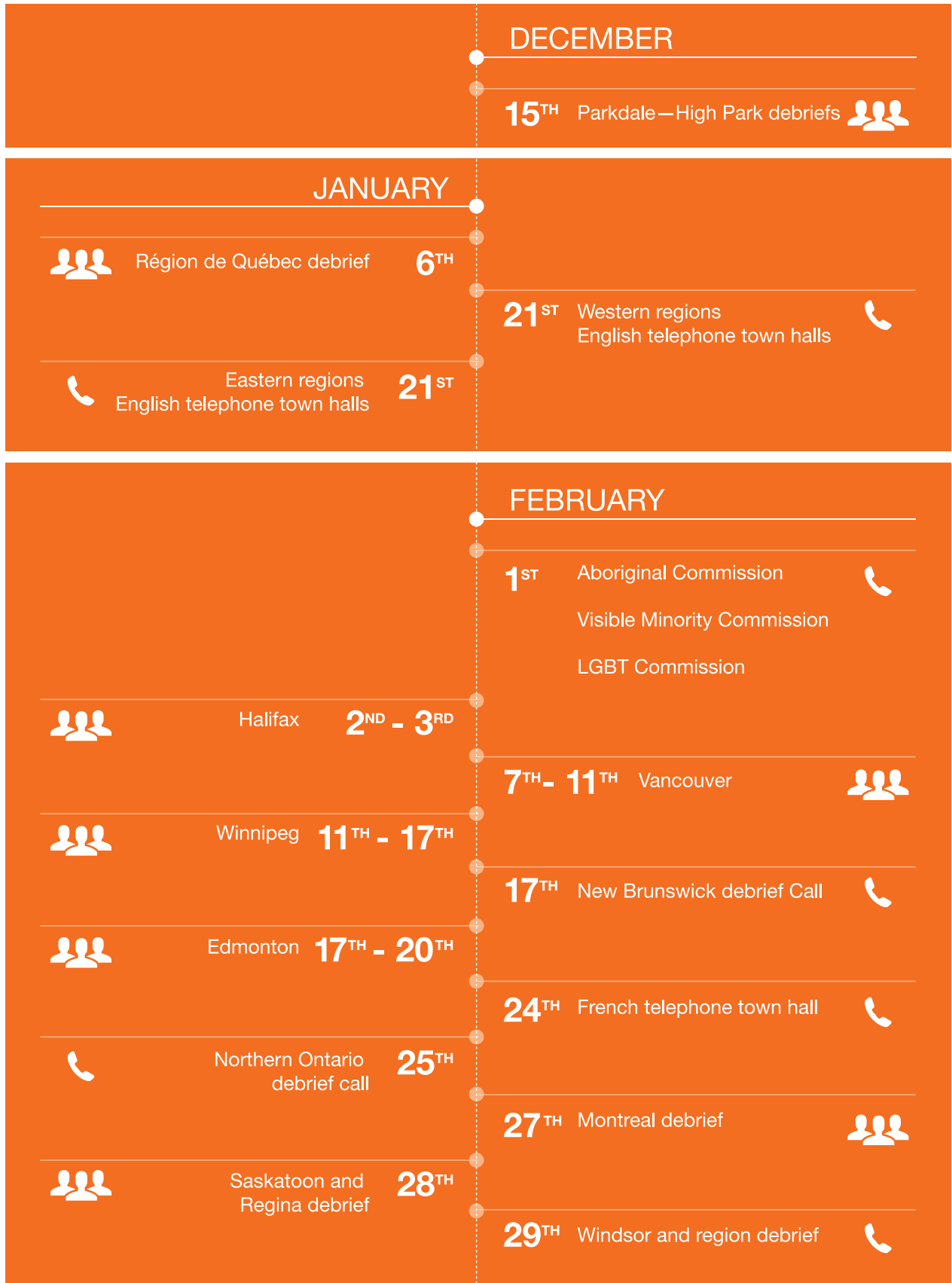




Campaign 2015 Review

WORKING GROUP REPORT

Survey timeline



MARCH



PEI debrief **2ND**

3RD

Northern ridings debrief



Lethbridge consultation **5TH**

6TH

Calgary consultation



Toronto and region **6TH - 10TH**

6TH

Ontario Prov. Council



Scarborough debriefs **6TH**

7TH

Etobicoke/North TO/York



Persons Living with disAbilities Committee debrief **10TH**

15TH

New Democratic Youth of Canada debrief



Staff Forum debrief in Ottawa **22ND**

ONLINE

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS
150+

SURVEY RESPONSES
22,840

4552	British Columbia	377	New Brunswick
1667	Alberta	727	Nova Scotia
682	Saskatchewan	98	Prince Edward Island
586	Manitoba	226	Newfoundland
8107	Ontario	14	Nunavut
1159	Quebec	41	Yukon
		16	Northwest Territories

CONSULTATION



In person
13 regions visited
500+ conversations



Teleconference
Three telephone town halls
21,000+ people
1100+ voicemail messages



Online
150+ Email submissions
22,840 Survey responses

Campaign 2015 Review: Working Group Report

Campaign 2015 was an entirely new experience for our movement. Never before had we entered a campaign as the Official Opposition. Never before had we led the polls for weeks before and during the campaign.

There is no denying that there is a deep disappointment across our movement. Our campaign came up short, and we missed the opportunity to elect Canada's first federal NDP government. Worse still, we lost dedicated MPs and were shut out of a number of regions in our country.

As we look back on this campaign we should also reflect on what unites us as New Democrats.

New Democrats are proud of our political and activist heritage - and our long record of visionary, practical and successful governments. That history and that record have distinguished and inspired our party since the creation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in 1933, and the founding of the New Democratic Party in 1961.

As our constitution states, we are guided by principles rooted in decades of struggle for a more equal world:

