large carbon footprint, produced this wonderful new opportunity for Nova Scotia. The new timber frame products are now sought after all over the world, in particular as we combined them with passive solar architecture developed in Nova Scotia since the 1970s.

The managed forests are more accessible and even more profitable, which created new opportunities for tourism and local recreation. Also, non-timber forestry boomed, such as the sustainable harvesting of plants that thrive here due to the unique ecology of oceanside Acadian forests.

The forestry industry added a greater proportion of the total local jobs created in the last 20 years. This is also true for our traditional fisheries that are now recognized for their value creation, thanks to sustainable practices, and ending of the harmful practices of open-pen fish farming and bottom-dragging.

The introduction of on-land aquaculture was a big part of the food security solution in many ways, including generation of natural fertilizers and by creating new enterprises, in particular, the production of feed from composted organic matter. Much of this technology was developed here in Nova Scotia, becoming a sought-after intellectual property exported all over the world.

Indoor farming, massive automation, affordable housing, and cheap and convenient transportation were only made



possible through the large investments to sustainable energy that now provide a massive payoff for industry and individuals. The building of solar farms, local mini-hydro systems, geothermal stations, wind farms, and the capture of waste heat have been expensive to build but are now returning substantial economic benefits.

The building of these new facilities provided many skilled jobs to transition workers from the old carbon industries and the fallout of COVID-19. The main fuel for power generating facilities is now free, in the form of sun and wind, and employs more people than the old energy sector did. By not burning foreign fuel we ended the cycle of importing dirty energy, and exporting billions of hard-earned Nova Scotian dollars.

Each community is different and requires individualized solutions to civic problems. Positioning the new green power-generating facilities in the hand of local municipalities, instead of a central provincial authority, gave towns and communities important new revenue sources. Municipalities have always been on the front line of the housing crisis and poverty, so they also understood best how to solve it. Armed with their own energy revenues, improvements to housing and health care in rural areas performed beyond expectations. Due to full access to high-speed internet, rural communities have resurged. People who telework have relocated to smaller communities, since they no longer need to sacrifice employment or connectivity to do so.

The increased ability of many professions to work from home with only sporadic in-person meetings changed the living and transportation landscape. Global market forces

made public and private transportation all electric because it was cheaper and better than gasoline and diesel. Autonomous cars are everywhere now, meaning that most families no longer spend 20% of their income on transportation, using instead inexpensive private and public ride-sharing programs. It is now possible to use commuting time to catch up with reading, relaxing or work. The productivity gain in such work environment have helped to reduce the working week to 30h.

The arts and culture scene is thriving in Nova Scotia. The Guaranteed Livable Income means that many musicians, fine artists and theatre performers have been able to afford to make their passion their full-time occupation. It is easy to find a concert, play, or festival not far from home.

Autonomous, electric public busses run up and down the province, routing according to demand based on real-time information from apps, just like UBER did in 2020. By providing cheap access to rural and distant towns, many Nova Scotians chose to live in small communities and in the country, while seniors do not have to worry about getting to appointments and can visit family or the city with ease.

## **Green Means Choice**

Twenty years. It is not a long time into the future, but it is our time. For everyone over 45 today, what we do in the next twenty years will define Nova Scotia for the rest of our lives. For younger generations it will decide whether they stay here or leave, perpetuating the drain of talent, capital and loved ones that has plagued our province for much of the last century.

Green Means Go is not the stuff of dreams. None of these proposals require fantasy technologies that don't already exist in some form today, or radical, risky ideas that haven't been proven elsewhere many times. From low-cost carbon-neutral power generation, to local control of health-care, to Guaranteed Livable Income we can afford, inclusive democracy, and free public transit to all corners of the province, there exist Made-in-Canada solutions that work. All we have to do is choose to do them.

We all know that Nova Scotia before COVID-19 faced challenges. Too many people and communities fell through the cracks, even as governments from the three other parties did good work to try and keep it together. Since the Great Recession in 2008 (which suddenly doesn't seem that bad in comparison to today), to the present day, the lives of most Nova Scotians have gotten harder. We hear the phrase "do more with less" all the time. Budgets are always shrinking even as the cost of living goes up and people's needs grow.

