



Review and Renewal Report

CAMPAIGN 2025

Introduction

The 2025 election produced a historic setback for the New Democratic Party of Canada. The campaign unfolded under extraordinary external pressure from the United States and an increasingly polarized domestic environment. Based on what we heard on the ground, this led many voters to fixate (understandably) on a perceived existential threat to our country. Ultimately, and unfortunately for New Democrats, on the central question of how to confront Trump and manage the trade crisis, the national debate came to be dominated by a binary choice between Carney's Liberals and Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives. Why the NDP was apparently not viewed by Canadians as a contender to lead in a time of crisis is a question we explored with many of the people we met with in the course of this review.

Needless to say, the election results were devastating. The NDP's vote decline was broad-based and consistent across the country, rather than concentrated in a few regions or riding types. No region or segment of the NDP's traditional voter base was immune from this national trend.

Vote losses were largest in Liberal–NDP battleground ridings (especially in Ontario, Atlantic Canada, and parts of BC), where Liberal gains accounted for most of the shift in progressive votes. In Quebec, the NDP lost ground to both the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals, marking the sharpest regional contraction since 2011.

In Western Canada, declines were smaller but still substantial, particularly in Alberta and Saskatchewan where Conservative consolidation reduced the NDP vote share. When it was all over, the Party was reduced to just 7 seats, losing official party status and earning just 6.3% of the national vote.

What made the 2025 election even more devastating for many New Democrats, was that it followed the historic policy gains the Party achieved in the 44th Parliament through its Confidence and Supply Agreement (CASA) with the Liberals. Dental care, pharmacare and anti-scab legislation were a source of enormous pride for New Democrats (yes, some invariably proclaimed “it didn’t go far enough!” as New Democrats are wont to do...). In some parts of the country, not only did the Party not reap any electoral rewards for the results accomplished through the CASA — it was punished. In some regions, voters told our candidates and volunteers that because of CASA the NDP was too closely linked to Justin Trudeau, whose deep unpopularity had rendered him toxic to many voters.

With all of that said, in the course of our widespread consultations a consensus emerged that we should exercise caution and resist drawing too many causal links between any particular campaign strategy and the outcome of the 2025 election. While the Party may not have been rewarded electorally for the generational policy gains of the last Parliament, we should not conclude that policy achievements born out of inter-party co-operation can never yield positive electoral results. Similarly, specific campaign strategies or policy offerings should not necessarily be permanently discarded because the Party fared

so poorly in this election. In this Report, we have therefore chosen to focus more on the big picture and less on the specific machinations of the 2025 election campaign because there is only so much that can or should be learned from an election conducted in a context like the last one.

It bears noting that this Review and Renewal initiative has taken place at the same time as the Party is choosing its new leader. While the new leader will play a pivotal role in the rebuilding process, this is not something that can or will be achieved by one person alone. New Democrats will have to come together with a sense of common purpose and resolve to advance the social democratic values which define the NDP. While we may not always agree on the precise policy prescriptions by which to deliver a fairer, more equitable society rooted in social, economic and environmental justice, it's what we are all fighting for. Therefore, in this Report, the focus is more on key takeaways from what we heard, rather than a series of rigid prescriptions on the path forward. Those will be for us to respectfully discuss and debate in the months and years to come.

Based on what we heard, there is cause for optimism about the Party's future. New Democrats are motivated to contribute to the rebuilding effort. There is a sense that though there is room for improvement as there always is, the NDP is poised to survive and thrive. It was inspiring to meet so many committed Party activists from across the country who, despite their profound disappointment with the election results, had solid, reasonable ideas about a path forward.

While this process had the dual mandate of reviewing the 2025 campaign and engaging with the process of renewal, it became clear that those two things are inextricably linked. Ultimately, people had much more to say about the work that does (or more often doesn't) happen between elections than they did about the campaign itself. This Report will thus be divided into three broad categories of insights and analysis: the pre-election period, the election campaign, and other general reflections.

Thank you to the thousands of New Democrats and supporters who fed their invaluable insights into this Review and Renewal process.

Overview of the Review and Renewal Process

Between July and November of 2025, we solicited and received input from a wide range of stakeholders in every province and territory. As part of this process:

- We met one-on-one with over 60 former and current members of Parliament, candidates, Electoral District Association (EDA) representatives, Party staff, Labour leaders, and elected New Democrats in a number of provinces. We met with members of the Federal Council, Party Executive and Officers, and representatives of most of the Party's Equity Commissions.
- We hosted approximately 30 group discussions with campaign managers, candidates, EDA executive members, members, and volunteers.
- We reviewed 3,500 survey responses to the public post-election survey and campaign staff surveys, as well as over 500 emails with written feedback from individuals, EDAs, and local campaign teams.

In this Report, every effort has been made to reflect the full range of feedback and offer key takeaways from what we heard.