“New Democrats seek a future that brings together the best of the insights and objectives of Canadians. Within social democratic and democratic socialist traditions, our movement has been built through farmer, labour, co-operative, feminist, human rights and environmental movements, and with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, to work towards a more just, equal, and sustainable Canada within a global community dedicated to the same goals.”

**“Be proud of our history,
and proud of our party.”**

We are a party with deep conviction that a more just and equal world is possible. We are motivated by our values, and a vision for change that the Liberals and Conservatives simply don't share. We believe everyone matters and no one should be left behind. We believe in the power of government to address the limitations of the market and to act in the public interest for social, economic and ecological justice.

In November of 2015 our party President, Rebecca Blaikie, was tasked with a thorough and extensive review of our campaign. In the new year, the federal executive ratified a working group to assist in this task.

The working group members are:

Craig Sauv 
George Nakitsas
Mathieu Vick
Marit Stiles
Paul Dewar
Paul Moist
Raj Sihota
Rebecca Blaikie (Chair)
Tania Jarzebiak
Trevor McKenzie-Smith

The working group would like to thank Jenn Prosser for her work on this report, and the support from federal office staff.

The consultation process was structured around three questions: what worked, what didn't, and what we need to start doing as we continue to build and strengthen our movement. We have heard from tens of thousands of New Democrats through online surveys, telephone town halls, teleconferences, and community consultations.

In accepting this task, we pledged to the party membership that our efforts would be honest, avoid the temptation to gloss over shortcomings and ultimately offer us a blueprint from which we could learn from our mistakes and do better next time. Our strength as New Democrats continues to be our ability to have sometimes challenging discussions inside our party.

Jack wrote to us in his final letter, "there will be those who will try to persuade you to give up our cause. Answer them by recommitting with energy and determination to our work."

Let us heed those words as we review campaign 2015, apply the tough lessons we learned and move forward together.

