

# 2021 Nova Scotia Provincial Election



## How to Get Involved in the 41<sup>st</sup> Provincial General Election:

### ***7 election questions CANS Members can ask candidates***

In this 2021 Nova Scotia Provincial Election, the Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS) will play an active role, ensuring that the issues important to our members and the industry are top of mind for all parties.

Our primary areas of focus to be included as key parts in the next government's post-election plans include:

- Prompt Payment regulations – Bill 119
- Workforce development
- Lack of consultation with industry
- Investing in infrastructure
- Increased private sector investment
- Progress towards a greener economy
- Innovation and technological advancement

Meeting with candidates is a great opportunity to ask questions and suggest that our next government focuses on key issues that are impacting you, your employees, and the construction industry.

Whether you speak with candidates over the phone, through door-to-door campaigning or in virtual all-candidates meetings, you can use the questions below to make sure candidates in your riding understand your priorities. These conversations can also help you decide how to vote.

Here are seven questions related to CANS' key areas of focus you can ask your candidates:

#### **Prompt Payment Regulations – Bill 119**

Nova Scotia needs a prompt payment solution that works for everyone, including tradespeople, contractors, government and consumers. While immediately felt in our industry, there is a serious risk to Nova Scotia's competitiveness long-term if we do not take action to fix the issue now.

Over the last several years, the construction industry has witnessed a very disturbing trend. Delinquent payment in the Industrial Commercial Institutional (ICI) sector, which employs over 30,000 people and contributes \$6 billion in revenue to our economy, is producing detrimental results for construction firms in our industry.

Delinquent payments are hurting our economy and continues to worsen. Every year, 35-40 construction-related companies go bankrupt, resulting in 700-800 jobs lost, and these impacts are increasing at an alarming rate. Companies cannot invest in hiring workers, provide training and most importantly, offer a safe place for their employees to work. CANS continues to survey its members to solicit feedback on prompt payment.

Prompt payment legislation sets out the rights and responsibilities of all parties to a construction project through the establishment of minimum standards for payment, dispute resolution and communication. The Act will set out minimum payment requirements and will have a systematic approach to how money will be released with rights and responsibilities set forth for all parties to a construction project.

If the provincial government enacts legislation, prompt payment will:

- Improve the movement of money in our economy.
- Increase fairness and transparency.
- Increase efficiency and productivity.
- Lower the cost of construction projects, public and private.
- Reduce burden on our judicial system.
- Drive investment, employment, training, innovation and purchase of equipment (i.e., apprentices).
- Increase competition and number of bidders on public work.
- Allow contractors to bid more work.

In March 2019, the Nova Scotia legislature introduced Bill 119 proposing amendments to the Nova Scotia Builders' Lien Act to include prompt payment. The bill passed in 2019 but to date has not taken effect. The previous provincial government, led by the Honourable Stephen McNeil, made a commitment to introduce prompt payment legislation at the Nova Scotia legislature's fall sitting in 2020, however, that was delayed due to COVID-19.

**If elected, will your party finalize the amendments to the Builders' Lien Act by December 31, 2021?**

### **Workforce Development**

Over the next decade, there is an expected labour shortage of 8,700 people in Nova Scotia's construction industry. To keep up with demand for skilled labour, organizations will need to remain focused on attracting, training, and retaining qualified talent from underrepresented groups.

According to BuildForce Canada, while the number of underrepresented groups working in the construction sector is growing, they still only make up a small minority. In 2020, there were approximately 3,650 women employed in Nova Scotia's construction industry – accounting for only 3.5% of tradespeople employed in the industry. Of the 27,400 tradespeople employed in the industry, Indigenous Peoples accounted for 5% of the total labour force in Atlantic Canada. Approximately 3.5% of Nova Scotia's construction labour force was made up of new Canadians. The only way to address future labour force needs is by increasing participation from all underrepresented groups.

In our 2020-2023 strategic plan, CANS made it a priority to include workforce development as a key pillar in driving the Association's growth and success. Recognizing the importance and impact of a diverse workforce, over the coming years CANS will work to connect employers and potential employers, ensuring all opportunities, including those less visible, are known and considered. We'll continue to proactively promote the construction industry through our work in schools with our Building Futures for Youth program and in partnership with related organizations. Facilitating relationships and collaborating with groups related to immigration and diversity will allow us to advise members and industry of opportunities and options, as well as influence workforce development policy, programming and training.

