

Green New Deal for NL

Summary Report for Green New Deal Town Hall
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Summary

This report is based on the first Green New Deal town hall to take place in St. John's. This report is not a final draft, but is meant to begin the conversation of what a Green New Deal should look like for Newfoundland and Labrador. Notes from the day were also sent to the national group developing a Green New Deal for Canada.

On a Saturday afternoon, about 60 people gathered to share their ideas, and were broken into 10 tables of about 6 people each. Each table had a facilitator to guide the conversation and a note taker. Participants were asked to share what they would like to see in a Green New Deal (green lines) and what they do not want to see (red lines). Each table then collectively decided what their top 5 green lines and red lines were. These were put on a board and discussed in a report back to the entire room. Notes from the day were grouped into broad categories and summarized below. Summaries highlight popular discussion points, with an emphasis on green lines and red lines that made it to the board, but are not meant to be comprehensive. Please see Appendix for full list of ideas shared.

Overall, there was a sense of urgency to the discussion. People wanted change and they wanted it now. While there was also general acknowledgement that there needed to be a transition, attendees were ready to declare a climate emergency and make big changes to curb climate change. The most popular topics for discussion were (1) Energy Production, (2) Community Development, and (3) Waste Management. Other topics included financial reform, family care, labour force, government finances, transportation, economic development, educational reform, public awareness, democratic reform, environmental legislation, and food security.

Green New Deal Guidelines

There were some suggestions for how a Green New Deal should be organized and designed. This included genuine consultations, building community-focused solutions, and recognizing the personal as political. It was also acknowledged that the Green New Deal should take a broad, holistic view of change, and there needs to be a transition plan as short-term band-aid solutions won't work. Organizers were cautioned against "progressive elitism" and over-focusing on individual behaviour over structural concerns. Having a strong public awareness aspect with positive messaging and not vilifying workers was also discussed.

Energy Production

This was a popular topic at the town hall and seemed to be discussed at every table. Generally, people wanted to end all oil exploration and production and transition to small-scale renewable energy production. Legislative changes were identified as necessary to make this transition, both for solidifying protections and removing current impediments. There was also discussion of investing in carbon capture technology and weakening the university's relationship with oil companies.

Community Development

Community development largely centered on land management, with some discussion of infrastructure development. Conversation on land management was centered on stopping urban sprawl and conserving ecosystems, with an emphasis on protected wetlands. Building developments that do not require private vehicles to access was also highlighted as important. There was demand for better environmental assessments for developments, building "complete" communities, and investing in climate change adaptation and resilience measures. Infrastructure development included ending the use of public-private partnerships (P3s) for construction projects, changing building codes to be low or neutral carbon, and engaging federal funding to help people with this transition to develop efficient homes.

Waste Management

Waste management covered an array of topics including reducing or ending plastics, "polluter pays" policies, and targeting initiatives that encourage reusing, recycling and repairing. Discussion on plastics was largely focused on banning single use plastics, but there were also concerns raised about eliminating plastic packaging and reducing or phasing out all plastic waste. "Polluter pays" policies were largely focused on making producers and distributors responsible for waste, including phasing out plastics, and ending public subsidies to polluters. There was considerate conversation on growing circular economies, supporting repair culture, programs and infrastructure, and legislating reusability of all products by manufacturers.

Transportation

Transportation was a popular topic and discussed at every table. Much of the conversation focused on increasing investment in and accessibility of public transit, encouraging transition to electric vehicles in

NL (both private and public) either through legislation or tax breaks, and building comprehensive infrastructure to support electric vehicles through greater access to charging stations.

Democratic Reform

Conversation around democratic reform largely focused on improving the decision making process through genuine consultations with Indigenous communities, but there was also discussion of electoral reform to build trust with politicians, ending partisanship, and regulating a fair media. There was significant demand to improve consultation with Indigenous communities about project development, and to ensure that any new projects are community-focused and have consent. There was also demand to have no forced migrations of rural or northern communities. Electoral reform included better representation from Indigenous and marginalized voices, and having more honesty in politics.

Government Finances

Incorporating taxes and spending, government finances largely focused on higher taxes on income, and similar measures to curb income inequality. There was desire to use funds from a carbon tax for green initiatives or as an emergency fund.

Economic Development

Economic development focused on stopping raw exports of natural resources and moving the economy away from its reliance on non-renewable industries. There was also some discussion of nationalizing more industries, democratizing the economy, reducing or ending corporate subsidies, and preventing further privatization of the postal service.

Educational Reform

Much of the discussion of educational reform was focusing on expanding school curricula from pre-K to PhD to include climate change and the environment. There was also a desire for greater public awareness and education about climate change and environmental destruction.

Environmental Legislation

While legislative changes have been discussed as key to addressing barriers in a wide range of areas, there was significant demand for government to declare a climate emergency and implement

environmental policies that were measurable and would be committed to. There was also demand to make a healthy environment a human right.

Food Security

Increasing, supporting, and promoting local food production was a popular topic and there were different ideas about how to do this, including backyard farming, foraging, restaurants using local food, community gardens, and food security rights legislation. There was also demand to ban neonicotinoids and glyphosate, protect pollinators, and stop underpaid or dangerous farm work.

Financial Reform

Financial reform included changing or nationalizing banks, reducing or ending student debt, implementing a universal basic income, and changing the measure of the economy away from GDP as a measure of success towards a focus on social health.

Family Care

Family care included a childcare strategy, expanding healthcare, public funding for undervalued social reproduction labour, and ending domestic violence.

Labour Force

Conversation around the labour force largely focused on retraining workers for a green economy. There was also a discussion of changing the structure of the labour force by valuing all types of work, developing meaningful work, and having shorter work weeks to improve quality of life.

Appendix

This section consists of raw notes gathered from tables. Repetitions were condensed and measured with (#).

Green New Deal Guidelines

- Involved people
- Community focused solutions
- Recognize there is no distinction between public and private sector - the personal is political
- Think about humanity and all of earth's life as a whole
- Stop thinking about our own selves, province, nation but think as a whole of species. Identify with all of humanity.
- Good PR strategies and good communication - educate the general public about the movement and counter potentially negative media-messaging
- Create policy and support initiatives that make sustainable and green choices easy and accessible
- Solid PR campaign
- Not giving bad faith arguments equal footing with facts in debates
- No short term, band-aid, solutions
- Stop expecting things to happen overnight - lack of transition plan
- Focus on phase-out rather than "stop now"
- No progressive elitism
- Don't over-focus on individual behaviour over structural concerns
- Stop placing burden of change on consumers sp. Low income earners
- Stop vilifying oil field workers; general divisiveness
- Vilifying people who work in carbon emitting sectors
- Focus on vulnerable communities (both climate disaster areas and communities that rely on carbon-producing jobs)
- Focus on finding common grounds and values
- Make biodiversity a topic during consultations
- Small scale initiatives can add up to big change
- Canada must still lead if others drag their heels
- Not to make this a partisan plan

Energy Production

- Move from an economy based in oil to one based in sustainable resources. Reinvest these public subsidies in renewable energy
- Invest in carbon capture technology (2)

Promote Small-Scale Renewable

- Promote small-scale energy production rather than mega-projects
- Explore/invest in renewable, clean energies (ex: wind, solar, geothermal) (6)
- Provincial plan to transition from black to green energy
- Subsidize green energy
- Decrease cost of electricity
- Incentives for individuals to adopt green tech at home
- Renewable energy focus now
- Promote and support small scale energy production over single source mega projects.
- Implementation on a national power grid/ strategy.

End Destructive Energy Production

- End public subsidies to the fossil fuel/oil and gas industry (9). Use the money freed up and the increased oil revenues for social goods
- Divest public money from carbon industry (2)
- No offshore exploration/seismic testing/ exploratory drilling (6)
- No harmful energy production, i.e. Nuclear, fracking, offshore oil
- Phase out oil
- No oil field expansion: no new wells
- No pipelines (2)
- Stop coal-use / no coal plants
- No hydro-dams
- No fossil fuel development (5)
- No tar sands expansion
- Increase cost of gas
- No resource exploitation in foreign states without consent of residents
- No more offshore deals
- Scrap muskrat falls and BC pipeline
- Reduce emissions now
- Reduce fossil fuel dependency
- Stop university obsession with fossil fuels
- Public universities need to divest from fossil fuels

