

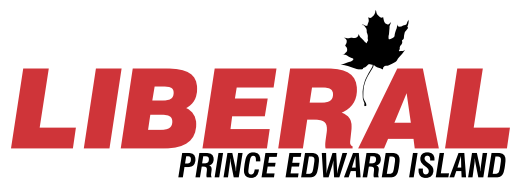
HEALTHCARE *first*

AN ACTION PLAN
FOR ISLANDERS

MARCH 2023



LIBERAL
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



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Authorized by the Official Agent for the Liberal Party of PEI

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Dear Islanders,

As you will see, our campaign platform is called Healthcare First. We have chosen to put healthcare at the forefront of our plan for Islanders because we believe it is the most important duty a government has to its citizens. We believe it is vital that more be done to tackle the pressing healthcare challenges facing Islanders. In addition, we believe the Island has not been well served by the current government's approach of simply asking for more money. Yes, the Government of Canada should increase its share of health spending. But the government of PEI, starting with the Premier of PEI, needs to be committed to transformative change and accountability to every Islander so that they will receive timely access to healthcare services.

The Need for a Healthcare Plan

Accessible healthcare begins with competent planning that sets goals in terms of access to services and designs strategies to get there. In the last 3.5 years, with no plan or sense of urgency, our health system has rapidly deteriorated. It is as if the King Government has simply accepted the fact that over 30,000 Islanders are without a family physician, and that every other day one of our emergency rooms or collaborative emergency centres is closed. This is unacceptable - Islanders deserve better.

Setting Our Healthcare Priorities: Our Action Plan

At the heart of our call for transformative change and accountability is the provision of healthcare to Islanders. Our platform, Healthcare First, identifies new ways that governmental leadership will focus on health service delivery. Specific areas, including mental health and addictions, will be given their own focus and organizational support. Measures to address the nursing shortage and poor working conditions are addressed, as are initiatives to address our "chronic" doctor shortage. Our platform also calls for ways to better utilize key healthcare partners, such as our community pharmacists working at pharmacies across the Island. These and many other areas for improvement have been identified through outreach and collaboration with our health professionals.

Affordability, We Can Do Better

But our plan goes beyond healthcare. The Liberal Party recognizes the critical importance of affordability and access to housing. At the same time, we know we must continually work to protect our environment and address climate change in a sustainable way. We also must find ways to address labour market challenges, our primary sectors and our life sciences and aerospace sectors.

There is no question our Island has been through a lot over the last number of years. Yet our spirit is not broken, nor is our optimism about the future diminished. We know we can do better, and Islanders have every right to expect more from their government. Healthcare comes first, but the state of our economy, the affordability of life on the Island, and the well-being of our environment ... these and other issues require thoughtful attention and competent, active leadership.

Our Island Can Be a Leader

We may be Canada's smallest province, but our size has empowered us; we have the capacity and character to lead the way with innovative strategies that larger provinces take much longer to implement. Let's use this size advantage to develop and build better approaches to healthcare delivery.

Our world is changing rapidly. As proud Islanders, we must have the energy and imagination to effectively guide and shape that change.

That's one big reason for my faith in the growing group of Islanders who have come together and put their names forward as Liberal candidates. They all sincerely want to represent you - and the better future we all want to build.

A New Liberal Team

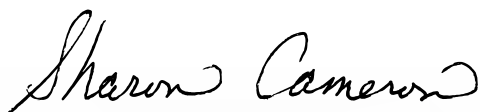
There is no doubt that our new Liberal Team represents the most diverse slate of people in the history of Island politics. Together, I believe we are on the vanguard of change - and we have the experience and imagination required to lead our province in a way that will help to harness the energy developing all around us.

I want to protect everything that's best about our Island: strong communities; a spirit of giving; and attachment to our best traditions while offering open arms to new ideas.

The new Liberal Team shares your uncertainties and concerns. Most importantly, we believe in both our shared history and our bright future.

We look forward to meeting Islanders on the doorstep, in our communities, and online as we seek to earn your trust in this election.

Thank you for the opportunity.



SHARON CAMERON

Leader • Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island





HEALTHCARE *first*

2.0 • HEALTHCARE FIRST: OUR PRIORITIES

Ensuring that every Islander has timely access to healthcare is the most important duty the government has to the people of this province. Managing and overseeing a health system is not an easy task, but complexity is not an excuse for indifference or inaction.

Dennis King's interest in the health system seemed to lessen significantly when he was no longer sharing the stage with the Chief Public Health Officer. For two years, as PEI battled the pandemic, he was ready to take credit for her leadership and fortitude.

As we moved beyond the pandemic, the King Government's neglect became all too apparent. While the health system collapsed all around him, our housing shortage spawned PEI's first tent encampment, and Islanders faced the highest inflation in the country, Dennis King failed to act quickly and decisively. It was only when Twitter and nightly news stories pushed him to take action did we see any kind of government response. Simply put, the King Government is not engaged in the issues that matter most to Islanders. Whether that's due to incompetence or indifference is for Islanders to decide.

In this election, the Liberal Party's platform, Healthcare First, sets improved healthcare access as the number one priority for Islanders.

Premier to assume ministerial responsibility for healthcare for a two-year period:

The Liberal Party believes that the crisis in healthcare is so pervasive that the office of the Premier needs to take on day-to-day Ministerial responsibility for healthcare for a minimum of two years to implement immediate measures to dramatically improve access to health services. This is a first in Canada, but we believe it is required to drive improvements to front-line service in the short-term while long-range planning is completed.

A New Patients' Rights Act that gives Islanders legal rights when it comes to timely access to healthcare services:

The Liberal Party believes that Islanders deserve the right to timely, legally guaranteed access to healthcare services, regardless of where they live in PEI. This Act will define the rights that Islanders will have regarding access to healthcare. Implementation and enforcement of the Act will be a ministerial responsibility accompanied by an independent officer of the Legislature to adjudicate complaints and recommend corrective and/or remedial action.

A separate minister and department for mental health and addictions: The complexity and demand of healthcare delivery is unworkable within the mandate of a single minister. The Liberal Party of PEI believes that mental health and addictions issues should be managed and addressed by a separate department. To this end, the Liberal Party would join other jurisdictions in recognizing the unique and challenging task of the public's mental health needs by creating a dedicated department and minister.

New recruitment/retention initiatives for nurses, doctors, and other health care workers: The band-aid approach of recent years does not work; we need a comprehensive, practical approach to recruiting and retaining nurses, doctors, and allied health workers. We believe there are real, underexplored opportunities for in-school/pre-practice recruitment, tuition/training subsidies, return-in-service grants, retention measures, and incentives to come out of retirement.

Access to new healthcare services and providers: A key way to improve healthcare is to make more of what we already have. The Liberal Party believes we can do this by embracing the full scope of practice of existing healthcare workers on PEI, as well as looking to new players that can be publicly funded. This would include further expanding even further the scope of practice of pharmacists, nurse practitioners, and advance care paramedics to provide medical services to Islanders.

Expediting professional credential recognition, both foreign and domestic: Across all healthcare professional areas, we need to dramatically expedite approval of the credentials of healthcare providers that want – and are ready to work – in PEI. Whether they are Canadian or coming from outside the country, we need to do a better, faster job of evaluating and recognizing their credentials so they can stop waiting and start contributing to caring for Islanders.

3.0 • HEALTHCARE FIRST: OUR AGENDA

3.1 Expanded Access to Mental Health and Addiction Services

Mental illness is a pervasive chronic condition that many Islanders face. The chance of having a mental illness in one's lifetime is 1 in 5. According to the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, the proportion of Canadians in the last 12 months that consulted their family doctor about their mental health is 57%. Anxiety disorders make up the most common form of mental illness, impacting 9% of all men and 16% of all women in Canada.

For years, Islanders have struggled with access to mental health and addictions services. While previous Liberal Governments have introduced many new initiatives, including a mental health campus, mobile mental health services, and mental health walk-in clinics, demand for services continues to outstrip supply. According to the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, the chance of having a mental illness or substance use disorder will be 1 in 3. Translated into PEI's population, these instances of the prevalence of mental illness are staggering.

New and expanded initiatives are required for Islanders suffering from mental health and addiction challenges to get the help they need. New health professionals are required to provide added services. In some cases, that means hiring new psychiatrists on both an in-person and virtual basis to treat Islanders. In other instances, we need to look to bring new health providers into PEI's public system, including psychologists.

However, new health professionals alone will not be enough. Mental health and addictions services need expanded leadership and dedication. A Liberal Government will establish a dedicated department of mental health and addictions with its own Minister, budget, and Deputy Minister.

The Liberal Party recognizes how salient safe housing is for Islanders suffering from mental health and addictions issues. New and expanded housing and accommodations are required to help Islanders on their journey to recovery and well-being.

In terms of mental health and addictions, the Liberal Party's **Healthcare First** platform will:

1. **Establish a dedicated department of mental health and addictions** with its own Minister, budget, and Deputy Minister to deliver enhanced services to Islanders;
2. **Expand the number of mental health walk-in clinics and mobile mental health units** to increase services to Islanders, including 24-7 coverage;
3. **Increase the number of psychiatrists** practicing in PEI;
4. **Provide online access to mental health and addictions services** to be available for every Islander in need;

5. **Expand access to mental health services through the use of psychologists** as part of the PEI Health system on a fee-for-service basis; and
6. **Introduce a 10-year plan on housing and accommodations** for Islanders living with mental illness without stable housing.

