

APRIL 2023

Official Opposition

2023-24 Budget Submission



Presented to:

**Prince Edward Island
Liberal Party Members**

Your Liberal Official Opposition

Our 2023-24 Budget submission is based on feedback we received from Islanders during the recent election. Islanders told us the number one issue they face is timely access to health care. Affordability and housing were the second and third main concerns.

Liberal Members of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island



**Hal
Perry**

LEADER OF THE
OFFICIAL
OPPOSITION



**Robert
Henderson**

OFFICIAL
OPPOSITION
WHIP



**Gord
McNeilly**

OFFICIAL
OPPOSITION
HOUSE LEADER



HEALTHCARE

Access to Mental Health and Addiction Services

- Provide online access to mental health and addictions services for every Islander in need.
- Waive all usage fees for access to Maple: Virtual Healthcare.
- Expand access to mental health services through the use of psychologists as part of the PEI Health system on a fee-for-service basis.
- Reinstate funding for private mental health services for low-income Islanders.
- Reinstate funding for private mental health services for those dealing with complex mental health challenge who cannot access the system in a timely manner.
- Increase hours of operation of mobile mental crisis teams to 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Reopen Deacon House

Access to Nurses in the PEI Healthcare System

- 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.
- Increase nursing spaces in NP, RN and LPN programs to address chronic nursing shortages, including a focus on training nurses in rural areas.

Access to Physicians in the PEI Healthcare System

- Double scholarships/financial recruitment incentives to ensure Island students studying medicine in other provinces will find it attractive to return to PEI to practice.
- Work with the PEI Medical Society, UPEI, and Holland College to develop a digital medical specialist program to support physicians with administrative backlogs and inefficiencies.

Primary Care Role of Community Pharmacists

- 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.
- Allow pharmacists to deliver the PEI Smoking and Vaping Cessation Program to allow more Islanders to access these critically important services.
- Allow pharmacists to deliver contraception management services to broaden the accessibility of these services for Island women.
- Allow pharmacists to play a greater role in chronic disease management, including blood pressure and cholesterol diagnosis / treatment and diabetes management.

- Allow pharmacists to serve as the primary location for vaccine services, including flu and COVID-booster vaccines.
- 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.

Enhanced Access to Emergency Rooms and Collaborative Emergency Centres

- Expand virtual healthcare/telemedicine to divert Islanders from ERs for non-urgent care needs.
- 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.
- Leverage Technology for Enhanced Health Delivery.
- Provide physicians with access to funded digital health technology specialists to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of medical practices.

WELLNESS

- Double the funding for the promotion of our provincial organ and tissues donation program.
- Expand fertility treatment funding.
- Develop and implement a five-year wellness strategy to provide upstream healthy interventions that will reduce chronic illness and improve quality of life.
- Enhance provincial trails through the commission of a feasibility study that grows of the trail program by connecting existing trails to one another. One such priority example: the existing Beach Grove trail at Maypoint Road could be connected to the trail at the Upton Road.
- Expand funding for obesity treatment with an emphasis on childhood obesity and ensure PEI's health system recognizes the condition as a chronic disease.

HEMECARE & SENIORS

Our HomeFirst Program

- 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.

Long-Term Care and Seniors Housing

- Develop and implement subsidies and contractual payments that reflect the actual inflation and cost of living increases experienced by the sector.

Expanded Access to Medications and Health Services

- Expand funding for diabetes treatment so that Islanders have access to timely and affordable diabetes care.
- Increase investments in women's reproductive health starting with public coverage for prescription contraceptives and expansion to fertility treatment funding.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- Appoint and fund an independent Inclusion and Diversity Commissioner to investigate matters of harassment, discrimination and racism occurring in provincially funded organizations, and recommend action to stop these behaviors at all levels.
- Enhance funding to Pride PEI to \$75,000 to allow the organization to continue building capacity through the retention of a full-time Executive Director, and the addition of a Project Coordinator. This commitment will be a critical first step to building a more inclusive Island, but more resources will be needed to address the rising acts of hate and violence against 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

POVERTY AND HOUSING

Address Poverty and the Needs of Low-Income Islanders

- Expand 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.

Province Wide Affordable Housing

- Support first-time home buyers 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.
- Expand access to low-cost financing as an incentive to non-profits, co-ops, and developers to build new affordable housing on PEI.
- New grant/subsidy programs to support non-profits and co-ops who construct/operate affordable housing.
- Make multi-unit residential properties qualifying businesses for immigrants to invest in, in order to qualify for citizenship under provincial immigration programs
- Provide financial and/or HR support to municipalities to expediate building permit approvals and zoning changes in order to help speed up the construction process
- Reconstitute the Cabinet Committee on Housing to provide leadership and accountability for housing projects and initiatives.

EDUCATION, EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE

Public School

- Increase investments in in-class support for teachers including education final assistants, as well as further investment in school psychologists, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and other resource personnel.

Early Learning and Childcare

- 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.
- Increase the number of spaces in existing early learning and childcare facilities as well as the construction of new facilities in rural areas.

- Increase renovation grants to expand existing centres/spaces that reflect actual building costs.
- Increase funding for inclusion support staff to support children that require one-to-one assistance.
- Create a funding program for school-age centres to support the requirements of parents requiring extended hours of coverage for their children.

WORKFORCE, SKILLS & TRAINING

- Enhance exposure to trades and career-related training in our high schools in order to let students better understand the career opportunities that trades provide.
- Modernize the apprenticeship system on PEI to make it more affordable and convenient for both students and employers.
- Develop innovative immigration recruitment approaches that focus on sectoral recruitment activities in partnership with industry associations.
- Develop 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.
- Better access to professional, trades and career-related training through Holland College with an emphasis access to training in rural communities.

ECONOMY

Our Agriculture and Food Sector

- Expand high school programming, including the Agriculture in the classroom initiative, in order to expose students to the range of career opportunities that agriculture offers.
- Expand the Buffer Zone Program and doubling payments to farmers to continue to take environmentally sensitive land out of production.
- Encourage 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

Our Tourism Sector

- Establish a COVID-Debt Relief Program to support operators with heavy debt resulting from COVID-19 with access to low interest funding through Finance PEI.
- Offer low-interest loans and start-up grants to assist tourism operators in developing new products/services and/or refreshing existing offerings.
- Develop a Tourism Management Internship Program to provide financial support to operators to access potential management staff.
- Develop a Season Worker Benefits Program to allow employers in seasonal industries, like tourism, to attract workers by offering publicly funded benefits.

Our Seafood and Lobster Sector

- Work 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.
- Revise the Fishers Low Interest Loan Program specifically supporting young fishers entering the sector by recognizing dramatic cost escalations over the last decade.
- Increase investment in programs that support young fishers such as the Future Fishers Program.
- Assess live holding capacity and cold storage needs in the sector to support stronger prices when landings significantly increase beyond market demand.

Aerospace & Advanced Manufacturing

- Implement a new and enhanced aerospace and defence tax rebate program to make PEI a more attractive location for manufacturing and retrofitting.

Our Bioscience Sector

- Work with the bioscience cluster to fund infrastructure that supports start-ups and pre-commercial investments to grow early-stage manufacturing.

Our ITC and Clean Tech Sectors

- Implement new and enhanced tax rebate programs to make PEI a more attractive location for ITC and Clean Tech sectors.

LAND, ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE

Protecting our Land

- Establish a permanent and independent land use commission that reports to the Legislature.