In solidarity,
Your Election Review Working Group

The feedback we've collected has been synthesized and divided into two sections. The section on overall campaign strategy summarizes feedback on campaign structure, strategic direction, communications and platform. The section on campaign preparation summarizes comments about the campaign on the ground, as well as with the party's internal governance and grassroots engagement. Together, these sections identify what members told us were the greatest obstacles that contributed to the final results of the campaign. The recommendations we propose in the latter part of this report will address what we need to start doing as we continue to build and strengthen our movement.

Overall campaign strategy, communications and platform

Our campaign was out of sync with Canadians' desire for a dramatic break from the Harper decade. The principled work carried out by our caucus in the last four years as Official Opposition set the tone for a "Stop Harper" campaign. However, our working group heard from members from coast to coast that this campaign strategy left us vulnerable in the current political environment.

“We were still putting up Stop Harper signs while it was clear we were driving those folks to the Liberals.”

The lack of a strong, simple narrative made it difficult to communicate our platform and positions, and as a result it became difficult for Canadians to distinguish us from the Liberals. We failed to represent the kind of change that Canadians desired. Instead, our campaign presented a choice for cautious change.

There were many frustrations shared about our internal communications during the campaign. Members, particularly local campaign managers, felt that the reporting from the ground had no effect on the strategic decision-making happening in the central campaign. What was being felt door-to-door was not being communicated, being miscommunicated, or went unheard. Members feel this impeded the ability of the central campaign to shift strategy when necessary.

Weak internal communications hindered our ability to empower those on the ground to accurately share our vision for Canada. For many local campaigns the lack of a strong national narrative reduced their capacity to move people from theoretical supporters to voters, and did nothing to stop the Liberal surge in the final days.

Our balanced budget pledge was in part responsible for presenting us as cautious change. Over the past 30 years, our economy has grown by over 50% while workers have suffered lower wages and cuts to services - in this context, our members and supporters found it difficult to understand our position on the deficit. It allowed the Liberals to seemingly contrast themselves from the Conservatives, and did not resonate with Canadians everyday experiences. Running a deficit became a symbol of change, one that the media and voters embraced. Our balanced budget pledge also overshadowed our progressive economic platform which included higher taxes on corporations, crackdown on tax havens and a federal minimum wage.

The platform overall had positive reviews from the members and activists we heard from - however the release came late in the campaign and it was noted that the launch failed to highlight how our plan would dramatically help people and represent the kind of change that Canadians desired. As well, we lacked a Quebec-specific offer. This challenged our organizers in Quebec to maintain our 2011 gains.

Our campaign was not nimble in its reaction to attacks by other parties. We seemed unable to pivot from attacks and reorient the media narrative, and we were unable to shift strategies when we were no longer the frontrunner in the fight to defeat Harper.

The production and placement of our ads were cited by members as weak and failing to effectively present our vision. The lack of NDP advertising on major broadcasters, whether television or radio, is seen to have contributed to the lack of a strong national campaign presence.

We did not adequately prepare for the debate on the niqab. While members are proud of our principled position, many questioned why the campaign was unprepared for the intensity of the debate and lacked a plan to shift campaign coverage back to our offer for Canadians.

We heard disappointment from members who felt that decisions about the strategy employed in the debates led to a situation in which our leader's full capabilities — as demonstrated in the House of Commons over the previous years — were not on display. Across the country, we heard that our party activists did not understand why we refused to participate in some national debates.

We heard a strong call to expand our digital presence beyond fundraising objectives. While some members in some areas of the country felt our social media presence was strong, overall members feel the campaign failed to empower our local campaigns to fully utilize these platforms effectively.

BY THE NUMBERS



Donations raised through email in 2015.



Amount raised online in 2015.



individual donors between July and September 2015 - more than any other party in a single quarter, ever.



