

A large, faint, light blue silhouette of a lighthouse is visible in the background, extending from the top left towards the bottom right. The lighthouse has a conical roof and a lantern room at the top.

BIG CHANGE

Ideas to transform Nova Scotia for the better.

A note from Elizabeth

Since deciding to run for the PC leadership at the beginning of the year, I have met with thousands of Nova Scotians. These conversations have been about the kind of province we want and the role we can play as Progressive Conservatives to get there.

As more than 11,000 PC Party members are eligible to cast their ballots this month, the following document provides an overview of the kind of BIG change I will fight for as leader of the PC Party of Nova Scotia.



These ideas reflect the themes I have advanced during the course of this campaign:

- **Improving health care** by engaging doctors, nurses and other professionals on the front lines for solutions;
- **Getting our economy growing** by taking dollars wasted in government and putting into the hands of hard-working Nova Scotians and the businesses that create jobs here at home; and
- Tackling new approaches to **reducing poverty**.

If you give me your support to become PC Leader, I will **change the culture of this party** to a culture where **everyone's talents are valued** and **everyone's voices are respected**.

Although this document reflects a great deal of listening, thought, research and costing, it is not a full platform. That will come from you, the party membership, under my leadership. It will come from our MLAs. And if you give me your support to become PC Leader, I will invite my four fellow candidates – Julie Chaisson, Cecil Clarke, Tim Houston and John Lohr – to play key leadership roles to bring about BIG change for our party.

I did not leave a successful career of **creating jobs** as a successful business owner, **recruiting doctors** to my home community and **working as a registered nurse** to play same old political game.

The same old political game has led our PC Party to not winning a majority government in 20 years.

Let's have the courage to embrace BIG change.

I ask for your support to become the next PC Leader!

Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin, MBA, BScN
MLA for Cumberland North



Improving health care

The problems:

- Close to 1,000 doctors are expected to retire in Nova Scotia over the next decade, with the Liberal government's current plan not expected to even come to half that level of new doctors;
- Rural emergency departments are closing frequently due to lack of physician coverage;
- Health care professionals are shut out of decision-making at all levels of the health care system;
- More than 1,000 seniors are waiting for a long-term care bed, without any plan from the Liberals to fix this;
- More than 20 per cent of patients are in a hospital bed when they should be in a long-term care bed
- The Auditor General concluded last year that Nova Scotia lacked a province-wide plan for mental health services; and
- The number of suicides is going up in Nova Scotia;

Solutions:

We can fix Stephen McNeil's health care crisis.

With 27 years as a registered nurse, Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin will engage those working on the front lines – doctors, nurses and other health care professionals – like never before. She will empower those who know health care best to put the needs of patients at the centre of decision-making.

This starts as soon as Elizabeth becomes PC Leader. She will strike a Front Line Health Innovation Task Force. The Task Force will provide an ongoing channel for doctors, nurses and other health professionals to work with the leader and caucus on an ongoing basis to prepare the PC Health Care platform for the next election campaign and a blueprint for changing health as part of a new PC government.

As PC Leader, Elizabeth will fight for:

- Ensuring 50 per cent of the voting members of the Nova Scotia Health Authority's board is either a doctor, nurse or other accredited health care professional, in concert with having one voting member be a mental health professional and another voting member with lived experience in mental health;
- Improving and restoring local decision-making and physician engagement – starting with the creation of Medical Staff Associations (MSA) across the province with MSA reps involved in decision-making;
- Strengthening recruitment initiatives – bringing compensation for Nova Scotia doctors in line with other provinces; asking for local physician input to identify which initiatives are working and which aren't; with community based recruitment teams where possible and flexibility around physician privileges;
- Reviving full-scope comprehensive family medicine – with a payment model that reflects the delivery of comprehensive and collaborative primary care; and greater flexibility on privileging and billing;
- Maintaining rural specialty services – with rural rotations for medical residents, integration of rural specialists into QEII and IWK planning and a strong and vibrant local program;
- Restoring the rural emergency department local program that Stephen McNeil cancelled – making it easier to prevent physician vacancies;
- Introducing a new Continuing Care Strategy to increase the number of long-term care beds to match the demand from the growing seniors' population;
- Creating stabilization units at long-term care facilities to provide the right level of care for high need seniors;
- Changing the *Homes for Special Care Act* to update staffing ratios that haven't changed in over 30 years;
- Hiring nurse practitioners to work in long-term care facilities to help improve care for seniors and manage workload demands;
- Enacting tough penalties on facilities that aren't complying with the *Homes for Special Care Act*; and
- Creating a new suicide prevention strategy, influenced by best practices in other jurisdictions that have brought the number of suicides down by 20 per cent.