3.2 Expanded Access to Nurses in a Renewed Healthcare System

Nurses are the most prevalent healthcare provider in our healthcare system. Without nurses, there is no healthcare system. More than anyone else, they are the face of healthcare delivery. But, as many in the profession are reporting, “nurses are at a breaking point.” Presently, PEI is short approximately 200 nurses, and the shortages are getting worse in the face of an aging nurse demographic.

The shortage of nurses is having a profound impact on access to healthcare. Virtually every department, ER, or rural hospital is just one missed nursing shift away from a closure or reduction of service. These shortages are placing enormous stress on the nursing workforce. Nurse shortages are causing ill-timed shift reassignments that create added burdens as nurses - like all Islanders - need to balance family responsibilities for their children and family members. Nurses describe their current work environment as toxic, with nurses and administrators locked in a constant battle of trying to deploy too few nurses to cover too many assignments.

According to the PEI Nurses Union:

“Governments must do three things to fix the nursing shortage crisis: keep experienced nurses in their jobs, bring nurses back to the public sector, and recruit nurses where they are needed most. We need proven programs, backed by firm timelines and real accountability.”

The Liberal Party’s **Healthcare First** platform recognizes the essential role of nurses and will:

1. **Engage with RN and LPN Nursing organizations to develop a Nursing Sustainability Strategy** with the nursing profession that is based on a 10-year workforce projection in order to define projected shortages and recruitment/retention/compensation challenges and solutions;
2. Establish a workplace where nursing workloads are based upon **legislated nurse-to-patient ratios**;
3. **Increase student enrollment in expanded PEI nursing programs** through a *Team Nursing Scholarship* program that covers the tuition costs for any nurse who returns to work in PEI’s healthcare system;
4. **Increase nursing spaces in RN and LPN programs** to address chronic nursing shortages, including a focus on training nurses in rural areas;

5. **Address financial compensation** so that nursing becomes a financially-rewarding career that attracts new entrants, retains our current nurses, and brings retired nurses back into active practice;
6. **Expedite the incorporation of internationally-educated** nurses into the PEI nursing workforce;
7. **Establish inter-provincial labour mobility among nurses licensed to practice** in other provinces to practice in PEI; and
8. **Expand the health service delivery role** that Nurse Practitioners play on PEI by ensuring they are employed and compensated to work to their full scope of practice.

3.3 Expanded Access to Physicians in a Renewed Healthcare System

PEI faces a crisis in terms of the access that Islanders have to a physician. Access to a family doctor in particular, is critically important as they are the gateway to the health system. Without access to a family doctor, over thirty thousand Islanders struggle to get the healthcare they need and deserve. A 2022 report by the Canadian Institute of Health Information found that PEI had the lowest number of family doctors per 100,000 population in Atlantic Canada and ranked among the lowest in Canada.

The problem was not always this extreme. When the King Government came to power, there were far fewer Islanders on the patient registry. Less than four years later, that number has swelled to over 30,000. In the past six weeks, Summerside has lost five doctors. Island doctors are working tirelessly in the face of ever-worsening numbers as many existing doctors are reaching the age of retirement. While the proposed medical school may eventually help address shortages, it will be over six years before the medical school produces its first practicing physician. **We simply can't wait that long.**

When it comes to Islanders accessing a physician, the King Government has failed to act with the sense of urgency that the crisis requires. Instead, King has taken to telling Islanders that it is unreasonable for them to expect to have a family doctor.

The Liberal Party's **Healthcare First** platform will work directly to improve access to a doctor for Islanders and will:

1. **Engage with the PEI Medical Society** to undertake health human resource planning to identify physician supply and demand and to guide recruitment and retention planning;
2. **Expand opportunities for virtual care** through Maple and other telemedicine/virtual-type initiatives;
3. **Adjust fee structure/compensation models**, so that family medicine becomes a more attractive career choice;



4. **Expand the volume of walk-in clinics** on an interim basis by incentivizing physicians to provide these services;
5. **Double scholarships/financial recruitment incentives** to ensure Island students studying medicine in other provinces will find it attractive to return to PEI to practice;
6. **Establish return-in-service agreements for Island students** studying at a Canadian University where the PEI government has purchased seats and double the number of medical residency seats, including four new seats for students studying outside of Canada;
7. Work with the PEI Medical Society, UPEI, and Holland College to develop a **digital medical specialist program** to help physicians with support to better manage administrative backlogs and inefficiencies; and
8. **Ensure Master Agreement Negotiations** use the results of health human resource supply and demand analysis to guide compensation decision-making in order to attract doctors in specialty areas where the greatest vacancies exist;

3.4 Expanding the Primary Care Role of Community Pharmacists

The Liberal Party believes that our Island is fortunate to have a network of fifty community pharmacies located across the province. These facilities and the pharmacists and staff that operate them are important focal points of local healthcare.

Despite some recent expansions to the services pharmacists provide on the Island, we need to change the patient journey from relying excessively on overworked, inaccessible physicians to diagnose and prescribe for minor ailments before sending patients to a pharmacy to get a prescription filled. Our discussion with the pharmacy profession suggests there is a better way.

Pharmacists on the Island need to be much more integrated into primary care delivery with expanded capacity to prescribe within their scope of practice for common issues like Lyme disease and travel vaccines. At the same time, we need to ensure that pharmacy/pharmacist payment models recognize that pharmacies are small businesses that need to attract and retain pharmacy staff to fulfill new and expanded roles.

The Liberal Party's **Healthcare First** platform will improve access to primary care through our community pharmacies by:

1. **Engage with PEI Pharmacy Association** to undertake health human resource planning to plan for future supply and demand of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians on PEI to guide recruitment and retention;
2. **Expand the range of health conditions** for which Island pharmacists can diagnose and prescribe in keeping with their scope of practice that reflects what pharmacists can do in the rest of Canada;
3. **Allow pharmacists to deliver the PEI Smoking and Vaping Cessation Program** to allow more Islanders to access these critically important services;
4. **Allow pharmacists to deliver contraception management services** on a fee-for-service basis to broaden the accessibility of these services for Island women;
5. **Allow pharmacists to play a greater role in chronic disease management**, including blood pressure and cholesterol diagnosis / treatment and diabetes management;
6. **Allow pharmacists to serve as the primary location for vaccine services**, including flu and Covid-booster vaccines; and
7. **Develop a funding model** that encourages and supports pharmacy owners to play a greater role in primary care delivery as well as incentivizes pharmacists to deliver expanded services.

3.5 Enhanced Access to Emergency Rooms and Collaborative Emergency Centres (CEC's)

In PEI, it seems that hardly a week goes by where there is not an announcement of ER overcrowding or the latest CEC closure. Staffing is always cited as the issue. At the same time, both a cause and a symptom of PEI's crisis in Islanders seeking to access a family doctor is the fact that our ERs and CECs

are being used as walk-in clinics. Increased traffic in these sites adds to line-ups, frustration and the overall dysfunction of the health system. The extent of overcrowding at the QEH, for example, means that as many as 40% of the Islanders that show up leave in frustration before they are seen by a physician.

To fix PEI's ER problem - as we are told by the experts - we must fix broader health system problems. First, we need to expand primary care options for non-urgent patients so that ERs are not viewed as "Out-Patients" clinics. These primary care settings need not be exclusively doctors' offices. They can - and should be - pharmacies, for example. To this end, PEI has begun to merely scratch the surface of the role pharmacists can play. At the same time, in the short term, we need added access to physicians through expanded walk-in clinics and virtual care if we are going to begin to address ER overcrowding.

Second, there are broader systemic problems around lack of senior's access to long-term care, restorative care, and other services which allow them to leave hospitals sooner, freeing up acute care beds needed for ER patients that have been admitted to hospital. In the absence of such beds, ER patients end up occupying ER observation rooms (or hallways) resulting in the bottlenecks that contribute to excessive wait times. At the same time, our paramedics crowd our hospitals' ER hallways, spending excessive times waiting for their patients to be seen resulting in shortages of paramedics being able to respond to calls.

A third issue is we much make the best possible use of our health human resources supporting emergency medicine, including looking at what new health care professionals can be leveraged to support access to care. There is no easy fix to improving access to emergency medicine. However, supporting the frontline workers who deliver this critically important service requires that we look at the issues and challenges from a systemic perspective and recognize that there are no quick fixes.

The Liberal Party's **Healthcare First** platform is intended to improve access to ERs and CECs and will:

1. **Ensure adequate staffing of ERs and CECs** through innovative compensation and staffing models;
2. **Expand the number of walk-in clinics** to divert Islanders from ERs for non-urgent care needs;
3. **Expand virtual healthcare/telemedicine** to divert Islanders from ER's for non-urgent care needs;
4. **Invest in interim residential services and facilities** for medically discharged patients who need supports prior to returning home;
5. **Invest in restorative care beds** so that medically discharged patients have an appropriate care setting to go to recover with the required medical supports; and
6. **Expand access to primary care in non-urgent settings** to divert patients away from ERs.
7. **Leverage other health professionals such as Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants** to become part of the ER care team to address shortages and improve access to care; and
8. **Ensure emergency medicine offers compensation commensurate to the stress and difficulty of working conditions** so that nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians, and other health care providers view emergency medicine as an attractive specialty of the health profession.



