



HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
Office of the Leader of the Official Opposition

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Letter to the Leaders of the Major Federal Political Parties in Canada

The Right Hon. Justin Trudeau
Leader, Liberal Party of Canada
c/o Azam Ishmael, National Director - Fax: 613-235-7208

The Hon. Erin M. O'Toole, P.C., C.D., M.P.
Leader, Conservative Party of Canada
c/o Janet Fryday Dorey, Executive Director - Fax: 613-755-2001

Jagmeet Singh, MP Burnaby South
Leader, New Democratic Party
National Headquarters - Fax: 613-230-9950

Annamie Paul
Leader, Green Party of Canada
c/o Anik Lajoie, Interim Executive Director - Fax: 613-706-1424

Dear Party Leaders:

I am writing on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Official Opposition Caucus in the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly.

Newfoundland and Labrador is a strong, proud partner in the Canadian federation, contributing enormously to our country. But facing this election, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are very worried about our province's future.

Despite being rich in resources, we are losing jobs and working-age people at an alarming rate. Communities are thinning out and rapidly aging. This means higher public service costs per person, and that is simply not sustainable. What's worse, the more people we lose, the less we get in federal transfers to help keep services like health care running, even though the costs are not going down.

The federal government has to play a key role in assisting the recovery of the Newfoundland and Labrador economy and ensuring a viable, sustainable future for the next generation.

Newfoundland and Labrador needs a strong commitment from the federal government to help us build towards a bright future for our province. More opportunities will mean more jobs here, more working-age people and families here, and more revenues to sustain public services for a thriving population here. So please give your strong commitment that you will be a true partner in supporting Newfoundland and Labrador's efforts to grow and prosper by capitalizing on our own strengths.

HEALTHCARE: Newfoundland and Labrador is facing a crisis in our healthcare system. The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association estimates 90,000 people in our province do not have access to a family doctor. The family doctors we are lucky to have are ageing and with an incredible workload, meaning the number of family doctors will continue to decline. That's forcing people into overcrowded emergency rooms for non-emergency reasons leading to extraordinary wait times, nurses working regular 24-hour shifts, and overall poor outcomes in our healthcare system. It has to stop.

We ask for your commitment: How will your government partner with Newfoundland and Labrador to increase healthcare funding, recruit physicians, and support our overworked frontline healthcare workers?

JOBS: Please work with the province to develop a targeted jobs strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador to bring down our high unemployment rate. There are many economic growth opportunities that could get people working in our communities in sectors such as ocean technology, offshore oil, mining, aquaculture and fisheries, tourism, agriculture, forestry, international education, aerospace, investment attraction, education, skills and workforce development, and digitalization. We do not need another report, we need governments to work together and start acting on these opportunities so Newfoundland and Labrador can grow like so many other regions of our country are growing. Infrastructure investments would also make a huge difference while helping us deal with the effects of climate change.

We ask for your commitment: How will your government grow employment in Newfoundland and Labrador?

POPULATION GROWTH: As mentioned above, the demographics of Newfoundland and Labrador are increasingly a challenge. We are the fastest ageing province in Canada, with the death rate outpacing the birth rate by a noticeable margin. That means a smaller workforce, with larger healthcare expenses per capita than anywhere else in Canada. Immigration is vital to our economy, but retention has been challenging again and again, especially in the medical field, where family doctors are increasingly hard to find for the estimated 90,000 people without regular access.

We ask for your commitment: How will your government help grow the population of Newfoundland and Labrador and reverse our demographic crisis?

FISHERIES: Please make a commitment to develop an effective cod rebuilding plan so we can grow the fish stocks that keep so many of our communities employed. Please make a commitment to reduce the number of seals, which consume huge quantities of fish. And please find a way to give Newfoundland and Labrador a seat at the decision-making table so we can help manage our fisheries just as other provinces manage their own natural resources, including a joint management model as seen with oil and gas in the Atlantic Accord.

We ask for your commitment: How will your government grow the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador and unlock the economic potential of our ancient fisheries?

GREEN ENERGY: Please make a commitment to follow through in bringing down the cost of the Muskrat Falls hydro project for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This green energy investment benefits the whole country, so it is right for the country to help keep the costs affordable for this province's ratepayers. Ottawa could also help us make good use of this green energy to support jobs in our province, and perhaps also help us develop new green energy resources such as Gull Island hydro and wind energy. As the climate emergency continues apace, infrastructure investments to mitigate its effects will be crucial to securing the future of our province.

We ask for your commitment: How will your government advance the green economy of the future while recognizing the immediate threat of natural disasters brought on by the climate emergency?

OFFSHORE OIL: Because the world is going to continue to use oil for some time to come, and Newfoundland and Labrador's oil is some of the least carbon-intensive on the planet, let's agree to make it easier to develop the oil off Newfoundland and Labrador. Exploration incentives would make a huge difference here, just as they have in Norway – a green leader in Europe that also supports responsible offshore oil development. This industry is one of the most important for jobs and economic activity in Newfoundland and Labrador, so it needs your support.

We ask for your commitment: How will your government support the workers in our offshore oil and gas industry during these turbulent times?

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND THE NORTH: A highway to Labrador's North coast, designed in partnership with Indigenous communities, would make a huge difference to the people and help develop opportunities in the region. Making Labrador a Gateway to the North would also create new opportunities in Labrador while helping Canada show its strength and leadership north of Labrador in the Arctic. All federal parties are committed to reconciliation with Indigenous people in this country. Investments in infrastructure, housing, social programs and services in Labrador's Indigenous communities would back up those words with meaningful action. There are rich resources in Labrador to sustain growth for generations to come.

We ask for your commitment: How will your government advance reconciliation while realizing the economic growth opportunities in the North?

TRANSFER PAYMENTS AND PROGRAMS: Newfoundland and Labrador is not being treated fairly under Equalization. There is a report from the Parliamentary Budget Office to prove it. Take a look at that report and make the necessary changes. Also, transfers for health and other programs should be based on need, not just on population. When working-age people move away but seniors stay here, health care costs remain high, but transfers fall, leaving us less able to pay the bills. That has to change. National programs in pharmacare, long-term care and child care could also make a big difference.

We ask for your commitment: How will you make federal transfer payments fair to our province, recognizing the unique circumstances not addressed by current funding models?

This is just a top-of-trees list of the actions the federal government could take to help Newfoundland and Labrador live up to its full potential in this country. We would love to talk with you about these and other ideas when the time is right. Let's work together to make sure Newfoundland and Labrador is growing the way it ought to grow in the greatest country on Earth. When we are stronger, Canada will be stronger.

We eagerly await your response.

Best of luck in the election!

Yours sincerely,

DAVID BRAZIL, MHA Conception Bay East – Bell Island
Leader of the Official Opposition
Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly