

MUNFA Provincial Party Leader Questionnaire
Provincial Election 2019

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.

QUESTION 1- Will your party commit to increased investments in core operating funding for Memorial to support quality research and education?

ANSWER 1 - We will review with Memorial University the entire state of affairs regarding infrastructure, operational funding, research and other matters. Memorial University needs to play an enormous role in advancing the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. We must properly equip the university to take on this task. Some funding will come from the provincial government, but we must also be ambitious and creative in seeking sources of investment from others without compromising the academic integrity and autonomy of the university. My approach to all matters of governance involves honesty, openness and accountability, and I trust these principles will also apply to our working relationship with Memorial University.

This is the way we introduce our policies on post-secondary education in our Blue Book. Some of them apply directly to your question, while others give an indication of the important role we would like to see the university play – a sign of the importance we will place on sustaining and growing Memorial.

The importance of post-secondary education has increased significantly in the last decade. A high school education alone is no longer enough to be successful in today's global economy. The economic health of a province has a positive correlation with the employment and productivity of its residents.

Studies of investments in post-secondary education show that rates for labour force participation rise significantly with higher levels of schooling, and the income of residents with more education is generally greater than the income of those with less education. One of the most important aspects of a post-secondary education is that it is often required for employment in a number of different fields.

Education benefits not only individuals, but also business and governments. First, higher productivity translates into higher income and, hence, improved standards of living. Second, a more educated workforce is less subject to unemployment and, as a result, society is less vulnerable to economic downturns and poverty problems. Third, such a workforce can produce a wide range of high-quality products and services from

which society can choose. Revenues collected by governments are higher when the income base is higher, and these revenues help maintain and/or improve various social programs, such as health care. Finally, a more educated population tends to generate more R&D activity, which, in turn, leads to social benefits.

Recognizing the importance of an educated workforce and with a focus on student outcomes and employability, we will work with stakeholders involved in employment provincially, nationally and globally to create a framework of current and projected high demand employment opportunities coupled with education and training requirements to ensure successful employment.

We will work in collaboration with all post-secondary training institutions to ensure residents have affordable access to the training programs offering the highest potential to full-time meaningful employment utilizing institution location, program offerings and ability to mobilize.

We will review both Public and Private training legislation and regulations to create consistent guidelines that maintain a high level of commitment and standards with a focus on creating labour market driven programming resulting in greater employment opportunity for graduates.

We will work with stakeholders to develop a template for allotting and approving federal and provincial employment and training program funding that targets high priority labour market shortage areas with the goal of more-effective use of funding and improving employment outcomes.

We will explore options, both technical and practical, to ensure post-secondary programming is available to those in remote regions and in a manner that is cost effective and allows participation to fit personal schedules.

Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic will play an enormous role in securing a strong and sustainable future for Newfoundland and Labrador. Both institutions ought to be recognized nationally and internationally more and more as centres of excellence in academic programming, research and innovation.

Competitiveness in a changing world requires investment. We will work with Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic to attract investment and partners from around the world.

We will work with our public and private college system in collaboration with the private sector to deliver programs responsive to the needs of industry. We will ensure our graduates are prepared to enter the labour market with quality programming in subject matters that consider emerging industries, disciplines, and technology.

We will continue to support the most competitive post-secondary tuition fees and student aid programs in the country.

We will continue to work collaboratively with Memorial University to maximize the potential of Grenfell Campus at Corner Brook for the benefit of its students, and promote research and development to further diversify economic growth in the western region of the province.

We will work with Memorial and the College to promote opportunities for women, for Indigenous Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and for persons with disabilities.

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.

QUESTION 2 -What will your party do to address the deferred maintenance, repair and renewal needs of Memorial University?

ANSWER 2 - My answer to this question is directly linked to my answer to the previous question. It is imperative that we assess the state and quality of the infrastructure already in place and determine what needs to be done, and when. Then we need to work out a plan for getting it done, and find out how to finance it. The one thing we cannot do is ignore problems that are ours to address. These are the burdens of governance, and we must take them seriously.

There is growing concern among faculty and staff at Memorial University about lengthy delays in the transition to a jointly sponsored pension plan. In August of 2018, Memorial University submitted a Pension Reform Agreement but has yet to receive a substantive response from government. Having already missed key deadlines in our Pension Reform Agreement, the future health of our pension plan and the financial security of members' retirements are becoming increasingly uncertain.