3.6 Expanded Access to Seniors Care

A key measure of any government should be how it respects and supports its seniors - those who have given so much to society. On PEI, our senior population is growing significantly, and plans must be developed to provide them with the best possible services and supports, in areas ranging from housing, nursing care, home care and access to independent living.

Between 2020 and 2030, the growth rate of the population of seniors aged 80+ is projected to be much higher in PEI than the rest of Canada. For example, the number of Islanders aged 80+ is projected to rise over the next ten years by 66.2%, compared with a national average of 53%, according to Statistics Canada population data.

Previous Liberal Governments provided new investments in palliative care and the construction of multiple public nursing homes; investments that have had a positive impact on our seniors population. But there is much more to be done.

As PEI looks to the future, the present challenges should serve to drive policy and service innovation. These new initiatives will demonstrate that targeted community supports such as HomeFirst can allow Island seniors requiring care to remain in the comfort of their homes, often at a far lower cost. More patient-centred, compassionate care, initiatives of this nature enhance the sustainability of our healthcare system.

3.6.1 Homecare: Our HomeFirst Program

Homecare is an important social support that helps Islanders stay as long as they can in the comfort of their own homes. Over the years, however, growth in homecare spending has not kept pace with the volume of potential clients requiring service.

Nonetheless, home care is still an affordable and compassionate option for a government looking to support seniors wishing to live in their homes for as long as possible. The Liberal Party is proposing a new program called HomeFirst in which family caregivers can be compensated for up to \$1500 per month to care for an immediate relative in their homes. This program will also include a one-time capital contribution of up to \$10,000 to cover 50% of the cost of renovations to support caring for a senior in a family member's home.

This initiative represents a substantive recognition of the role that informal caregivers have and continue to play in providing care for our seniors. It is intended to change the trajectory of demand for the construction of institutional long-term care facilities by enabling families and communities to be partially compensated for the critically important role they play when caring for Island seniors in their homes. For over a decade, PEI's palliative care program has had a homecare component allowing seniors to spend their final days in the comfort of their homes with their families. More recently, mobile integrated health services have seen Island EMS paramedics providing homecare services to residents in their homes, significantly reducing the need for ER visits. This approach will allow future provincial government investments in long-term care to focus on key unmet needs, such as dementia care, where caring for seniors in the home is not an option.

The Liberal Party's **Healthcare First** platform will improve access to homecare with our plan to:

1. **Expand the homecare budget** to allow for more Islanders to remain living in their own homes;
2. **Create a HomeFirst homecare program** as a pilot project to provide financial compensation of up to \$1500 per month for Islanders who stay at home to care for a loved one;
3. **Ensure the HomeFirst Homecare Program is focused** on supporting the caregiver with system-wide health supports, including:
 - Provincial needs assessment to determine level of care requirements;
 - Inclusion in the Provincial Homecare program for monitoring and follow-up;
 - Access to 911 and Island EMS paramedics mobile integrated health services for in-home care under the guise of an expanded Senior's Check-In Program;
 - Access to advanced first aid training for caregivers;
 - Access to mental health supports and training for caregivers;
4. Provide seniors and their families with **tools and technologies** that allow them to live longer in their homes.

3.6.2 Long-Term Care and Seniors Housing

For many Islanders, seniors' care can take the form of entering a long-term care facility either run by the province or a private facility that is provincially subsidized. In addition to facilities that provide nursing care, PEI also supports through government subsidies to community long-term care facilities that provide meals, lodging, and assisted living. Such facilities play a key role in support of seniors' accommodations and housing needs. Going forward, PEI's need for new long-term care spaces will be second highest in the country, given our comparatively older population base.

Despite the importance of both types of these facilities, both nursing care and community care facilities have gone multiple years with expired government contracts and no funding stability. Indeed, during the enormous challenges they had to contend with during Covid-19, the government failed to support them with adequate funding at a time when they were doing their very best to protect our seniors. The national discussion on the future of long-term care in Canada has brought into focus a critical assessment of current institutional approaches. It has also caused us to appreciate the evolving demographic reality of caring for an increasingly older population. As our population continues to age, we need new approaches to long-term care and housing that better focus on the needs of our seniors.

The Liberal Party's **Healthcare First** platform will improve access to long-term care and senior's housing with our plan to:

1. **Engage with the associations serving the long-term care sector** to develop a strategic approach to planning for and addressing long-term care needs on PEI;
2. **Expand nursing care aimed at treating the unique needs of dementia patients** in both public and private facilities;
3. **Adopt the new national long-term care standards** as mandatory on PEI in collaboration with the sector;
4. **Develop and support new and expanded training programs** for the long-term care sector;
5. **Develop and implement subsidies and contractual payments** that reflect the actual inflation and cost of living increases experienced by the sector;
6. **Treat community care facilities and nursing care facilities equally** in terms of payment for non-health services;
7. **Develop a supply and demand planning model that provides 10-year projections** on long-term care, community care, and senior's housing needs; and
8. **Expand in public investments in 500 new, affordable seniors housing units** that provide seniors with assisted living options.

3.7 Expanded Access to Medications and Health Services

The Liberal Party of PEI believes that Islanders need and deserve expanded access to medications as well as other health services. Despite huge funding increases from Ottawa, the PCs have not invested significantly in improving access to medications. In fact, a \$35 million influx in new funding for medications from Ottawa has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in new spending on medications, leaving many Islanders without access. As a result of this inaction, Islanders face among the longest wait times in Canada when it comes to having medications covered under the provincial formulary. At the same time, the government is not increasing spending on critical issues related to helping Islanders living with chronic diseases. From 2022 to 2023, the King government reduced projected investments in chronic disease management. At the same time, they underspent the grants they allocate to health promotion.

There are real and pervasive impacts of failing to invest in medications and new health services. For example, Islanders living with type 1 diabetes face the highest out-of-pocket costs in the country for managing their care. There are multiple other health conditions for which PEI's failure to invest has had consequences for Islanders living with critical health conditions.

The Liberal Party of PEI is committed to putting health care first by making new investments in medications and health services that:

- 1. Expedite access to publicly funded medications** so Islanders get access to newly approved medications;
- 2. Expand funding for diabetes treatment** so that Islanders have access to timely and affordable diabetes care;
- 3. Increase investments in women's reproductive health** starting with public coverage for prescription contraceptives and expansion to fertility treatment funding;
- 4. Double spending for health promotion grants** to expand promotion activities to support Islanders;
- 5. Expand funding for obesity treatment** with an emphasis on childhood obesity and ensure PEI's health system recognizes the condition as a chronic disease; and
- 6. Improve access to cancer screening and treatment** with an emphasis on high-risk lung cancer and cervical cancer.



3.8 Leveraging Technology for Enhanced Health Delivery

The Liberal Party believes that technology holds the potential to enhance the quality of healthcare delivery. The aspiration of Electronic Medical Records (EMR) technology is to provide every Islander with a secure and private healthcare history that can allow for the seamless flow of information between multiple healthcare providers, dramatically optimizing the timeliness and quality of care.

Technology also has the capacity to provide patients with ready access to information and advice on how they manage their own healthcare. Properly employed, technology can also let Islanders know where and when they can access the appropriate level of care with up-to-date, real-time information. Technology can also be used to help enhance the delivery of health services to people living in rural areas. However, the adoption of new technology in PEI's health system has been far too slow and in no way reflects a patient-centred approach. It is inconceivable in 2023 that the main form of communication among players in the healthcare team is the fax machine.

A Liberal government will:

- 1. Expand utilization of mobile and Internet-based medical technology** to provide Islanders with enhanced access to better manage their own health outcomes;
- 2. Implement online systems and booking options to provide Islanders with real-time information on wait times at ERs, medical clinics, and other care settings** to enhance access to non-urgent treatments;
- 3. Embrace best practices in technology-based health service delivery** for those living in rural communities; and
- 4. Provide physicians with access to funded digital health technology specialists** to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of medical practices.



POVERTY & *housing*

4.0 • OUR AFFORDABILITY AGENDA: ADDRESSING POVERTY AND HOUSING

In 2022, many Islanders struggled to afford the necessities of life as PEI faced the highest inflation in the country. In the first quarter of 2023, inflation persists as food costs and fuel costs continue to sustain record increases. Average rental costs also rose as new housing units brought onto the market were often higher-end, reflecting the inflation-driven increased costs of construction.

In 2022, the government's lack of a workable plan for affordable housing ushered in the Island's first tent encampment as Islanders struggled to find housing.

4.1 Addressing Poverty and the Needs of Low-Income Islanders

The Liberal Party recognizes that poverty takes many forms and touches everyone's life – directly or indirectly. PEI is not immune to poverty. According to the 2021 census, 8.7% or 12,970 Islanders, live in poverty.

As part of its action plan ***Belonging and Thriving: A Poverty Reduction Action Plan for Prince Edward Island (2019-2024)***, our previous Liberal Government implemented many initiatives to improve the quality of life for all Islanders and specifically those living in low income. Some examples were increases in the minimum wage; income tax relief; major changes to social assistance such as increased income and asset exemptions, increases to food rates, and shelter rates; and increases to seniors and low-income home repair programs.