Review and Renewal Process Timeline

JULY

- Review and renewal process launched
- Post-election survey sent to NDP supporters
- Started one-on-one meetings over Zoom and in-person

AUGUST

- Sent a Review and Renewal Discussion Guide to EDA presidents to help them host local debriefs and compile feedback
- Hosted listening sessions with members of Federal Council

SEPTEMBER

- Travelled to Toronto and Hamilton for candidate roundtables and meetings with Labour leaders
- Hosted virtual candidate roundtables
- Met with commission co-chairs and hosted meetings with equity commissions
- Launched a survey for local campaign staff

OCTOBER

- Travelled to Vancouver and Victoria for a roundtable with lower mainland candidates and meetings with local EDAs
- Hosted virtual roundtables with campaign managers

NOVEMBER

- Conducted final interviews
- Analysis of the 2025 election results and data

Online Engagement

500+

WRITTEN
SUBMISSIONS

3,500+

SURVEY
RESPONSES

Consultation



Over 60 one-on-one meetings with former and current MPs, elected New Democrats at the provincial level, candidates, Electoral District Association (EDA) representatives, Party staff, Labour leaders, and supporters from every province and territory



30 group discussions with campaign managers, members of Federal Council, candidates, EDA exec members, and NDP members

Part I: The Pre-Election Period

(i) Far More Voter Persuasion and Volunteer Mobilization Needs to Happen Before the Campaign

Many people we heard from felt that the 2025 election was lost before it began. Messaging in general, and around the Confidence and Supply Agreement in particular, was almost universally seen as weak and confusing. This led to missed opportunities for the Party to demonstrate its value as a strong progressive opposition and, more importantly, a future government.

We heard that weak support for local organizing and a failure to properly invest in a number of key areas meant that the NDP was not election-ready. The Party's work between elections should be laser focused on persuading Canadians that the NDP is worthy of its support. The Parliamentary work, while clearly important, should not overwhelm or distract from the political work – the two need to happen in tandem and be mutually reinforcing. If the persuasion work, and the organizing which supports it, has been properly executed before the writ period, the writ period can focus on voter identification and getting out the vote ("GOTV").

Unsurprisingly, large numbers of volunteers and supporters urged us to learn from the recent electoral victory of Zohran Mamdani in the New York City mayoral race. Bold policy ideas and dynamic leadership were critical to Mamdani's success. But so too, according to many we spoke with, was his campaign's approach to organizing. His leadership and positive vision inspired people to support Mamdani not only with their vote but with their volunteer time. Volunteers should feel motivated, valued and trusted rather than just resources to be deployed where, when and as needed.

Delivering greater field organizing capacity will require significant financial resources. It was understood that it will take some time for the Party to have the resources to implement the necessary changes. Nonetheless, the Party is encouraged to look at ways to reorient priorities to make it happen.

Key Takeaways From What We Heard:

1. Build a stronger field organization which treats organizing as a permanent function, not a campaign-only activity.

Regional Organizers need resources to

- support EDAs;
- coordinate training;
- help recruit and develop candidates;
- and facilitate regional collaboration between ridings

2. Build Up Digital Organizing Capacity.

The digital organizing program, known as Team Jagmeet, was widely praised (though it was seen by some as overly "leader focused"). Its mobilizing work, volunteer recruitment, and training components were reported to be worth expanding.

(ii) Building Electoral District Association (“EDA”) Capacity

Strong, resilient EDAs (Riding Associations) are fundamental to the Party’s electoral success. This is something that has been noted in many past federal campaign review exercises. Some expressed the view that the Party’s failure to build up local EDAs reflects its preference to maintain strong central control. However, it is also likely that it is because doing it well requires resources and local leaders who are willing and able to do the work. As challenging as it may be, it is critical. EDAs are the Party’s greatest local assets. They offer critical opportunities to expand relationships with people who share the Party’s values, building common cause with allied social movements at the community level. Whether it be fighting for workers’ rights, affordable housing and tenants’ rights, environmental protection and climate justice, human rights or countless other local, national, and international issues, a local NDP presence is essential.

The existing capacity of EDAs varies widely. In many cases, the necessary organizing work is already being done well due to knowledge and expertise that has been built over time. Ridings with incumbent MPs tend, generally, though not exclusively, to have greater capacity than EDAs in regions where the Party has seen less electoral success. In some ridings there may not be a functional EDA at all. The goal should be to build up capacity over time which will look different in different places depending on their starting point.

In the years leading up to the election, from January 2023 to December 2024, the Party hosted 42 trainings for local EDAs and members. Attendance at these trainings varied widely, and even active members were not aware of the training offerings available to them. In the future, the Party should reconsider its approach to how these opportunities are advertised and actively encourage members to attend trainings that will give them the skills to build the capacity of their EDAs.

It is trite to say, but there is no pathway to victory for the NDP without Quebec. The NDP has an incredible base of activists in Quebec. The Party is encouraged to support the necessary work of building up its EDA infrastructure in Quebec where social democratic values are strong and the Party has enormous potential for growth, despite the complexities of its political environment.

It also bears noting that the responsibility to build EDA capacity is not something the Party can do alone. It requires active collaboration and partnership. Without motivated volunteers who are willing and able to do the work, there is only so much that can be done centrally to strengthen regional infrastructure.

EDAs across the country are encouraged, independently or with Party support where needed, to develop relationships with neighbouring or otherwise aligned ridings (perhaps based on local priorities rather than physical geography). In Saskatchewan, for example, where there is a structured Coalition of Electoral District Associations (CEDA), there appeared to be a strong sense of solidarity, cooperation and mutual support which would be worthy of replication in other parts of the country.

