



2019 Provincial Election Questionnaire

POVERTY

Women in NL are disproportionately affected by poverty. They are the majority of minimum wage earners.

What strategies and policies will you put in place to alleviate the levels of poverty women are experiencing?

Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador:

Poverty stymies the development of children and youth, denies people opportunities to fulfill their potential and undermines people's health. The Poverty Reduction Strategy of previous PC administrations was lauded nationally for bringing poverty levels in Newfoundland and Labrador from the highest in the country to the lowest within a decade. We will begin the process of developing a new Poverty Reduction Strategy to build on what we started.

We will bring forward a renewed housing and homelessness plan, building on initiatives that were undertaken under prior PC administrations. The strategy will cover affordable housing, social housing, accessible housing and home retrofits, landlord-tenant relations and slum landlords, safe housing and violence prevention, student housing, seniors' housing, fire protection, home insurance, and other issues.

We will provide regular, reasonable increases to the minimum wage by linking it to the Consumer Price Index. The new Poverty Reduction Strategy will consider whether this approach strikes the optimal balance.

We will update the strategy on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in collaboration with a variety of provincial organizations. We will focus on improving opportunities for full participation in our province, lowering barriers to employment, improving housing and home support options, improving transportation, improving access to sports and recreation, and making education inclusive, personalized and meaningful. We affirm that persons with disabilities have the right to make their own decisions and to use support if

they choose. In partnership with organizations representing persons with disabilities, we will strive to apply the general principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which are: Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons; Non-discrimination; Full and effective participation and inclusion in society; Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity; Equality of opportunity; Accessibility; Equality between men and women; Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

Newfoundland and Labrador New Democratic Party:

The NDP since 2016 has called for the minimum wage to reach \$15 by 2021. The current minimum wage at \$11.40 is one of the lowest in Canada. There is a small annual cost of living increase that will never catch people up.

Women are half the labour force, but they make up two-thirds of minimum wage workers. Most minimum wage workers are in permanent jobs. Women and their families depend on these minimum wage jobs.

Workers spend minimum wage increases in the local economy, which benefits local business. The NDP would eliminate the corporate income tax for small business to help them pay for a higher minimum wage.

The NDP would make housing more affordable. Most low-income single parent families are headed by women. Private market rents have doubled in the past ten years. We would invest in more rent supplements and look at ways to increase the provincial contribution to new affordable rental units.

We would make child care more affordable. Child care fees are \$750-\$1,000 per child. Families earning up to \$40,000 get at least some subsidy, but many low-wage working couples don't qualify. Mothers are staying home instead of pursuing careers and higher education. This perpetuates a low-wage cycle for women. The NDP would gradually transition to a publicly managed, affordable, quality child care system.

NL Alliance:

We will touch on this in the next question, but eliminating the gender wage gap would be the first priority, full stop. Second, we need to focus on education - on all levels.

We need to educate everyone to help eliminate the stereotype that women have a 'place' within certain areas of employment. This is a hard mentality to change, but if we can change attitudes we can change the world. Next, to help change that attitude, we

should do everything we can to help foster the participation of women, for instance, in the trades and traditionally 'male' jobs. We should incentivize this, whether it means reserving a certain number of seats in a program for women, creating a bursary program, or working within the secondary education curriculum to encourage broader career paths.

Thirdly, we need to provide assistance for new mothers, who are starting their careers while also starting a family. Women should not have to choose between being a mother and caring for their children, and bettering themselves through education or necessary career experience. Providing adequate child care, which would allow more women to participate in the workforce longer, will open more women to promotions and opportunities they are often passed over for.

Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador:

As a government, we recognize the far-reaching impacts of improving the economic well-being of women.

Budget 2019 allocates \$123 million toward our NL Income Supplement and NL Seniors' Benefit. The NL Seniors' Benefit provides up to \$1,300 annually to adults aged 65 and older, of which, approximately 70 per cent of single beneficiaries are women.

Through the Income Supplement, qualifying families are eligible to receive upwards of \$650 per year, with an additional \$200 for each child. Other families would receive more or less depending on their individual circumstances.

In 2018, approximately 47,000 seniors and their families received the Seniors' Benefit and approximately 154,000 families received the Income Supplement.

For the first time in the history of our province, we have dedicated a ministerial portfolio with responsibility solely for the Status of Women. This is representative of the expanded commitment across our government to addressing matters affecting women and girls. Part of the Minister's mandate is to work in collaboration with the Minister of Transportation and Works to explore ways to enhance our processes in relation to the development, implementation, and monitoring of Women's Employment Plans in our Government's infrastructure strategy.

We have just signed a nine-year bilateral agreement with the federal government totaling \$270.6 million to help protect, renew and expand social and community housing in the province, as well as to support Newfoundland and Labrador's priorities related to housing repair, construction, and affordability. The finalization of this bilateral

will inform our coming provincial housing and homelessness plan, which will include a focus on women and girls. The bilateral includes a commitment to expand new and affordable housing units by 15 per cent.

During our time in government, we also increased the Early Learning and Child Care supplement budget, resulting in pay increases for early childhood educators, most of whom are women, and we will provide a further income enhancement to qualified Early Childhood Educators working in regulated child care services.

Budget 2019 invests \$78.2 million to maintain tuition levels for Newfoundland and Labrador students. We have the second lowest tuition in Canada, save for Quebec's tuition fees for QC students.

Budget 2019 allocates \$4 million for the Film Equity Program, which we doubled in 2017, and renews the Newfoundland and Labrador Film and Video Industry Tax Credit, which was set to expire. 70 per cent of the projects supported to date have been led by female producers.

Budget 2019 also includes a commitment of \$150,000 to support newcomer women through the introduction of an empowerment-focused employment and self-employment initiative.