For sure, many Nova Scotians thrived in the past ten years, thanks to hard work, a little luck and an overall global economic tailwind that lasted until last winter, but for every Halifax luxury condominium selling out in record time, somewhere in the province a traditional employer in the region closed down. Public money poured into private projects, but only to cover costs, and never did the public get to share in the profits.

As long as we continue down the old road of public service austerity, and where public investments are seen as "the problem" instead of the solution, then the cycle will continue. The Nova Scotia of the future can be a modern, pros-

perous 'have' province, an energy-independent, sustainable economy that exports knowledge, technology, products and healthy food, while preserving its character as a place people want to live and work.

In the past dozen years, all three other parties have governed this province with little change or real improvement to the lives of most citizens. If democracy is government by choice, but none of the other ideologies makes any difference to Nova Scotia voters, is it really a choice at all?

We do have a choice. We can choose innovation instead of resource exploitation. We can choose belief in locals instead of central planners or big-shot saviours. We can choose public investment instead of private subsidy. We can choose a government that accepts the facts of life in Nova Scotia as they really are: that we are not all equal; that some have enjoyed privileges unavailable to most; that policies of the past no longer work or may have never worked; and that we face the most serious and critical crisis in our history with climate change.

We live in a democracy and so we have choice. The leaders of the Green Party of Nova Scotia have laid out theirs. What will your choice be?

## **Appendix: Value statement of the Green Party of Nova Scotia**

### **Living within our ecological and economic means**

- A healthy and sustainable society lives within both its economic and ecological means, and these two are not in opposition with each other.
- The Earth's ability to provide materials and energy to meet human demands and to absorb our waste and pollution is limited. We must shift our society from ideals of perpetual growth to ones of ecological and social sustainability.
- Human society depends on natural life supporting systems. We must ensure the integrity of ecosystems, preserve biodiversity and nurture the resilience of the planet's natural resources.

## **Local Self-Reliance**

- Communities must be in charge of their own destiny and their own resources as much as possible.
- A resilient, sustainable province requires communities with local economies that meet essential local needs such as energy, shelter, water and food supply, minimizing external dependencies.

## **Grassroots Democracy, Active Citizenship and Self-Determination**

- Citizens must have meaningful opportunities to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Decisions must be made at the closest practical level to those affected by them.
- Meaningful participation in the democratic process requires an electoral system in which every vote counts and results in a Legislature that reflects the diversity of political viewpoints of its citizens.
- Nova Scotians have the right to know about, understand, and participate in the decisions their government makes. This is a commitment to government transparency, inclusion and responsiveness in its actions.

## **A Just Society**

- The legitimacy of government depends on honouring commitments, including Treaty commitments.
- The success of a society is measured by many diverse factors affecting the quality of life for all people, not only economic indicators.
- A just society cares that every person receives basic material security as a right.
- A just society considers the well-being of non-human species, both wild and domestic.
- A just society recognizes and respects both human and environmental rights, and values the interconnectedness of the two.

## **A Culture of Peace**

- Non-violent solutions promote co-operation between individuals, within communities and in relations between governments and citizens.
- Local, national and global security relies on co-operation, fair economic and social structures, ecological security, and vigorous protection of human rights.
- Healthy, caring and protective communities make our society and all its members safer from violence and harm.

## **Strength in Human Diversity**

- Our society is stronger when all people are able to thrive, safe from prejudice or discrimination, whether based on racial identity, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, social origin or language. This includes actively working to remove systemic and historic injustices.
- Collaborative diversity of thought and perspective strengthens our society and our politics.









# **GREEN MEANS GO**

Nova Scotia is famous for its beauty, natural bounty and friendly people. It might just be the perfect corner of Canada to live if it weren't for the economy. With shrinking industries that often require government support to stay in business, under-developed rural communities and infrastructure, it is increasingly looking like Nova Scotia will remain a "have not" province, perpetually dependent on handouts from the federal government.

**It doesn't have to be that way.**

Green Means Go presents a road-map to sustainable prosperity that is completely achievable using only what Nova Scotia has already. Developed by Dr. Thomas Trappenberg and Jessica Alexander, with input from many discussions with members and citizens of Nova Scotia, Green Means Go uses real world data to demonstrate how Nova Scotia can take advantage of Green principles to become a prosperous, just society that is at last a have province.