

## **District 5 Provincial Election Candidate Written Forum – Responses from Gail MacDonald**

- 1. Housing is of serious concern in Stratford, as it is across PEI. From affordability, to general inventory, to variety of housing stock, it is challenge for many residents to afford to stay in their existing housing, let alone to consider trying to move and find something. What tangible commitments are you prepared to make to help address this issue over the next four years?**

“If we form government, the Liberal Party is committed to a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the housing crisis, including:

- 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;
- 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;”

- 2. The Town of Stratford has an exciting Community Campus project underway with plans for a multi-purpose recreational facility, sports fields, and cultural spaces to be included on the site, along with the upcoming high school. Are you supportive of this project and in what ways?**

“Multi-purpose recreational facility, sports fields, and cultural spaces would do much to promote Stratford in a beneficial way. If we form government, the Liberal Party is committed to provide access to infrastructure funding to support such initiatives. We would be further prepared to advocate to the federal government for increased federal infrastructure funding to support these initiatives.”

- 3. A recent review by Norbert Carpenter, Director of the Public Schools Branch, identified five schools of concern including three in the Charlottetown Family of Schools – Birchwood, Queen Charlotte and Stonepark Intermediate. These schools are of concern for a variety of reasons, including the increasing pressures on the school’s functional capacity. Before renovations or additions are completed on any of these aging school structures, will you commit to being a strong advocate for a new build in Stratford?**

“The Liberal Party is supportive of placing schools in communities where student populations warrant. Given the continued growth of Stratford and the concerns that exist about the Charlottetown-based schools, we would be prepared to support a school in Stratford, provided that such a location is warranted based on data and analysis of the PEI Public Schools Branch.

To this end, while we appreciate the Town of Stratford's position on a school, such decisions should not be made for the purposes of influencing voters."

- 4. The responsibilities of municipalities have grown substantially, and that trend will continue as municipalities deliver increasingly complex services and tackle complicated issues. Since the government made a number of changes to the financial arrangement in 2008 from a tax credit to a grant system the Town of Stratford has been losing tax revenue in the amount of approximately \$600,000 per year. In the past five years this alone amounts to close to 3 million in lost funds. What are your party's plans to work with the municipalities, including Stratford, to negotiate a revenue sharing deal that is fairer, predictable and provides municipalities with the funds needed to grow and service our communities?**

"The Liberal Party recognizes that revenue sharing arrangements between the Province and municipalities must be fair and equitable. In the case of Stratford, the growth of the population warrants a timely re-consideration of funding arrangements given the added service delivery challenges that the town faces."

- 5. The Town of Stratford has had great success with our Switch Stratford Program, which has allowed many residents to get off of fossil fuels and make their homes more efficient, including winning a national award recently alongside fellow municipalities in the program. However, our Federal funds in Stratford have been depleted for a second time. With climate change, natural disasters and other related environmental concerns a growing reality, what are your plans to help us address these from both the resident, business and municipal perspectives?**

"The Liberal Party is committed to working with municipalities in programs that help residents and businesses undertake measures that protect the environment and reduce our carbon footprint. To this end, we would make additional program funding available to municipalities for programs such as the Switch Stratford Program as well as press the federal government for additional funding.

The Liberal Party has also committed that 30% of its capital budget support climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives."

- 6. Healthcare remains a high priority for residents in Stratford, and across PEI. What steps will your government take, if elected, to move us from the situation that we are in now on PEI? And how are your plans expected to get us different results than we've had with promises in the past?**

"The Liberal Party's plans for healthcare offer a comprehensive set of initiatives intended to transform how healthcare is delivered to Islanders with an emphasis on expanding access to primary care.

- 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 improve 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 expectations Islanders will have regarding accessing 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 several 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, nurses, doctors, and other health system 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 expanding even further the scope of practice of pharmacists, nurse practitioners, and advance care paramedics in PEI 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 to Islanders.”

**7. PEI is long overdue for a province-wide land use plan. What, if any, are your plans and timeline for introducing strong land use policy to control development and protect the land where municipal land use planning does not exist?**

“The Liberal Party is committed to advance Land Use Planning through the establishment of a permanent and independent land use commission that reports to the Legislature. Elements of this commission would include:

- Ensuring the commission would be expert-based with indigenous and geographic representation;
- Ensuring the commission has the staffing and resource capabilities to undertake analysis, consultations, and other activities deemed essential to its mandate;
- Revising the Lands Protection Act and other statutes to define and enshrine the role of the commission; and
- 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.”

**8. In no more than 250 words, what would you like residents of the Town of Stratford to know?**

“I would like the residents of Stratford (and all residents of District 5) to know I will be a hands on, committed MLA for them for the next 4 years. I have been a resident of Stratford for over 44 years and know the concerns. Going door to door I am hearing major concerns about the state of health care on the Island. I would love to be part of that solution. My background as a 911 calltaker came natural to me as I am a good listener and thrive on helping people. As I continue to meet you at your doors – please let me know what your top priorities are, and I will ensure they are discussed and hopefully resolved by government. I respectfully ask for your vote on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.”

**Gail MacDonald - Liberal Candidate, District 5, Mermaid-Stratford**