Key Takeaways From What We Heard:

1. The Party should reorient itself to treat EDAs as the foundation, not the periphery, of its political power.
2. EDAs cannot thrive without sustained, regionalized support.
 - The Party should support EDAs to anchor themselves in local life through:
 - ongoing canvassing on issues (not just voter ID);
 - town halls and listening sessions;
 - and participation in community and labour events.
3. Training must be formalized, structured, accessible, and available early. The Party should maximize the use of available channels to ensure that EDAs have every opportunity to avail themselves of training opportunities as they arise.
4. Communication from Central must be clearer, more consistent, and sensitive to local realities.
5. The Party must acknowledge and address the wide variation in EDA capacity.
6. Members and supporters with the capacity to do so are encouraged to get involved in their local EDA to ensure the success of local organizing efforts.

(iii) Candidate Search and Nominations

There was a strong consensus that candidates were nominated too late for the 2025 election and that it would be preferable for candidates to be nominated several months, if not years, before elections. It was also reported that, at least in some ridings, the vetting process was slow and opaque. To be fair to the Candidate Search and Nominations Team, they worked tirelessly for over two years to support the nomination of a full slate of candidates¹. Not all delays were attributable to their work. In some cases, insufficient groundwork had been laid locally to identify and support prospective candidates. Delays in vetting were sometimes attributed to candidates for reasons that could not be shared due to legitimate confidentiality concerns. Nonetheless, there were instances where lengthy delays in approving candidates or nomination dates went unexplained by the Party, which caused frustration.

While, in general, nominating candidates sooner rather than later is desirable; care should be taken not to pursue that goal too fiercely or universally. In some ridings good, strong candidates may not be able to be nominated years ahead of an election due to requirements of their employment, family obligations,

¹ Note that while candidates were recruited, vetted nominated or appointed in all 343 ridings, for reasons that are not entirely known, one candidate failed to register with Elections Canada in time so that the Party ultimately had nominated candidates in 342/343 ridings.

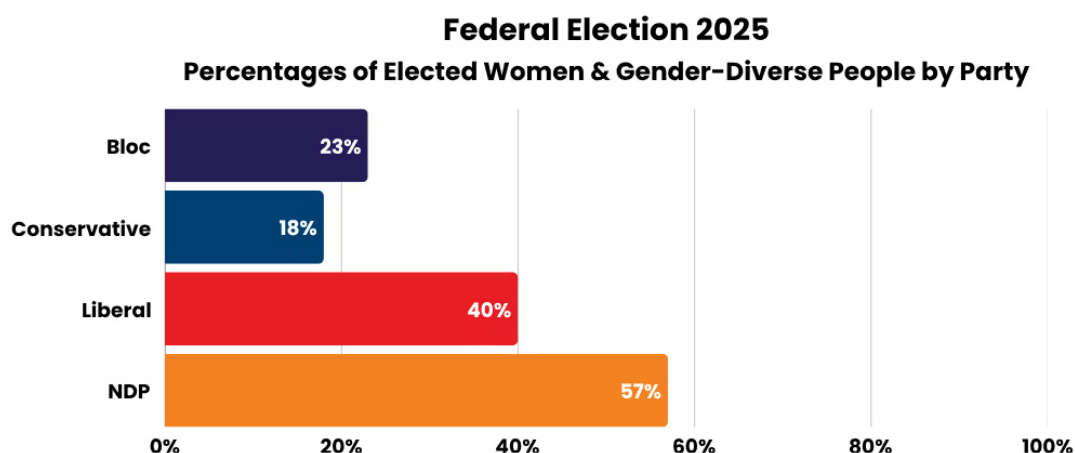
economic precarity or other personal reasons. In some ridings there may not be sufficient EDA capacity or resources to support the candidate once nominated, leading to unnecessary stress and little advantage.

The Candidate Search and Nominations Team reported that they felt they had the resources they needed and when they asked for more resources, their requests were approved. However, given the delays in vetting and nominating candidates, the Party should consider increasing the capacity of this team in the future.

Twelve months before Election Day, the NDP only had 37 nominated candidates. When the election was called on March 23, 2025, there were nominated candidates in 243 ridings but 182 of those were nominated between February 7 and March 23, 2025, which did not give them much runway. 100 candidates were nominated after the election campaign began. Whatever the ideal timeline is for nominating candidates, the consensus that too many candidates were nominated too late is fair.

On the other hand, everyone should be commended for the fact that New Democrats far outpaced any other federal party when it came to the recruitment of equity deserving candidates. The goals of achieving gender parity and at least 30% racialized candidates were achieved.

For example, the NDP was the only federal party to nominate over 50% women and gender diverse people:²



This does not happen by accident. The Party actively prioritizes nominating a diverse slate of candidates. From what we learned in reviewing the data, little if any of the delay in nominating candidates was attributed in any significant way to the equity commitment. Having said that, with Party resources being what they are, and the practical reality that another election could be triggered sooner than would be ideal, the Federal Council should consider building *some limited flexibility* into the equity requirements in the interest of expediting nominations for the next election.