QUESTION 3- What will your party do to ensure Memorial University's pension deficit (\$416.5M) is addressed and a smooth transition to a jointly sponsored pension plan occurs?

ANSWER 3 - I can understand why you are concerned. This is a matter we can discuss collaboratively around the table as we study the fiscal circumstances of the province and its institutions, and our relationship with the university. It is important that pension plan liabilities be properly covered.

Canadian universities traditionally practice collegial (shared) governance without political 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, and the Memorial University Act is out of sync with the notion of collegial governance.

QUESTION 4- What will your party do in its commitment to improving the collegial governance and autonomy of Memorial University?

ANSWER 4 - I don't like to hear that Newfoundland and Labrador ranks last in anything. My approach to governance generally is to enhance transparency, collaboration and accountability. The same is true of our relationship with Memorial University. If it is time to revisit the Memorial University Act, we will do so collaboratively, insisting that all who should be at the table are there. It is important that the government respect the principle that universities should be autonomous institutions. It would be valuable to open up a discussion of the importance of academic autonomy so people appreciate and avoid the consequences of political encroachment in the affairs that a university ought to govern on its own. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians naturally feel a sense of ownership over the university, considering its history and status as the province's only university and the support the university receives from the people. People are right to expect the university to take a strong role in growing our province, sustaining its communities, serving its people and shaping its future. There is so much that Memorial University has done and can do as a community leader. I would like to see a grander partnership open up between the university and the people and communities of our province. I would like to see such an initiative driven by the university community itself. The Harris Centre is doing wonderful work in this regard, as are many others.

Lastly, Memorial University has long been recognized as one of the most vital public institutions in this province. We invite you to share your party's vision for its role in our collective future.

QUESTION 5- 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 of this role?

ANSWER 5 -In our policy Blue Book, we state: We will promote partnerships that will enable the provincial government to draw more effectively on the expertise of Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic. I am very serious about this. I see the university community as a natural leader in the cause of elevating our province to achieve its fullest potential. We have only scratched the surface of what we are capable of achieving. The visionaries and thinkers often channel their passions through academic work in a university setting, shaping the minds of the many who walk those corridors. But imagine if the walls opened up and the entire expanse of our province became the classroom, so that all of us can reimagine ourselves in exciting new ways.

In the section of our Blue Book on Indigenous partnerships, we imagine a province where the Indigenous communities and cultures of Newfoundland and Labrador thrive.

We support the policies expressed by the Government of Canada in Bill C-91, the Indigenous Languages Act, to reclaim, revitalize, strengthen and maintain Indigenous languages in Canada. We will work with the federal government, Indigenous organizations and Indigenous governments to create effective support for Indigenous languages in Newfoundland and Labrador. We will explore opportunities to engage Indigenous communities, educators, the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation and others in offering a variety of courses on Indigenous cultures, languages and history to students in schools throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. We will work cooperatively with Indigenous communities on the wide range of issues that concern Indigenous people and that may overlap various areas of jurisdiction: education; post-secondary education and training; the preservation and promotion of heritage and culture; and other matters. Imagine the role the university can play in this endeavour. Imagine what a future of reconciliation could look like in a province where Indigenous cultures flourish alongside all the other cultures that a university community assembles and celebrates.

One of the great disappointments that brought me into the political arena was the dwindling of our provincial and municipal populations. Watching this great facing away of Newfoundland and Labrador appalls me. We should be growing like our neighbours, passing the richness of Newfoundland and Labrador to a burgeoning populace of children and youth. Instead, we are hemorrhaging. This cannot continue to go on. With your participation, we can do something transformative about this.

As a government, we will address these demographic challenges with decisive action in four areas. First, our Families Plan will work to create conditions to increase the birth rate, including removing financial barriers to people who have or want to have children, and supporting individuals who care for adult family members. Second, we will launch a Workforce Development Action Plan to support job growth, help people find jobs, and help employers find employees. Third, a Communities Action Plan will promote diversity, expand settlement assistance for increased immigrant retention, and for rural regions of our province, particularly target specific regional immigration strategies tailored to the labour market needs of larger communities outside St. John's. We will work at bringing expatriate Newfoundlanders and Labradorians home to work. And we will aggressively implement an Immigration Action Plan, focusing on attracting more immigrants to the province and welcoming them, and seeking to provide the optimal conditions to ensure that they have good work opportunities and are welcomed as contributing members of our communities. Our university community will be instrumental in facilitating this growth.