Online donors in 2015

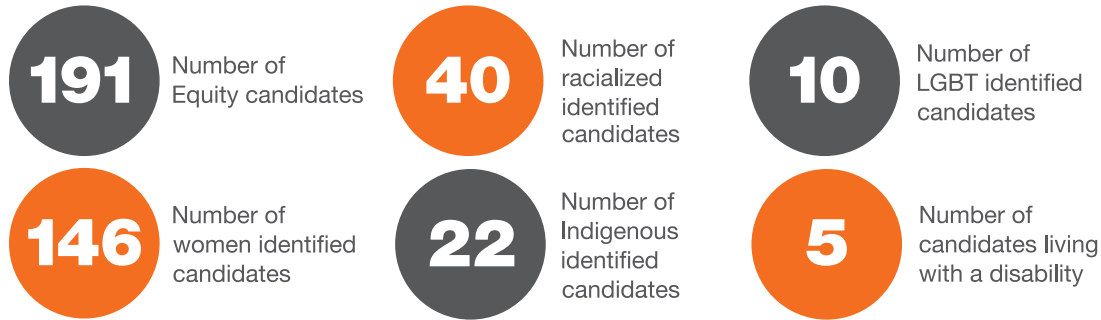
While the party's unprecedented fundraising success was celebrated by members across the country, many flagged frustration that our email communication with supporters had become primarily to seek funds. Members have reflected that — in contrast — since the campaign, both the Election Review process and the party's digital program have allowed for greater engagement on issues and feedback on the work of the leader and caucus.

Campaign preparation: local organization capacity and party governance

New Democrats spoke specifically of pride in their local campaigns and their local candidates. Campaigns, candidates and activists told us that they were engaged in their strongest local ground game in the party's history and that they raised more money than ever before.

We ran the strongest and most diverse slate of candidates in the history of any party in Canada, though we can and must strive to do even better. For some campaigns, a slow nomination process impacted their efforts to hit the ground running. We also heard a strong call to increase transparency in nomination and vetting procedures.

BY THE NUMBERS

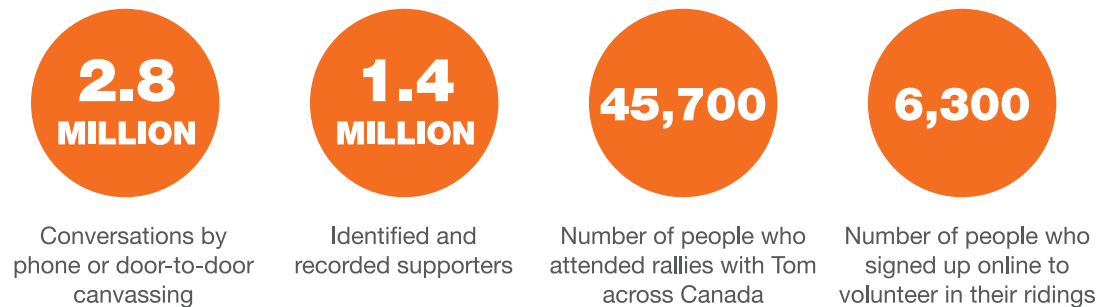


* in the 2015 election

Increased voter turnout impacted results across the country. Young and new voters came out to vote for change. Members raised concerns that our voter contact models were unable to effectively connect with first time and young voters, and that this was a lost opportunity. We heard that we need better and more diverse strategies to reach and engage more voters.

Alongside the call to develop innovative organizing strategies to reach a broader audience, there were firm calls for new and improved ways to engage openly and meaningfully with our members and supporters.

BY THE NUMBERS



Nationally, we had more trained, experienced organizers than ever before. But our members believe we still lag behind in the number of skilled organizers with a deep understanding of the unique characteristics of local and regional campaigns. The high turnover of regional and federal office organizers, or the loss or lack of them altogether, created a vacuum of information and left riding activists disconnected from the central campaign.

The National Days of Action were highly regarded as excellent ways to build capacity on the ground in the pre-election period, and engage new communities on priority issues.

Many members reflected on the losses in Atlantic Canada and Toronto and expressed a desire to engage in concrete strategies for rebuilding in these areas, and others where we no longer have sitting MPs.

