

District 5 Provincial Election Candidate Written Forum – Responses from Michele Beaton

- 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?**

“Every Islander requires housing and it must be treated as a human right. Housing, especially affordable housing, is critical to every person’s well-being, yet remains out of reach for a growing number of Islanders. A Green government would amend the *Planning Act* and work with municipalities to improve development processes, promote density, encourage development in transit corridors, and reduce the loss of farmland. To achieve this a Green government would invest \$385 million dollars over 5 years to construct new public housing, with an additional \$100 million investment to acquire existing housing stock over 4 years. We would establish a right of first refusal on the sale of multi-unit residential property to ensure government has the first opportunity to acquire these properties rather than investors.

A Green government would establish a rental registry to protect islanders from illegal rent increases, would make the moratorium on renovations permanent to protect tenants from unnecessary evictions, and would establish a tenant advocate for tenancy proceedings before IRAC, to ensure people like Island seniors have access to the legal assistance they need if tenancy issues arise.

A Green government would promote inclusionary zoning, look at tax measures to prevent speculation in the housing market, and end blind bidding to ensure that the home purchase process is transparent. A Green government would also review the Down Payment Assistance Program to ensure that the program design does not exclude people from purchasing homes in communities like Stratford.”

- 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?**

“Yes, I have participated in all of the public meetings on the community campus from the beginning. The Green caucus has been vocal in the need to plan for population growth rather than deal with it after the fact. I have advocated for the high school since elected, and the Green platform includes a commitment to finally build the school.”

- 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?**

“I am supportive of an intermediate school based on the enrollment numbers and I will continue to be a strong advocate for Stratford students to make sure that they get the school infrastructure that they so desperately need.

Further, overcrowding of schools that Stratford students attend was the whole reason why I got into politics in the first place. I believe in effectively planning for population growth by addressing the foundational infrastructure needed to support that growth. The promise of school infrastructure should not be a political promise in an election. It should be based on facts and evidence. The reality is, enrollment numbers in our 3 junior high schools in the Charlottetown family of schools show that our schools are either at capacity or overcapacity. It should not take an election to make the promise of new school infrastructure.

In the last budget debate in 2022, I found out that the Department of Education has not had a strategic plan in 9 years. How can we ever plan for adequate school infrastructure if the Department of Education doesn't even have a strategic plan to work from? A Green government would mandate every department to have a strategic plan and we would hold them accountable.”

- 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?**

“Municipal governments provide important services for promoting the well-being of islanders. Creating vibrant communities and ensuring sustainable development is critical. A Green government will negotiate a new funding agreement with PEI municipalities that make sure that our communities have the resources they need, including the resources to implement strong local planning, and appropriate resourcing for emergency and fire protection services. A Green government will also review the Property Tax structure to provide additional tax room for municipalities.

In addition to this, we will also increase the Capital Area public transit system operating grant so residents have access to improved public transportation. We will also increase funding for recreation infrastructure like playgrounds, sports fields, and community gardens so that residents of all ages can stay active in the community.”

- 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 Town of Stratford has been a leader with the implementation of the Stratford Switch Program, an excellent initiative. A Green government would extend the program Island-wide so all Island homeowners can benefit from zero-interest loans for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

A Green government would call an independent inquiry into our response to Hurricane Fiona, to ensure we fully understand where our response failed Islanders and to use the recommendations of this inquiry to ensure Islanders are never subjected to the same level of disruption again.

Finally, a Green government would return the full amount of the carbon levy back to Islanders so they have extra money to address the costs associated with our climate transition.”

- 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?**

“Previous governments, Liberal and Tories, have failed to deliver on their healthcare promises because they ignore the experts on the frontlines, they fail to address the political interference that impedes the delivery of healthcare, and they have failed to address wage inequities that so many healthcare workers are dealing with.

The Green platform focuses on four major components - immediate plans to get our healthcare system out of crisis, valuing our healthcare workers who have been neglected by the King government, investing long-term into health care, and improving public health.

Specific actions a Green government would take include:

- Immediately invest \$37 million directly into wage increases and benefits for frontline healthcare staff at Health PEI. This includes all levels of nursing, medical lab technologists, radiation technologists, porters, cleaning staff, and all others who work on the frontline of patient care.
- Support existing healthcare workers to increase their skills and certifications:
- Boost funding to provincial pharmacare by \$18 million to match the Canadian average per capita investment in pharmacare;
- Provide Islanders with comprehensive and timely mental health and addiction services including finally building a new mental health hospital, establishing Psychiatric Urgent Care Clinics (PUCCs) outside of Charlottetown, and increasing the number of guidance counsellors in schools;

- Expand homecare services to seniors and other Islanders in need;
- Improve our Island long-term care system by offering low-interest loans to private long-term care facilities to make capital improvements, seeking an ownership stake in funding agreements to begin the transition away from for-profit care, building more public long-term care beds, and legislating national standards of care;
- Give all Islanders free access to virtual care services when they need them.
- Open more walk-in clinics, such as cough and fever, mobile blood work, and prescription renewal clinics.
- Amend the Medical Act to allow nurse practitioners to work more effectively in a collaborative practise or to manage nurse practitioner-led clinics. Both will allow nurse practitioners to take more patients off the patient registry.
- Amend legislation to allow Physician Assistants (PA) to work in healthcare on PEI, and work with UPEI to create a Physician Assistant (PA) training program. There are only 3 universities in Canada that train PAs.
- Increase family physician residency spots from 5 to 10.”

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?

“Every report, study, task force, and commission on land for the last 50 years has come to the same conclusion: we need province-wide land use planning to protect our Island and improve the lives of Islanders. A Green government will implement land use planning Island-wide. Staff at the Department of Agriculture have said this can be done within 2 to 3 years.

A Green government would design planning policies to protect the shoreline and coastal ecosystems; protect and enhance forests, and increase carbon capture; reduce carbon emissions; adapt to climate change, erosion, flooding, and storm surges; protect prime agricultural land and keep it in production. Protect waterways and groundwater; promote higher density housing and reduce urban sprawl; increase affordable and accessible housing; better plan infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing population; reduce the cost of utilities and improve access to services; improve public transit and active transportation; and allow Islanders to participate in decisions that affect their community.”

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

“As the elected representative for Mermaid-Stratford for the past four years I have gained the knowledge and experience to be a strong voice in the legislature for you. I know the issues that you want to be represented on because I have been active in the community and have been listening carefully. Send me back to the Legislature so I can continue to work for you by asking the tough questions, and doing the work to implement services that you deserve and so desperately need. It has been an honour to represent you and I promise that I will continue to work hard for you.”

Michele Beaton- Green Candidate, District 5, Mermaid-Stratford