The previous Liberal government's plan included many new significant actions to support the most vulnerable and to further enhance the social and economic well-being of all Islanders. During that period, the Liberal Government pledged approximately \$68 million over the next five years to implement the Action Plan.

Since the PCs came to power, the focus on addressing poverty has become unfocused and ad hoc. The action plan and proposed spending targets are gone. Any reductions in poverty over the last two years in Canada are largely attributed to the impact of federal Covid-19 funding.

The Liberal Party of PEI's plan to combat poverty and low-income challenges facing Islanders will include:

- 1. Increasing social assistance supports to counter inflation** in order that recipients do not fall behind during times of high inflation;
- 2. Increasing allowable income to be earned** while still remaining eligible for social assistance programs;
- 3. Expanding funding under the Senior's Home Repair Program** to ensure more seniors have access to funding that allows them to remain in their homes longer;
- 4. Expanding eligibility/funding under Access Ability Supports** to ensure more Islanders access funding for services with added emphasis on senior's needs;
- 5. Enhance the Emergency Shelter system to provide 24/7** access rather than 12-hour nighttime access only and address the recommendations of the 2019 Community needs assessment on emergency shelters;
- 6. Enhance childcare subsidies for low-income Islanders** to support their efforts in participating in the labour market; and
- 7. Increase rental subsidies to low-income Islanders** to support access to safe and affordable housing.

4.2 Province-wide Affordable Housing

Prior to the election of the PCs, the Liberal Government had developed and was implementing a Housing Action Plan, advised by a Housing Council that was focusing on:

- advising the Cabinet Committee on Housing;
- providing direction to the Housing Hub;
- providing advice on the newly created Community Housing Fund; and
- ensuring the Housing Action Plan aligns with the government's goals for affordable housing.

The Housing Action Plan included immediate and long-term targets and focuses on five goals: availability; affordability; sustainable communities; collaboration; and leadership. Since the launch of the plan, hundreds of units have been built and opened to Islanders.

Since the PC came to power, the focus and momentum on affordable housing was lost as the King Government struggled to implement a comprehensive strategy. Unfortunately, it was not until the tent encampment appeared that the PC's realized just how serious the housing problem was on PEI. But instead of practical, concrete action the PCs issued press releases with unreasonable construction targets that even PEI's construction sector stated were unachievable given worker shortages and construction delays.

A Liberal Government is committed to establishing workable, timely solutions to the housing crisis, including:

- 1. Support first-time homebuyers with an OwnFirst program** whereby families with an income of \$95,000 or less can get an interest-reducing subsidy on the first \$200,000 of their mortgage of up to \$4000 per year for a period of 5 years;
- 2. Expanded access to low-cost financing** that provides \$150,000,000 over three years in new incentives to non-profits, co-ops, and developers to build new affordable housing on PEI;
- 3. New grant/subsidy programs to support** non-profits and co-ops who construct/operate affordable housing;
- 4. Making multi-unit residential properties qualifying businesses for immigrants** to invest in in order to qualify for citizenship under provincial immigration programs;
- 5. Provide financial and/or HR support to municipalities** to expedite building permit approvals and zoning changes in order to help speed up the construction process;
- 6. Make community-funded housing projects eligible** to be funded under Community Economic Development Investment Funds (CEDIF);
- 7. Explore the strategic use of crown land for housing developments** in partnership with communities and PEI's First Nations;
- 8. Undertake a more balanced approach to rental legislation** that allows PEI landlords to adjust rents on vacant properties in keeping with the approach in the rest of Canada;
- 9. Re-institute the Cabinet Committee on Housing** to provide for leadership and accountability for housing projects and initiatives;

EDUCATION, EARLY LEARNING & *childcare*

5.0 • OUR EDUCATION, EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE AGENDA

5.1 Public School

Our Island's public school system serves approximately 19,000 young Islanders. The PEI Liberal Party knows that parents and teachers are committed to seeing our Island students get the best possible education to prepare them for the future.

In 2007 the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) results showed that Island students were struggling. The Liberal government of the day implemented a Provincial Common Assessment Program that actively involved teachers to assess curriculum and developing common testing tools.

According to a 2018 report from the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) "By 2015-2016, PEI's results on PISA, PCAP, and Provincial Common Assessments had improved significantly. Island students were among the top performing in the country."

The authors of the above study further found that teacher involvement and engagement were essential in the achievement of these improved student outcomes. Since 2019, however, the PCs have placed significantly less emphasis on the value of common assessments in helping to support both students and teachers. During Covid-19, PEI Government even went so far as to cancel high school exams, claiming that it was not possible to accurately test students who studied on both an online and in-person basis. Given the disruption that Covid-19 caused to our Island's education system, the government should be placing significantly more emphasis on common assessments rather than less.

In addition to the lack of focus on assessments and knowing how our children are learning, there are issues with the fact that as many as 35% of our high school graduates do not go on to any kind of post-secondary education. We know that further education improves economic opportunities for individual students as well as helps ensure a skilled worked force for the Island's economy.

The Liberal Party of PEI is committed to enhancing our public education system's performance in educating our children by:

- 1. Increasing focus on student assessments** (PCAP, PISA, and provincial assessments) as a key measure of student/teacher/education system performance;
- 2. Increasing investments in professional development supports for teachers** to allow them better teach our island students to the required curriculum in order to enhance learning;
- 3. Increasing investments in in-class support for teachers** including educational assistants, as well as further investment in school psychologists, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and other resource personnel;
- 4. Increasing emphasis on supporting students with academic and career counselling** earlier in the student journey to expand their options;

5. **Setting targets** to increase the number of Island students who go on to study at a post-secondary education level; and
6. **Revising apprenticeship training** to better accommodate the needs of students and employers.

5.2 Early Learning and Childcare

The Liberal Party firmly believes in investing in early learning and childcare and is proud of its strong record of doing so in PEI. Access to early learning and childcare spaces for our children ensures that learning begins at an early age, better preparing our children for success. Additionally, access to early learning and childcare allows for great female participation in the workforce, supporting our Island's economic development and the financial capacity of Island families.

The previous Liberal government played an active role in modernizing PEI's childcare system, through our Preschool Excellence Initiative. The Liberal Government's initiative stabilized the sector and over the last decade has allowed the province to establish a robust, publicly managed Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) system which is responsive to children, families, and the community. The initiative created additional spaces, enhanced quality, and supported early childhood educators in upgrading their training. The Liberal program also dramatically increased wages for our early childhood educators, recognizing the importance of their role in supporting our children's development.

Today, there are approximately 7199 Island children from birth to age 4 (Statistics Canada, July 2020). There are 4050 licensed spaces, coverage for approximately 56% (May 2021) of children across the province. As a result, many Island families struggle without access to high-quality, affordable care, particularly in rural areas.

These limitations on access exist even in the face of a significant infusion of federal funding. Between 2021-2022, the Federal Liberal Government allocated an additional \$13.6 million in funding for early learning and childcare on the Island. While the King Government has used federal money to allow centres to reduce fees, funds allocated for new spaces have not been sufficient to address the needs as the wait list for access to early learning and childcare continues to grow. In addition, the operators and educators need to be more fully engaged in the roll-out of federal funding in order that new financial support is meeting the needs of the sector.

The Liberal Party of PEI is committed to enhancing our early learning and childcare sector by:

1. **Fully implement federal funding program for early learning and childcare**, including reduction of parent fees to \$10 per day and enhanced wages for early childhood educators;
2. **Increasing the number of spaces** in existing early learning and childcare facilities as well as the construction of **new facilities in rural areas**;
3. **Increasing renovation grants to expand existing centres/spaces** that reflect actual building costs;
4. **Increasing funding for inclusion support staff to support children** that require one-to-one assistance;
5. **Working with the sector to develop a sustained, long-term recruitment and retention program** in order to ensure the required workforce to support expanded spaces;
6. **Supporting training and professional development opportunities** for staff to enhance their skills and income opportunities; and
7. **Creating a funding program for school-age centres** to support the requirements of parents requiring extended hours of coverage for their children.



DIVERSITY & *inclusion*

6.0 • OUR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AGENDA

The face of PEI has changed dramatically in the last decade, and as a province, we are strengthened and enriched by our diversity. But for those that have come to call PEI home, as well as members of diverse communities and populations, it is essential that we recognize that inclusion is something we must address on both a personal and societal basis every day, day in and day out.

The reality is that some newcomers, Indigenous, Black, people of colour, 2SLGBTQ+, Persons with Disabilities and other marginalized groups struggle to gain acceptance. In some cases, they are victims of racism, harassment, and discrimination.

Recognizing that systemic racism, harassment and discrimination exist on PEI is the first step in having a collective, honest conversation about how we can come together to combat it. It is essential that we recognize that inclusion is something we strive for with constant diligence. It sets the building blocks for healthy, prosperous communities. We do this through actioning equity programming and services, bringing the margins of our society to the centre.