Legislation

- Pass legislation to encourage development of diverse public and private energy sources, including options to sell back to the grid
- Stop legislation that facilitates additional drilling
- Legislation and policy to encourage the development of diverse public and private green energies, such as selling back to the grid.
- End legislation and policy that facilitates additional drilling, such as the attenuation of Environmental Impact Assessment procedures, exemptions that allow oil & gas exploration in Marine Protected Areas, etc.
- Legislate transition to alternatives
- Legislated transition to 0 emissions.
- Amend Bill C-16 at the provincial level to remove barriers to private & green energy generation.
- Remove barriers to wind projects, i.e. Bill C-16

Community Development

Land and ocean management

- Better land management
- Stop urban sprawl (2)
- Conserve habitats/ecosystems
- No diverting/destroying wetlands/rivers for projects
- No development on protected lands, i.e. Wetlands, forests, Indigenous reserves
- No further loss of biodiversity/habitat
- Better environmental assessment for development projects
- All development be assessed on their impacts on biodiversity. Losing species more rapidly than ever in history.
- Build complete streets and complete communities
- Push for municipal, provincial, and federal planning toward complete neighbourhoods
- Invest in adaptation and climate change resilience (2)
- No new development without honest accounting of waste
- Stop development that intensifies reliance on private motor vehicles (2)
- No new housing developments without public transportation access.
- Better municipal focus on transit/cycling/walking infrastructure
- Protect Oceans
- Protect forests
- Create a secular means to build communities to replace the fading churches but continue their good work
- Better consultation on development
- Hold industry not taxpayers accountable for environmental destruction

Infrastructure

- No P3s (public-private partnerships) for infrastructure (re)building (2)
- Federal funding to upgrade infrastructure for low carbon
- New low carbon building codes
- Update building codes encourage a shift towards carbon neutral housing.
- New developments use geothermal
- Efficient homes
- No infrastructure projects without Indigenous consent

Waste Management

- Serious legislated action on waste in general we ...no longer export our waste.
- Empower and refocus the MMSB- assign it s.m.a.r.t goals and hold it accountable.
- No more food waste going to landfills

Plastics

- Introduce legislation to ban the production of single use plastic products (6)
 - Plastic waste reduction
 - Phase out plastics (2)
 - Eliminating plastic packaging
 - Replace disposable plasticware with compostable
 - Tackle wasteful packaging

Polluter Pays

- Make producers and distributors responsible for waste, including plastics which ought to be phased out
- End ocean pollution
- End public subsidies for polluters
- Freeze emissions
- Criminal and civil suits against polluters like what happened with tobacco last century and opioid makers this century
- Ending subsidies to companies known to pollute

Reuse / Recycle / Repair

- Legislate reusability of all products at level of manufacturer
- Legislate product lifespan and reliability
- Promote/support repair culture, programmes, and infrastructure
- Ending consumer culture (right to repair, recycling/reuse)
- Ending the carnival of excess that is consumer culture
- Right to repair legislation

- Grow and subsidize circular economies (2)
- Circular economy where the producers of goods manage the waste
- More recycling programs (2)
- Bring recycling back to sellers/distributors instead of landfills
- Increase recycling at point-of-purchase (grocery stores)
- Incentives for reducing consumption/waste

Transportation

- Increase investment in & accessibility of public transit (4)
 - Including incentives to choose public transit (4)
 - Policy and planning for “Mobility for the Public Good” – i.e., to make safe and sustainable transportation options feasible, accessible and convenient, so that it “just makes sense” to opt for them.
- Encourage transition to electric vehicles in NL (both private and public) (4)
 - Legislate a transition to zero emission vehicles (2)
 - Tax breaks for purchases or use of low carbon transportation, introduce federal & provincial tax rebates for the purchase of electric vehicles.
- Comprehensive infrastructure to support electric vehicles (5)
 - Every rural post office should have a charging station
 - Implement high speed charging station
- Increase the presence of charging stations for electric vehicles throughout the province.
- Focus on car sharing, one vehicle per person is wasteful
- Stop expansion of airports

Democratic Reform

- Fair media
- Ending media manipulations of public opinion
- Stop leaving people behind, without concern for economic equality and job transition
- End partisanship
- Encourage community spirit
- Holding industry/government accountable to higher standards (regulation that isn’t token gestures)
- No imperialist aggression
- No more colonization home and broad
- Ending the corporate influence over government
- Move from corporate and political business as usual. Collaborative approach.

Electoral reform

- Move toward better representation for Indigenous and other marginalized voices
- Honest politics & politicians
- Hold politicians to better account

- Change the political landscape; more parties
- Explore a public recall mechanism within our electoral process to hold elected officials to greater account.