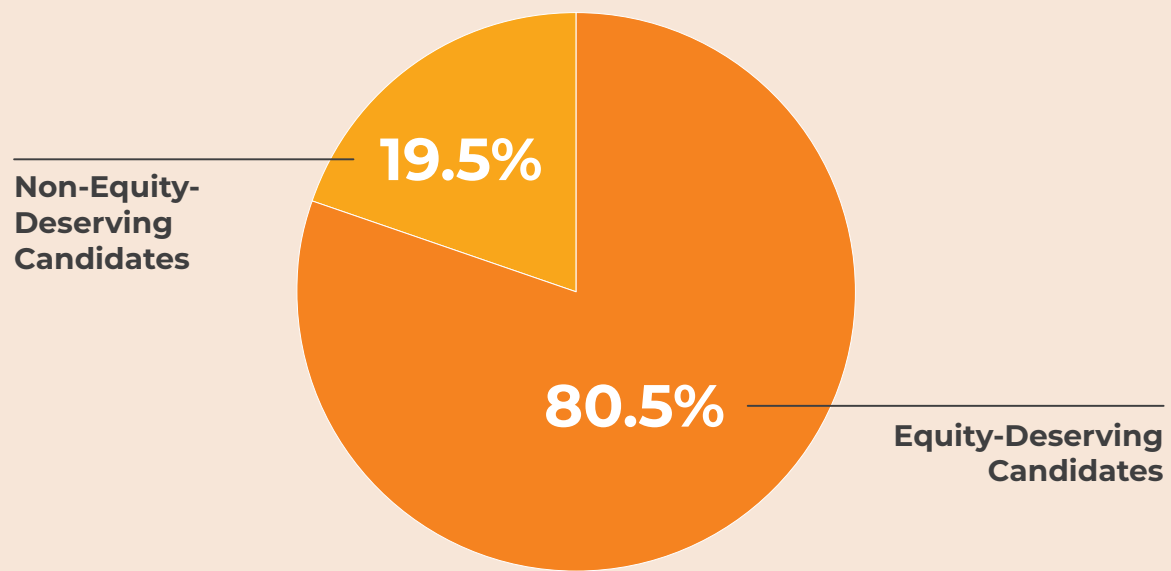
² See Equal Voice 2025 Election Tracker available online at https://www.equalvoice.ca/federal_election_2025

Finally, while it is understandable that there is considerable pressure to nominate as many candidates as possible before the statutory registration deadline, care should be taken to ensure that candidates are given fair and transparent expectations in terms of the resources and support that will be available to them during the campaign. We heard from some candidates in low resource, non-battleground ridings that they felt abandoned once their nomination had been approved and the requisite nomination signatures obtained. In speaking with many of these candidates, it became apparent that their expectations were unrealistic. Many thought they would be provided with campaign managers, staff, volunteers and money. Some of them were overcome with emotion when describing the anxiety they felt upon being launched into an election campaign (in many cases a campaign which was already underway) with virtually no support. It is imperative that the Party and local EDA executive members involved in the candidate search process be direct with candidates and provide reasonable assessments of what the campaign will look like while also providing achievable if modest goals for those campaigns.

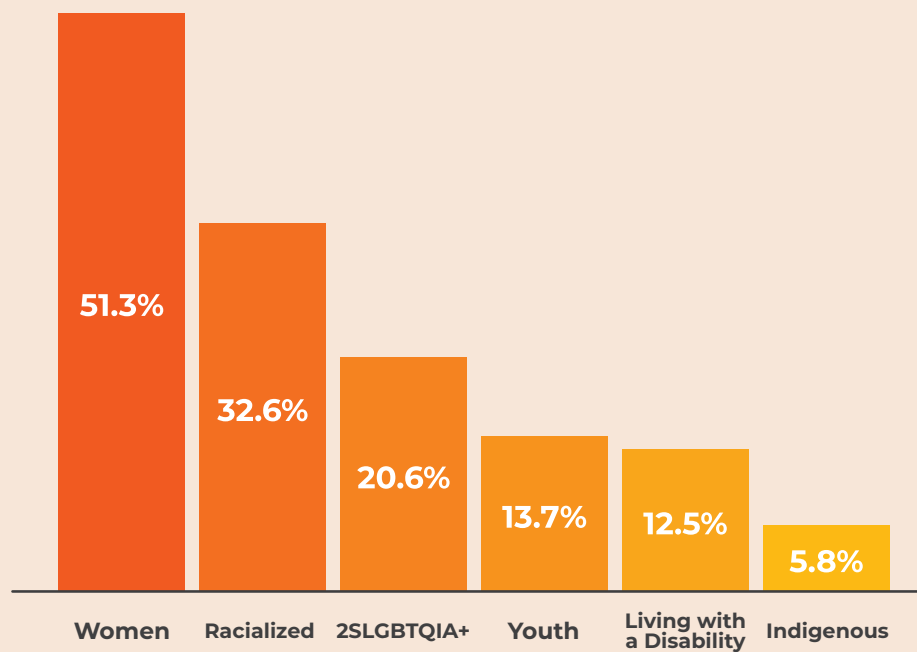
Key Takeaways From What We Heard:

1. Earlier candidate vetting and nominations would give local campaigns more runway to build a successful campaign, assuming they have sufficient capacity.
2. The vetting process is seen as being slow and sometimes opaque. Better communications (and enhanced overall trust between EDAs and the central Party) could mitigate frustrations.
3. EDAs also have a role to play. As greater capacity is built at the riding level, and as the Party's overall fortunes improve, it will get easier to recruit strong candidates earlier.
4. Equity considerations should be maintained but with a reasonable degree of flexibility to ensure that nominations are timely, and the Party doesn't miss out on great candidates, particularly in the next election cycle. To be clear, the Party's equity requirements are rarely, if ever, the cause of delays, and it is a myth that prioritizing equity reduces the quality of candidates.
5. In the rush to nominate candidates before the deadline (and in general), the Party should take care to manage candidate expectations in terms of resources and other supports.

