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Dear Dr. Schipper,

Thank you for your correspondence of February 2nd, 2021.

I share your vision of Memorial University as a unique institution that provides not only the highest-quality education but also social, cultural and economic leadership that benefits our entire province. Memorial University is the pride of Newfoundland and Labrador. Faculty, students, administrators and staff all contribute to Memorial's national and international standing. Faculty and students confront the bounds of knowledge boldly and fearlessly, applying their skills and ingenuity to make new discoveries that establish Memorial as a beacon of innovation. Memorial is a rich, nurturing, motivating environment that drives all of us to aspire to become something more, both individually and collectively as a province. You never cease to inspire us.

Let me address your specific questions one by one.

Q1: As the only degree-granting institution in our province, Memorial University plays a central role in all aspects of Newfoundland and Labrador's social, economic, and cultural development. Memorial prepares students for their future roles by developing capacities that can be applied in a range of situations, while fostering the skills necessary to be engaged citizens and adapt to our changing society. Furthermore, investments in post-secondary education pay dividends to the province in a multitude of ways. It is important that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially our political leaders, understand the distinct role of a public university and the value it provides to the province socially, culturally, and economically. How does your party view the role of Memorial University in the social, political, cultural, and economic life of NL? What will your party do to strengthen this role?

Memorial University was created to lead our province into the future boldly and audaciously, in full command of our own destiny. 'Launch forth into the deep' is more than just a motto. It is an authentic expression of the university's *raison d'être*.

Every Newfoundlander and Labradorian is touched by and benefits from the university's work. You educate our teachers and leaders, our advocates and *agents provocateurs*, our entrepreneurs and innovators, our healers and builders and policy makers. You hold a mirror up before us and force us to face who we are and decide who we ought to become. You are indispensable.

Our university is a place where knowledge grows, but also a repository where the threads of our becoming are archived. I have frequently drawn upon the knowledge catalogued at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies – an excellent source of local history, publications, and reference material. The Centre not only supports students and faculty, but benefits all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by preserving our stories, culture and heritage in a way that is accessible and informative. We must learn from our history to avoid being damned to repeat it.

I believe our government must more fully engage Memorial to more effectively shape the province we are in the process of becoming. The Harris Institute and particular faculty members take an active role in doing this, and I applaud them for it. I believe our government should work even more closely with Memorial University to strengthen our province and its communities as we face the challenges before us. Shake us out of our complacency and inspire us to build a society that works more effectively for all of us, leaving no one behind and no good opportunity unseized – a new society that is a model for all others.

This must not be just an academic exercise to satisfy our intellectual curiosity, but a practical exercise to change the way our society functions, and prepares us to lead in pragmatic ways, as job generators, investment attractors, engineering pioneers and poverty reducers, among other things.

A PC Government will work with Memorial University, College of the North Atlantic and all private training institutions to promote opportunities for those underrepresented in various fields of study, training and work.

A PC Government will work with the federal government, Indigenous organizations and governments, and Memorial University to create effective support for Indigenous languages in Newfoundland and Labrador.

A PC Government will explore opportunities to engage Indigenous communities, educators, the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation, and others in promoting education on Indigenous cultures, languages and history to students in schools throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

A PC Government will work with Memorial University to develop specialized undergraduate and graduate courses and programming for Indigenous leadership, business and entrepreneurship development.

A PC Government will ensure Newfoundland and Labrador graduates and attracts sufficient computer science professionals to meet the growing need.

A PC Government will review training, legislation and regulations for public and private training institutions to ensure labour market-driven programming with consistent guidelines that maintain high standards.

