



Islanders First... For Agriculture

Liberal

Agriculture: Keeping Our Island Growing

*The Islands agricultural sector contributes over \$350 million to our economy.
The future of both our rural and urban communities is intimately tied
to the well-being of our agricultural sector.*

Over the last decade, our agriculture sector has struggled in the face of poor market conditions and the ongoing deterioration in farm incomes. In particular, our potato, beef, and pork sectors have been particularly hard hit.

In the face of adversity, our farmers have looked to farm support programs to help them cope with difficult times. On balance, provincial administered support programs have not been effectively managed and it has been the farmer who has had to pay the price for government mismanagement. At the same time, the agricultural sector remains mindful of the need to manage production in a manner that continues to promote price stability. This has been particularly so in the case of the potato industry.

What has been lacking in Prince Edward Island is an agricultural strategy that recognizes the economic importance of this sector. A Liberal Government would commit itself to a new partnership with the agriculture sector in recognition of its key importance to not only our economic well-being but to our Island way of life.

A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:

- 1. Establishing a separate Department of Agriculture with a dedicated Minister to advance agriculture issues.**
- 2. Working with potato farmers and the processing sector to improve farm incomes and reduce nitrate levels by shifting a percentage of table stock production into value-added opportunities that reduce nitrate usage.**
- 3. Promoting research and development into new crops that could grow in the longer growing season.**
- 4. Encouraging government institutions to purchase their fresh food products and supplies from Island suppliers.**
- 5. Ensuring that all federal monies allocated to P.E.I for implementing income support programs go into hiring new staff to increase the speed of claims processing and payment.**
- 6. Expanding nutrient management funding support to provide the agriculture sector with increased resources to reduce fertilizer usage.**
- 7. Funding to support field trials of potato varieties that yield well, yet require fewer nitrates.**
- 8. Working with the agriculture sector to increase buffer zones and to establish a land bank to reduce acreage.**
- 9. Working with our beef industry to leverage funding from other Atlantic provinces and the federal government to support our processing operations.**
- 10. Using the borrowing power of the provincial government to provide the beef plant with more cost-effective lease arrangements.**