Getting our economy growing

The problems:

- Nova Scotia has suffered from among the worst rates of economic performance over the last 30 years;
- Current economic forecasts from all major institutions place Nova Scotia at the bottom of Canadian provinces;
- With the exception of Halifax Regional Municipality and a few other municipal units, most municipalities are struggling, with a declining tax base and shrinking population;
- Nova Scotia people and businesses pay among the highest tax rates in Canada; and
- Nova Scotia imports 87 per cent of the province's food supply.

The solutions:

As someone who started four successful businesses that led to the creation of 35 full-time jobs in rural Nova Scotia, Elizabeth understands the best way to turn our province's economy around is through private sector growth.

The small steps and half measures of the typical politician won't cut it. We need to invest in our people and businesses and end Nova Scotia's reputation as Canada's high tax capital.

Elizabeth will fight for the largest direct financial investment in Nova Scotia's economy since the Second World War with a Mega Tax Break.

Helping every single Nova Scotian, regardless of their income, and every single business that pays taxes, the Mega Tax Break's major components include:

- Increasing the basic personal allowance to \$15,000 a year for Nova Scotians earning \$75,000 and under;
- Increasing the basic personal allowance for the remainder of individual taxpayers from \$8,481 to \$10,000 a year for the remainder of individuals;
- Ending bracket creep by fully indexing personal income tax brackets – bringing Nova Scotia in line with the majority of Canadian provinces;

- Reducing corporate taxes from 16% to 12% - bringing Nova Scotia's rate down to the lowest level in Atlantic Canada; and
- Reducing the small business tax rate from 3% to 0% - making Nova Scotia only one of two provinces with a zero small business tax rate.

The Mega Tax Break will be financed based on the results of an independent external review of government finances to be commissioned by an Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin government within 30 days of being sworn into office. The goal of the review is to identify 5% of savings within the province's \$10.8 billion budget, with proceeds from these savings to be turned over to Nova Scotians in the form of a Mega Tax Break.

Elizabeth also believes that Nova Scotia can be doing a much better job making the most of our natural resources, starting with agriculture.

Local food production and consumption must be a major priority for the province. As PC Leader and Premier, Elizabeth will work with farmers, local communities and others to develop *Our Food First*, Nova Scotia's first-ever Healthy Local Food Strategy.

The goal of *Our Food First* is to have Nova Scotia produce 50 per cent of its own food by 2030, encouraging more local food production and consumption by:

- Amending the province's *Public Procurement Act* to mandate local and regional food purchased by public sector entities;
- Supporting the Maritime Beef Council's efforts to increase regional beef production – using such assets as the Nappan research facility and the Dalhousie University's agriculture campus in Truro;
- Implementing regulations and policies that promote, rather than discourage, the sale of provincially-inspected meat, which currently cannot cross provincial borders and places severe restrictions on getting local meat to markets;
- Developing a Nova Scotia land bank and other measures to help get unused farm land into production;
- Exploring an investment tax credit for capital expenditures for farmers to help stimulate investment in modern farms;
- Identifying alternate energy sources, such as geothermal, to help with greenhouse food production.

Elizabeth is also committed to the importance of harnessing the benefits of other natural resources in an environmentally responsible way, with the support of local communities. She will merge the departments of Energy and Mines and Lands and Forestry into a single Department of Energy, Mines and Natural Resources, while putting all functions related to environmental stewardship and protection into a single Department of Environment, Climate Change and Parks.