A PC Government will work with communities, doctors, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association to focus on the recruitment of family doctors. We will develop a more robust retention structure for graduating physicians of the Memorial University Medical School and provide attractive reimbursement/taxation packages for those who choose to practice in the province, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

The university community has led on the issue of democratic reform. A PC Government will advance electoral and legislature reform through an all-party process that includes advocates and experts in democratic reform. Matters to be addressed include campaign financing, fixed election dates including fixed dates following a change of Premier, party leadership campaigns and donor disclosure rules, question period responses, digital petition signatures, recall of members, MHA code of conduct review, honesty in politics legislation, public consultation, legislation review, conflict of interest, personal privacy protection and other matters.

These are examples of very pragmatic policy commitments that will draw on the expertise and leadership of members of the university community. But these are only some examples – the tip of the iceberg of what Memorial can provide to Newfoundland and Labrador as we shape our future.

I commit to work with you, to share my vision with you, to listen intently as you challenge me and to let those conversations shape public policy moving forward. Let this be an ongoing conversation, with constructive intent. As our government works to serve, sustain and grow our communities and residents, Memorial University must be right there alongside us, a true partner in education, community development and leadership.

Q2: Memorial University has a special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but its ability to keep this promise is increasingly compromised by cuts in provincial funding. Since 2015, Memorial University has seen successive cuts to its operating grant with the most recent provincial budget confirming that forecasted cuts to funding for Memorial University would be implemented, as previously announced. The University has seen an increase in precarious employment and fewer permanent faculty and support staff positions, with an inevitable erosion of Memorial's ability to continue offering high-quality programs to the students of this province. While fiscal challenges can create political pressure to cut government spending, investment in education is widely recognized as one of the most effective economic multipliers. Education levels within a society are also linked to socioeconomic stability, equality and to improvements in public health. In short, access to high quality post-secondary education brings very significant individual and societal benefits. Public post-secondary education and research are critical for a successful transition to a post-COVID, post-fossil fuel economy. Will your party commit to increased investments in core operating funding for Memorial to support quality research and education?

Only a thriving Newfoundland and Labrador economy can sustain increased operational funding for the university. Investing in our university can help us drive growth, and growth can help us drive university investments.

I am well aware that many in the university community are opposed to Newfoundland and Labrador's continuing role as a producer of hydrocarbons. I appreciate the reasons many take this position. I am a strong proponent of the goals articulated in the Paris Accord. We must protect our planet by reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions. Newfoundland and Labrador must do its part in achieving the net-zero targets we have agreed to meet. As the world weans itself off oil as a fuel, it ought to opt to use the least carbon-intensive oil moving forward, and Newfoundland and Labrador's reserves fit the bill. That is why I believe our commitment to driving offshore exploration and development and our commitment to achieving the Paris Accord targets are not mutually exclusive. The producers operating in our waters are themselves committed to doing things differently.

Here is how we phrase it in our Blue Book:

A PC Government will drive growth in the oil and gas sector. Oil and gas will supply much of the world's energy needs until well beyond 2040. Proven developed supply from onstream fields can meet about half of this demand, leaving a huge amount of oil and gas yet to be found and developed to satisfy global demand. Our province has staggering resource potential, and the economics of our large fields, together with their low carbon emissions at point of extraction and relatively low carbon intensity as fuels, puts them in the advantaged category for exploration and development.

A PC Government will make natural gas development a priority by investing in a joint feasibility study, funded by the province and industry. We know natural gas has an even lower carbon footprint than our low-emission oil, and would create more local jobs.

A PC Government will require sustainable development of the province's energy reserves. We will publish a new energy plan to guide renewable and nonrenewable energy development for the next 10 years. The plan will integrate wind power, tidal energy and natural gas into future development. We will integrate Nalcor and Hydro, and provide appropriate and effective oversight.

As Progressive Conservatives, we don't accept that we must choose between a healthy economy and a healthy environment. Rather, we understand the two go hand in hand. A PC Government will take a sustainable development approach. We will manage our renewable resources with the long-term future in mind to ensure the renewable industries we inherit are passed to future generations in a better, stronger, and more resilient condition.

