

Retail Council of Canada

Political Party Policy Survey - Green Party Response

- 1. Retailers are resilient and despite unprecedented challenges brought on by supply chain issues, inflation and increased competition from e-commerce entities, New Brunswick's retailers continue to fight to remain a viable and essential element of the province's economy. Despite these challenges, the retail sector provides an over \$17.2 billion boost to the provincial economy, and over 50,000 jobs. But unlike other key sectors, the New Brunswick government has not developed a sector strategy to ensure that government policies are aligned to support the industry and enhance its competitiveness.**

If elected, will your party work with the Retail Council of Canada to develop and implement a retail sector strategy? This strategy would be similar to the strategies that have previously been developed for other economic sectors and would ensure New Brunswick's retail industry continues to prosper?

Yes, if elected, we will develop a retail sector strategy based on a robust consultation process.

- 2. The increase in dramatic weather events across Atlantic Canada is evidence that governments need action plans to mitigate the impact of climate change on critical infrastructure in the transportation sector. Most products sold in retail stores across Atlantic Canada arrive via truck and to a lesser extent, via rail. Many of the trucks and rail cars delivering retail product to Atlantic Canadian stores must travel through parts of New Brunswick, to reach their destination. As New Brunswick's highways and rail systems are a vital part of the Atlantic Canada supply chain, the New Brunswick government is aware of the climate risks to areas like the Isthmus of Chignecto (connecting Nova Scotia and New Brunswick). While local, provincial and federal governments have worked together to complete a feasibility study of the climate risks to the Isthmus of Chignecto, debate continues over jurisdiction and the proper path forward. Nevertheless, each passing year seemingly increases the risk of storm surge flooding the Isthmus of Chignecto and rendering the Trans Canada Highway and the CN Rail line impassable. Given that this is the only viable land transportation route between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, lack of government action will have a significant impact on the economies of each Atlantic Province.**

If elected, will your party commit to work together with all levels of government to plan and implement timely solutions to the climate change challenges – like sea level rise at the Isthmus of Chignecto - that could severely impact the retail supply chain in New Brunswick and across the Atlantic region?

Yes, the Green Party of New Brunswick is committed to working with affected communities, Nova Scotia, and the federal government to ensure that the potential negative impacts from storm

surges and flooding within the Chignecto Isthmus are addressed. We recognize the importance of safeguarding this essential transportation link between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, which is vital to the economies of both provinces and the entire Atlantic region.

- 3. Retail employees (and their customers) are on the front line of increasing threats to their safety as a result of both organized retail crime as well as prolific and often violent offenders who use a range of dangerous weapons and tactics. Retail employees also face complex interactions with those dealing with mental health issues and drug induced behaviours. RCC has begun the execution of a coordinated strategy to address these issues in collaboration with police agencies, retailers, community groups and other key stakeholders.**

If elected, will your party support RCC's initiatives with the Department of Public Safety and join other key stakeholders at the table in an effort to ensure a coordinated response to retail safety and crime?

Yes, the safety of retail employees and customers is a priority. If elected, the Green Party is committed to working collaboratively with police agencies, retailers, and community partners for a coordinated response to retail safety and crime.

- 4. Although many RCC members have generous paid and unpaid sick leave programs, the reality is that not all businesses are financially able to offer sick leave at the levels that have recently been contemplated in New Brunswick. Most provinces offer unpaid sick leave at levels that are similar to the existing mandate in New Brunswick as these governments understand the ever-increasing cost and staffing pressures on businesses.**

If elected, will your party commit to making no changes to sick leave provisions in the province?

No. While we understand the financial pressures many businesses face, the Green Party believes that access to adequate sick leave is essential for the health and well-being of workers and the public. Fair sick leave provisions help prevent the spread of illness, protect employees' health, and create more resilient workplaces.

If you answered No to the last question: If your political party believes there is a social imperative for a significant and expensive initiative like introducing paid sick leave or dramatically increasing the number of unpaid sick days, will your party commit to offering such support through a government-funded program?

Yes. We would ensure that small and medium-sized businesses are not disproportionately burdened by these changes. We would explore the feasibility of government-funded programs or other financial support to assist small and medium-sized businesses in offering paid sick leave.

- 5. New Brunswick has established a predictable model for calculating annual minimum wage adjustments based on the Consumer Price Index. The approach helps ensure politics are removed from the process, and that minimum wage increases are balanced fairly between**

the interests of employees and employers. New Brunswick's model also mandates a review, every two-years to ensure that the province's wage remains competitive within the country. This approach provides businesses with predictability and allows them to plan for the cost increases throughout their salary scale that result from minimum wage increases.

If elected, will your party commit to maintaining the current model of determining annual minimum wage adjustments through a formula that is linked to the change in the CPI for the previous year?

No. The Green Party is committed to ensuring that workers can earn a living wage that reflects the true cost of living. If elected, we will review the effectiveness of this approach to ensure that it meets the needs of both workers and employers. To support small and medium businesses during this transition, we will also advocate for reducing taxes on these businesses, ensuring they can thrive while providing fair compensation to their employees.

- 6. Competitive tax rates are an important tool for governments to attract and retain businesses. New Brunswick's commercial tax rates are generally competitive within Atlantic Canada while the province's Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) is equal to that in the other Atlantic provinces. However, Prince Edward Island recently lowered its small business tax rate to 1% while New Brunswick's small businesses continue to struggle with the costs of doing business while competing with retailers from all over the world. During the summer of 2024, the Premier of New Brunswick promised that if re-elected, his party would lower the HST to 13%, over a period of two years.**

If elected, will your party pledge to not raise corporate taxes (small and large businesses) or the provincial portion of the HST during your mandate so as to maintain New Brunswick's competitive tax position within Atlantic Canada?

No. The Green Party recognizes the importance of competitive tax rates in fostering a thriving business environment in New Brunswick. However, we also believe in the necessity of ensuring that our tax policies are equitable and contribute to the overall well-being of our communities.

If elected, will your party commit to lowering the small business tax to 1%?

Yes. If elected, we will pledge to lower the small business tax rate to 1% and raise the income threshold from \$500,000 to \$700,000.

Will your party commit to lowering the HST during your mandate?

No. Rather than committing to lowering the HST, we will explore more comprehensive approaches to tax reform that address the needs of residents and businesses while promoting sustainability and social equity.



7. **During the 2010's, the New Brunswick government did not always provide the necessary leadership and direction in environmental stewardship. The result of this lack of leadership was as follows:**
- a. **a confusing patchwork of local initiatives to ban single use plastic bags.**
 - b. **a government mandated administrative structure for its environmental stewardship programs which is not harmonized with best practices from across the country.**

Such actions have needlessly created public confusion, administrative red tape and increased costs for businesses in the province. Given the growth of extended producer responsibility programs in each province, combined with the small size of each Atlantic Province, it is imperative for each Atlantic government to work together and harmonize best practices related to solid waste regulations. A regionally harmonized approach avoids public confusion, reduces red tape and makes it easier for businesses to meet environmental mandates throughout the Atlantic region without creating needless administrative challenges.

If elected, will your government take action to harmonize policies related to solid waste regulations across Atlantic Canada?

The Green Party is committed to examining solid waste regulations across Atlantic Canada. We are keen on learning about best practices that support businesses in complying with environmental mandates.