



August 9, 2021

Kathleen Yurchesyn  
CEO, Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce  
Via email: [Kathleen@cbrregionalchamber.ca](mailto:Kathleen@cbrregionalchamber.ca)

Dear Kathleen,

I am pleased to respond to our questionnaire as follows:

**Our Path Forward: *Questions that count***  
**Submitted by: The Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce**

1. The economy of Cape Breton Island has been in decline for decades. Out-migration has been an upward trend, and population decline has become an ongoing challenge for the entire island. Now more than ever, Cape Breton shows great promise in reversing this trend and working toward achieving sustainability. The CBRM is the second-largest economic centre in the Province. Population growth and job creation are two integral pieces of ensuring our region's sustainability and economic health. **As the leader of our Province, how do you specifically plan to address population decline and unemployment in Cape Breton Island and help positively change our economic future?**

The PC Party recognizes the work required to ensure a true recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. We are proud of our innovative solutions, such as the More Opportunities for Skilled Trades (MOST) program. This program is a targeted investment for those who work in the skilled trades that will permit those under 30 years old who work in the skilled trades to pay no provincial income tax on their first \$50,000 of income. This will put thousands of dollars directly into the pockets of our young skilled trades workers each year. As well, our Better Paycheck Guarantee will return 50% of the corporate tax a corporation pays in Nova Scotia on the condition that 100% of the returned funds go towards the wages of workers who are not in the top 20% earners. These funds can also be used to create new jobs. We are confident that if a company has the opportunity to pay their workers more, they will.

We have also committed to a goal of attracting 25,000 more individuals to Nova Scotia per year. The Department of Immigration will work with the province's Tourism Department to launch this campaign, within six months of the PC Party coming into government. With respect to our plan for increased immigration, more supports will be needed outside of Halifax to help new immigrants with a smoother transition into their new communities. These offices will help with translation, jobs, housing, etc., and will operate as a one-stop-shop for obtaining information and help for immigrant needs. This provides each immigrant with the consistency of dealing with only one government office and developing relationships with the staff. The smoother the transition, the higher the likelihood of retention. If we don't do everything possible to ground these new residents here in Nova Scotia, we will risk losing them.

2. The CBRM has the highest commercial tax rate in the Province of Nova Scotia and one of the highest taxation rates in Canada. Commercial and residential tax rates fall under the jurisdiction of the Province. High commercial tax significantly prevents us from a) attracting investment in existing infrastructure b) the ability to attract developers for the construction of new infrastructure and c) the capacity for some small businesses to afford to own or rent space throughout our region. **As Premier, how would you work directly with CBRM Mayor and Council to address this issue and develop a strategy to lower our tax rate to be more attractive for investment and affordable for our commercial taxpayers?**

A PC government is committed to working with all municipalities in order to lower costs and ensure economic success. For several years, the PC Caucus called on the Liberal government to ask the Auditor General to prepare a report on the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant, all the way back to when they were still referred to as equalization payments. They did not respond. Our MLAs continued their efforts and wrote directly to the Auditor General and requested that a report be commissioned on the subject of this fund. The PC Party feels that the MFCG should be reviewed and modernized. We will not know what form it will take until it has been properly assessed by the Auditor General. As a PC government, we intend to double the MFCG for the first year, until a new Memorandum of Understanding with the municipalities can be reached.

3. Cape Breton Island lost their rail line between Port Hawkesbury and Sydney when it closed to all rail activity in 2014. The revitalization of our rail line is essential to revitalizing Cape Breton's economy. One significant opportunity before us is connecting the planned Sydney Container Port (NovaPorte) to the continental rail system. This project will enable us to advance an aggressive export strategy for Cape Breton and Nova Scotia, raising NS's trade to GDP ratio. Additionally, it will be cost-efficient and more environmentally friendly than road transportation and will strengthen Newfoundland's vital supply chain while reducing carbon emissions by shifting trucks to rail. **Will your government publicly support the initiative to develop Sydney Harbour as an international transportation, logistics and green energy hub and commit to a cost-sharing agreement for the planned \$103 million rehabilitation of the Sydney to Port Hawkesbury section of the Cape Breton and Central Nova Scotia railway?**

The PC Party believes you should not need an inside track to be engaged with the government, and we are giving the municipalities a seat at the table that the previous government neglected to do. We are committed to engaging with you and all stakeholders in this sector in order to learn about ways to grow our economy, especially in a green way.

4. There are several publicly funded infrastructure projects in progress in the CBRM right now, including significant investments in healthcare infrastructure and the construction of the NSCC waterfront campus. **As Premier, how do you plan to support continued future investment on Cape Breton Island, and how do you plan to prioritize the many other infrastructure investments before the government for our region?**

The PC Party is committed to growing and addressing our health care infrastructure head-on. We are committing to building 2,500 single-room long-term care beds in conjunction with the Federal Government. We committed to opening up operating room hours to address the surgery backlog, and attract new health care professionals by creating environments that encourage people to stay. We have also committed to creating a clinical health services plan for each of the health regions. This plan would outline what staffing should look like in each region, overlapping staffing with the needs of each community. We are committed to building up the supply of housing so that a competitive market can put a halt to skyrocketing prices. The PC Party believes that land owned by the government can be analyzed and determined for better use; some could be used for attainable housing purposes. A PC government will instruct Nova Scotia Lands to work with Housing Nova Scotia to identify areas that could be used for housing. The inventory must be submitted to the Minister within three months of coming into government so that the province can manage and keep track of the land it owns in a comprehensive accounting manner. This will also allow work to get underway immediately in determining the best uses of those lands. As previously mentioned, we are also committed to doubling the MFRA until a new MOU is negotiated.

5. Small business is the backbone of our economy. Throughout the pandemic, small businesses of all sizes have been significantly negatively impacted, especially businesses within the tourism and hospitality sector. Although there has been support for business through grants and loans, recovery is expected to take many years. **How will your government support the post-pandemic recovery of our economy, and what specific investments do you plan to make?**

The PC Party has put together the most thorough and robust economic platform that Nova Scotia has seen in generations. Although COVID has disproportionately damaged our tourism and hospitality sector, the PC Party is fully prepared to work directly with them to ensure that these sectors recover as strongly as possible. Our previously mentioned MOST program and Better Pay Cheque Guarantee will raise the wages of workers and make Nova Scotia a more competitive place for people to live, work, and stay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tara Miller', written in a cursive style.

Tara Miller  
Campaign Co-Chair  
PC Party of Nova Scotia