A PC Government will reduce emissions in Newfoundland and Labrador. We will establish targets with public reporting annually. We will ensure Newfoundland and Labrador does its fair share to meet Canada's net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emission targets. This year, we will be the greenest province in Canada for electricity, with 98% of our power coming from clean Hydro.

A PC Government will promote the benefits of hydroelectricity in making our province 98% green in electricity generation, and market our electricity nationally and internationally as a green alternative to coal.

The offshore industry is already dramatically reducing its GHG emissions, and we can help Canada and the world meet climate change goals by working with the industry to further reduce GHG emissions and help the province meet its emissions targets. A PC Government will work with the oil sector to power offshore rigs with hydroelectricity or wind power where feasible.

A PC Government will work with stakeholders to make clean hydro power available to supply vessels and other ships in port, which now keep their diesel engines running to maintain power.

Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore oil is a light sweet crude and as such has less of an environmental impact than oil produced elsewhere in the world. Additionally, our industry partners have committed to reaching net zero emissions. A PC Government will promote our petroleum products as a greener alternative to oil produced elsewhere in the global community.

A PC Government will make natural gas development a priority with a goal of marketing our natural gas to replace coal in some jurisdictions and to replace costlier natural gas in other jurisdictions.

A PC Government will work with remote communities and associated stakeholders to develop and leverage sustainable energy solutions, such as wind energy, to fuel sustainable natural resource activities. We are aware of ongoing work at Memorial University which can support this development.

A PC Government will consider how biofuels can be used to reduce the province's GHG emissions while growing green economic opportunities.

A PC Government will promote the development of enterprises throughout Newfoundland and Labrador that capitalize on green employment and business start-up opportunities. Memorial University is known for its enterprise development and entrepreneurial support programs. We will support these programs in order to support the development of green start-ups and green employment opportunities.

A PC Government will enable research and development of green technologies, initiatives and private sector projects that help reduce emissions. Memorial University is an obvious partner in helping to carry out this research. We will work with Memorial University and the private sector to obtain the funds necessary for Memorial University to carry out this research.

Hydrocarbons have uses other than fuel, and innovators within our university community, and others, can surely identify them, while also identifying ways to deal with the byproducts and wastes effectively. I genuinely believe the great minds at Memorial University can help us do this.

A PC Government will partner with agricultural producers, academia, and the research community on research projects with the goal of improving farm efficiency, product quality, and innovation. A PC government will use its resources to leverage private industry investment. A PC Government will support research that can be applied to our local industry. Again, this is an area where Memorial University could be engaged.

A PC Government, under my leadership, will have an expanded role in the research sector of this province. As such, funds must be provided to carry out this research. A PC Government will work with the federal government, industry, private businesses, and Memorial University to secure the funding necessary.

Driving economic growth drives revenue growth, which in turn supports operational investments that benefit our university. We all have a role to play in helping our economy thrive so it can in turn help our university to thrive as a well-funded centre of research, innovation, creative thinking and leadership in our society.

Q3: Memorial University is key to the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. Facing an aging, declining population, investments in post-secondary education are one of our province's best immigration strategies. Despite this, years of budget cuts to Memorial University have severely impacted our academic mission of delivering high quality education. We need public post-secondary education that is both accessible and of high quality in order continue attracting and retaining young people to our province. How will your party work to maintain a system of accessible post-secondary education that continues as a key driver for immigration to Newfoundland and Labrador, while ensuring Memorial University's ability to meet its academic mission of delivering high quality education?

I reiterate: only a thriving Newfoundland and Labrador economy can sustain increased operational funding for the university. Investing in our university can help us drive growth, and growth can help us drive university investments.

Students will continue to come here to study if they see evidence of superior quality and superior value for their investment. Affordability is critical.

A PC Government will retain and attract students by supporting among the most competitive post-secondary tuition fees and student aid programs in the country.

A PC Government will break down barriers to education by ensuring post-secondary programming is available to students of all regions of the province in a manner that is cost effective, because no one's academic success should depend on their postal code.

