

NDP Response: Northern Premiers' Letter to Federal Party Leaders

How will you ensure federal policy decisions involving the North engage Northern leaders?

Northerners deserve a government that listens to their needs and is focused on their priorities. New Democrats know that rural, remote and Northern communities make incredible contributions to the prosperity and strength of our entire country.

Unfortunately, for too long Liberal and Conservative governments have worked to pit one region against another all the while failing to deliver the help that Canadians living in rural and remote communities need.

Jagmeet Singh's New Deal for People will ensure that the North finally has a partner in Ottawa. We're on your side and we're in it for you. We have a plan to make life easier and better for all Canadians, no matter where they live. We'll work with local, provincial, and territorial governments to ensure that all communities in our country have a bright future and the support they deserve.

What would you do to ensure territorial needs are recognized in federal planning and programs, including the territories limited fiscal capacity and small populations?

The unique nature of the North means that we need to have unique solutions to the challenges that local and territorial governments face. For years the priorities of the North were ignored. Governments in Ottawa put the priorities of the rich and well-connected over those of everyday people, and places like the North suffered because of it. Government after government has promised to recognize and prioritize territorial needs in federal planning and programs but time and time again, we've seen those promises are completely empty.

Jagmeet Singh's **New Deal for People** represents a change from many years of empty talk from the Liberals and cuts from the conservatives. Our New Deal is a new deal for the North as well. We'll create specific funding streams - like our Northern Infrastructure Fund - to ensure territorial needs are being addressed. A New Democrat government will be a true partner with the North. We're on your side and we're in it for you. Together we'll work to make life better for northerners and all Canadians.

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What critical investments will you make to strengthen Canada's position in the Arctic? How will you work with northerners, territorial governments, and indigenous rights holders in this work?

One of the biggest things we can do to protect our position in the Arctic is to ensure that the North and Northern communities are protected from the risks of climate change. As the climate crisis grows worse, arctic communities are dealing with rising sea levels, melting permafrost, and receding glacier - all of which put the future prosperity and the livelihood of northerners at risk. Jagmeet Singh's **New Deal for People** tackles the climate crisis head on and invests in the services and supports that matter to people.

Your priorities are Jagmeet's priorities because we're in it for you. A New Democrat government will work with northerners, territorial governments, and indigenous rights holders to ensure that critical northern infrastructure, transit, and energy projects get the support they need. These investments won't just create good jobs and make life better for Canadians in the North, they'll help continue to ensure our position in the arctic for generations to come.

How will you support existing and forthcoming modern treaties and devolution agreements across the territories? How will you support continued dialogue and sharing information with Indigenous people, governments, and organizations in your work?

New Democrats believe that governments should not be able to pick and choose which rights they will uphold and which ones they will ignore. A new framework for reconciliation must be grounded in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which sets out minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous peoples.

A New Democrat government will replace mere consultation with a standard of free, prior, and informed consent for Indigenous communities affected by government policies – including for all decisions affecting constitutionally-protected land rights, like energy project reviews. We are committed to good-faith, consent-based engagement and negotiations consistent with the Tsilhqot'in decision, an approach that honours Canada's legal and constitutional obligations.

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When it comes to the North specifically, we will respect Inuit self-determination by co-developing the federal government's Arctic Policy Framework through shared governance within the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, including through the adoption of an Inuit Nunangat policy in full partnership with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. We will support the economic and social self-reliance of Inuit by addressing the massive infrastructure deficit in Northern communities. Jagmeet Singh's **New Deal for People** also commits to supporting Indigenous Nations who are building and re-building their governance structures.

Will you support the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

In partnership with Indigenous peoples across the country, a New Democrat government will fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. To ensure that we're meeting our commitments we will also establish a National Council for Reconciliation to provide oversight and accountability for this process, reporting regularly to Parliament and Canadians.

Jagmeet Singh's **New Deal for People** also commits to working with Indigenous Peoples to co-develop a National Action Plan for Reconciliation, drawing directly from the TRC's Calls to Action and the UN Declaration to ensure that Canada's laws, policies, and practices are consistent with Canada's human rights commitments – including cultural rights, land rights, and rights to self-determination and self-government.

In response to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 80, we will also establish a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to acknowledge the painful legacy of colonization, honour the Survivors of residential schools, and help communities across Canada commit to meaningful reconciliation.

How will you respond to the Calls to Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls?

Respect for Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people must be at the core of a new Crown-Indigenous relationship. New Democrats will work in partnership with Indigenous women, the families of the missing and murdered, and communities to implement the Inquiry's Calls for Justice and the calls to action brought forward by communities.

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This includes establishing a comprehensive plan to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQI2S+ people — ensuring that all those fleeing violence have access to culturally appropriate programming, emergency shelters, and transitional housing.

New Democrats also acknowledge that respect for Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people must be made real by ensuring equitable access and self-determination over land, culture, language, housing, child care, income security, employment, education, and physical, mental, sexual, and spiritual health.

What action will you take to support the territories in their efforts to fight, adapt to, and mitigate climate change including natural disasters? How does this approach integrate and respect the wealth of Indigenous knowledge in all three territories? What will your approach be to working with territorial governments and Indigenous rights holders on the issues related to the environment, including species at risk?

Canada is facing a climate emergency. Decades of Liberal and Conservative delay and denial have left us unprepared for the coming changes as the world moves towards a low-carbon future. Everyday Canadians are doing their part to confront the climate crisis – but they need a government willing to make the right choices, too. We have to move past the delays and inaction of past Liberal and Conservative governments and take a fundamentally different approach to our future – one that recognizes a holistic definition of sustainability.

