

September 19, 2008

RE: Questionnaire

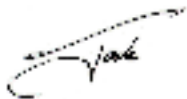
Attached please find the response of Canada's New Democrats to your 2008 Election questionnaire. It is the policy of our party to respond on behalf of all New Democrat candidates.

Our full platform will be released shortly and our web site is updated with all of our latest information. To find out more, we encourage you to consult: www.ndp.ca

Thank you for your interest in the views of Canada's New Democrats on the critical issues facing Canadians.

We appreciate your efforts to help voters make an informed decision on voting day.

Sincerely,



Jack Layton
Leader of Canada's New Democrats

Question 1

New Democrats believe in listening to and consulting with ordinary Canadians and their organizations as part of the policy development process. New Democrats also pride themselves for bringing the concerns of ordinary Canadians to Parliament. For example, in the last Parliament NDP MPs Charlie Angus and Alex Atamanenko both worked hard to ensure that Canadians are aware that the majority of farm families support the Canadian Wheat Board after the Harper Conservatives placed an unconstitutional gag order on the Canadian Wheat Board.

Question 2

New Democrats are concerned about the impact high oil and natural gas prices are having on working families. As natural gas is one of the key components in chemical fertilizer its price has a direct impact upon farm families. As available supplies of easily accessible fossil fuels decrease in the upward pressure on the cost of products from these non-renewable energy sources will increase.

New Democrats believe the best way to deal with these rising costs is to move toward a more sustainable system of agricultural production which moves away from relying on inputs based upon non-renewable resources. This will help reduce the input costs that farm families pay to large multinational corporations.

Later in this election Jack Layton and the New Democrats will be bringing forward a comprehensive plan to help farm families deal with the economic crunch they find themselves in.

Question 3

New Democrats have long been calling for major government investment in Canada's crumbling rail infrastructure and infrequent service throughout our country. Although railroads built and connected Canada, it is truly regrettable that they have been allowed to go to ruin and, in many cases, have even been dismantled under Liberal and Conservative governments.

The current state of our rail system is unacceptable. Countless communities and businesses across Canada depend on our railways and yet they are being neglected. The NDP supports a new national vision for our railways. Better rail service is good for the economy and is one of the best things we can do for the environment. In addition to reducing congestion on our roads, rail is one of the cleanest and most energy-efficient systems of transport for both goods and people, and one which has already been proven by the test of time. The technology was developed long ago, is well-understood and is there waiting for us to implement it.

Recently, NDP MPs Tony Martin and Charlie Angus cited a current U.S. study reporting that an enhanced rail service in nine Midwest U.S. states could generate \$23.1 billion in the economy.

In the case of freight rates, New Democrats would be willing to develop a system of mandatory, periodic reviews of freight rates to determine if adjustments to the cap are warranted. However, New Democrats strongly support maintenance of the cap as many studies have shown its removal will most likely result in increased freight charges for farm families.

Question 4

The Canadian Grain Commission is the result of an act of 1912, which established three grain commissioners to oversee the regulation of the movement of grain from the country elevator to the point where it was loaded for export or processed in Canada. It has functioned in the interest of farmers. One of the main reasons it exists is to retain quality, so the wheat we send overseas has a stamp of quality from Canada.

Today, approximately 700 dedicated employees arbitrate disagreements over grain and weight, inspect grain passing in and out of terminal elevators, license and regulate elevators and grain companies and, most important, administer the Canadian grading system. Canadian grains are trusted and respected throughout the world due to the honesty and thoroughness of the Canadian Grain Commission.

Bill C-39, as it stands, has a potential threat to Canadian grain producers. New Democrats know the Grain Commission has served as an independent referee to settle disputes between Canadian grain producers and the powerful companies that buy and export. It is no secret that our system of doing things in Canada is under attack.

C-39 was flawed right from the start. Instead of having a study done by a parliamentary committee, the Harper government used a report prepared by a polling firm whose very existence depends on contracts from government and large corporations.

The Harper Conservatives' plan to eliminate the requirement for grain buyers to post security bonds and expose grain producers to financial harm in the event of a grain buyer bankruptcy or refusal to pay shows that the Conservatives are more concerned with protecting the interests of big agri-business than farm families. New Democrats realize this and fought hard against not only C-39 but also Stephen Harper's plan to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board. New Democrats will continue to fight on behalf of farm families and would never consider introducing a bill so harmful to the interests of farmers as C-39.

Question 5

While federal New Democrats have not developed a formal policy concerning Alternative Land Use Services, an NDP government would be open to considering such a proposal and looks forward to meeting with farmers to discuss such this initiative and others.