Education is the cornerstone of change. CANS has hosted a leadership workshop, geared specifically for female leaders in construction, offering an opportunity for the construction industry in Nova Scotia to start the conversation about what it's really going to take to close the gender gap. We've also partnered with BuildForce Canada, the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency and Department of Labour and Advanced Education to offer Working in a Respectful and Inclusive Workplace, a free online course offered to CANS members seeking to support diversity and inclusive practices in their workplace.

**If elected, what specific measures will your party take to create an equitable and sustainable construction industry workforce and alleviate the expected labour shortage?**

### **Lack of consultation with industry**

The Industrial Commercial Institutional (ICI) construction sector employs more than 30,000 people across Nova Scotia and contributes \$6 billion in revenue to our economy. Seen as subject matter experts to our members, the Construction Association of Nova Scotia continues to be recognized as one of the key advocacy and lobbying groups for industry, respected by members, government, industry and the public.

Government can't solve problems on their own, especially those specific to construction. Industry must be at the table and included in consultations, and government needs to abandon their one-time consultation approach.

**If elected, will your party commit to working in a direct and ongoing manner with the construction industry and key stakeholders?**

### **Investing in Infrastructure**

In 2016, Canada and Nova Scotia signed an initial agreement under the Investing in Canada Plan to invest more than \$119 million in federal funding for the rehabilitation, repair, and modernization of existing infrastructure to provide communities with more reliable water and wastewater systems and improve public transit systems across the province. In 2018, a second agreement was signed to provide more than \$828 million in federal funding over the next decade for long-term infrastructure projects through four streams – public transit infrastructure; green infrastructure; community, culture, and recreation infrastructure; and rural and northern infrastructure. In 2020, a COVID-19 resilience stream was added.

To ensure the federal government fulfills its mandate to ensure Canadians have access to accurate and timely information about infrastructure investments in their communities, on a weekly basis Infrastructure Canada publishes provincial and territorial project funding applications. Since the initial agreement in 2016, Nova Scotia has committed \$422 million (45%) of \$947 million available.

**If elected, how will your party collaborate with industry to maximize the remaining infrastructure funds allocated to Nova Scotia by the federal government?**

### **Increased Private Sector Investment**

Nova Scotia is home to some of the most innovative, dynamic and resilient companies in the country however, there have been many barriers that have made it hard to do business or attract new business in the province. The construction industry represents some of the most

forward-thinking companies in Canada, helping to create jobs, growth and opportunities locally, regionally and nationally.

Industry needs cost-effective, high-impact programs to address the biggest pain points, providing them with access to resources to start and scale their companies – and stay in Nova Scotia. To do this, government needs to provide funding, tools, and support to ensure the benefits are felt by people in all regions of our province.

**If elected, how will your party remove barriers, expedite development opportunities and create incentives for sustainable investment in Nova Scotia?**

### **Progress Towards a Greener Economy**

The construction industry understands the importance of infrastructure projects that protect communities and support the ongoing transition to a clean growth economy. Investments in infrastructure that reduce emissions from electricity, transportation and buildings will help Nova Scotia transition to a greener future.

Industry needs a solution similar to other programs that offer green rebates and incentives. Businesses will save money, expand their skilled workforce, and ensure return on investment, advancing clean and climate resilient infrastructure projects in Nova Scotia.

**If elected, what specific measures will your party take to support the construction industry while meeting the target of net-zero emissions by the year 2050, as set out by the Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act and Sustainable Development Goals Act?**

### **Innovation and Technological Advancement**

In today's world, innovation and technology is rapidly integrating into every industry, including construction. Nova Scotia is geographically located in one of the most accessible areas of the world and is poised to attract exponential growth, especially in design, construction, engineering, research and development, and fabrication. We have all the ingredients but need an investment strategy similar to Canada's Ocean Supercluster, in order to capitalize on success.

Government is constantly asking industry to invest in training, but we're at a competitive disadvantage with little to no support. If support is available, it's often out of reach for most companies. Government needs to collaborate with industry to ensure tools and innovations are readily available to support the growing demand for Nova Scotia businesses to compete on a global scale.

**If elected, will your party commit to establishing an innovation fund, similar to the Ocean Supercluster, in the first year of your party's mandate?**