

## Anna Keenan - Green Party Candidate for Malpeque

### **1 - Intro: Tell us a bit about yourself and why you want to represent Malpeque in Ottawa as Member of Parliament? (max. 100 words)**

Since graduating in science and economics, I've worked with international advocacy organizations, on climate change and democracy. I serve on the boards of local community organizations, focused on active transportation, arts and culture.

I'm running because two-party politics needs a shakeup. The challenges of the coming 50 years need new ways of thinking, centred on community wellbeing and sustainability. I want to advance these values in parliament, especially in reforming healthcare, rebalancing our economy, and addressing climate change.

I want to add diversity - of political stripe, age, and gender - to the slate of politicians that PEI sends to Ottawa.

### **2 - Workforce: We hear from our members frequently about the pressure of labour and skills shortages across a wide range of sectors. It is especially concerning because we see higher rates of unemployment than we did before the pandemic, yet there are still hundreds of jobs being left unfilled. What is your plan to deal with these shortages, and how might you and your party achieve this?**

I don't fault people for using the CERB if they lost their jobs during the pandemic, and it meant they were better off. I do, however, have problems with the way that the CERB was designed - it was an emergency measure, intended to prevent a recession and keep people out of poverty, which it did, but also had this unintended negative consequences of disincentivizing a return to work.

Many of our benefit systems are designed like this - I've met people on disability payments who are able and willing to work 10 or 15 hours a week, or episodically, but if they take on any work, they'll lose their disability benefit.

Universal Basic Income that the Greens champion would have been designed differently - no gatekeeping, and truly universal. It's a benefit that everyone gets, and because you keep it when returning to work, there is no disincentive. It is an idea whose time as come.

Other key initiatives to address labour and skills shortages that the Greens support:

- **Supporting the universal affordable childcare roll-out.** Greens have long been calling for such a program and it is high time that it is fully implemented. We will hold the government to account on delivering on this commitment. Affordable childcare will enable many parents, particularly women, to return to the workforce if they so desire.
- **Increasing minimum wage to a living wage.** The living wage which was recently estimated to be \$19.30 for PEI, far above our current minimum wage. This would not only attract workers, but

also boost our local economy - Henry Ford doubled the wages in his car-manufacturing plant in 1914, on the principle that *“a worker should be paid enough that he can afford to buy the car he is making.”* When Island workers are paid well, island businesses benefit.

- **Supporting immigration, and recognition of foreign credentials**, especially in areas where skills shortages are acute.
- **Abolish post-secondary education tuition fees.** Germany has a highly skilled workforce, because it has long provided free post-secondary tuition to all, both in university and trades education. Free “Education For All” is estimated to cost only approximately \$10.2 billion annually - it is not a far financial reach from the existing student aid programs, and is an investment in our country's future that will pay dividends.

### **3 - Small Business Support: Small businesses have been through a stressful and tiring past eighteen months. While there have certainly been business support programs to help, businesses will feel the impacts long after the pandemic is gone. What will you and your party do to support our small businesses and economic recovery after COVID-19?**

The Green Party is committed to extending wage and rent subsidies for small businesses, until COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions are fully lifted - which may still be some ways away. This is particularly crucial for PEI's highly tourism-dependent economic sectors.

We would hold the small business tax rate at no more than 9%, and reduce the paperwork burden on small businesses by eliminating duplicative tax filings and red tape.

Greens believe that small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. They create more employment in the private sector than the big corporations, create good, stable jobs, and offer competitive wages and benefits. Best of all, their success stays local. They circulate dollars in the local economy and improve the communities around them. Small businesses still need support, and the Green Party will make sure they have it.

### **4 - Affordability: A major issue throughout this election has been overall affordability for Canadians. Due to the rising inflation, the rise in housing and rent costs, and the rise in cost of everyday life, people are finding it harder and harder to get ahead. We see it in our businesses and our communities everyday. When Islanders have to devote more of their hard-earned income to necessities like food and housing, it means less disposable income for them to spend within our business community. What will you and your party do to make life more affordable for everyday Canadians?**

We should have heeded the warning signs that economists were giving us years ago, before we arrived in this affordability crisis.

There are two sides to affordability: One side is income, and the other is expenses. We need to make sure these are in balance.