2025 Candidates



Equity-Deserving Candidates identified as:



470

TOTAL NUMBER OF
CANDIDATES VETTED

8

REJECTED

58

WITHDREW FOR PERSONAL
OR OTHER REASONS

(iv) Fundraising

It was often stated as indisputable that the NDP will never be able to compete with Liberals and Conservatives when it comes to fundraising. While it is true that some other parties benefit from a general alignment with the interests of wealthier Canadians, New Democrats should not be so defeatist. The bigger problem is, as one participant put it: “Many New Democrats are allergic to fundraising.” This is a problem for the central Party and EDAs.

The federal NDP has failed to adequately prioritize and invest in fundraising. The Party inexplicably lacks a full-time fundraising program. While it may be unseemly to some, the very supports our members and volunteers told us they want the Party to provide, require financial resources. This is one of the most confounding things about the argument advanced by some New Democrats, that individuals should stop donating to the federal Party until it can somehow demonstrate that is sufficiently invested in grassroots organizing. It is perplexing to understand how such an investment can be made without the financial resources needed to support it.

Interviewees across regions and roles described fundraising as a critical structural weakness for the federal NDP. The overall theme was clear: the Party is leaving substantial money on the table, and systemic changes are required to modernize, professionalize, and decentralize aspects of the fundraising ecosystem.

Fundraising was described as inefficient, outdated, and under-resourced. The fundraising strategy was seen as overly dependent on email blasts, underdeveloped in terms of donor segmentation, and insufficiently staffed. Several people, in particular those with fundraising experience, emphasized that the Party should be employing more professional fundraisers. While the digital fundraising program is effective in its own right, it should be complemented with other fundraising strategies to maximize contributions.

People were clear that this is not work that should be contracted out. A professional Fundraising Director should be hired on a priority basis to rebuild the Party’s fundraising program. This was overwhelmingly seen as an investment that would pay for itself. It is also critical to support the Party’s work outside of the campaign period. There is a sense that the Party is stuck in a cycle of deploying endless resources to pay back loans that are used to finance election campaigns at the expense of organizing and other critical work. The Party would benefit tremendously from a more sustainable revenue base.

At the local level, EDAs would benefit from training and resources to support the development of local, sustainable fundraising programs. There is still significant resentment, particularly in Quebec, the Prairies and Atlantic Canada, about the Party’s decision to keep the Elections Canada rebates which used to return to the ridings. Many of these ridings rarely, if ever, elected New Democrats, but regularly met the 10% threshold to qualify for the rebate (with the 2025 election standing as an unfortunate exception). While this decision was defensible given the state of the Party’s finances, it highlights the importance of building fundraising capacity at every level.

Finally, but fundamentally, fundraising success depends on strategic messaging which resonates with and excites prospective contributors. While it may seem paradoxical, we heard that working-class resonance is essential for financial sustainability (and the Party’s success in general). The collapse of working-class support risks undermining voters’ impressions of the NDP’s viability, demotivates the Party’s allies in organized labour, and is a symptom of messaging that is not resonating in a way that motivates people to offer financial support.

Key Takeaways From What We Heard:

1. Professionalize the central Party's fundraising.

- Hire dedicated fundraising professionals.
- Develop a major-donor strategy as well as a strategy for targeting smaller donations.
- Improve donor segmentation and data analytics.

2. Reconsider the rebate system and resource flows.

- Revisit whether the Party should automatically retain rebates in every riding.
- If so, the Party should find ways to increase the level of tangible service or support provided to EDAs.
- Consider revenue-sharing models or joint fundraising agreements (although this could be complicated by the federal regulatory environment).

3. Expand monthly donor programs.

- Consider developing a system of PAC donors with a portion flowing to local EDAs.
- A shared system of donor stewardship could unify central and EDA programs.

4. Connect fundraising to a political narrative.

- Donors must feel the party is fighting for something understandable and urgent.
- Economic messaging is especially important for working-class donors and supporters.

(v) Tools and Training

In this election, campaigns had access to a number of tools such as Populus (the Party's voter database), Agnes (a volunteer management tool), MiniPop (a mobile canvassing application), CallHub (a browser-based call centre tool), and Mobilize (a general repository of resources). How people felt about these tools seemed to correlate to the general level of experience and capacity in their riding and to what extent they had access to pre-election training on how to use these tools. Overall, the tools seem to work relatively well, although there is always room for improvement.

Many ridings seemed over-reliant on their local organizers or the Central campaign for support in using these tools once the campaign was underway. They either did not know that the answers to their questions could be found on the Mobilize website or couldn't effectively navigate Mobilize to find the answers they were looking for. Upon review, there were many available training manuals, instructional videos, policy fact sheets, and many other resources available on Mobilize. More than anything, EDAs likely just need to be pointed towards this resource earlier so they can find the information they need.

Many candidates expressed that they would have appreciated more training, including but not limited to media training. The biggest issue here was likely the timing of nominations. With so many candidates

nominated so close to the election opportunities for training were limited. A review of trainings offered between 2023 and 2024 revealed that training was made available, but not always when and where it was most needed.

One concern which was expressed by several campaign managers as well as Central staff was that the Party could and should be doing more to develop the next generation of campaign managers and organizers.