A PC Government will help students stay in our province by extending MCP coverage for international students for 12 months after graduation, while they are actively looking for employment, so those who are not currently covered by MCP can safely establish careers in our province. That commitment will reassure international students who want to remain here after they complete their studies.

Memorial University offers superior academic programs that earn national and international praise. Many international students travel to Newfoundland and Labrador to attend Memorial University because of its reputation. We will work with Memorial University to promote the University's programming around the world. We will focus on international recruitment with the goal of increasing immigration into the province.

A PC Government will listen to and partner with Memorial University as it seeks to ensure its course offerings are world class. We will help Memorial University make connections with universities, institutes and other bodies abroad, building on partnerships already achieved. We will support the university in its efforts to attract even more world class researchers and faculty members. Through an effective partnership with the university, we will help ensure our university continues to be a top-choice educational institution for students throughout the world.

Q4: The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the landscape of our world, our country, and our province in the span of months. Like all post-secondary institutions in Canada, Memorial University was forced to make dramatic changes to our day-to-day operations while working to reduce impact on students' educational opportunities. The pandemic has compounded the effects of many pre-existing problems that Memorial has faced due to sustained budget cuts over recent years, such as an overreliance on precarious workers in the face of reduced faculty complement in many academic units, cuts to academic support staff in many units, and an eroding physical plant. How will your party work with the Federal Government to support post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador, whether by leveraging COVID-19 recovery opportunities or otherwise?

A PC Government will work with the Government of Canada and others to help address the needs of individuals, families, employers and communities impacted by the pandemic and by the measures the federal and provincial governments and others have taken to deal with COVID-19 and its consequences. This includes the university community.

A PC Government under my leadership will work with Memorial University to leverage federal funding opportunities to support the university. This would include opportunities in response to the COVID-19 recovery, but would also include the broader context.

We will advocate to the federal government for improved research funding in support of Memorial University, its faculty and students, and postsecondary education, research and innovation in our province generally. All too often, federal research dollars go to competing institutions without a fair share coming to our province. We will stand up for Memorial University and advocate for our fair share of funding, and even make the case for targeted funding to narrow the disparities that have our province at an intolerable disadvantage in this country.

Q5: Students, faculty, and staff at Memorial work and study in significantly aging infrastructure. In the absence of adequate funding, Memorial applies band-aid solutions to occupational health and safety concerns. Long-term neglect of existing infrastructure is putting the physical and mental health of many students and employees at risk, and many facilities are no longer fit for their designated teaching and research purposes. Direct investments by the provincial government to address deferred maintenance at Memorial ended effective the 2015-16 fiscal year. What will your party do to address the deferred maintenance, repair and renewal needs of Memorial University?

To support student education and ongoing research, we must ensure a safe and supportive environment. This means leaky ceilings and drafty windows must be fixed, and it also means all buildings and other infrastructure must be assessed and made safe for the university community.

To address the deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs of Memorial University, we will put in place a 10-year infrastructure plan, prioritizing the needs based on consultations and evidence.

And I reiterate: only a thriving Newfoundland and Labrador economy can sustain increased operational funding for the university. Investing in our university can help us drive growth, and growth can help us drive university investments. We must work together to drive the province's economic growth so a richer revenue stream can support the investments we need to make.

Q6: Canadian universities traditionally practice collegial (shared) governance without political or private sector interference. Collegial governance means that students, faculty, staff, and administrators share in key decision-making processes. The Canadian Association of University Teachers ranks Memorial University at the bottom among Canadian universities for practices of shared/collegial governance. Memorial is the only university in Canada with no faculty representation on its governing board, putting the Memorial University Act out of sync with widely accepted standards of collegial governance. What will your party do in its commitment to improving the collegial governance and autonomy of Memorial University?

