

## **Renew PEI: Economic Recovery and Growth Submission**

### **Hannah Bell MLA District 11 Charlottetown-Belvedere**

The constituents and stakeholders I work with are predominantly in the social, community/NGO, arts and culture, and hospitality sectors. I also have ongoing active engagement with the startup, entrepreneur, and small business ecosystem which crosses over multiple sectors (including food, retail, IT, biotech, social enterprise).

Drawing on these resources and my role as Official Opposition critic for Social Development, Housing, and Economic Development, I am providing a focused set of recommended actions that I believe would drive economic recovery and growth with a lens of inclusion and the goal that no Islander is left behind.

### **Establish PEI as a hub for innovation and export in food manufacturing, and strengthen the sustainability of our local supply chains**

**Challenge:** Scaling up to federal regulatory requirements is a significant barrier to export for small PEI food producers; it requires a level of production and access to equipment that requires capital investment beyond the reach of most small manufacturers. Innovation in food manufacturing comes from giving new players a chance to introduce change and new ideas - and strengthens local food production.

#### **Recommended Actions:**

- Invest in food incubator / innovation hub that provides federal regulation-standard food manufacturing work spaces and equipment for rent by food entrepreneurs, existing and new
- Invest in expanded cold storage facilities to create food distribution and storage hubs, and partner with local producers to ensure the local market is a priority by implementing a 'buy local' government procurement policy
- Remove interprovincial trade barriers, with priority for food, manufactured food products, essential supplies
- Make the exemptions put in place during COVID for alcohol sales and distribution (including home delivery) permanent, and pursue a full modernization of PEI's liquor laws to reduce unnecessary barriers to producers and restaurants while still putting public health at the centre of the policy

## Create opportunity for growth in a new economy

**Challenge:** We are going to have to substantively and creatively rethink our tourism strategy. The impact of COVID and the drastic reduction and cancellations in meetings, conventions, festivals, group tours and cruise ship visits is going to reverberate for years. Many businesses will not be able to survive until the industry begins to reopen - and we can't count on the industry to ever 'return to normal'. Charlottetown in particular needs to create new opportunities to strengthen local business support and traffic.

### Recommended Actions:

- Immediately work with City of Charlottetown, Downtown Charlottetown Inc and other key stakeholders to plan for creative reuse of the anticipated number of empty storefronts and commercial spaces that will result from business closure
  - Examples could include pop-up artisan spaces and live-in and live studio workshops for artisans; pop-up food spaces for food entrepreneurs - at low-cost / subsidized rents and with flexible use agreements; art installations and exhibits
- Develop an immediate province-wide strategy engaging all key stakeholders to shift from a consumer-based volume product to experiential products, expanding on Fall Flavours model. This could include 'how-to camps and learning groups' as well as demos and experiences, moving from passive to active and celebrating the diverse stories of PEI beyond Anne and the 'Cradle of Confederation'
  - Examples could include Mi'kmaq heritage, music and drama, ecotourism, birdwatching, plein air painting, self-sufficiency and sustainability - engaging local expertise and 'PEI famous'
  - Recognize that many people are craving a place to get away and be safe - create a tourism product focused on clean, quiet, safe, beautiful but high quality
- Ensure government innovation programs are open for creative entrepreneurs including those in the arts, culture, and tourism sectors (traditional models of funding are biased on the creation of business to consumer product with export potential)

## Support the sustainability of communities with a focus on health and wellbeing

**Challenge:** No Islander left behind. In particular, economic recovery plans must ensure that women, who have disproportionately suffered economic hardship during the pandemic, are not left behind during the recovery. We must also invest in infrastructure - not just new buildings and roads, but skills, social structures and programming.

### Recommended Actions:

- Encourage community economic development through investment (resources, financial, and regulatory) in social enterprises and cooperatives that supports the shift to business for environmental and social good

- **Model:** *Social Enterprise Network of Nova Scotia* (<https://senns.ca>)
- Provide education in creating co-op enterprises
  
- Provide sustainable long-term operational funding to NGOs and social enterprises that support our health and well-being - the community sector employs 6500+ Islanders and is the third largest sector in PEI.
  - **Note:** *The commitment made to fund community sector organizations in the 2020 Budget has not yet been allocated, putting these critical organizations at risk*
  
- Increase number of licensed daycares, pay rates for ECE workers, and substantially increase overall investment into ECE to expand number of spaces available across the province at affordable rates and extended hours - ensuring women can equally participate in the workforce and economic growth
  
- Urgently review and simplify social assistance and disability support programs taking into consideration the recommendations of the Special Committee on Poverty - particularly conditionality and Market Basket Measure - to ensure no Islanders are living below the poverty line.
  
- Provide free tuition and increase the capacity for essential trades training (construction, electrical, plumbing, nursing, early childhood education) with participants signing contract of agreement to work in PEI after graduation
  
- Ensure affordable housing development is a priority so Islanders have a safe, financially sustainable and secure place to live and be a part of the workforce regardless of the changes happening in the economy
  - Repurpose surplus commercial spaces (above street level) for housing
  - Reclaim housing currently tied up in short term rentals by closing regulatory and planning loopholes
  - Implement a rental registry
  - Implement regular inspections of rental accommodations
  - Work towards occupant owned and governed housing