The Liberal Party believes that PEI must strive for inclusion for all Islanders and take concrete measures towards equity in all that we do. We will support the goal of inclusion by:

- 1. Appointing a Diversity and Inclusion Commissioner**, with supporting infrastructure to operate independently from the government with a mandate to promote equity and inclusion.
- 2. Gathering data** on inclusion, diversity, racism, and other related issues on PEI through multiple forums and using the information to formulate public policy recommendations, strategies, and action plans;
- 3. Receiving and responding to public complaints** surrounding instances of racism, harassment, and discrimination and recommending corrective action;
- 4. Monitoring issues related to inclusion and equity** in the provision of government services to Islanders regardless of ethnicity, colour, race, disability and/or sexual orientation on topics such as barriers to opportunity; equitable access to programs and services; systemic racism and discrimination in healthcare, education, social development and services, housing, employment, justice and sport;
- 5. Undertaking education on** anti-racism, harassment, and discrimination to promote acceptance of our diversity and inclusion; and
- 6. Conducting investigations**, in areas determined by the commissioner, to address concerns of racism, discrimination, and harassment relating to the government of Prince Edward Island and funded agencies and organizations.



WORKFORCE, SKILLS & *training*

7.0 • OUR WORKFORCE, SKILLS, AND TRAINING AGENDA

Like every jurisdiction, PEI is challenged by the aging demographic of our workforce. While there are more Islanders working today than ever before, the percentage of those nearing retirement has also never been higher. If PEI is to continue to have a vibrant economy, we need to do a better job of attracting and retaining workers into available positions.

A concerning statistic is the fact that almost 35 percent of Islanders leaving high school do not go on to post-secondary studies. This is especially challenging when you look at how much our school age population has declined over the last two decades. Simply put, our Island needs to maximize the skills and talents of every Islander who can enter the labour market.

The Liberal Party has a strong record of working with our education system to ensure access to skilled labour. But challenging times require new approaches. For example, we hear that traditional approaches to apprenticeship are too time-consuming and expensive, both for the employee and the employer. Immigration, while very important, is a challenging, lengthy process that can't easily be relied upon as a source of labour for Island businesses. While PEI is home to three post-secondary institutions that offer a range of academic and vocational programs that are essential to our labour market, underfunding has left them too financially strained to innovate and grow. At the same time, students are not getting adequate exposure to career opportunities at a younger age to better prepare them for the kind of academic studies that support their potential career ambitions.



The Liberal Party is committed to enhancing our labour market, trades, and training by:

1. **Enhancing exposure to trades and career-related training in our high schools** in order to let students better understand the career opportunities that trades provide;
2. **Modernizing the apprenticeship system on PEI** to make it more affordable and convenient for both students and employers;
3. **Developing Innovative immigration recruitment approaches** that focus on sectoral recruitment activities in partnership with industry associations;
4. **Developing a seasonal worker benefits program** to serve as a recruitment incentive for Islander working in seasonal sector to expand their time in the labour market;
5. **Better access to professional, trades and career-related training through Holland College** with an emphasis access to training in rural communities

ECONOMIC *agenda*

8.0 • OUR ECONOMIC AGENDA

8.1 *Primary Industries*

8.1.1 *Our Agricultural and Food Sector*

Our agricultural and agri-food sector is the backbone of rural PEI. It is the largest element of our economy and is heavily export oriented. Today, 594,324 acres of land is farmed on an Island that consists of 1.4 million acres in total. The patchwork of farmland is utilized to market the natural beauty of the Island in marketing campaigns to attract immigrants and tourists alike. Agriculture and agri-food are part of the Island's identity.

In 2022, the agricultural sector employed over 15,000 Islanders on a direct and indirect basis and accounted for \$620 million in exports. In total, agriculture and agri-food amounts to a \$3 billion industry that stretches from one end of the province to the other. To put this in perspective, the agriculture and agri-food sector represents one-third of the entire PEI economy.

On balance, the sector came through COVID-19 relatively unscathed as US border closures were short-lived, and our access to the US foodservice sector returned to normal. In fact, despite the pandemic, the industry set a record for exports that year at \$618 million. This represented almost 40% of all Island exports that year.

Like other primary industries, strong demand for our products means a great deal of labour is required. The ongoing labour shortage seen in the seafood sector extends to agriculture as well. Many farms rely on foreign workers utilizing the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, but many farm labour jobs are becoming highly skilled. Precision agriculture with the utilization of GPS and advances in farm technology are found on farms across the Island. Farming on PEI is not what it used to be, and exposure of this to immigrants and local schools is important.

As farming has become more advanced, some operations have grown. The Lands Protection Act is there to protect against large land grabs. A review of the legislative controls and how they are policed should occur periodically to allow for growth, but also ensure the spirit of the Act is respected.

As the Island climate changes, so does agriculture. Sustainable agriculture must be at the forefront of government programming. Farm renewable energy incentives, taking high-risk land out of production, building water infrastructure, and ensuring agriculture and agri-food have access to affordable 3 phase power will help the industry grow while also lowering the province's GHG emissions.

Finally, the Livestock strategy needs an infusion of funds. The Strategy needs to provide incentives and price controls that encourage growth to ensure the longevity of a beef plant that employs well over 100 Islanders and our dairy industry that produced over \$200 million in farm cash receipts last year.

The Liberal Party is committed to supporting our agriculture and agri-food sector in leading our province by:

- 1. Expanding high school programming**, including the Agriculture in the Classroom initiative, in order to expose students to the range of career opportunities that agriculture offers;
- 2. Expanding immigration recruitment for workers** to support the labour market needs of the agriculture sector; and
- 3. Developing a Seasonal Worker Benefits Program** to allow employers in seasonal industries, like agriculture, to attract workers by offering publicly-funded benefits.
- 4. Ensuring that land limits are reviewed every five years** under the Lands Protection Act to ensure they reflect current ownership levels and market conditions;
- 5. Developing a province-wide approach to agricultural land** from a land-use planning perspective, given the importance of such land to the province as a whole;
- 6. Implementing a farm renewable energy program** that provides incentives to help farmers develop renewable power generation capacity with the opportunity to sell excess power back to Maritime Electric;
- 7. Expanding the Buffer Zone Program** and doubling payments to farmers to continue to take environmentally sensitive land out of production;
- 8. Investing in water infrastructure** in clusters where potato production is prevalent to help boost yields in years when rain is not adequate;
- 9. Accelerating on-farm climate adaptation and mitigation** initiatives that leverage federal/provincial funding and increase adoption of proven practices;
- 10. Supporting farmers in accessing 3 Phase power** by ensuring access to funding is included in any future Infrastructure Agreement between the Province and the federal government;
- 11. Encouraging the strategic expansion of PEI's livestock herd** through price reassurances, low-interest government financing and grants; to support new entrants to strengthen the long-term viability of PEI's livestock industry; and
- 12. Assisting livestock farmers to invest** in adequate fencing and enhanced manure management through low-interest government financing.



8.1.2 Our Tourism Sector

Our Island's renowned natural beauty and hospitality have helped Prince Edward Island build a world-class tourism destination. In 2022, our Island's tourism sector rallied and responded with a strong season in terms of the volume of visitors coming to Prince Edward Island (PEI). 1.2 million visitors came to PEI, double the number that operators saw in 2021. After two years of Covid-19 and the severe financial and operational challenges facing tourism operators, they look to 2023 and beyond with tempered optimism. The employment and economic impact of the tourism sector on PEI in 2022 is substantial, amounting to \$529 million in visitor value, employing 17,000 workers.

However, our tourism recovery has not been without its challenges. Labour shortages across the board are making it difficult for the sector to meet consumer demand. Building upon the growth of the shoulder season has not been possible for many operators. In the fall, for example, PEI is seeing an increasing volume of cruise ships. However, limited access to labour has made it difficult for operators to remain open and benefit from the expanding tourism season. On a full-time and part-time basis, the industry employs upwards of 17,000 workers and is projected to grow by 3% annually. New workers are needed, but where they will come from is a prime concern of the tourism sector.

In addition, Covid-19 forced a large portion of the sector to take on debt to finance operations. While the return to strong tourism numbers is a welcome occurrence, the financial position operators find themselves in post-Covid-19 creates uncertainty and cost pressures for the sector.



A Liberal Government would step forward to support our tourism sector with tangible measures that recognize the challenges it faces, including:

1. **Establishing a Covid-Debt Relief Program** to support operators with heavy debt resulting from Covid-19 with access to low interest funding through Finance PEI;
2. **Offering low-interest loans and start-up grants** to assist tourism operators in developing new products/services and/or refreshing existing offerings;
3. **Supporting tourism career promotion** with funding support to assist TIAPEI in promoting job opportunities in the sector;
4. **Advocating to the federal government for EI policies** which allow students to continue to work into the shoulder season without financial penalties;
5. **Developing a Tourism Management Internship Program** to provide financial support to operators to access potential management staff;
6. **Developing a Season Worker Benefits Program** to allow employers in seasonal industries, like tourism, to attract workers by offering publicly funded benefits; and
7. **Investing in our unique creative and cultural industries** on the Island to support their collective capacity to help celebrate PEI.

8.1.3 Our Seafood and Lobster Sector

Prince Edward Island's seafood industry spans the province and is woven into the very fabric of communities throughout rural PEI. It has been a part of the history of this Island, and today has grown into an industry that is world-renowned. Our lobsters, oysters, and mussels are the mainstay of the seafood sector.

