



January 15, 2006

Honourable Danny Williams, Premier
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Confederation Building
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J6
FAX: (709) 729-5875

Dear Premier Williams:

Thank you for your letter inquiring about the New Democratic Party's policies and positions on issues of importance to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I appreciate the opportunity to present our party's views on these key questions. As we proceed through this federal election, we want Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to be aware of our position on fisheries, energy, infrastructure and the other issues you raised in your letter. As well we wish to emphasize that the policies of the New Democratic Party for seniors, on housing, health care, pharmacare and post-secondary education among others are of great benefit to the people of your Province and are deserving of consideration.

Fisheries

It is time for both levels of government to co-operate on a solution for fishery workers displaced by globalization and the failure of fish stocks. Fishery and forestry workers in this province have been devastated by resource failures, plant closures, punitive tariffs, high fuel prices and competition from cheap labour abroad. At a meeting with the FFAW-CAW in 2004, I endorsed that Union's proposal for a cost-shared retirement and licence buyout program for fishery workers.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador must have a greater say in fisheries management in order to preserve stocks that are being decimated from overfishing. We support federal-provincial joint management of fish stocks and we are committed to the implementation of a cod recovery strategy.

The international fishery and over-fishing taking place on the continental shelf is of great concern to all of us who value conservation, sustainability and the long-term economic viability of the fishery. Our party supports Canada's custodial management of the continental shelf outside Canada's 200-mile limit—the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap. Peter Stoffer, NDP MP for Sackville-Eastern Shore, Nova Scotia, has been advocating for this as a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, and was instrumental in the Committee's unanimous report urging the Government of Canada to take action on this matter.

Canada's New Democratic Party / Nouveau Parti démocratique du Canada

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Our party supports the allocation of shrimp quotas to provide maximum benefit to communities. We have seen the model of shrimp allocation to the Labrador Fishermen's Union Shrimp Company produce a significant long-term benefit to the southern Labrador coast and we believe this approach would work for the people of Harbour Breton and the Conne River Miawpukek First Nation.

Our party recognizes the value of sustainable aquaculture that provides economic development in rural areas but is concerned that the highest of environmental standards apply and wild species and natural populations are not threatened. Details of support through a comprehensive aquaculture framework agreement would be worked out through federal provincial negotiations.

Energy

In the last federal election, the NDP fully supported Newfoundland and Labrador receiving 100% of its offshore oil and gas revenues as "principal beneficiary" in keeping with the intent of the Atlantic Accord and are proud of our role in insuring that this was achieved.

Our party continues to support the view that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador should have an ownership stake in offshore oil and gas as an equity partner and believe that the Government of Canada, as an equity partner in the Hibernia project, has more than recouped its investment and should work towards transferring its 8.5% equity share in Hibernia to the Province.

The NDP is committed to the development of a national power grid for electricity. This would increase Canada's energy security and facilitate development and distribution of renewable energy to provinces currently dependent on fossil fuel. It would also give hydro-producing provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador access to energy markets, to maximize benefits.

The NDP supports green power development as a key strategy towards meeting our international climate change commitments. We are therefore open to examining possible developments like the Lower Churchill, as long as it can be done in an ecologically sound manner, help meet our Kyoto commitments and for the principal benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Should this development meet these criteria, we would support the federal government to providing, for example, an investment guarantee as a part of the development of renewable resources and in support of the benefits of this project to Canada as a whole

Federal Presence

The disproportionate loss of federal employment, wages, salaries and spending in this province over the past 25 years is unacceptable. As the Harris Centre report points out, the greatest loss is that of senior staff who can make decisions and represent provincial interests in Ottawa. Concurrent with this are developments such as the loss of the Gander Weather Office, Public Service Commission Office, and threats to facilities such as 5 Wing Goose Bay and the cold climate agricultural research station in St. John's.

We support the reinstatement of the Gander weather office, given its importance to public weather forecasting and the special needs marine and aviation weather forecasting in Newfoundland and Labrador. I was glad to sign the PSAC petition on reopening the Gander Weather Office forecasting when I was in St. John's recently and had previously agreed to present the petition to Parliament.

