



Meet the Westmount–
Saint-Louis candidates /1

Description

Candidate Nicholas Lawson of the NDPQ – New Democratic Party of Quebec

Dear WestmountMag.ca reader,

In view of informing our readers on the various parties' platforms for the upcoming **Quebec Provincial Election 2018**, WestmountMag.ca has invited all the candidates for the district of **Westmount–Saint-Louis** to submit an article about themselves and their program.

Articles are published unedited and on a first submitted, first published basis.

Here is the first article of the series, submitted by **Nicholas Lawson** of the **NDPQ – New Democratic Party of Quebec**.





Nicholas Lawson

My name is Nicholas Lawson, and I am the Quebec NDP candidate for Westmount-Saint-Louis. I was born and raised in Guelph, Ontario, and I completed a BA in 2007 and an MA in 2008 at Queen's University, both in economics, followed by a PhD in economics at Princeton University in 2013. After three years working as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Aix-Marseille School of Economics in France, I moved to Montreal to begin my current job as a professor of economics at UQAM in June 2016.

I am passionate about an approach to economics that searches for better public policies that have the potential to improve people's lives. As a professor, I have taught courses in labour economics and econometrics to undergraduate and graduate students at UQAM. I have also written research papers that study a variety of policy questions, including unemployment insurance, university tuition policy, and income taxation. In all of my work, I emphasize the real-world applications: I apply economic methods to the study of public policies that impact the lives of the general public.

I am running for the Quebec NDP because I am a progressive federalist. My training in economics has taught me that government can be a force for good in our society and our economy, and that we can do better than the current government's agenda of cutting the services people rely on in order to finance tax cuts. The Quebec NDP believes in defending and improving our public services, in fighting poverty, and in the principles of cooperation, solidarity, and equality. We want to build a Quebec of greater shared prosperity, a Quebec that is more environmentally sustainable, a Quebec that is open, tolerant, and welcoming to immigrants and to people of all backgrounds. And we want to do this within Canada; we believe that Quebec is better off within the Canadian family, and we reject the divisive agenda of separatism in order to focus on building the progressive Quebec of the future that will set an example for the rest of Canada.

In particular, the Quebec NDP wants to strengthen our public health care system, which includes making health services more accessible and less centralized. We want to reverse Bill 10 and the centralization of decision-making put into place by Gaetan Barrette and the current Liberal government, and we want to ensure that the CLSCs have the resources to provide the services people need so that they can perform their original function as the first line of our health care system. We propose a universal public prescription drug insurance system, because it makes no sense that our public health insurance should cover medical appointments but not the necessary medications that are prescribed in those appointments. We also want to provide more support for long-term care, both in the form of better funding for CHSLDs and in the form of new financial and structural support to people who want to take care of family members at home.

The Quebec NDP want to ensure that schools and school boards have the resources they need to provide a quality education to everyone. The riding of Westmount-Saint-Louis has been neglected for too long in this regard: there are no public schools in the Saint-Louis (downtown Montreal) part of the riding, leading to overcrowding at schools such as Saint-Léon-de-Westmount, which has not been given sufficient resources to support the students of various backgrounds and of diverse needs who are currently studying there. We want to make sure that education really is free up to the end of CGEP – meaning that there should be no supplementary fees – and eventually through university and college as well. A growing body of research indicates that education is not only beneficial to the individual student, but to the whole society as well, and so we believe that a government with a long-term vision must invest more in education.

The Quebec NDP believes that we can do better when it comes to protecting our environment. In particular, we propose the electrification of all ground transportation by the year 2030; with large increases in subsidies to the purchase of an electric car, and a ban on sales of fossil-fuel-burning cars by 2030, we can make an immediate and large impact on our greenhouse gas emissions and make use of the clean energy of Hydro Quebec. We also support investment in public transportation, and we oppose the constructions of pipelines in Quebec as well as the existing subsidies to the oil industry. We believe that the Green Fund can be refocused on investment in



environmentally-friendly technologies in the sectors that will make the most difference in our fight against climate change.

The Quebec NDP proposes the creation of a guaranteed minimum income: each adult resident of Quebec would be entitled to a payment of \$1000 per month. This would replace existing measures of our income support system such as social assistance, the solidarity tax credit, and the work premium. It is a simple and transparent way of fighting poverty, and it would make our social safety net more efficient, less bureaucratic, and less stigmatizing. Studies of prior experiments indicate that the income security that such a program provides would encourage education and entrepreneurship, and reduce public health care expenses due to improved health of lower-income recipients. The labour market of 2018 is very different from what it was decades ago, and we need an income support system that is flexible and accounts for the realities of increased automation and precarious employment conditions.

The Quebec NDP advocates more support for the integration of immigrants: rather than talking about language tests or presenting immigrants with additional challenges, we want to ensure that every immigrant has the opportunities and resources necessary to learn French and find jobs where they can contribute fully to Quebec society. On the latter point, we want to accelerate the recognition of credentials obtained outside Canada, so that immigrants can qualify for jobs that use all of their skills. We further believe that a more open and tolerant sense of “vivre-ensemble” should be a priority, without any of the polarizing rhetoric that we sometimes hear today.

The Quebec NDP supports most of the other parties in this election in advocating a system of proportional representation for our future elections. Such a change would put an end to strategic voting and enable voters to freely vote for the party, the candidate, and the idea that they prefer, rather than choosing their vote with the goal of defeating an option they dislike. In that way, proportional representation would increase political competition by making every vote count: even the voters of a riding that is considered a “safe seat” for one party would have a chance to make themselves heard.

When I go door-to-door in the riding, I am hearing a desire for something new: many people express a desire for a party that is progressive while also being pragmatic, a party that will represent a real change in policy from the Liberals without a divisive and negative agenda on separation from Canada or on issues of immigration and identity, a party that wants to move forward from the national question to build the best Quebec possible within Canada.

We believe that the Quebec NDP is that party, and I believe that I am the candidate that best represents that change for Westmount-Saint-Louis. We promise real change, with policies that are idealistic but also realistic, and we promise to act on a sincere desire to improve the opportunities of everyone in Quebec society. We promise to do politics differently – “faire autrement maintenant”, as you may have seen on our campaign signs – by doing politics in a positive way, by putting the emphasis on proposing new ideas rather than simply opposing, and by supporting other parties when they have good ideas. We believe that candidates and MNAs should be as free as possible to speak on behalf of their constituents and represent their interests, and if I am elected MNA for Westmount-Saint-Louis on October 1, I promise to listen and to represent all the people of the riding to the best of my ability in Quebec City.

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