The scope and size of the seafood sector is large by any measure. On average, nearly 45 million pounds of mussels, more than 10 million pounds of oysters and over 42 million pounds of lobster are harvested each year. The industry contributed over \$490 million in landed value while generating approximately \$938 million in economic output. In 2021, lobster was the largest element of the sector, with a landed value of almost \$371 million.

COVID-19 slowed the industry only slightly in 2020. Demand remained strong as exports fell slightly and then rebounded to historic highs. With such great demand, fishers and processors have struggled to find consistent labour, often relying on the Temporary Foreign Workers program. According to the provincial government, the industry employs up to 8,000 people at its peak. In the processing sector, a full third of these jobs are filled by foreign workers. As such, it is important the Temporary Foreign Worker program be accessible and reformed to mirror what is found in the agriculture sector, where seasonal workers are much easier to access.

At the same time, the strength of the sector is a double-edged sword. Lobster, for example, has experienced high prices and strong catches that have driven the cost of lobster licenses and fleet prices up, making it difficult for young Islanders to purchase fleets. With interest rates significantly on the rise, the ability of young fishers to enter the sector against a backdrop of high costs is a challenge. Without natural succession of fishers, the industry is weakened.

In addition, the PEI lobster industry needs to constantly promote the quality and uniqueness of our Island products. Lobster fishers in PEI are the only lobster fishing sector in Canada that collect a levy to finance marketing activities to generate higher returns for harvesters. Despite this commitment, ACOA and the provincial government have been willing to step forward and fund PEI-specific marketing activities in partnership with Island fishers.

As with other primary industries on the Island, the changing climate continues to present unique challenges. Wharf damage for both fishers and processors is a problem, and we know that extreme storms like Dorian and Fiona will continue to occur more frequently, with often catastrophic consequences for infrastructure.

Seafood that is not processed and frozen is a perishable commodity. Island fishers are not immune to market volatility. Our aquaculture sector has pointed to the need for business risk management protection as found in other primary industries, and this concept should be explored.



The Liberal Party of PEI has been a strong supporter of the seafood sector and lobster fishery. In 2007, the Liberal Government introduced the Island's first low-interest loan program aimed at helping lobster fishers deal with low prices and fluctuating landings. Liberals also invested in the Future Fisher program to help young fishers get established.

A Liberal Government would support the Islander seafood and lobster sector and its fishers with an action plan aimed at the following:

- 1. Working with the Federal Government to establish a Seasonal Seafood Workers Program,** mirroring what is found in the agriculture sector to ensure long-term reliable labour for the industry;
- 2. Increasing investment in climate mitigation infrastructure at PEI's small craft wharves and harbours** to protect against extreme weather and the resulting storm surges;
- 3. Supporting our aquaculture sector** by working with federal partners to provide business risk management programs, including crop insurance, to provide assistance when a producer experiences a significant loss of product;
- 4. Developing a provincial framework** that would enhance lobster marketing initiatives that would also engage our federal partners to advance the industry;
- 5. Revising the Fishers Low Interest Loan Program** specifically supporting young fishers entering the sector by recognizing dramatic cost escalations over the last decade;
- 6. Increasing investment in programs that support young fishers** such as the Future Fishers Program; and
- 7. Assessing live holding capacity and cold storage needs** in the sector to support stronger prices when landings significantly increase beyond market demand.

8.2 Our Aerospace & Advanced Manufacturing

PEI's aerospace sector represents 900 employees and accounts for over \$440 million in revenues. It is an advanced manufacturing success story. Put into perspective, the Island's aerospace sector accounts for over 50% of Atlantic Canada's aerospace parts exports.

Successive provincial governments, starting with a Liberal government, have worked closely with the sector to help create conditions that support production growth and export success. Provincial governments have provided tax credits and financial incentives that reward aerospace companies based on the amount of employment they provide to PEI. At the same time, provincial governments have worked closely with employers and both Holland College and UPEI to develop industry-focused training programs to help the sector ensure future access to skilled employees

The Liberal Party of PEI is committed to continuing to support the growth and development of a vibrant aerospace and advanced manufacturing sector through programs and funding that:

- 1. Implement a new and enhanced aerospace and defence tax rebate program** to make PEI a more attractive location for manufacturing and retrofitting;
- 2. Increase funding to the PEI Chapter of the Aerospace and Defense Association of Atlantic Canada** by 50% to bolster programming for PEI companies;
- 3. Develop a labour market strategy** for the PEI aerospace and defense sector;
- 4. Assess opportunities for the extension of the tax rebate program** more broadly in the advanced manufacturing sector;
- 5. Support sectoral and company immigrant recruitment efforts** in order to better utilize immigration as talent pool to support labour market needs;
- 6. Work with Holland College and UPEI to explore enhancements** to existing training as well new training programs that respond to the sector's needs; and
- 7. Provide the Association with career promotion and marketing funding** support to expand its activities aimed at getting more Islanders into the sector.



8.3 Our Bioscience Sector

Previous Liberal Governments have played a formative role in the establishment of PEI's world class bioscience cluster through initial investment in the BioCommons. According to the PEI BioAlliance, Bioscience Cluster has surpassed 2025 growth targets and will be a billion-dollar industry by 2030. A survey of more than 65 employers in the sector based on 2021 revenues indicated strong sector performance. In 2021, private sector company revenues reached \$575 million, a \$200 million increase over 2020. According to the PEI BioAlliance, "... investment attraction topped \$110 million, almost doubling the previous year. Sector workforce has increased by 400 full-time jobs since the pandemic began, now standing at 2,300 employees. Business-led R&D was \$28.2 million, up \$8 million, while annual tax revenues to governments were estimated at \$87 million annually, up 53% since 2018."

Despite the growth in the sector, there are challenges to future sector growth. Access to labour remains the most significant obstacle to growth. And while the PEI BioAlliance has developed long-term, innovative partnerships with employers and post-secondary institutions, the industry is still limited in how far it can go in the context of current labour market conditions.

The Liberal Party is committed to renewing its partnership with the biosciences sector it began back in 2010 with new investments that will help to:

- 1. Work with the BioAlliance to develop a comprehensive Innovation Strategy** that sets out key public policy and funding programs to support the growth and viability of knowledge-based industries on PEI;
- 2. Engage with the BioAlliance and its members to develop a sectoral approach to immigration** that helps attract greater number of skilled professionals to PEI.;
- 3. Enhance the role of UPEI and Holland College** in supporting bioscience R&D and advanced education through Graduate Fellowships and other measures to attract leading students and faculty to PEI;
- 4. Work with the bioscience cluster to fund infrastructure** that supports start-ups and pre-commercial investments to grow early-stage manufacturing; and
- 5. Undertake a review of excise tax on cannabis** to determine how the level of taxation impacts the growth and development of manufacturing on PEI.

8.4 Our ITC and Clean Tech Sectors

Our Island is home to over 100 companies active in the information technology and communications (ITC) sector. These companies operate in several fields, including video gaming, e-health, and enterprise software. With over 2,500 employees, it is a highly export-oriented sector, with over 85% of companies selling abroad. The ITC sector contributes over \$195 million to PEI's GDP and has demonstrated solid growth over the last decade.

Another growth sector of PEI is the Clean Tech sector. Clean Tech is both the product of and a contributing factor to PEI's growth in renewable energy. While relatively young compared to the ITC sector, Clean Tech brings together companies that develop products and services that help lessen our environmental footprint through energy efficiency, environmental protection, and sustainable use of resources. From wind energy products and technology to innovations in other renewable energy sources, Clean Tech represents a growth area for the Island that creates well-paying jobs and supports environmental sustainability.

Despite the success of both sectors, they face similar challenges in terms of access to skilled labour. In addition, they are not organized under the auspices of a formal industry association structure, which reduces the capacity for strategic industry-government partnerships to respond to common sectoral issues.

The Liberal Party of PEI is committed to fostering the growth and well-being of the ITS and Clean Tech sectors with initiatives to:

- 1. Implement a new and enhanced tax rebate programs** to make PEI a more attractive location for ITC and Clean Tech sectors;
- 2. Provide funding to support to associations** representing ITC and Clean Tech sectors in order to facilitate industry government strategic partnerships and new program delivery;
- 3. Develop a labour market strategy** for the ITC and Clean Tech sectors to ensure industry growth and viability;
- 4. Support sectoral and company immigrant recruitment efforts** in order to better utilize immigration to support labour market needs;
- 5. Work with Holland College and UPEI to explore enhancements** to existing training as well new training programs that respond to the ITC and Clean Tech sectors' needs; and
- 6. Provide the sectors with career promotion and marketing funding** support to expand its activities aimed at getting more Islanders into the ITC and Clean Tech sectors.

8.5 Our Small Business Sector

Prince Edward Island is home to the entrepreneurial spirit with small businesses found across PEI. They are made up of a host of different industries and employ countless hard-working Islanders that drive the economy forward. They are the backbone of our rural communities, the engine of our major cities and the heartbeat of our financial well-being as a province. Their success is our collective success.

COVID and the ripple effects of the pandemic continue to impact this community. Some were closed for periods of time, and many saw reduced hours. They have dealt with supply chain issues, debt management, inflationary pressures and an ongoing labour shortage. Despite this, they have continued to rise to the challenge. In 2022, small businesses exported \$1.9 billion worth of products and grew our economy at a modest rate of 2.9 percent.