There was broad-based enthusiasm for the idea that the federal NDP adopt something like the British Columbia NDP's biannual Forward Conference which is an activist training weekend. BC New Democrats alternate between policy conventions and conferences wholly dedicated to training, networking and general solidarity building among Party and labour activists. While the federal NDP constitution mandates a policy convention every two years, there would be considerable value exploring either alternating between policy conventions and training conferences or adding a training conference on some regular schedule. While there are often trainings available at policy conventions, having a weekend dedicated to learning and capacity building in an environment that is less contentious than a policy convention could be a key component to rebuilding the Party and should be given serious consideration, even if it requires a constitutional amendment.

Key Takeaways From What We Heard:

1. The available tools are more or less fine, but they aren't being used to their fullest potential because many NDP activists don't know how to use them.
2. There is no substitute for in-person training. Virtual trainings are not as good but still okay. Self-study through Mobilize seems to be the least effective way of ensuring that EDAs and volunteers are aware of the full range of available tools and how to use them, but it's a solid resource.
3. The Party should consider adopting a regular activist training conference on the same scale as a policy convention but with a complete focus on training, networking and general solidarity building.

Part II: The Election Campaign

As noted, given the context of this election, it was determined that a microscopic dissection of the campaign itself risked yielding unhelpful returns. For this reason, the Report focuses on a few areas at a relatively high-level. The overall verdict from campaign staff was that the NDP ran a technically solid campaign in a brutal environment. Most agreed that even significantly better decisions would likely not have changed the overall outcome in terms of seats. Across reports and interviews there was a consistent view that the campaign did not “look” like a losing operation: the tour was professional, events were generally well-executed, the leader performed strongly given the circumstances, and many battleground campaigns were well-funded and able to hit or approach their spending ceilings.

(i) Campaign Team and Structure

It was suggested that, in future, the Party should consider having a Campaign Director who is not doing double duty as Chief of Staff. While the Campaign Director was extremely well-respected and admired, it would be preferable to have a Campaign Director who is able to direct their full time and attention to the campaign, particularly in the pre-election period.

We also heard that certain vendors played an outsized role in the strategic execution of the campaign. It was also suggested that a more objective, competitive process should be used in the selection of vendors to maximize value for money.

The field team was seen as extraordinarily hard-working, successfully delivering a full and diverse slate of candidates, and a functional regional organizing model with capable regional directors. Staff and local campaigns reported that they generally liked the regional organizing model but would like to see it better resourced. An overwhelming majority of candidates, local campaign managers and volunteers would like to see the Party invest more in the ground game and less in certain aspects of the central campaign such as paid television advertising. Local campaigns are yearning for strategies and messaging that are more regionally focused, particularly for rural and northern ridings. More robust regional organizing teams would facilitate improvements in this area.

The central digital team was described as high-capacity, diverse, collaborative, and innovative. Team Jagmeet was widely seen as a standout innovation, demonstrating the potential of national digital organizing and deep canvassing. Where exactly digital fits structurally — in particular field vs communications — is a source of internal debate. Wherever digital fits within the campaign structure, it could be better integrated into the work of both the field and communications teams. While the pre-election strategic plan had been to run a “digital-first campaign,” staff agreed that whatever “digital-first” was supposed to mean, it was never clearly defined or effectively implemented.

Key Takeaways From What We Heard:

1. The Campaign Director and Chief of Staff roles should be decoupled. This would facilitate better pre-election planning and election readiness.
2. Vendors should be selected through an objective, competitive process to ensure value for money.
3. More resources should be allocated to regional organizing.
4. Digital organizing should be expanded and better integrated into the broader campaign team structure.

(ii) Campaign Messaging and Policy

There was a stark divide between campaign staff on the one hand and local campaigns and volunteers on the other, as to whether the campaign was too “leader focused.” Central staff were unified in the view that most voters base their vote primarily on their impressions of the leader so significant focus must be placed there, whereas local campaigns felt the national campaign messaging should have been far less concentrated around the leader.

Ultimately, upon further discussion, most of the people we spoke to agreed that if significant focus is to be placed on the leader, the emphasis should be on the leader as spokesperson for the values and policy priorities of the Party, rather than who the leader is as a person. There was broad consensus that paid advertising highlighting the leader’s personal qualities was not effective and did not resonate with voters.

We heard there was a lack of coordination between the communications team and the development of paid advertising. Consequently, messaging lacked a cohesive strategic frame and while the advertisements generally looked professional, they lacked meaningful political content. The advertising in Quebec was generally better received but lacked impact because it was not widely seen.

Many local campaigns complained that the central messaging failed to adequately respond to voters’ primary preoccupation: Trump, the tariffs, and threats to Canadian sovereignty. They also want to see more regionally appropriate messaging which responds directly to issues of local concern.

Several participants said the NDP directed too much of its spending to national television advertising, which they viewed as low return on investment, particularly in today’s media environment. They felt the Party underinvested in targeted digital advertising, which would have allowed for greater geographic and demographic tailoring.

Interviewees repeatedly said the narrative groundwork for the election was not laid early enough. Key messaging arrived too late, which hurt local campaigns’ ability to respond to voter inquiries and speak with authority on the Party’s priorities.

Voters adopted a “Trump/Poillievre/Carney” mindset long before the election began. We heard that the NDP did not effectively counter this frame, failed to articulate its own theory of change, and did not manage to assert its message on priorities like housing and affordability. At the same time, the context of this election meant that none of the parties’ policy or other priorities really penetrated beyond shallow slogans like “Axe the Tax” and “Elbows Up.”