Decision Making

- Centre, do not simply consult, Indigenous voices
- Consult and consent from indigenous community.
- Respect the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous peoples
- No trampling Indigenous rights
- Respect treaty rights
- Increase the engagement of indigenous communities
- Community-focus - projects must have consent
- Consultations must not exclude the vulnerable
- No sham consultations
- No forced migrations of rural or northern communities
- No significant investment of public funds without active public oversight and input.

Government Finances

- Higher taxes on income (5), progressive tax reform for economic security
- Higher taxes on purchases above basic needs
- Progressive wealth tax
- Higher taxes on income and purchases above basic needs
- End tax shelters/loopholes
- No net cost increase of living for people earning under a certain amount (i.e \$40k/ year)
- Low-income earners shouldn't bear a bigger burden
- Earmark funds from carbon tax for things that positively impact everyday people
- Carbon tax revenue used for green initiatives
- Remove funds derived from non-renewable resources out of operating budgets and into "rainy day & development" funds.
- End corporate subsidies
- Genuine investments in indigenous communities
- Remove non-profit status of groups that push verifiably false information
- Budgets and taxation cannot remain business as usual on a planet that is anything but

Economic Development

- Stop raw natural resource exports
- Stop economic reliance on non-renewable industries
- Nationalize more industries
- Democratize the economy ie oil, mining. Etc.
- The market can't solve our problems
- Ensure Labrador benefits the most from their natural resources.

- End resource exploitation
- Stop further privatization of the postal service (2)
- Ending subsidies to corporations' period
- End government subsidies to corporations that exploit the earth
- Reduce reliance on international supply chain
- Increase local production.
- Can't eliminate jobs without plan to transition

Educational Reform

- Education reform from pre-K to PhD
- Include climate change & environment in educational curriculum
- Environmental education + access to nature in schools
- Significantly increase education on environmental studies in the public-school system.
- Education initiatives in public schools
- Grants/scholarships for new ideas

Public Awareness

- Better communications ...avoid fake news. Media driven how we need to live. We are consumer driven. We are a self-interest group driven by the media. Need to find a way to communicate/counter communication media. Educate people better.
- More public awareness/education
- Promote awareness of environmental destruction
- Don't blame victims, oil workers, migrants, etc. Not their problem.

Environmental Legislation

- Push for all levels of government to declare a climate emergency and develop timelines with measurable, accountable targets (4)
 - We need to make it an election campaign issue - put tools in the hands of grassroots movement.
 - All levels of government to declare a climate emergency and work together on a Green New Deal. We need political action. We need political will behind this. Non partisan approach to world problems. Bold action for climate change emergency. Timelines, hard goals, measurable, tangible, targets. We have signed on to the Paris agreement. We need to be committed to these targets.
- Demand that all party candidates and elected officials include environmental policy that is measurable & cooperative across party lines
- Declare healthy environment a human right
- Request all candidates to build a plan for green future
- Enshrine access to a clean & sustainable environment into the Charter of Rights & Freedoms.

Food Security

- Community gardens
- Ban neonicotinoids and glyphosate
- Protect pollinators
- Green food incentives & rebates
- Food security rights legislation
- Increase/support/promote local food production (6)
 - Produce and buy local food; backyard farming, foraging, restaurants use local food
 - Policies and programs to support local food production for local consumption as far as possible, recognizing the limitations of geography and climate (e.g. Redistribute subsidies from export-oriented agriculture to local farmers).
 - Locally produced food using passive solar/geothermal
- Stop underpaid or dangerous farm work (2)

Financial Reform

- Change banking models
- Nationalise the bank
- Reduce/end student debt
- Universal basic income (2)
- Stop using GDP as measure of success
- Stop use of housing stats and GDP
- New economy metrics (shift from GDP/growth model) that focus on social health

Family Care

- Nationalize the childcare sector
- National childcare strategy
- Subsidize daycare/after school care
- Shift healthcare focus from “treat” to “prevent”
- Universal pharma dental & eye care
- Public funding for undervalued work, domestic labour, care work, etc.
- Tackling domestic abuse

Labour Force

- Implement fair labour practices & retraining toward a green economy
- Build a culture that values all types of work
- Green jobs
- End job elimination without replacement

- Green tech/jobs
- Meaningful work
- Retraining workers
- Education programs for transitioning workers
- Shorter work weeks to improve quality of life