

District 5 Provincial Election Candidate Written Forum – Responses from Dr. Lana Beth Barkhouse

- 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?**

“The Green Party platform recognizes that housing must be treated as a human right. Affordable, safe, and secure housing is one of the basic determinants of health for every one of us. Stratford-Keppoch is a prosperous community, and yet affordable, safe and secure housing remains out of reach for some. A Green government would amend the *Planning Act* and work with municipalities to improve development processes. This, for Stratford-Keppoch, means that we will improve the consultation with community members and neighbours before developments proceed. In some of our neighbourhoods, this may mean promoting density where the community believes it's right to do so, such as near transit corridors, while elsewhere in our community this may mean reducing development and the loss of our remaining greenspace in District 6. Your voice needs to be heard before any future plans are approved.

Stratford-Keppoch has seen increasing numbers of rental properties over the past ten years. Recognizing the importance of affordable rents, 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.

We have heard from some in District 6 who are landlords who own just one or two apartments and feel that they are being lumped in with large corporate developers. They are concerned that a rate freeze that is arbitrarily applied makes their ability to operate their properties unsustainable. In our plan, a rental registry would protect both the tenant and the landlord by ensuring that each rental property is fairly and appropriately treated rather than a one-size-for-all solution.

There are a number of other measures in the Green Platform. We hope that you will have a close look at some of the details we've shared on our website. Province-wide, 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. To achieve this, we would establish a right of first refusal on the sale of multi-unit residential property to ensure the government has the first opportunity to acquire these properties at fair market value.”

- 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. Stratford-Keppoch is one of the fastest-growing communities in Canada. I raised my children here and they all attended Glen Stewart, Stonepark and Charlottetown Rural High Schools. It was before Stratford Elementary existed. The schools were all crowded. They still are. We need to build space in Stratford.

My children played hockey in Pownal and they participated in many other sports, mostly away from Stratford... wherever the facilities and programs were available. We spent many years driving back and forth to Pownal or Belfast for hockey, Charlottetown for Singing Strings, Pottery in Victoria Park and Rigid Riders cycling as examples. The Community Campus is something that will serve our community, give us a stronger “centre” for the town, as well as ease the crowding of other resources across the Hillsborough for our neighbouring districts. A Green government will work to finally build the complex that has been needed for a long time.”

- 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?**

“Yes. Firstly, a green government respects and listens to those who have specialist knowledge, such as Mr. Carpenter. While I will always ask hard questions, I recognize that someone with his experience and insight must be heard, and his opinion has weight. Accepting his view about the pressures on the schools in Charlottetown where we send our children, the right way to address the overcrowding in existing schools is to draw Stratford youth into a Stratford school. My own family has lived through all of the overcrowding issues in the school system. Up to now, our teachers have done an amazing job of simply making it work for all the kids. It's overdue. This is needed.”

- 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 question is a great one! In fact it actually includes the answer! We need to negotiate a revenue sharing that is fair, predictable and provides municipalities with the resources they

need. A Green government will negotiate. The first, most essential step in negotiation is to listen. A Green government will listen to municipalities before it speaks. It will genuinely consult with municipal governments in Stratford and elsewhere, and it will make decisions that can be fairly applied to each and every municipality's unique situation. That will, of course, be done in a way that ensures the local municipalities can plan adequately for the future."

- 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?**

"Many Stratford-Keppoch residents have benefited from the Switch program. 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. As part of the funding strategy and negotiations with local municipalities for a fair deal to support their work, the Switch program, as well as public transit in Stratford need to be part of the conversation.

The nature of disaster planning is... Planning. That means we need to look ahead to foresee what challenges we might possibly face. Regarding our disaster preparation, a Green government would call an independent inquiry into the response to Hurricane Fiona. The recommendations of this inquiry will be essential for planning for the inevitable next event, having the policies and structures in place to handle an event, whenever and whatever form it takes."