We recognize the need for greater fairness in the distribution of federal jobs throughout the country and also recognize the economic importance of such presence. The New Democratic Party is disturbed by the number of jobs and services that have been reduced in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are committed to reviewing federal government policies that have resulted in this situation with a view to ensuring fairness and full access to federal government program delivery and services in this province.

Equalization

Although Newfoundland and Labrador has seen growth in its GDP recently due to oil and gas, it still has low incomes and high unemployment relative to the rest of Canada. Declining federal government transfers have made matters worse. The NDP supports a revised equalization formula based on a ten-province standard, with a better measure of fiscal capacity. Equalization reform will contribute to fairness and equity across Canada.

Labrador

The NDP supports the timely completion of the Trans-Labrador Highway to an acceptable national standard. The addition of the TLH to the National Highway System requires the commitment to a cost-shared federal-provincial agreement to complete this highway, which we support. We note the commitment of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to contribute \$50 Million to the project, indicative of the priority that the province has placed on the issue.

Our party recognizes the importance of 5 Wing Goose Bay to the local economy and employment. We support continued use of the Base for military training, along with efforts to develop alternative activities on the Base, consistent with Canada's defence strategy, to diversify the economy.

The NDP has long shared the anguish of the Innu over the devastating effects on families and children that their people have faced and the lack of support for creating conditions

that contribute to social development and control over their futures, including control over Innu education. In this context a reserve at Sheshatshui is seen as a step forward toward a negotiated Land Claims Settlement and self-government agreement, which would provide more comprehensive solutions. The NDP would work closely with the Innu leadership and people to provide services and support to allow the Innu to achieve their goals.

Marine Atlantic

The federal government has a constitutional obligation to maintain the ferry service that links Newfoundland and Labrador to the rest of Canada. The NDP is committed to maintaining Marine Atlantic as a crown corporation and to providing stable funding to this service. Recent rate increases have caused difficulty for residents and discouraged tourism, and our party supports an examination of a significant rate reduction, along with an exploration of ways to enhance Marine Atlantic's revenue.

Economic Development and Infrastructure

We support efforts to repair and restore key transportation infrastructure in Newfoundland and Labrador as part of our commitment to addressing transportation infrastructure needs across the country. Infrastructure funding needs federal and provincial participation to provide stability and enable long-term planning. New, flexible programs are needed to address needs of small, rural and northern communities.

Bilateral federal provincial agreements have been instrumental in helping sectors such as cultural industries, agrifoods and tourism to develop capacity and create new employment opportunities. Therefore, the NDP will continue to support federal cost-shared economic development and infrastructure agreements.

Our party also supports the development of a Canadian shipbuilding strategy and has strongly endorsed a National Shipbuilding Policy as developed in cooperation with the Marine Workers Federation and the industry. This would benefit facilities such as Bull Arm Fabrication site and the Marystown Shipyard and see greater job opportunities and job security as well as considerable economic activity.

Water quality and waste management are key issues for the NDP in this election. For example, our party would establish national standards for water safety, along with water quality regulations that would include standards for waste disposal, dump management, mine site operations and rehabilitation, forestry and farming practices and pesticide use. We have also purposed a major long-term infrastructure fund. As well, we have called for the long-term transfer of the full 5 cents a liter of gas tax. These are both specifically called for, and budgeted, in our platform that we released last week.

Newfoundland and Labrador is overdue for a comprehensive approach to waste management. We would be interested in exploring ways in which federal government environmental programs could be used to assist in the implementation of the Waste

Management Strategy as a necessary step in reducing pollution as well as an opportunity for economic development based on eco-friendly enterprise.

I appreciate the opportunity to share our views on these matters. Please be assured of our understanding of the difficulties faced by Newfoundland and Labrador as it pursues greater economic and social progress.

I also believe that the well-being and prospects of the people of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador would be greatly enhanced by implementation of our policies and programs for seniors, on affordable housing, health care, pharmacare and post-secondary education among others. Our budget amendment bill (C-48) provided significant resources (\$66 million) for Newfoundland and Labrador, in particular for affordable housing and post-secondary education. We fully intend to continue to deliver such tangible results. After all, your citizens want results, not empty promises.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jack Layton". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jack Layton
Leader, Canada's New Democratic Party

cc: Peter Stoffer, MP
Jack Harris, Leader, NDP Newfoundland and Labrador