Our Families Plan will work to create economic and social conditions in our province to increase the birth rate, and will work to remove financial barriers to people who have or want to have children. We will provide expanded affordable childcare so many more people – especially women – can pursue their careers and soar. We will also carefully study the elements of quality of life for families, with a commitment to optimize government programs and services to ensure the highest possible quality of life for

families in our province. This measure alone may help us achieve the rebalancing of voices that has eluded us for so long.

Our Workforce Development Action Plan will support job growth, help people find jobs, and help employers find employees. Our province is rich in natural resources and we have some of the most resilient and creative people on the planet. We will focus on optimizing employment opportunities for unemployed and underemployed people of our province, and take measures to help match particular skills with opportunities in the employment market. We will drive research and development, and promote business incubators like the Genesis Centre at Memorial University. We believe that high paying jobs, innovation, and the use of our greatest natural resource – the ingenuity of our province's peoples – is the best way forward. We will take measures to attract innovative international businesses and technological sector employers to the province. We will implement programs across government, particularly in business and tourism, that build on our enviable international reputation as a world-class tourism destination, and a world-class destination for gastronomy, music, culture, and the natural environment. We will also market the province as a highly desirable lifestyle, cultural, economic, and employment destination in which to work, live, and raise a family.

Our Communities Action Plan will promote diversity, focus on immigrant retention, and for rural regions of our province it will particularly target specific regional immigration strategies tailored to the labour market needs of larger communities outside St. John's. Our vision is of communities with activities, amenities, and services for residents of all ages, serving people with differing needs from many different backgrounds. We will aim to make diversity and opportunity the hallmarks of our province's communities in the future. Our goal is to bring expatriate Newfoundlanders and Labradorians home to work in communities where families can set down roots and build a high quality of life. Partnering with municipalities, we will develop quality of life plans that support a high quality of life in our communities.

Aggressive action will be taken on our Immigration Action Plan, focusing on attracting more immigrants to the province, welcoming them. Over the next five years, we will work to increase by 15% annually the target percentage of immigrants over the current target of 1700 immigrants. We will market and promote the province within Canada and especially internationally, and work with employers to ensure that we do everything in our power to recruit and retain immigrants. We will bring the federal government to the table to create a new Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador streamlined and accelerated immigration agreement. We will also systematically and aggressively seek to remove the barriers to permanent settlement for the thousands of international students who are studying in our university and college systems. We need to ensure the highest quality of their experience here; we need them to find good work here, choose to settle permanently in the province, and because of their potential as some of our best international ambassadors, we need to use their skills, ingenuity, and linguistic abilities to promote the province internationally.

As a part of the Population Growth Plan, we will establish a Graduate Retention Program. This program will provide a tax credit, to a maximum of \$20,000, when post-secondary graduates choose to work in this province. The rebate will be based on the amount paid by the graduate and the level of education they have obtained. The rebate will be paid to the graduate for seven years after they have graduated while they work in this province.

We will do things in the digital sector that will place Newfoundland and Labrador at the fore. Certain jurisdictions in the world are leading in the delivery of services using new technologies. These include the United Kingdom, Ireland, Estonia and South Korea. We will examine what they have done and measure our performance against the performance standards they have set. 5G, AI, and machine learning will open doors to new opportunities around the world and here at home, revolutionizing the way we live and work. We will ensure that the province's post-secondary system is educating students to work within the digital economy. We will also ensure that students are prepared, through the K-12 system, to move into more advanced digital training in the post-secondary system. We will lead a partnership between Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries and CLDI (the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation) to act as lifelong learning centres. We will reimagine our libraries and community centres as a vital link for our citizens to live and age well, while being globally connected; and offer an innovative and socially modern view for our libraries to be Communications and Community Centres connecting our people. We will assemble a digital technology consortium with academic institutions and companies of all sizes to position Newfoundland and Labrador as a global hub for digital technology innovation. The consortium will consider solutions to enhance the potential of Newfoundland and Labrador's digital industry, advance the competitiveness of our resource sector, and secure new global markets for our digital products. By teaming up with industry and academic institutions, we will be a partner in a crucial hub for the digital industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, and help develop a culture of collaboration and openness that will lead to more innovation and growth in our economy.

Find out more of our ideas in our Blue Book at <https://crosbie2019.ca/blue-book/>

Sincerely,

Ches Crosbie
Leader, PC PARTY OF NL