

[Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Campaign](#)

Dear Ms. Davis

Thank you for reaching out to the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative campaign. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to your questions and share our strategy to support the well-being of children and youth in Nova Scotia.

1) What will your party do to listen to and elevate the voices and interests of children and youth?

In April, our government passed the Financial Measures Act, establishing the Office for Children and Youth Act. This office is a landmark in Nova Scotia's commitment to protecting and advocating for the rights of children and youth. The legislation creates an independent office dedicated solely to amplifying the voices and interests of our youngest citizens, providing a non-partisan, expert perspective on policies affecting their well-being.

This new office is central to our broader, cross-departmental approach to children's rights, involving departments like Community Services, Justice, Education and Early Childhood Development, and Health and Wellness. Our approach also includes ongoing consultation with children, youth, and their families. An example of this commitment is our recent review of the Children and Family Services Act, during which we engaged over 300 individuals across 60 sessions and gathered insights through surveys and written submissions, ensuring we build a responsive and inclusive system for Nova Scotia's children.

By creating this office and enacting these measures, we are reinforcing our commitment to keep children's voices at the heart of policy-making, focusing on their rights, safety, and well-being. A re-elected PC government will continue to engage children and families in policy development and fight for their best interests.

2) What will your party do to reduce rates of childhood poverty and food insecurity?

Reducing child poverty is a priority for our party, as it is instrumental to our future success and the well-being of our communities. We recognize that children are the backbone of our society, and ensuring their health and security is vital.

To address childhood poverty and food insecurity, our government has implemented significant initiatives that are already making a difference. In the last budget, we allocated an additional \$7.8 million for actions aimed at reducing

child poverty. We also committed \$42.5 million more in child-care funding this year, which will lower fees for families, create more child-care spaces, and enhance after-school care. This investment is fully recoverable from the Canada-Nova Scotia agreement.

Moreover, we have increased funding by \$5.1 million to raise rates and provide additional supports for foster children and their families, bringing total annual funding to \$16.7 million following our redesign initiative. These investments underscore our commitment to supporting vulnerable families through enhanced social services.

Most recently, we introduced the Nova Scotia School Lunch Program. This innovative pay-as-you-can system allows families to choose how much to contribute toward a nutritious lunch, with the option to pay as little as nothing at all. In its first phase, this program will serve over 75,000 elementary school students, potentially providing more than 13 million lunches in the coming school year. This initiative is a clear demonstration of our commitment to combating food insecurity among children.

Through the Department of Community Services, we support families on income assistance by helping them purchase school supplies. This year, we increased the payment for children aged 13 to 18 from \$160 to \$200, and for children aged five to 12 from \$80 to \$100. Furthermore, children who turn four by the end of December and are eligible for pre-primary in the fall will receive a \$100 payment automatically included in clients' August 29 payments, eliminating the need for a separate application process.

Lastly, we have introduced the Children's Sports and Arts Tax Credit, providing a refundable credit of \$500 per child to help offset the costs of enrolling in sports and arts programs. This initiative not only encourages participation in extracurricular activities but also contributes to the holistic development of our children.

If re-elected, we will continue to prioritize these initiatives and explore further ways to reduce child poverty and food insecurity, ensuring that every child in Nova Scotia has the opportunity to thrive.

3) What will your party do to ensure all children and youth are protected from systemic racism and discrimination?

Ensuring that all children and youth are protected from systemic racism and discrimination remains a critical commitment of our party. We have made significant strides to create a more equitable and inclusive society. For example, we have

partnered with the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia to help municipalities develop equity and anti-racism plans, investing \$1.8 million into this important initiative.

Our investment of \$4.2 million in the community-led African Nova Scotia Justice Institute has been pivotal in developing policies and support programs to address the overrepresentation of Black individuals in the justice system and combat anti-Black racism. We have also allocated \$100,000 to support training for law enforcement agencies, enhancing their cultural competency through training modules focused on ethics, accountability, and racially biased policing.

In February, we launched the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism's Community Network Grant program, which awarded \$289,000 in grants to 12 organizations in April, funding projects that align with the goals of Nova Scotia's Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy, the first of its kind in Canada.

Furthermore, we passed the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act in 2022, which acknowledges the systemic inequities in government policies and practices that harm underrepresented and underserved groups. This Act reflects our ongoing commitment to dismantling the policies and practices that have perpetuated these harms.

Our government unveiled the Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy – the first of its kind in Canada. Its goal is to ensure a whole-government approach in addressing systemic hate, inequity, and racism. The strategy details actions to ensure this work reaches all regions, communities, and people of our province.

As we seek re-election, we are dedicated to continuing these efforts, ensuring that all children and youth in Nova Scotia can thrive in an environment free from discrimination and prejudice.

4) How will your party uphold and protect the unique and inalienable rights of children and youth and realize the articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

We are focused on protecting children's rights and will continue to take a comprehensive, cross-departmental approach involving the Department of Justice, Department of Health and Wellness, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Community Services. By coordinating efforts across these key areas, we ensure that the protections and provisions necessary to safeguard children's rights are upheld.

We are equally committed to listening to and adapting to the evolving needs and views of children. This dedication is reflected in our commitment to regularly review,

consult on, and update the Children and Family Services Act. Through broad consultation efforts, we gather direct input from children, families, and their communities to make sure our policies reflect their real-life needs and experiences.

By approaching children's rights from multiple perspectives and engaging directly with those affected, we will continue building a framework that prioritizes the well-being, safety, and future of all children and youth in Nova Scotia.

5) How will your party improve data collection and availability for increased transparency and accountability about the health and well-being of children and youth?

Our party is committed to transparency and accountability in tracking the health and well-being of children and youth, and robust data collection is key to this. We regularly track and release data on critical indicators, such as child poverty and childcare arrangements, through the Department of Finance and Treasury Board. This data, essential for monitoring trends and making informed decisions, is always available to the public on the Finance and Treasury Board's Economics and Statistics webpage.

Our commitment to transparency and accountability extends beyond internal data collection; our government also values the oversight and insights provided by the Office of the Auditor General. Recent audits on critical areas such as the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of Children in Temporary Emergency Arrangements and Child and Youth Care Homes, as well as Healthy Eating in Schools, provide both qualitative and quantitative data that help us assess our effectiveness in meeting children's needs.