A PC Government will work with Memorial University's faculty, students, staff, and the surrounding community to ensure that the governance of Memorial University is appropriately designed to meet the needs of the University. We will respect the principles of academic freedom and university autonomy. If there are legislative changes the university community believes are warranted, we will consult and take direction on the best path forward.

Q7: The Province's over-reliance on the fossil fuel industry combined with the cost of the Muskrat Falls project has pushed our province into a state of great uncertainty even as the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many pre-existing problems here. These include a lack of accessible childcare, the vulnerability of workers in minimum wage jobs with inadequate security and benefits, and the difficulty of accessing primary health care in many rural and Northern NL communities. What will your party do to make Newfoundland and Labrador the kind of inclusive and equitable society that will make our province the kind of place where graduates of PSE can imagine settling?

Our Blue Book is a comprehensive vision for a strong and sustainable Newfoundland and Labrador that enjoys full employment, investment growth, economic expansion, community strength, rural revitalization, Indigenous partnerships, the full and fair participation of traditionally marginalized groups, accessible health care delivering better outcomes, poverty reduction initiatives that enable self-reliance, accessible and affordable early childhood education, respect for the rights of seniors, freedom from violence and racism, and so many other good things. All these things we can aspire to achieve by talking with one another more openly and by agreeing to partner with one another for meaningful change. Let us not be content to lament our failings. Let us strive to create the community we want to live in, and settle for nothing less than the best we can be.

A PC Government will prioritize growing our population, so more people come to call our beautiful province home. More people contributing to our tax base, creating jobs, and enriching our local communities will lead to a more prosperous Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will strive to make our province a place where graduates want to stay, grow careers, start businesses, and raise their families.

A PC Government will develop a strategy for population growth spanning 2021-2025, focused on workforce development, families, communities and immigration. Our workforce development plan will support job growth, help people find jobs, and help employers find employees. Our families plan will create the conditions needed to increase the birth rate, including removing financial barriers deterring people from having children, and supporting individuals whose life choices are limited as they care for adult family members. Our communities plan will promote diversity and expand settlement assistance for increased immigrant retention; and for rural regions of our province, it will tailor strategies to the labour market needs of local communities. Our immigration plan will focus on attracting more immigrants to the province but also of creating the optimal conditions for them to find meaningful work in their chosen areas of expertise and to find the support they need to understand they are accepted in their new home as equal members of our communities.

A PC Government will work to attract more immigrants to the province, understand what is required to retain them, and work even harder to persuade immigrant families to sink down their roots in Newfoundland and Labrador. To promote retention, a PC Government will expand settlement assistance. To ensure our immigration system is in line with our economic needs, a PC Government will tailor specific regional immigration strategies to pair them with labour market needs. A PC Government will review and enhance programs promoting the immigration of entrepreneurs, and proactively market these programs internationally, highlighting the comparative advantages of living and doing business in our province.

A PC Government will support recent graduates and encourage them to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador. Enduring access to affordable early childhood education is one of the ways we will do this. To ensure a more holistic, long-term approach to early childhood education, a PC Government will act immediately to establish a panel of early childhood education operators and care providers and meet regularly to ensure proper consultation informs all decisions. We will adapt policies based on advice we receive. As we follow through on our 2019 commitment to \$25-a-day early childhood education, we will also work with the federal government toward the introduction of a universal publicly funded early childhood education program that adequately addresses quality, affordability, capacity and fair wages, commencing with a three-year bilateral agreement. In an effort to increase the number of affordable infant and early childhood education spaces, a PC Government will help to offset the cost of undertaking necessary home modifications to upgrade providers' status from non-regulated to regulated.

Please peruse our Blue Book to find much more detail on the many issues you raise and others that will be of interest to you. See www.pcnl.ca

Thank you once again for giving me the opportunity to address these important questions for the benefit of MUNFA members and many others. May your work continue to challenge us, and may your partnerships make our province stronger. May Memorial help Newfoundland and Labrador to more effectively launch forth into the deep.

Sincerely,

Ches Crosbie
Leader
Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador