



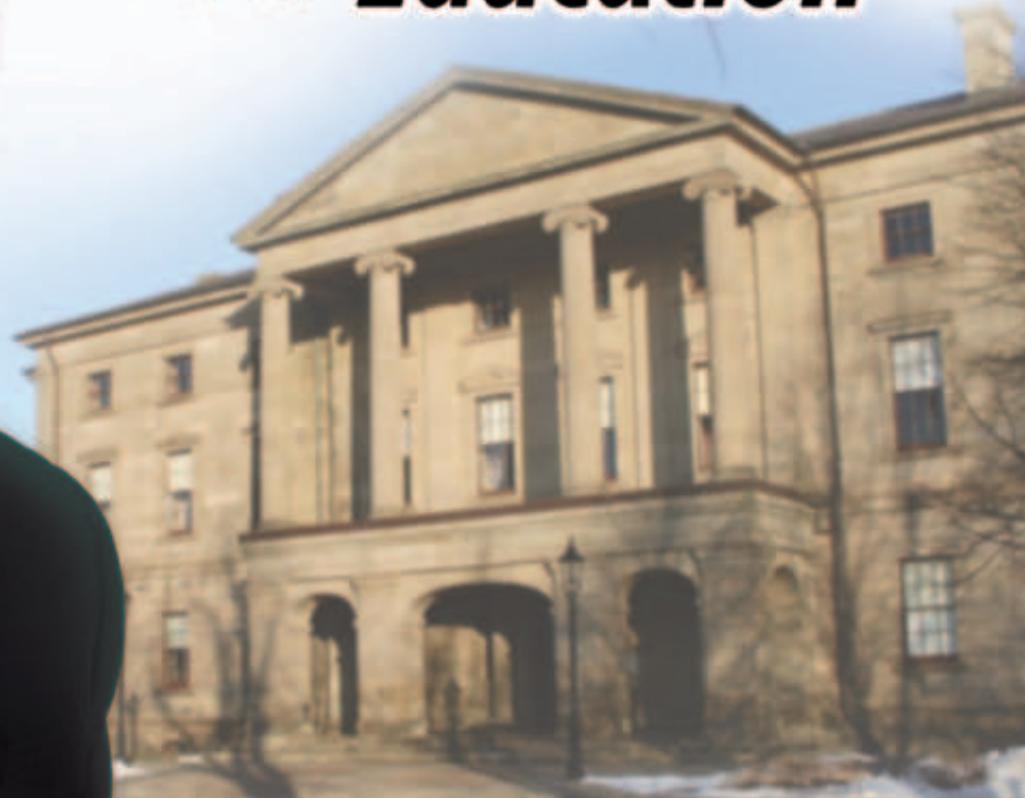
Liberal



***Islanders First
For Education***



***Islanders First...
For Education***



www.IslandersFirst.ca



Putting Our Children First in Education and Learning

Liberals believe that access to education and learning is the greatest gifts that one generation can pass on to the next. From the earliest years, the investments that we make in young Islanders today will be returned fivefold tomorrow. Over the last decade, however, the Conservatives have routinely under-invested in key aspects of our education system. Growing class sizes, too few educational assistants, a drastic shortage of key professionals such as speech language pathologists, audiologists, and psychologists, and 2-year wait times for learning disability assessments are the signposts of this under-investment.

A Liberal Government would commit to new strategic investments in key areas of our education system. First, we need to re-commit to investing in our children at the earliest level with early childhood learning initiatives that offer them the best start in life. Second, we need to strive for excellence in special needs learning if we are to live up to the inclusion model we so rightfully embrace. This requires strategic investments in key education professionals. Third, we need to equip our classrooms with the resources that will allow the teachers to teach and our children to learn to their full potential. Finally, we are committed to improving access to high quality post-secondary education for young Islanders.

Liberals are committed to putting our children first in education and learning with the following initiatives:

- **The Early Years: Every Child Deserves the Best Start**
- **Classroom Resources to Enhance the Learning Environment**
- **Excellence in Special Needs and Learning**
- **Affordable, High-Quality Post-Secondary Education**





The Early Years: Every Child Deserves the Best Start

Effective early learning and child care services are critical building blocks in the lives of our children. What happens in the first few years of a child's life can have profound impact on their emotional and intellectual development. Offering our children the very best start in life is a goal that will drive our Liberal government's approach to early childhood learning and child care. A Liberal Government will be committed to improving services aimed at early childhood education and child care.

A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:

- 1. Expanding the Best Start Program*** with a multi-year funding agreement to cover more families and children from birth to 3 years of age;
- 2. Improving educational opportunities and wages*** for early childhood educators through a \$1 million wage enhancement fund in an effort to promote recruitment and retention to the sector;
- 3. Expanding funding*** to parents to improve access to child care services;
- 4. Increasing learning disability testing*** for children in the early childhood education system as part of an early intervention strategy;
- 5. Providing increased grants and financial incentives*** to operators to increase spaces for ***infant child care*** and those providing spaces for ***special needs children***.