Ultimately, people felt that the Party missed opportunities for early identity-building. They urged the Party to present a crisp, values-driven story months in advance, reconnect with working-class voters and articulate what differentiates the NDP on issues like affordability, public services and the environment. In the months and years which precede an election, unapologetically progressive messaging which motivates prospective candidates, volunteers, and donors is critical.

When it comes to policy, we heard that people want to see greater policy ambition from the Party. They want policies which reflect the Party’s core values and better distinguishes the NDP from the other parties, particularly the Liberals.

In reviewing the Party’s 2025 election platform there were policy offerings which met this ambition but did not appear to capture the imagination of Canadians, either because they weren’t talked about enough or possibly because the context of the election meant that people were not really listening.

Commitments like a cap on grocery prices, implementation of wealth and excess profit taxes, ending fossil fuel subsidies, rent control and investments in non-market housing were distinguishing policies. However, the Party’s members and supporters want to see more bold, transformative policies which address economic and social inequality and climate change. It was suggested that the Party should focus on a small number of key priorities which excite voters and motivate the Party’s volunteer and donor bases. These priorities must include easy to digest commitments around affordability and other core preoccupations of working people.

We heard a range of views expressed on the necessity of having a detailed, fully costed platform. However, interviewees were united in the view that policy commitments should be revealed much earlier, ideally *before* the election is called, so they can be fully leveraged in the pre-election persuasion phase of the campaign.

Key Takeaways From What We Heard:

1. Some of the campaign messaging lacked clarity, coherence, and strategic focus.
2. Framing of the leader should be as a spokesperson for the values and priorities of the Party.
3. Paid advertising was siloed and insufficiently strategic.
4. Pre-writ messaging did not prepare voters to see the NDP as a governing option, which allowed Liberals and Conservatives to fully frame the election.
5. Policy should be bold, animated by the Party’s core values, and be released much earlier.

(iii) The Leader's Tour

Like the campaign itself, the tour was described as generally well-executed but lacking strategic narrative impact. Local campaigns sometimes felt like second thoughts and would have liked to have seen the strategic opportunities for their local campaigns better considered and leveraged by the leader's tour. However, this does not necessarily reveal a structural problem with the tour.

Staff did note that the tour team worked hard and kept morale up despite difficult circumstances. It was understandably difficult to advance a campaign narrative when the balance of questions from the media focused on poor polling numbers and the likelihood of a negative election result. This is another example of how the overall context of the election created challenges that were, at times, insurmountable.

(iv) Strategic Considerations for Non-Battleground Campaigns

The Party has to make strategic decisions about which ridings will receive the highest levels of resources and central support. The list of battleground ridings evolved throughout the campaign and eventually focused primarily on preserving incumbent seats. Given current realities, most people we spoke with understood that as the Party rebuilds its strength, difficult decisions will have to be made about resource allocation in future elections.

The Party should develop strategic priorities for lower resourced ridings. Many felt that they are essentially trying to run the same style of campaigns as battleground ridings, focused on voter identification and GOTV priorities which are unrealistic and demoralizing given their low levels of financial and volunteer resources. The Party is encouraged to promote more appropriate, achievable priorities for smaller campaigns focused on visibility and capacity building with a view to developing organizational strength for future campaigns.

Key Takeaway From What We Heard:

1. Develop achievable goals for lower resourced campaigns, which gives candidates a sense of purpose and contributes to building strength for future campaigns.

Part III: Other Reflections

(i) The Party's Relationship with Organized Labour

Through interviews and roundtables with national, provincial, and local labour leaders, a clear picture emerged of a relationship at a crossroads. Organized labour remains institutionally committed to the NDP. Labour leaders reaffirmed the party's historic role as the political arm of the labour movement and expressed no interest in abandoning that founding principle. But the campaign exposed a growing operational, political, and cultural distance between the Party and working people.

Labour leaders uniformly described a widening gap between the NDP and working-class Canadians but also, to be fair, in some instances between union leadership and their own members. This is an international trend and not unique to the NDP or Canadian unions. While the structural alliance between the NDP and labour persists in Canada, its effectiveness — and its emotional resonance among workers — has declined.

Regardless of region or sector, labour leaders' diagnoses were remarkably aligned. The Party is not seen as leading with work, wages, jobs, industry, and economic security — the issues workers vote on. While former and current caucus members tended to dispute this based on their parliamentary work, the perception is there and cannot be ignored.

One of the most consistent themes was that the Party's language often feels exclusionary, academic, or moralizing. People we spoke to were clear that labour is not rejecting equity as a foundational principle and priority. They are saying the Party communicates in ways that obscure material issues and alienates the very people equity is meant to include.

It was observed that on major economic issues — affordability, tariffs, industrial policy — workers did not hear a clear plan from the NDP. It is indisputable that Conservative messaging on jobs and identity is resonating with many workers.

Labour leaders want the NDP to succeed. They view the NDP as the only vehicle for political change in the genuine interest of workers. The disconnect between the NDP and working-class Canadians is not a matter of policy — labour leaders consistently praised the NDP's achievements on dental care, pharmacare, anti-scab legislation, and workers' rights, many of which were supported by significant contributions from labour allies. They view the problem as being political, cultural, and strategic.

