

**Michelle Neill – NDP 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)**

I was raised in Stratford, PEI, and moved to Oyster Bed Bridge after marrying my husband, Robbie. We have two adult children, Keila Blackett (French teacher at Stonepark Jr High) and Taylor Neill (3rd year student at the Atlantic Veterinary College).

I volunteered on many boards including North Star Minor Hockey Association and North Star's Board of Management, Wings on Ice and Charlottetown Skating Clubs, Hockey PEI, Skate PEI, as well as the UTE-Charlottetown local, and MADD-Central PEI.

I truly enjoy speaking up on others' behalf to help them succeed, and I believe my experience and tenacity will transfer well to the duties of an MP.

**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?**

We recognize that a shortage of workers is a major barrier for small businesses operating in PEI, especially in rural areas, and a New Democratic government will make vital new investments in training Canadians and boost support to under-employed groups, ensuring that they get access to good jobs that pay a fair wage.

Every Canadian should have an opportunity to obtain the skills they need to pursue work that is meaningful for them. New Democrats believe training opportunities should be flexible enough to work with people's busy lives, and significant enough to actually improve job prospects.

We will support workers who want to improve their skills by changing EI rules to allow workers who need to quit their job in order to pursue education/training to still qualify for EI benefits, so that families can count on some income support during that period of transition.

We'll expand options for workers in certain sectors and regions to take EI funded training in advance of losing a seasonal job and promote investment to make sure regional economies are producing good jobs that support families and communities.

Finally, to ensure that businesses are investing in the training that Canadians need, an NDP government will require large employers to spend at least 1 percent of payroll on training for their employees annually.

In order to deliver these changes, we'll work with the provinces to establish national training priorities that suit local contexts, and establish a new Workers Development and Opportunities Fund to expand

training options beyond people who qualify for EI. This fund will be provincially managed, with support for marginalized workers, those in transitioning sectors, and for programs to improve literacy and essential skills.

**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?**

Small businesses have suffered greatly due to the pandemic, and should have access to the support they need to get through this crisis, grow, innovate and stay competitive in Canada and around the world. That's why we have stood up for emergency small business aid during COVID-19, lower small business taxes, opposed unfair merchant fees, and fought to make it easier to pass on small businesses to the next generation. The New Democrats realize that there is much more to do to help the small businesses that are central to healthy communities.

We will make sure small business wage and rent subsidies continue until they are able to fully reopen, where applicable. We'll enact a long-term hiring bonus to pay the employer portion of EI and CPP for new or rehired staff to help small businesses get people back to work.

New Democrats will keep working hard for small businesses to tackle issues that impact their bottom line. We'll put an end to gouging by credit card companies by capping high credit card merchant fees at a maximum of 1%. Our plan for universal pharma care will also save businesses roughly \$600 per employee with extended health benefits every year.

To help Canadian small businesses expand, a New Democrat government will streamline access to government export services and make it simpler to break into foreign markets. We'll also provide small- and medium-sized businesses with a single point of contact to ease regulatory processes and support compliance - freeing time for entrepreneurs to grow their business.

**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 every day. 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?**

Housing & Rent

Both owning a home and finding a decent place to rent have become increasingly difficult for Canadians. Having a safe, stable, affordable place to call home has become out-of-reach for too many. We've got a plan to invest immediately to create half a million units of quality, affordable housing across the country. Our plan will create jobs, and build the rental, cooperative, and social housing that is desperately needed.

A New Democrat government will create at least 250,000 units of quality, affordable housing in the next five years, and at least double that within ten. We will work in partnership with provinces and

municipalities, building capacity for social, community, and affordable housing providers, to provide rental support for co-ops. This ambitious plan will create thousands of jobs in communities all across the country, jump-starting the economic recovery, and helping Canadians get the affordable housing they need.

To jump-start construction of co-ops, social and non-profit housing, we will set up dedicated fast-start funds to streamline the application process and help communities get the expertise and assistance they need to get projects off the ground immediately. We'll mobilize federal resources and land for these projects, turning unused and under-used land into vibrant communities.

We will spur the construction of affordable homes by waiving the federal portion of the GST/HST on the construction of affordable rental units. Many families do not have time to wait, when every day is a constant worry. We'll provide immediate relief for families that are struggling to afford rent, while we bring forward long-term solutions to the housing affordability crisis.

New Democrats also believe that owning a home should not be out-of-reach for Canadian families. That's why we will re-introduce 30-year terms to CMHC insured mortgages on entry-level homes for first time home buyers. This will allow smaller monthly payments, freeing up funds for families to help make ends meet. We'll also give people a hand with closing costs by doubling the Home Buyer's Tax Credit to \$1,500.

Big money investors are driving up the costs of houses, and to help put an end to speculation that's fueling high housing prices, we'll implement a 20% Foreign Buyer's tax on the sale of homes to individuals who aren't Canadian citizens or permanent residents.

#### Education, cell phone, services, medicine

Alongside addressing housing affordability, New Democrats have a detailed plan to ease the strain on the pocket books of Canadians by helping to make their everyday costs more manageable.

Our national pharma care program will give Canadians access to vital medicines and medical devices in the same way we currently have access to medical and hospital care – free at the point of care, and financed by a public insurance system. It means that you'll need your **health card** – not your credit card – at the pharmacy. It also puts an end to costly co-payments, deductibles and premiums that cost families hundreds and even thousands a year.

Every Canadian deserves the right to better themselves through education, but tuition prices and other related costs have become too much for many to bear. New Democrats will work with the provinces and territories to cap and reduce tuition, and build towards making post-secondary education part of public education. We will ease the debt burden placed on Canadians by removing interest from federal student loans, and we will introduce a targeted debt forgiveness program for graduates that will forgive up to \$20,000 in student debt, while also introducing a 5-year break on loan repayments immediately after graduation to allow students to obtain employment and get settled into their careers before starting their repayment schedule.

Cell phone and wireless internet bills have become too expensive, and we believe that no matter where you live in Canada, you should be able to stay connected without breaking the bank because of gouging

by some of the wealthiest corporations. Until the industry becomes more competitive, we'll put in place a price cap to make sure that Canadians aren't paying more than the global average for cell phone and internet. We'll ensure providers offer a basic plan for wireless and broadband that is comparable with the affordable plans that are available in other countries, and require companies to offer unlimited wireless data options at affordable rates.

**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?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated large investments to protect Canadians. Everyone has made large sacrifices, and many Canadians have undergone economic hardships in doing their part to protect Canadians. During these trying times, Canadian billionaires have profited, becoming \$78 billion richer since the first lockdown in 2020 – and counting. They're making big money while most people struggle to get by. Rather than placing the burden of economic recovery on the shoulders of everyday Canadians and small businesses, that have already sacrificed so much, New Democrats believe that billionaires should pay their fair share.

Both Trudeau and O'Toole and their MPs voted against a previous NDP-introduced motion for a wealth tax on the top 1% richest Canadians (those making more than \$12 Million/year), but the NDP will not allow the ultrawealthy to get a free-ride. We will make those who have profited from the pandemic pay for the recovery. We will get rid of tax loopholes for big corporations and the richest Canadians, and get tough on tax evasion and tax avoidance.