Resources to Enhance the Learning Environment

Liberals believe that we must commit ourselves to putting more resources into our classrooms in order to enhance the quality of the learning environment for our children. Overcrowding remains an unacceptable reality in far too many classrooms. We also challenge the lack of textbooks and basic educational tools that force parents to pay out of pocket for things provided elsewhere in Canada. By any measure, we need to increase the resources in our classrooms in order to enhance the educational opportunities of our children. At the same time, we need to undergo capital improvements to our educational infrastructure in areas defined as priorities by the school districts.

A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:

1. ***Legislating small class sizes to 15 students*** or less for students in grades 1 to 3 and changing student teacher ratio calculations to include only educators in the classroom;
2. ***Eliminating all user fees*** charged for curriculum-based equipment, and supplies;
3. ***Establishing a staffing model for educational assistants*** that recommends the minimum number of positions that need to be staffed based upon number of students served and increase the number of educational assistants were required;
4. ***Undertaking planned capital projects*** in schools defined as priorities by the school districts;
5. ***Implementing a province-wide breakfast program*** by building upon the success of existing programs;
6. ***Placing a moratorium on standardized testing*** of our children until our Island schools are funded to the national average;
7. ***Ensuring that our Island teachers*** are compensated at a level equal to an ***Atlantic average***;
8. ***Expanding professional development programs*** for our teachers, including enhanced sabbatical opportunities;
9. ***Increasing tax exemption for teachers*** purchasing classroom supplies to \$1000.



Excellence in Special Needs and Learning

Liberals believe that much more needs to be done to help our teachers give their students, and our children, the very best possible education. However, the prevalence of learning disabilities and the serious shortages of professionals such as school psychologists, speech language pathologists, and educational assistants have been identified by experts as a profound weakness in our education system. Teachers have been telling government for some time that the situation is untenable. Liberals believe that no parent or child should be forced to wait up to two years to be assessed for a learning disability or pay two-thousand dollars for private assessments. The Liberal plan places a high priority on addressing these and other issues facing our educational system.

A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:

- 1. Increasing access to **assessments for learning disabilities** and reducing wait times - to 90 days;*
- 2. Increasing access in the classroom to **school psychologists, speech language pathologists, and audiologists** to recommended national student-professional ratios;*
- 3. Developing a strategy of **early intervention** such that learning disabilities are identified and treated much earlier in a child's educational development;*
- 4. **Improving access to educational assistants** in order to promote the educational opportunities of special needs children;*
- 5. **Expanding** programs such as the Education Coalition Summer Reading Program;*
- 6. Launching of a **Learning Disabilities Educational Equipment Program** to ensure students with learning disabilities have access to financial assistance for required educational equipment.*





Affordable, High-Quality Post-Secondary Education: A Driver of Prosperity

Liberals believe that post-secondary education is a path to a brighter future for both our children and our province. Increasing the number of young Islanders who can access quality education builds opportunities for them as individuals and for our province by increasing the skills base of our workforce. Prince Edward Island is home to two high quality post-secondary institutions that can play an even greater role in equipping Islanders with the skills they need to build a more prosperous future.

Over the last eleven years, access to affordable post-secondary education has been an increasingly elusive goal for a number of students and their families. More must be done to encourage attendance at our post-secondary institutions. Prince Edward Island ranks last in Canada in terms of government spending on post-secondary education as percentage of total government spending. This is not acceptable.

Liberals believe that we need innovative thinking in order to make post-secondary education more affordable to young Islanders. However, ensuring that Islanders have access to high quality, affordable education is only part of the challenge. A Liberal Government will look for ways to retain and attract newly educated Islanders.



A Liberal Government will put Islanders first by:

1. ***Establishing a Skills at Home Tax Rebate Program*** that will encourage recent post-secondary institution graduates to live on the Island by offering \$2000 per year in a non-taxable tuition rebate to a maximum of 50% of their tuition costs capped at \$10,000 over five years;
2. ***Creating a New Beginning Education Program*** that will provide a one-time \$2000 grant to any full-time Island student entering the University of Prince Edward Island. A comparable program will be developed for Holland College in applied arts, trades, and technology programs and at La Société éducative;
3. ***Changing student loan funding eligibility*** to reduce the extent to which parental income is a consideration for eligibility for assistance;
4. ***Working with both U.P.E.I. and Holland College to encourage the delivery of courses on a regional-basis through satellite campuses and/or distance learning initiatives;***
5. ***Increasing operating funding*** on a per student basis to UPEI and Holland College to the national average over a 4-year period;
6. ***Developing a Provincial Skilled Trades Strategy*** that engages industry, the high school system, and Holland College in order to dramatically increase the supply of skilled workers on Prince Edward Island;
7. ***Working with other provinces and the federal government to establish a dedicated Post-Secondary Education Transfer*** to provide for more stable and predictable funding;
8. ***Pursuing new tuition support measures,*** as provincial finances permit, with a goal of significantly reducing or eliminating the cost of tuition for students in their 4th year of full-time studies;
9. ***Expanding the mandate of the Department of Education*** to include skills development;



Islanders First...
For a Change

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