



Solidarity Halifax Opposes Liberal Austerity Agenda

1. The Liberal government plans to continue its austerity agenda in the coming provincial budget. Austerity is the ruling class solution to the Great Recession of 2008. Instead of reining in the big banks and corporations, the ruling class seeks to blame working people for this economic crisis. It was finance capital, not nurses, teachers and bus drivers who crashed the economy. We didn't cause this crisis, and we won't pay for it.
2. While full details of the budget will not be available until April 9th it is clear from statements the Premier and his Ministers have made, that they intend to inflict pain on the working class in Nova Scotia. This will likely include privatization of public services, rising tuition fees, ongoing freezes to income assistance rates, ongoing corporate welfare and the possibility of a health levy.
3. The privatization agenda includes outsourcing maintenance of basic public documents like vehicle registration, land registration and more to private, for-profit companies. These are services that should be run in the public interest and not to generate profits for corporations. Even more worrying is the possibility that these services, which contain personal information about Nova Scotians, could be turned over to an American corporation and subject to the Patriot Act in the US. This is on top of cuts already made to public services in tourism and child welfare.
4. On health care, the government is moving forward with plans to privatize home care services across Nova Scotia. This will be done through a process called 'competitive bidding'. What this means is thousands of health care workers, mostly older women, will be fired and forced to reapply for their jobs at a much lower wage rates and with few or no benefits. This was done in Ontario and Alberta with disastrous results. Patient care will suffer. The Liberals are also talking about the possibility of a health levy. This would be a flat fee, of several hundred dollars, everyone would have to pay each year to access the public health care system.
5. The Liberals continue to starve the post-secondary education system of the resources it needs. The government will allow tuition fees to increase again at our universities and college, while class sizes get bigger and administration salaries continue to grow.
6. In the election the Liberals campaigned on a promise to reinvest money that had been cut from P-12 education under the previous government. Instead, however, they have announced education "reform" initiatives that do not provide any new funding, and tried to pit teachers against parents on issues such as snow days. Meanwhile, many Nova Scotian students are in junior high and high school classes of 30-38, and special needs continue to go unaddressed.

7. When it comes to social assistance, the Liberals began their mandate by freezing personal allowance payments last year and are now having a Montreal-based corporation review the entire system. Social assistance payments remain well below the poverty line, damning tens of thousands of Nova Scotians to poverty. The Liberals have also begun closing rural income assistance offices. With the cuts that have been made to Employment Insurance by the federal Conservatives, more Nova Scotians will be forced to look at income assistance for survival.

8. The Liberals continue the failed economic development policy of corporate welfare, which has been done by political parties of all stripes for decades. Recently, they gave \$22 million to the Royal Bank, one of the most profitable corporations in the country. Corporate welfare will never develop our economy. Corporations come here, get the subsidies, and then leave when the subsidies run out.

9. There are alternatives to austerity capitalism. Life doesn't have to be like this. Through a mix of public ownership, workers cooperatives, and non-profit enterprise, we can build a sustainable economy and keep more of our wealth here in Nova Scotia, instead of sending it to corporate shareholders in Toronto and New York. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Nova Scotia Office has also published progressive budgets for the past 15 years. These budgets demonstrate that we can afford to invest in health care, education and eliminating poverty.

10. We need a government willing to break with austerity capitalism and begin building a real future in Nova Scotia. If you are interested in building alternatives to capitalism, contact Solidarity Halifax and get involved in the struggle for justice. Another world is possible.

Learn more about Solidarity Halifax at solidarityhalifax.ca