Many of our partners in Labour supported our efforts in the lead up to and throughout the election, including organizing labour canvasses in support of local candidates. Some local campaigns acknowledged and appreciated the significant presence of labour volunteers. But just like many Canadians, union members had a difficult time finding their aspirations reflected in the messages they heard from us.

All four Equity Commissions reported that they were proud of the work they did with the party leadership in crafting meaningful platform policies that reflected their respective community's distinct needs. However, commissions felt that they lacked the necessary resources and information in order to communicate effectively with their respective communities. They asked that persistent barriers to participation be addressed in more meaningful ways.

The Aboriginal Commission feedback reflected great respect and pride for the work our caucus had done in the House, and for issues we had elevated in the national discourse. However, commission members were also of one voice with regard to the importance of correctly following traditional protocols and improving our knowledge of these protocols.

The party's Persons Living with Disabilities Commission noted the challenges their members face in engaging with campaigns locally and with our leader's tour events. While we have made significant advances towards increased accessibility - we have much more to learn from those living with disabilities.

Many of those active in their EDAs noted the increased success they had in fundraising in this election period. However, the process of contributing locally versus nationally remained unclear.

Data is a crucial tool in modern-day political campaigning. We heard often that we need to find better ways to capture useful data and employ it effectively. Populus - our new database - is seen as an important evolution, and many commented on the importance of continued investment in modernizing our voter identification to enable more targeted organizing.

“There was a disconnect between the internal conversation we were having with ourselves, and the conversation we were having publicly.”

The superior work of the New Democratic caucus was a point of pride for our members and supporters. Activists told us that they expected the team of talented MPs and candidates to have played more of a visible role during the election, especially in our bid to form a competent cabinet in government.

** All comments in quotation marks were heard during our consultations accross Canada.*

Recommendations

The task for this election review exercise has always been to identify what worked, what didn't and how we should move forward together. We recognize that there is no one cause to our failures in the election campaign and there is no one solution. But we hope our findings give our members, organizers, caucus and leader the necessary information as they apply the lessons of Campaign 2015.

As New Democrats, we practice the politics of conviction. That is not antithetical to developing a message and a campaign that successfully earns the support of Canadians. Being better at telling our story will bring us greater electoral success. We can do that in an authentic way and we can rely on the thousands of volunteers that make up our political movement. As difficult as the results of Campaign 2015 have been, the members of your Election Review Working Group have found new inspiration and new energy through their interactions with our party members. Our movement is strong and our members are ready to keep fighting for a better world.

“We lost the game this time, but we didn't lose who we are — we can win next time.”

Your Election Review Working Group was mandated to ensure we learn from our mistakes and develop a plan of action to apply the lessons we have learned collectively. That's why the recommendations we present in this report are **measurable, transparent, and accountable**.

Together, these recommendations may provide a blueprint for the Federal Executive and Council, and the party's National Director, to engage with our grassroots and rebuild the party. The specific timelines allow for accountability by Council and Convention 2018.

Our aim is to ensure utmost transparency and accountability to our membership as we move forward, together, united by our values and motivated by a new sense of purpose and optimism.

Our planning for the next campaign should begin today:

- a. An Election Planning Committee (EPC) should be struck no later than 2 years prior to the next fixed election date, and key campaign staff positions should be identified and confirmed.
- b. A campaign plan and draft platform should be presented to the EPC for consultation and feedback at least one year prior to the fixed election date. This process should also allow for a 6-month review of the campaign plan.
- c. In recognition of Québec's national character, our campaign plan should always include a distinct Quebec strategy.
- d. Federal Executive and Council should be provided with greater and more consistent opportunities for consultation and reciprocal feedback to ensure these bodies are empowered to reach their full outreach and organizing potential.
- e. The party should conduct a review of strategic communications - inclusive of campaign advertising production and placement, as well as media relations.
- f. The Executive should appoint a committee to review nominations and vetting with a view to increased transparency.