Labour wants the NDP to reclaim its identity as the party of working people and called for: a return to class-rooted politics; a clear, confident economic and industrial strategy; simpler, more inclusive language; stronger, earlier engagement with unions; and a leader and message that can stand up to Conservatives on economy and identity.

Key Takeaways From What We Heard:

1. Canada continues to need a labour Party and the NDP is the only party in Canada which can play that role.
2. The Party must consistently lead with work, wages, jobs, industry, and economic security.
3. The Party's language is often perceived as exclusionary, academic, or moralizing. Fundamental values such as justice and equity should not be abandoned or sidelined but need to better understand class as a source of intersecting marginality.
4. The disconnect between the NDP and working-class Canadians is not a matter of policy. The problem is political, cultural, and strategic.
5. The NDP must reclaim its identity as the party of working people.

(ii) Party Governance

We met with several members of the Party's Federal Council as well as members of the various Equity Commissions. The people who serve in these roles are among the NDP's most engaged and active volunteers. Many feel that they are underutilized as a resource, and that consultation with them is often perfunctory. It may be useful for the Party to better distinguish between information items and genuine decision items and to encourage fulsome debate when decisions are required.

While a deep dive into structural governance issues is beyond the scope of this Report, the Party should consider looking at ways to better leverage the expertise and energy of members on Federal Council. While this would require a constitutional amendment, the Party may wish to include EDA representation on the Federal Council or to create an EDA Presidents' Commission, or some other body that would represent the interests and concerns of EDAs. Alternatively, the Party should encourage and support the creation of Councils of Electoral District Associations (CEDAs) in accordance with Article IX of the Constitution and provide a mechanism for CEDAs to have some role on Federal Council.

(iii) Increasing Youth Engagement

Young people were identified as one of the NDP's greatest unrealized strengths. Youth strongly align with NDP values — affordability, climate justice, equity, workers' rights — but many do not see the Party (or in many cases, political parties in general) as a place where they can find solutions to the structural changes they face, exercise meaningful power or develop as leaders. The Party's youth strategy must move beyond recruitment to belonging, empowerment, and leadership development.

We heard that young New Democrats sometimes feel under-supported, tokenized, or sidelined in decision-making. They reported that messaging feels scripted and corporate which resonates less than authentic, values-driven storytelling. This is not out of synch with what we heard about the Party's messaging in general.

In many regions, campus and other community youth networks are underdeveloped or inactive. The Party should continue to work with Canada's Young New Democrats to develop a strategy for increasing the Party's presence on college and university campuses.

(iv) Trust and Unity

As Tommy Douglas said in his nomination speech for the national leadership at the NDP's founding convention in 1961³:

The first thing which must be done is to create a spirit of unity within the party itself. In a movement like ours there are bound to be differences of opinion and outlook because we represent different geographical areas, cultures and different occupational activities. We are people who hold certain convictions very strongly. That is why we're here. It would therefore be strange if we didn't have differences of opinion because it is still true that where everyone thinks alike no one thinks very much.

And,

More social democratic parties have been ruined by dissension from within than have ever been destroyed by attacks from without. Any party which expects to win the confidence of the Canadian electorate must demonstrate its ability to manage its own affairs with dignity and unity. We must learn to work together as a team each of us with a part to play, but always remembering that our individual contribution will only be valuable if it contributes to the victory of the team as a whole.

Admittedly, unity, like trust, must be earned not imposed. Those who advance respectful, good faith, passionate defences of their policy or strategic visions are within their rights to do so and should be listened to. However, being listened to does not always mean that one's position will prevail – the NDP is a party with a wide-range of views, not all of which can win the day. Both the Party and its members are encouraged to commit to fostering a culture of trust and unity where rigorous internal debate is welcomed but following which everyone can move on with common purpose.

³ https://www.douglascoldwelllayton.ca/speech_to_the_founding_convention_of_the_ndp_1961

Conclusion and Acknowledgments

While the Review and Renewal process was, at times, daunting, it was an honour to have been asked to undertake it on behalf of the NDP. The insights highlighted in this Report should be viewed as a starting point for future discussion and recognized as requiring time and resources to fully address.

Despite the results of the most recent election, there is cause for optimism – after all, hope and optimism are central to the Party’s DNA. New Democrats are clearly committed to helping build the Party back up to a position of strength. The new leader will no doubt face challenges but can be reassured in knowing that there is an incredible team ready and willing to do the work alongside him or her.

No one we spoke to posited that the NDP should settle for being the moral conscience of Parliament. The Party should roundly reject the notion that vying for greater political power requires compromise in terms of its values or a move to the political centre to achieve electoral success. On the contrary, the Party can learn from the successes of bold, progressive campaigns like Zohran Mamdani’s mayoral campaign in New York City. Grassroots organizing supported by a positive message for change can accomplish big things.

A massive thank you to the staff who assisted with this process by providing informational, administrative and logistical support, particularly Alison Blagden, without whom none of this work would have been possible. We were a small but mighty team, and I genuinely can’t believe how much we got done in such a short time. I want to express my profound gratitude to my colleagues at Champ & Associates who supported me and gave me the time and space I needed to get this done. And last, but by no means least, thank you to the thousands of New Democrats who entrusted me with their ideas and insights. Meeting all of you has left me genuinely excited about the future of the federal NDP.

In solidarity,



Emilie Taman