Elizabeth is against a carbon tax and will fight for any and all legal means to stop Justin Trudeau's carbon tax. Nova Scotia reduced its greenhouse gas emissions more than any other province in Canada without a carbon tax. We can continue to be environmental leaders without imposing a new tax on Nova Scotians.



New approaches to reducing poverty

The problems:

- 21.6% of Nova Scotia children living in poverty – the third highest rate in Canada and the highest rate in Atlantic Canada;
- 18 communities in Nova Scotia had child poverty rates of more than 30%, including 10 on Cape Breton Island; and
- 37.4% of visible minority children living in poverty

Current policies – through successive PC, NDP and Liberal governments – have not resulted in an economy where people can lift themselves out of poverty.

It's time to explore new approaches – not only through economic growth and government restructuring – but with a renewed focus on education.

Elizabeth will fight for:

- (as part of her Mega Tax Break) Ending personal income taxes on anyone earning less than \$20,000 a year – taking 39,000 low-income Nova Scotians off the province's tax rolls; and
- Conducting a feasibility on a basic income for low-income Nova Scotians, as advanced by the late Robert Stanfield and Nobel economist Milton Friedman.

Better education will also help lift more Nova Scotians out of poverty. Elizabeth believes that decisions about the education of our children and young people are best left in the hands of teachers and parents.

Elizabeth will rebuild a relationship of trust with our educators. She will bring a reality check to the bureaucrats in Halifax by directing senior officials at the Education Department to spend some time in the classroom, so they understand the realities faced by teachers, staff and students.

Someone with a post-secondary education is also likelier to earn more than someone without. Unfortunately, Nova Scotians pay among the highest tuition rates in Canada. Elizabeth will fight for a new province-wide bursary program for Nova Scotia high school graduates to help them afford the cost of a post-secondary education.



Smarter, more transparent government

The problems:

- Municipal governments feel they lack the resources to respond to citizens;
- Citizens question the need for 49 municipal units in a province of 960,000 people;
- Stephen McNeil doles out hundreds of millions of “March madness” spending of tax dollars;
- Nova Scotia’s lobbyist law is out of date with no independent oversight; and
- Stephen McNeil ignores the province’s freedom of information law, which also lacks independent oversight.

When it comes to discussions around government structure, Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin believes the needs of citizens and taxpayers must come first. Problems can’t be solved just by writing cheques from one level of government to another. That’s old-style politics.

As PC Leader, Elizabeth will fight for A New Deal for Local Governments that reflects the following principles:

- Encouraging more efficient local government and co-operation between neighbouring municipalities;
- A new municipal funding formula, including a new equalization formula, that acts on whatever findings are reached by the province’s Auditor General to the audit requested by PC MLAs from the Cape Breton Regional Municipality;
- Reviewing which services are best delivered and financed by either the provincial or municipal governments, including Halifax Regional Municipality’s request to assume responsibility for housing services;
- Requiring municipal merger proposals to be submitted to affected voters by way of a plebiscite, based on the successful Region of Queens model from the 1990s;
- Reforming the municipal tax structure to ensure both residential and commercial taxpayers are protected, while recognizing the differences between urban, suburban and rural communities;

- Legislating the Cape Breton Regional Municipal Charter, as promised by the PC Party in the last two provincial elections;
- Hosting annual meetings between the provincial cabinet and Federation of Nova Scotia Municipalities to track progress on meeting the goals of the New Deal.

Taxpayers are best protected when there are tight spending controls and independent oversight. As PC Leader, Elizabeth will fight for:

- A new law that will apply 50 per cent of year end surpluses to the debt;
- Creating a new Commissioner of Ethics and Conflict of Interest, an independent officer of the legislature that will be responsible for lobbying and MLA ethics; and
- Strengthening the powers of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, making her an independent officer of the legislature.

Conclusion

More information is available at www.elizabethforleader.ca.

Get in touch at connect@elizabethforleader.ca.