

Policy Backgrounder

Putting Our Island Communities First

Our Island is a collection of distinctive communities each with its own unique history, culture, and people. The health and vibrancy of these communities must never be taken for granted. Over the last decade, our rural communities, in particular, have declined in the face of service cutbacks. Closures of ER's, court houses, and loss of government offices has directly impacted communities in a negative manner.

Liberals believe that the fate of our rural communities can only be addressed if we reverse the trend in cutbacks and service losses. We are proposing a series of initiatives aimed at helping to reverse the trend in service cuts.

Liberals recognize that our communities are more than just places on a map. Island communities are about a way of life in which people work together and help one another. Volunteers and the community groups to which they belong are a key strand of the fabric of our communities. We also need to look for innovative ways to support the volunteers and community groups that make our communities strong.

A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:

1. Providing financial assistance to help connect communities with high speed internet services for both residential and commercial users.
2. Developing a new municipal equalization funding formula in which increases in the operating grant to municipalities will be tied to increases in federal equalization.



3. Increasing the level of services provided in our community hospitals by securing additional doctors and other health care professionals through our rural health care strategy.
4. Expanding ambulance coverage to Island communities to the level that existed when the Island was serviced by community-based ambulance services.
5. Increasing the level of RCMP and police coverage in our Island communities.
6. Compensating volunteers for out of pocket costs incurred as a result of their volunteering activities through tax deductions, fee reductions, and other financial measures.
7. Increasing legal protection to volunteers from liabilities incurred as result of serving on Boards of Directors of non-profit groups.
8. Establishing a provincially-administered Community Festivals/Events Insurance program to ensure that events and attractions run by volunteer non-profit groups can continue to operate despite high insurance costs.

