



## 2019 Provincial Election Questionnaire

### WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

**In NL, only 29 women have ever served as MHAs. Currently, four out of 14 cabinet positions are held by women. The number of women candidates for this election is even lower than 2015 levels.**

**What will you do to change the climate to encourage women and minority groups to run?**

#### **Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador:**

For one, we must endeavor to improve the climate of the legislature. As a government, we must lead this, and all members must accept nothing short of a safe and respectful workplace for all.

There was a spotlight on our legislature last year when complaints were filed against two cabinet ministers, against two members of our caucus. Indeed, with the Time's Up and Me Too movement, there's a spotlight being shone on the harassment and violence perpetrated by men primarily against women (recognizing some men have also spoken out on their experiences – this is not to detract from the fact that the vast majority of experiences here are women's experiences of harassment and violence). The world is changing, albeit slowly, because women are speaking out and sharing individual experiences that, when shared collectively, expose deeply entrenched, systemic problems around power and sexism.

Our leader, our Premier, not only voiced his support for these members speaking out and making it clear that there will be zero tolerance for harassment, he took action.

As an employer, government has a stringent policy to deal with workplace harassment issues. We have passed legislation to ensure that those working in the public sector have a clear and structured means to report incidents and to have them dealt with promptly and professionally.

A better, more defined process is required for Members of the House of Assembly. We must be held to our Code of Conduct as required by the Oath of Office to serve with integrity; to enhance public confidence and trust in government; and to maintain high standards of ethical conduct in public office.

An e-learning course, *Fostering a Harassment-Free Workplace*, was made mandatory for all employees. All MHAs have undertaken a four-day mandatory workplace harassment training.

Just last month, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, a committee comprised of members of each party, tabled its final report in the House of Assembly respecting the development of a legislature-specific harassment-free workplace policy.

The proposed policy recommends:

- a comprehensive definition of harassment;
- a confidential support mechanism through the establishment of a position, independent of the legislature (including its statutory offices), to provide support and guidance to individuals throughout the process;
- Assigning jurisdiction for the complaint and resolution process, including formal investigations, to an independent office of the legislature (Office of the Citizens' Representative);
- Establishing a clear process for complaints;
- Providing both informal and formal resolution options;
- Including mechanisms to protect confidentiality of the complainant and witnesses (to the extent possible, complying with principles of procedural fairness); and
- Making respectful workplace training mandatory for all MHAs.

We have also established an All Party Committee on Democratic Reform to review democratic processes in Newfoundland and Labrador with the goal of improving democracy to better serve residents of the province. The initial focus of the Committee will be campaign finance rules, but it has also been established to:

- Determine in consultation with the public other matters and priorities related to democratic reform that may enhance democracy in the Province for residents in Newfoundland and Labrador, including but not limited to:
  - methods for public engagement and participation in democracy;
  - changing or broadening methods to vote;
  - reducing barriers for participation in the democratic process by marginalized groups; and

- methods to increase public access and input in the House of Assembly.

We absolutely want diversity in our legislature to ensure the decisions we make are reflective of the people we represent. We have some great advocates running for the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, such as Patricia Hynes-Coates, former President of Mothers Against Drunk Driving; Nicole Kieley, former Executive Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre; Janice Ryan, former Senior Specialist with WWF Canada, and Sherry Gambin-Walsh, former Executive Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living.

**Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador:**

Within my first 200 days in office as Premier, I will establish an All Party Select Committee on Democratic Reform with a one year mandate to report. We will reform fixed-date election legislation to respect the principle of providing adequate advance notice for elections while ensuring prospective candidates have adequate time to prepare. The provision in the existing House of Assembly Act that, in effect, permits the Premier to call an election at any time will be repealed. We will explore options to ensure women, Indigenous communities and minorities are better represented in the House of Assembly.

A Ches Crosbie PC Government will restore trust and accountability in government. As a foundational principle, a Crosbie government will not only respond to the changing needs of people, but also allow for the broad participation of people in decision-making. Accordingly, the policies, programs and methods of a Crosbie government will shift toward partnerships with businesses, unions, academic institutions, other governments and voluntary organizations to reshape processes of decision-making into forms that are more suitable for a modern, inclusive society. We will commission a review of the Members of the House of Assembly Code of Conduct to ensure it better reflects the people's expectations of their elected Members. We will remove the Premier's power to commission secret investigations of Members that are reported to the Premier directly but not to the House. We will prohibit political interference in harassment investigations.

**Newfoundland and Labrador New Democratic Party:**

It's expensive to run for political office, and candidates are expected to raise money. Women and minorities often don't have the financial networks that men do. Taking time off work is a hardship, too. Running for office must be financially accessible to women.

The NDP has been calling for electoral reform. We would like to see public campaign financing for all candidates—no more corporate/union donations. Every party should establish quotas of women candidates and create a fund for child care.

The NDP would provide funds for women's centres to do public education and workshops to get women involved in politics.

The Select Committee on Electoral Reform has committed to "reducing barriers for participation in the democratic process by marginalized groups." We will demand that the Committee include the above measures.

**NL Alliance:**

We must do better as a province, when it comes to giving qualified people who will help Newfoundland and Labrador become a better place, more reason to run for public office and help contribute to the decisions and policy of our Government. That fact becomes even more true for women in our province. Throughout the years, a hostile, adversarial and combative mentality has plagued our political arena and has contributed to a negative environment that caused many to avoid the public service. It's a dated mentality and an archaic demeanor that has been prevalent for far too long.

Our political system needs a desperate upgrade and reform. Governments of the past - including the most recent Liberal administration - have run on the promise of electoral reform, and let the idea die without little to any action. The lack of response and consequence for the bullying and harassment accusations in the House of Assembly last year, coupled with an unwillingness to address issues and change the environment, shows it's obvious that most are satisfied with the status quo.

NL Alliance was founded because we believe we need a change. We need a change in how we vote, who we vote for, how our Government will run, and how the business of the House of Assembly are enforced. We have proposed radical electoral reform ideas, including the elimination of First Past the Post, the elimination of a party system in the House of Assembly, a consensus style of Government, a separate election for premier, open nominations for district candidates through Elections NL and enforceable rules for conduct and demeanour in the legislature.

Bringing civility and effectiveness to Government will show people that it isn't about what 'team' you're on or 'towing a party line.' We need to ensure that everyone has a voice. We also need to consult with Women's and Minority groups to hear the issues that matter most to them, and work with them to show that women's voices matter in

our society. We believe that inclusivity should be our first focus when looking for willing participants in our democracy.