The NDP New Deal replaces Justin Trudeau’s empty talk with concrete action and it takes the climate crisis seriously. Our plan cuts emissions, invests in clean infrastructure and technology by making big polluters pay more, and creates 300,000 good jobs for working people while doing it. New Democrats will put reconciliation at the core of this effort, upholding Indigenous knowledge and respecting inherent sovereignty. The recognition of inherent rights, title, and treaty rights will be at the heart of our approach to addressing climate change.

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When it comes to protecting species at risk in Canada, New Democrats will use all the tools available under the Species at Risk Act and ensure the implementation of recovery strategies to preserve biodiversity for generations to come. We will expand the Indigenous Guardians Program, invest in Indigenous-led science, and support the creation of Indigenous-managed protected areas – making sure that species-recovery efforts respect Indigenous rights and embrace traditional knowledge to increase biodiversity.

How will you work to support territorial economic development and diversification? How will you support community and regional capacity development? How will you support innovation?

Making sure that northern communities thrive means working in partnership with territorial governments and northern people to expand economic opportunities and create good jobs for working people. Our investments in northern infrastructure - including building the roads, transit, good schools, hospitals, and housing projects communities deserve - will help grow the economy in the North and make life better at the same time.

Many Northern, rural, and remote communities are working hard to retain families, attract workers, and stop out-migration, but they can't do it alone. That's why New Democrats will put in place a new tax credit for graduates to work in designated rural and Northern communities, and make it easier for employers to hire and retain the workers they need. Smaller communities left behind by Liberals and Conservatives need dedicated regional economic-development support to help expand economic opportunities in a way that reflects the community's social and cultural values.

How do you believe critical Northern infrastructure regional land use planning and energy security needs will be best met? What do you believe are the greatest priorities in the area?

To make all of Canada's communities sustainable for the long term, we need to change how we build them. Rural and northern communities need fair access to federal infrastructure and transit funds, and more help in preparing for and dealing with the increasingly severe impacts of climate change. New Democrats will work with the territories and provinces to put in place a new deal for rural infrastructure programs that provide long-term predictable funding for communities. We'll increase the amount of help the federal government provides to communities to adapt to climate change and rebuild when disasters happen. We'll make sure that affordable housing investments go to rural communities, too – and that federal infrastructure dollars flow now to create good local jobs that stay in the community.

No one knows the priorities of the North than northerners. That's why we're committed to working with local and territorial governments to address the priorities that matter most to them. A New Democrat government will create a Northern Infrastructure Fund to fast-track investment for projects deemed a priority and focus on improving much-needed infrastructure like roads and broadband internet for communities in the North.

While health care is led by the territories, the federal government is a critical partner. How do you intend to work with the territories to fund health care in the north? How will you support the territories in improving the mental health and well-being of Northerners? How does your plan integrate access to housing that recognizes the role of mental health and addiction in homelessness or substandard housing?

Access to strong publicly-funded, publicly-delivered, health care is a fundamental right to which all Canadians - from coast to coast to coast – should benefit. Unfortunately, after years of cuts from the Conservatives and empty promises from the Liberals our health-care system is on life support.

Unlike Liberals who talk a big game then fail to act, or Conservatives who think that you should have to swipe your credit card before you can see a doctor, New Democrats will introduce health care that finally covers us from head to toe. Jagmeet Singh's **New Deal for People** will take concrete action to improve health care not only in the North but in every corner of the country and for every single Canadian.

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We'll introduce a national pharmacare program to ensure that all Canadians can access the prescription medicine they need, regardless of income or address. We'll ensure that mental health care and support for addictions is available at no cost for people who need it, and along with enshrining dental care in the Canada Health Act, we'll also work with the provinces and territories to expand access to eye care and hearing care as well.

What do you propose to do to address the high cost of food in remote communities and address food security?

Access to cheap, fresh, and high-quality food is something that many Canadians take for granted. For those in northern and remote communities the high cost of food and basics often means making difficult decisions or struggling to make ends meet at the end of the month. No one should ever have to choose between diapers for the kids, paying the utility bills or putting food on the table for their family.

Jagmeet Singh's **New Deal for People** invests in the things that matter to families and the services that communities need. Working together with northern communities, we're committed to reforming the Nutrition North program to improve food security for northern families. We will support northern and Indigenous food sovereignty, by working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, Métis and northern communities to expand access to healthy food, including traditional and country foods.

We also know that lack of food security can be especially hard on children and young people. That's why we'll also partner with the territories, municipalities, and Indigenous communities in the North to develop a national school-nutrition program that will give every child in Canada access to healthy food, and the food literacy skills to make healthy choices for life.

How would your government support northerners in addressing other social indicators of health such as an ongoing shortage of adequate housing?

New Democrats believe that everyone in Canada should be able to find a safe and affordable place to call home. No one in this country should be forced to live in housing that makes them sick. Decades of failure and broken promises from Conservative and Liberal governments have left communities in the North and across the country with overcrowded, often dilapidated, homes and long wait lists that are unacceptable.

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We know that without access to safe, stable, and affordable housing, it's impossible to address any of the other social indicators of health. That's why New Democrats will introduce new dedicated funding to address this housing crisis head on and we'll also ensure that we work with Indigenous communities to implement co-developed First Nations, Métis, and Inuit housing strategies. **Our New Deal for People** also will ensure that all Canadians, no matter where they live, have access to the resources they need to make their homes more energy efficient and affordable.

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