The party must commit to exploring ways to ensure a two-way conversation with members and supporters — beyond fundraising efforts — to tell the story of who we are, update the

membership on work being done by our caucus, and communicate strategic messaging tools as well as provide opportunities for real engagement. This should include but is not limited to:

- a. Organizing online meetings and/or telephone town halls with members.
- b. Ensuring fact sheets on priorities and policies are readily available in multiple languages to members and the public.
- c. Making our talking points easily accessible to members and organizers.
- d. Issuing a monthly electronic newsletter that informs members and supporters of our work in Parliament and our policy proposals.

The party should continue developing and investing in digital platforms, online communications, data management practises and database capacity by:

- a. Reporting to our membership on the latest capacity of Populus at the next convention.
- b. Prioritizing training on Populus for activists across the country.
- c. Expanding the use of digital platforms to connect with more Canadians.
- d. Developing a social media best practices guide for campaigns, candidates, organizers and activists.
- e. Ensuring Equity Commissions have access to the database tools required to collect and track outreach information.

The permanent National Director should be tasked to prepare a plan for rejuvenating the party by improving its fundraising capacity and engagement with members and supporters. The plan should be developed in consultation with Equity Commissions, Federal Executive and Council, and parliamentary caucus and include:

- a. Identifying missing voices and diversifying our staff by reaching out into underrepresented communities.
- b. Strengthening our internal call to action in the fight against racism and discrimination by developing outreach, engagement and communications strategies that reach out explicitly to a broader and more diverse audience.
- c. Furthering efforts to diversify our caucus and staff, as well as explore the potential for strategic communications in a wider variety of languages.
- d. Developing the training, tools and relationships necessary to create a network of support for Indigenous candidates, candidates of colour and people living with a disability.
- e. Working with the Aboriginal Commission in developing culturally guided procedural guidelines (region, territory and event specific). This must be done by listening carefully to Indigenous communities and following their lead. Doing this work, in this way, furthers our work in pursuit of a decolonized Canada.
- f. Working with the Persons Living with Disabilities Commission to develop accessibility requirements for all NDP outreach platforms and events to ensure that the over 30 per cent of Canadian families affected by visible and non visible disabilities are able to participate on an equal basis with other people.

In addition, we believe Officers should review the party's organizational structure and provide recommendations to the National Director, to ensure that the party office is able to prioritize supporting and facilitating the work of the party executive, council, equity commissions and the party's youth wing, the NDYC.

Mentoring and generational change are important to the success of our Party, and can be achieved by:

- a. Developing a long term and sustained investment in regional organizers and organizer development. This should include organizers in those regions where we do not have sitting MPs.

- b. Empowering and acknowledging successful organizers through access to opportunities for leadership roles during election campaigns.
- c. Building on the “Days of Action” model to further support grassroots skills building and encouraging the establishment of neighbourhood teams across the country.
- d. Implementing an ongoing activist training strategy, including templates and supports for candidates, Electoral District Associations (EDAs) and organizers.
- e. Providing a regional platform for EDAs to share best practices in organizing, encourage a sense of belonging, build momentum and increase grassroots capacity.
- f. Supporting our EDAs to organize in between elections to ensure we continually engage local volunteers, build relationships with the community, and raise the funds needed for a robust local ground campaign in 2019.

Conclusion

In politics some challenges will always remain beyond our control, it is our job as a party to address the challenges we can control. The recommendations provided here are aimed at addressing those challenges.

The process of engagement has been a great privilege for the working group. There have been too few opportunities in our party’s history when the time, space and resources have been granted to reach out and meet with our members and activists from across the country.

New Democrats are proud and dedicated to the work they carry out in the movement. This dedication to providing loving and hopeful political leadership in Canada runs deep, and means good things for the future of our party. We must continue as Tommy Douglas taught us, to dream no little dreams, and one day, together, we will make the Canada of our dreams a reality.

Much accomplished. More to do.