#### **On expenses**

- **The cost of housing is driving inflation most significantly.** Greens support regulation of short-term rentals like AirBnB, and will support making proper investments in well-designed, publicly-owned and cooperative housing, operated as a nonprofit social service, outside of the

developer-led housing model. While many other parties are offering policies designed to enable young people to borrow more, the Greens are offering these key policies as ways to actually cool the housing market.

- **Energy costs** - the best ways to bring those costs down is with: efficiency upgrades; shifting from oil to electricity for heating and transport; and introducing quality public transport so that people aren't reliant on the major expense of owning a private vehicle, just to get around. These are all part of the Green vision, and a Green government would provide substantial support to drive a rapid energy transition, modelled on the successes of other countries.
- **On food** - Greens want to support farmers to keep supply chains short, and food high quality and affordable.

### **On income**

- Minimum wage needs to be enough to live on. The \$6/hr gap between PEI's minimum wage, and our 'living wage' level, creates significant working poverty on PEI, and it short-changes our local community.
- For anyone who is not able to work, and is on a fixed income or social support payments, whether disability or seniors payments, these payments should be increasing at the inflation rate, so that they never fall behind the cost of living.
- Universal Basic Income is also a key policy to impacts affordability - keeping people out of poverty, and support all people being able to meet the basic costs of living, without disincentivizing work.
- [ubiworks.ca/howtopay](http://ubiworks.ca/howtopay) lists 8 different ways to pay for a UBI - 5 of the 8 ways do not affect personal income taxes. If we do choose to pay for UBI through graduated income taxes, modelling showing that a UBI gives a raise to all people earning less than \$95,000 per year.
- This drives significant economic growth, which in turn leads to increased revenues - so we don't need to raise the full cost of the UBI in new taxes.

**5 - Pandemic Debt: COVID-19 has required our federal government to make immediate and necessary investments during the pandemic to ensure Canadians, families, and businesses were taken care of. While much of this was necessary during the initial months of the pandemic, many of our members have expressed concern for the extensions of some programs and, more importantly, how the government plans to pay back the massive debt accumulated during the pandemic and beyond. In fact, this was a key component of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's election platform, *What It Takes to Grow*. What will you and your party do to deal with the pandemic debt?**

National Debt has to be considered somewhat differently to household debt - National governments borrow from the national treasury, not a private bank, or other countries. Running up the debt was a good thing and a wise choice in 2020, because it prevented us from falling into an economic recession.

Coming out of COVID, we now need to spend to stimulate the economy, using this opportunity to not just go "back" to normal, but to transition into the new normal, - a Green recovery, that addresses the housing and climate crises at the same time as regaining economic stability across affected sectors.

We now have an opportunity to make investments to set us up for the future, in the same way that governments spent and invested in the recovery during the post-war years. With a strong and prosperous future economy, we will have the tax base that we need to pay down the national debt.

We aren't at the end of the pandemic yet. If we take an austerity approach too early and fail to invest, cutting deficits too harshly, we will be hamstringing our economy. There are times when Canada's national debt has been higher than it is now, and there are countries with a significantly higher debt-to-GDP ratio than Canada, but who still have healthy and well-balanced national economies.

The Greens have a suite of tax policies that proposes how we can raise additional funds to gradually pay down the debt, without raising income taxes on the working class. Instead we look at things like:

- Cutting fossil fuel subsidies (\$23 billion in the last 3 years alone, or approximately \$500 of tax dollars per Canadian household per year)
- Increase the federal corporate tax rate from 15 to 21 per cent to bring it into line with the federal rate in the United States, our biggest trading partner.
- Introducing a financial transactions tax of 0.5 per cent in the finance sector, similar to that introduced in France in 2012,
- Introducing a 1% wealth tax on those with a net family worth of over \$20 million
- Closing capital gains tax loopholes.
- Introducing taxes on luxury goods like planes, private motor-yachts and luxury cars.

Greens call for looking at all of these proposals, and the proposals of other parties and advocacy groups, through a federal Tax Commission, to redesign Canada's taxation and social benefits system, and make it fit for the next 50 years. The last federal Tax Commission was in the 1960s, so we are badly overdue.