- 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?**

"We've had a lot of years of different governments promising to "fix healthcare". Stratford residents are right to be skeptical of promises. I have been working in healthcare as a family physician for 30 years, 21 of which have been here on PEI. Frankly, a lot of the proposals floated by some parties have very little basis in reality.

I believe in the wisdom, experience, and commitment of our Island healthcare workers. The best people to help us improve healthcare... I won't say "fix" because that's been over-used... is to listen to the experts, those people who have had our backs over the past four years. I hear from clinical psychologists who suggest simple steps that could save money, time, and lives. Nobody has been listening to them. I hear from Nurse Practitioners who feel their extra training is wasted if they aren't able to work to their full scope of practice. I hear from Nurses who question why their shift schedules can't be flexible... in a time when coffee shop workers have

collaborative shift planning. I hear from my colleagues about things in their own practice that could make their work more effective. It goes on and on...

We have a system that is running on fumes. The staff within the system are almost... but not quite... ready to give up. We need to think about all the little contributions by each person, in each department that will make each step better. The most important promise I can make is to listen to the people who know how to fix things. Each improvement we make has a ripple effect. While any small thing might speed up wait times, pass through diagnostic tests quicker, whatever... collectively they will restore the faith of our healthcare team and our community. As a government, we will listen, and we will act.

I could go into details about some of the specific solutions, for example the increase of Family medicine residents. I have been a preceptor/mentor to many students over the past 20 years, and many of them have stayed on PEI in family practice. Increasing the seats from 5 to 10 to start, and improving the ranking system so we accept the best candidates to finish their training here are essential steps. This may help to recruit more family doctors on PEI, but without the "listening" to all levels in healthcare to instill their inspired enthusiasm for a renewed and healthy PEI, we will continue to lose more practitioners. It doesn't matter how much water you flood into a leaky bucket, if you don't fix the bucket it may still be empty one day. I believe we can do this."

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?

"Some of the most passionate conversations I've had with Stratford-Keppoch residents over the past weeks have been about land use. Whether its people are upset about shoreline erosion caused by storms and the impact to their properties, development permits given to Point Deroche, deforestation and clearcutting of private woodlots, we all care about this island in different ways. On the one hand, we have farmers on the land who need the space to grow crops and feed livestock. On the other we have developers who want to build new homes. Everything ultimately runs down to our rivers and estuaries where our fishers and aquaculture farmers are working to feed us. Balance is needed. This is done through thoughtful oversight... a "big picture" plan. A Green government will implement land use planning Island-wide.

Producing a plan isn't enough. A Green government will defend the plan, and will defend and enforce the regulations for shoreline protection, appropriate development, and ultimately seek to balance the competing needs.

Finally, Its important to recognize that most of us are newcomers here. The animals and plants have been here long, long before any of us. The indigenous peoples have been here long before most of us. The essential core of land-use planning is to ensure that we respect and protect the legacy of our Biome as well as the legacy of our first-nations."

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

“I love PEI. I love my community in Stratford-Keppoch. It's where I've raised my family. It's our home that my children return to whenever they need to regroup. It's a place where I've learned about the struggles of my grandparents, great-grandparents and more. I've learned to be a steward for the history in my ancient house. I've learned to be a steward for my small patch of PEI.

This Island is worth working for. I've come to believe in the Green principles of ecological wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy, nonviolence, sustainability and respect for diversity. They are principles which can help us sustain ourselves and our beloved Island home.

You have an opportunity to make a thoughtful contribution to the future of your Island community by choosing to vote Green in Stratford-Keppoch. Our ideas and concrete plans are not empty promises, they come from a place of deep commitment, wise planning, and will improve our unique and fragile environment and society. I believe in these principles. I also remain humbly open to hearing your voices in all aspects of improving life here. I believe in better, and I believe you do too!”

Dr. Lana Beth Barkhouse - Green Candidate, District 6, Stratford-Keppoch