As small businesses grow forward, the economy continues to face storm clouds. Since March 2021, PEI has continued to have the highest rate of inflation. It now sits at 7%. PEI is facing inflation rates that are at a 30-year high and this has placed price pressures on inputs, wages, and the cost of doing business. The ongoing labour shortage continues to be a pressure on many as both low and high skilled jobs remain vacant stifling the potential growth of many. Some economists fear a potential contraction or even recession later this year and the next Government needs to be prepared.

A Liberal Government would support the Island's small business community by:

- 1. Partnering with the private sector to build sector specific workforce strategies** that ensure the Island has an available workforce for Island businesses to grow;
- 2. Revisiting PEI's population growth strategy** with a focus on recruiting, integrating, and retaining immigrants to the Island that match our workforce strategies;
- 3. Re-evaluating the provincial income tax model** to better align with our Atlantic counterparts to ensure we are competitive in attracting labour to the Island;
- 4. Committing to reviewing the annual minimum wage process** and developing a long-term strategy to create a transparent, fair, and predictable process that takes private wage trends into account; and
- 5. Utilizing Finance PEI** to ensure the business community has continued access to affordable capital and explore low interest loans programs for certain sectors as we navigate our way forward in a challenging interest rate environment.



LAND, ENERGY & *climate change*

9.0 • OUR LAND, ENERGY, AND CLIMATE CHANGE AGENDA

Islanders have always been strong stewards of the environment. Whether it is our world-leading use of wind energy, the most comprehensive waste management system in the country, or our rapid adoption of public transit, Islanders have proven time and again that they are willing to change behaviours for the sake of the environment.

This willingness to act is rooted in a fundamental understanding of how climate change is impacting our Island. While Islanders contribute very little to carbon emissions, our geography and our existence as an Island leaves us particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change. The reality of coastal erosion and storm surges on PEI has demonstrated that the vagaries of climate change are here and must be addressed on a level never seen.

The Liberal Party has long advocated for measures which protect our environment considering our warming world. In 2008, we produced the province's first climate change strategy and followed that with actions on wind generation and environmental protection.



9.1 Protecting Our Land

Islanders have a strong sense of the need to protect our environment and recognize the limited nature of our land base. In precolonial times, the Mi'kmaq's commitment to protecting land and environment was known as Netukulimk, a cultural concept that is based on "an innate awareness of one's impact on its environment and life forms."

The Liberal Party believes that more must be done to protect our land as competing demands for land usage combine with the impact of climate change, creating further scarcity. We must, as Mi'kmaq suggest, recognize our collective impact on our land and make decisions which preserve what we have for all to use and enjoy.

PEI has a long history of studying our land use issues. However, these have been temporary commissions which produce reports at a given point in time. The Liberal Party believes in a permanent and independent land use commission that reports to the Legislature. Such a commission would be expert-based with indigenous and geographic representation. It would initially offer advice to government and regulatory bodies. Eventually, the Lands Protection Act would be re-drafted to provide the commission with a degree of decision-making authority.

The Liberal Party of PEI is committed more timely and effective land use decision making by:

- 1. Establishing a permanent and independent land use commission** that reports to the Legislature;
- 2. Ensuring the commission would be expert-based** with indigenous and geographic representation;
- 3. Ensuring the commission has the staffing and resource capabilities** to undertake analysis, consultations, and other activities deemed essential to its mandate;
- 4. Revising the Lands Protection Act** and other statutes to define and enshrine the role of the commission; and
- 5. Mandate the commission to undertake ongoing assessments** of the effectiveness of the current policy and regulatory framework to achieves land protection objectives and, where required, recommend new policy and regulatory approaches.



9.2 Stable, Clean Energy Supply

Energy generation and usage are interdependent when it comes to climate change. Islanders are proud of the fact that PEI is a world leader in wind generation and usage. Roughly 99% of power generation in PEI is from wind farms, with an estimated 205 MW of electricity output. However, most of the electricity consumed in PEI is still imported from New Brunswick, which generates the majority of its electricity from a mix of nuclear, fossil fuels, and hydroelectricity. Electricity is transmitted between PEI and NB by four undersea cables under the Northumberland Strait.

PEI's renewable capacity increased from about 15 MW in 2005 to 205 MW in 2019. Current on-Island wind generation is approximately 291,400 MWh, representing approximately 30% of the total electricity supply. Its share of generation from renewables also increased from 86% to 99% in this period. The previous Liberal Government was responsible for over 90% of this increase. Since the PCs came to power, not a single MW of new wind energy has been generated.

Wind energy helps keep energy prices low for Islanders and reduces Prince Edward Island's need for energy from outside the province. PEI has no sources of oil, natural gas, or other fuels for traditional forms of electricity. Wind energy also adds to a cleaner setting because it does not produce emissions or pollution.

Despite PEI's success in generating record levels of renewable electricity through wind, reliance on MECL as a legislated monopoly is not without its challenges. MECL's response to Fiona demonstrated just how dependent we are on a private company to provide us with electricity as necessity of life. MECL took too long to get Islanders back online and failed to accurately assess the initial damage and deploy its crews in the most expeditious manner possible, leaving thousands of Islanders with inaccurate timelines. MECL's Inadequate vegetation management activities contributed to the sheer devastation of power lines destroyed by trees. Once the storm ended, moreover, MECL lacked



a coherent strategy of getting Islanders back online in the most expeditious means possible. A significant concern was the apparent lack of communication and cooperation between and the Provincial Government as to those customers who were the most vulnerable to be without power.

At the same time, this winter saw times where as many as 3000-4000 power outages occurred because of MECL's inability to handle peak electricity demand increases resulting from cold weather. As PEI pushes to dramatically expand the use of electric vehicles, implications on electricity demand will need to be considered in light the surge in peak electricity demand on PEI.

The Liberal Party is committed to greater stability in our electricity supply through initiatives that will:

- 1. Launch an expert committee into the delays of MECL to get Islanders back on-line** in a timely fashion as well as issues associated with the current and future capacity of our grid;
- 2. Ensure that an expert committee also explores the potential opportunities and challenges of MECL assets going under public ownership** to ensure better, more cost-effective service to Islanders;
- 3. Explore regional cooperation to access cleaner sources of energy**, including direct negotiation with Newfoundland and Labrador for hydroelectric power; and
- 4. Encourage the development of community-owned wind farms** with the goal of achieving wind generation for 50% of Islanders' electricity needs through low-interest financing.



9.3 Protecting Islanders and the Island from Climate Change

It is widely recognized that climate change will have significant impacts on Prince Edward Island. While coastal hazards are often seen as the most visible impact of climate change, post-tropical storms, increasing temperatures, and flooding are also increasingly apparent. For a province whose livelihood is shaped so much by harvesting from land and sea, the economic costs of climate change are pervasive. Whether harvesting potatoes, mussels, or lobster, climate change impacts the Island. The impact of climate change on our Island is perhaps most poignantly illustrated by the fact that PEI loses almost one foot a year to coastal erosion caused by climate change.

Climate change also has a negative impact on residential, commercial, and industrial infrastructure located on the coast, as it will become increasingly vulnerable to sea level rise and storm activity. That is why in 2018, the Liberal Government of PEI produced a five-year action plan for both adapting to changing climate as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This Liberal plan was based on the following five strategies:

1. Adapting to Climate Change
2. Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions
3. Carbon Sequestration
4. Education and Capacity Building
5. Research and Knowledge Building

However, as climate change worsened, the PC government focused on subsidies and quick fixes that are not anchored in the energy realities we face in PEI.

For example, a strategy based solely on the promise of heat pumps and electric vehicles fails to recognize the electricity demand issues that they create. In fact, in a report prepared for both the federal and provincial governments, it was noted that “if half of Maritime Electric’s total customers



were charging one vehicle (40,000 EVs) concurrently during the system peak, our peak today would increase by 85%. This would require an extensive expansion of both transmission and distribution facilities, resulting in significant infrastructure investments and most likely large rate increases.”

The Liberal Party of PEI is committed to continuing its record of addressing climate by the following:

1. **Undertaking advance planning and preparedness** so that PEI is never caught in the kind of state we were in post Fiona;
2. **Developing an ongoing working relationship** between the Armed Forces and Provincial and Municipal Emergency Response Personnel and other stakeholders that takes the form of a codified action plan and yearly training exercises in the event of a climate-related disaster such as Fiona happening again;
3. **Expand access to energy efficiency/carbon reduction program funding** for both Islanders and businesses that undertake green building and retrofitting activities;
4. **Ensuring that the provincial capital budget allocates a minimum of 30% of its total funding to mitigation and adaptation activities** to upgrade our infrastructure to both reduce our impact on the climate as well as to prepare for adverse events;
5. **Developing yearly action plans for those sectors that make up PEI’s largest source of carbon emissions**, including transportation and agriculture, with increased provincial/federal funding aimed at introducing best practices aimed at mitigation; and
6. **Increasing investments in public transit** to ensure that less carbon-intensive options exist for Islanders to access travel for work and family requirements.

APPENDIX A • PLATFORM COST SUMMARIES

The following offers a summary of the Liberal Party Platform spending commitments that will need to be included in the base provincial operating budget of the Government of PEI should we be elected.

