



August 2, 2021

Louis-Phillippe Gauthier,
Senior Director, Legislative Affairs, Atlantic
CFIB
Canadian Federation of Independent Business
VIA EMAIL: Louis-Philippe.Gauthier@cfib.ca

Dear Mr. Gauthier,

I am pleased to respond to your questionnaire as follows:

2021 Nova Scotia Provincial Election Leader Survey

- 1. With many Nova Scotia small- and medium-sized businesses continuing to feel the negative effects of the pandemic, will your government commit to a “Do No Harm” principle for small businesses in Nova Scotia; to not introduce new legislation or policies that will increase employer costs?**

A PC government is dedicated to supporting small-and-medium-sized businesses and will engage with all stakeholders in order to make sure neglect does not continue to plague businesses.

- 2. If elected, how will your government support Nova Scotia small- and medium-sized businesses that continue to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?**

The PC party has advocated for changing the status quo of “not enough” from the pandemic supports. In May of 2020, we wrote to the Premier and called for measures such as:

- Establish the “Get Going Grant” to provide eligible businesses a grant of up to \$2,500 to stock up on necessary PPE, plexiglass, and other protective equipment.
- Fill in gaps in the wage subsidy and extend the program provincially to cover anyone who is truly working for the business, including independent contractors and instructors.
- Fill in gaps in the CERB and extend the program provincially to cover owner/operators whose income comes from dividends from their small business as opposed to drawing a “salary.”
- Commit provincial funding for summer day camps to enable parents to return to work.
- Provide short-term commercial rent relief with a no eviction backstop (for evictions related to COVID-19).

3. If elected, how will your government address the challenges faced by businesses in finding skilled and unskilled labour?

A PC government recognizes that in order to retain and attract workers, living here needs to be desirable. Nova Scotia is a beautiful province, but it is not achieving its full potential. We understand the need to rebuild our economy with a long-term vision that will not only give immediate results to Nova Scotians, but will set us on a solid path to sustainable, long-term growth for the next 10-15 years.

To start, we are facing a massive shortfall of skilled labour. We have 7,000 unfilled skilled trade roles to be filled, which will also be key in addressing our housing crisis over the next 10 years. Nova Scotia needs thousands of new homes and apartments. A PC government knows that before housing can be built, the necessary land must be secured. Approximately 30% of the land in Nova Scotia is owned by the government. The government apparently owns so much land that it doesn't know what it owns because no full inventory of provincial-owned lands exists. The PC Party believes that once it is analyzed, there will be land that could be better used - for agricultural purposes, for recreational purposes, and for housing purposes, to name a few. As such, the first direction the PC government will give to Nova Scotia Lands is to work with Housing Nova Scotia to develop a full inventory of lands owned and 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.

4. If elected, what will be your government's plan to reduce claim durations and claim costs within the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia?

A PC government is committed to ensuring injured workers are protected and receive benefits. We recognize the need for efficiency in this process, as the prolonged experience of a claim benefits nobody. We will work with stakeholders to make these processes more efficient and less costly.

5. If elected, how will your government reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses and citizens?

The Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness has demonstrated the value in making red tape reduction a constant goal of government, and we are eager to move forward in this direction.

6. If elected, what is your government's plan to ensure Nova Scotia small- and medium-sized businesses are competitive?

The Better Pay Cheque Guarantee will ensure that businesses in Nova Scotia remain competitive by allowing those who pay corporate taxes to either have more dedicated employees through a higher paycheque or through expanding their workforce by using their return to hire new employees.

This program will give 50% of a corporation's taxes paid back on the condition that 100% of those funds are given directly to employees (current or new hires). This return cannot be given to the top 20% earners in a company, so only working-class families will see the return.

7. If elected will your government align minimum wage increases with the consumer price index?

A PC government has already committed to meeting with all stakeholders, including the Retail Council of Canada, to learn about a formula based on the CPI for minimum wage. As previously mentioned, we have introduced bold initiatives, such as the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee, to raise wages and expand the workforce.

8. If elected, what will be your government's policy on paid sick days?

More than a year ago, our Party said it was time to waive sick notes for frontline workers. At the time, no one knew the effect this virus would have on our province.

There has to be a balance of protecting workers and making sure policies don't further hurt our small businesses. We need to make sure that employees who are sick do not come to work and infect others.

This is an issue that must be examined by all stakeholders when we have emerged from the pandemic to ensure employers and employees are treated fairly should there be another situation that requires employees to stay home for public safety. A PC government is committed to creating these policies with appropriate consultation.

9. If elected, will your government legislate pay equity for the private sector?

The PC Party has a proud history of leading on pay equity. It was the PC Party that passed the *Pay Equity Act* to regulate the public sector, so that government can lead by example.

Upon forming a PC government, we hope that the private sector has followed suit and has addressed pay equity between genders already. However, we will take action if necessary.

10. If elected, what is your government's plan to restore fiscal balance to the province?

A PC government is focused on investing in our people: keeping them here, bringing them home and attracting more. With our health system being inefficient, and our services limited, we cannot recover by adhering to the status quo. That's why we are making investments in healthcare and promoting programs such as Nova Scotia Loyal to encourage buying local, the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee to help pay workers more and hire more workers, and no provincial tax on the first \$50,000 for tradespeople under the age of 30. An aging population calls for the demand for younger workers and investment in these sectors. We are planning a course for a balanced budget in six years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C MacKeen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cameron MacKeen
Campaign Co-Chair
PC Party of Nova Scotia