For the purposes of costing the platform and assessing its impact on the province's fiscal situation, spending that occurs under the capital budget or spending in the form of low-interest government financing are not included in the totals as they are not operating expenses.

In some instances, spending commitments are to be financed out of existing program spending envelopes. However, most of the spending is in the form of an increase to the operating budget. Items funded out of capital or through government loans are noted with "***".

The following are the platform spending summaries:

Health	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Mental Health & Addictions	\$3,550,000	\$5,800,000	\$7,200,000
Nursing Care	\$7,400,000	\$11,350,000	\$14,250,000
Physicians	\$7,850,000	\$12,050,000	\$16,050,000
Primary Care Role of Pharmacists	\$3,100,000	\$6,025,000	\$9,025,000
Emergency Rooms/CEC's	\$4,000,000	\$8,000,000	\$11,500,000
Homecare	\$4,000,000	\$7,750,000	\$10,450,000
Long-Term Care and Seniors	\$6,250,000	\$8,025,000	\$11,525,000
Medications and Health Services	\$3,100,000	\$4,400,000	\$6,800,000
Technology	\$1,200,000	\$2,900,000	\$5,100,000
Total	\$40,450,000	\$66,300,000	\$91,900,000

Affordability/Housing	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Affordability	\$4,200,000	\$9,900,000	\$14,600,000
Provincial-Wide Housing*	\$1,300,000	\$2,200,000	\$3,100,000
Total	\$5,500,000	\$12,100,000	\$17,700,000

*\$150 million in low-cost financing will be made available

Education/Early Learning/Childcare	2023-2024	2024-2024	2025-2025
Public School	\$1,750,000	\$3,250,000	\$4,750,000
Early Learning/Childcare*	\$24,000,000	\$28,000,000	\$33,000,000
Total	\$25,750,000	\$31,250,000	\$37,750,000

*Federal funding already in base budget so it is not counted as new operating expenditure, but included here for illustrative purposes

Diversity and Inclusion	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
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Diversity Commissioner	\$600,000	\$900,000	\$1,300,000
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Workforce Skills and Training	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
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Labour Market, Trades, and Training	\$850,000	\$2,750,000	\$5,250,000
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Economic Agenda	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
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Agriculture*	\$1,780,000	\$2,600,000	\$3,650,000
Tourism**	\$1,400,000	\$2,750,000	\$4,200,000
Seafood and Lobster***	\$425,000	\$450,000	\$800,000
Aerospace/Advanced Manufacturing	\$200,000	\$1,600,000	\$1,650,000
Biosciences****	\$250,000	\$150,000	\$200,000
ITC and Clean Tech	\$0	\$200,000	\$200,000
Small Business	\$0	\$350,000	\$500,000
Total	\$4,055,000	\$8,100,000	\$11,200,00

*commitments #10 and #11 take the form of low interest financing.
 **commitment #1 takes the form of low interest financing.
 ***commitment #5 takes the form of low interest financing.
 ****commitment #4 takes the form of low interest financing.

Land, Energy and Climate Change	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
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Protecting Our Land	\$400,000	\$500,000	\$750,000
Stable, Clean Energy Supply*	\$500,000		
Climate Change**	\$1,150,000	\$2,250,000	\$3,800,000
Total	\$2,050,000	\$2,750,000	\$4,550,000

*commitment #4 takes the form of low interest financing
 **commitment #4 is a capital budget item

Total Campaign Spending Summary 2023-2026 (Million's)

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Item Summary			
Health	\$40.4	\$66.3	\$91.9
Non-Health	\$14.8	\$29.9	\$44.7
Total	\$55.2	\$96.2	\$136.6

APPENDIX B • FISCAL ASSUMPTIONS OF PLATFORM

Our Platform's Fiscal Assumptions

The Liberal Party of PEI's platform is based on an economic analysis of current and future economic factors and information from the Province's most recent Fiscal Update. This analysis has determined a series of assumptions about (1) real GDP growth for 2023-2027 based on historical averages over the last five years, (2) nominal GDP growth derived from considering financial projections from trusted financial institutions, and (3) total government revenue growth projections. Section (4) of this analysis compares how Liberal Party Platform commitments potential impact the operating budgetary position of the province in light of total revenue growth and the latest financial projections from the Province contained in the most recent Fiscal Update.

1. PEI's Real GDP Growth 2023-2027

The Liberal Party of PEI's Platform is based on a real GDP growth rate forecast of 1.5% for 2023 because of the following:

- The most recent 5-year average growth rate of real GDP for PEI GDP was 2.94%.
- An economic slowdown is widely forecast for 2023 in Canada, as the lagged impact of monetary tightening takes hold.
- The average private sector real GDP forecast for PEI for 2023 is 1.2% (reference 2022 Fiscal and Economic Update). However, the Banks' forecasts have tended to underestimate PEI's economic growth rate in recent years because they have underestimated population growth.
- With a proportionately larger public sector, PEI's economy tends to weather economic downturns better than the nation as a whole.

For 2024-2027, we have used a real GDP growth rate in the range of 2.5% per year. This assumes continued strong population growth, but slightly lower labour force growth due to population aging.

This equates to a real GDP annual compound growth rate of 2.3% for PEI for the five years of 2023-2027.

1. PEI's Nominal GDP Growth 2023-2027:

Nominal GDP Forecasts

Forecaster	2022	2023	2024
Scotiabank	7%	4.2%	2.4%
TD Economics	10.5%	3.5%	3.6%
CIBC Economics	6.5%	2.6%	3.4%
Average	8.0%	3.4%	3.1%

Our assumptions use a nominal GDP growth rate of 4% for 2023, (1.5% real GDP growth and 2.5% price inflation), based on higher real GDP growth than the banks' forecast and higher price inflation than implied in the banks' forecasts. For 2025-2027, our assumptions include a 4.5% annual nominal GDP growth (2.5% annual real growth and 2% annual price inflation).

This equates to an annual growth rate in nominal GDP of 4.4% for the five years of 2023-2027.

2. Provincial Revenue Growth

PEI Government revenue growth over the past 5 years (2018/19 – 2022/23 est.) has grown by 41.1% or an annual compound rate of 7.14%. Data for 2018/19 through 2021/22 are from RBC fiscal tables. 2022/23 reflects the December 2023 Fiscal Update.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 Est	5 Year Growth	Annual Compound Growth Rate
Annual rate of revenue growth	4.6%	5.2%	8.1%	8.8%	9.1%	41.19%	7.14%

For reference, the December 2022 and 2023 letters from the federal finance minister identified the following amounts for PEI (\$ millions):

	2022/23	2023/24	\$ Increase	% Increase
Equalization	503	561	58	11.5%
CHT	196	220	24	12.2%
CST	69	73	4	5.8%
Total	768	854	86	11.2%

The amount of these above transfers that PEI receives rises with population. CHT and CST are distributed among provinces on an equal per capita basis. Recently PEI’s population has been growing faster than the national average, so PEI’s rate of increase in CHT and CST has exceeded the national growth rate of these transfers. A rising population also generates more Equalization. In considering these numbers, it is also important to note that the February 7th, 2023 announcement from the Prime Minister included an estimated \$1.036 billion for PEI over the next ten years.

For the next five years 2023/24 – 2027/28 it is unlikely that provincial revenues will grow as fast as the 7.14% annual rate recorded in the previous 5-year period. The previous period reflected massive federal assistance payments associated with the pandemic and the effects of post-pandemic price inflation, which increased the nominal value of tax sources. However, the recent federal funding announcement for health funding will likely result in overall provincial government revenue increases of 6%.

For 2023/24-2027/28, annual revenue growth is set at 6% per year.

PEI Government Revenue (\$ millions) based on 6% annual growth rate

Year	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Revenue	\$2,808	\$2,976	\$3,344	\$3413
Annual Revenue Growth		\$168	\$179	\$189

3. Impact of Liberal Platform Commitments

The most up to date fiscal projection from the Province has the deficit coming in at \$94.8 for 2022-2023. According to the Fiscal Update, an additional \$137.9 million in tax revenue was generated. At the same time, unbudgeted Inflation Programs and Fiona Costs came in at \$89.2 million and \$81.5 million respectively.

Based on the above, it is assumed that the inflation program costs are a one-time expense that will not be included in a go forward base budget as a permanent operating expenditure. At the same time, it is assumed that Fiona costs are one-time costs largely paid for by offsetting federal revenues.

Based on these assumptions, if tax revenues remain the same or more going forward, the projected deficit of \$94.8 should reduce significantly. However, it is understood that there are in any provincial government operating budget cost items that escalate from one-fiscal year to the next. However, even with these escalations, it is assumed that the projected revenue growth outlined in section 3 will be sufficient to offset increased operating costs resulting from platform commitments in a manner that does not result in increases to yearly operating deficits.

The following chart shows platform costs versus total revenue growth:

Platform Costs Versus Total Revenue Growth (\$ millions)

	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Platform Costs	\$55.2	\$96.2	\$136.6
Total Provincial Revenue Growth	\$168	\$179	\$189

The above assumptions are based on the expectation that the financial figures presented in the Provincial Fiscal Update are accurate.

Notes:

[illegible]




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