

1. Will your party pledge to work with the Retail Council of Canada to develop and implement a COVID-19 retail recovery economic strategy? For years, other industries have received government incentives for investing in people, technology and eCommerce.

The Liberal government is proud of the resiliency shown by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The retail industry has shown tremendous diligence and have continued operating throughout. Our government has been supportive of the business community in the province, deferring and waiving fees, as well as reducing the regulatory burden faced by small business. The deferral of over \$6 million in fees helped our business community, including the retail industry, when they needed it the most.

We instituted the Small Business Assistance Program to aid small businesses and community organizations; the Tourism and Hospitality Support Program to assist people in the tourism and hospitality sectors; the Artist Support Program to help our vital arts community that has been struggling when concerts, festivals and other performances were canceled due to COVID.

Under provincial and federal Liberal leadership, numerous supports were put in place to support our retail sector including:

- Providing Wage Subsidy Payments to Employers
- Continuation of payments to support employer training under existing agreements
- Supporting employers and coordinating workforce adjustment for employees impacted by business downturn and closure
- Allowing temporary direct sale of alcohol to customers by restaurants, breweries and other licensed establishments for takeout and curbside pick-up and deliveries
- Reimbursing private sector employers, including the self-employed, for continuation of employee pay associated with required self-isolation time
- Deferring Business Investment Fund loan payments to the provincial government
- Deferring employer premium payments to WorkplaceNL
- Providing essential service worker top ups for retailers (pharmacy, grocery, appliance, automotive, home improvement, health and wellness, electronics)
- Establishing a general contingency fund of \$200 million to address the impacts of COVID-19
- Cost-sharing the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program for small businesses with the federal government

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Our government has delivered on our commitment to support the business community, inclusive of our provincial retailers. We look forward to continued engagement from businesses and the Retail Council of Canada to ensure we continue to be there for Newfoundland and Labrador's businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. While the uncertainty of the pandemic continues, we are working to support local businesses in partnership with the federal government.

2. Is your party prepared to maintain the current model of determining annual minimum wage adjustments through a formula that is linked to the Consumer Price Index?

Tying the province's minimum wage to the CPI, the most widely used indicator of inflation, helps ensure future adjustments keep pace with consumer price changes and helps enable workers and employers to appropriately plan for future increases. Last year, our Liberal Government announced four increases to the minimum wage and we introduced a formula based approach, which increases minimum wage based on changes to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The review of minimum wage is an independent process established by government, and considers the complexity of setting a minimum wage, including possible unintended outcomes such as reduced hours for employees and/or reduced numbers of employees hired to account for increased wage costs for employers.

3. Will your party pledge to not raise corporate taxes (small and large businesses) or the HST during your mandate so as to maintain Newfoundland and Labrador's tax advantage within Atlantic Canada?

Our government is committed to ensuring that Newfoundland and Labrador is a desirable place to do business and that our tax environment is competitive. By investing in a strong business ecosystem, a Liberal government will improve the ease of doing business for retailers. Our government will focus on education, diversity and infrastructure—a proven, lasting approach to creating an environment that will improve the attractiveness and ease of doing business in our province.

We have maintained a suite of tax credits, incentives and benefits across government to ensure Newfoundland and Labrador remains an attractive place to conduct business. We are always open to exploring tax policies that could further strengthen the competitiveness of our province as a place to do business.

4. Will your party commit to conduct a review of the numerous fees charged on businesses?

Our government understands how important it is to foster an attractive business environment. Through our "engageNL" online portal, our Liberal Government has launched a red tape reduction consultation to solicit feedback from the business community on ways to help alleviate some of the regulatory burden on the province's business sector. The deadline to submit feedback is March 31, 2021. We have been working

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closely with the business sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and look forward to continuing to work together to ensure we are best supporting local businesses to succeed.

Through continued consultation with the Retail Council of Canada and other local businesses and industry organizations, we are open to exploring how regulations and fees can be refined to ensure a fair and competitive business environment exists in the province.

5. Will you take steps to ensure foreign eCommerce sellers begin to pay their fair share of taxes and eco-fees?

The retail industry is the largest private sector employer in the province. The industry provides good jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and provides billions of dollars in sales for our economy every year. A Liberal government will continue supporting our local retailers. We will remain engaged with local businesses to make sure we understand what eCommerce impacts they may be facing, and we will work with the federal government to make sure that eCommerce businesses are not operating on an uneven playing field.

Through our government's leadership and commitment to technology, we will also help empower local businesses to compete in the online retail space. By supporting our thousands of storefronts here at home while helping to grow these retailers' presence online, the Liberal party is best equipped to support our local businesses, the people they employ and the communities in which they operate.

6. Would your government provide refundable tax credits to assist with COVID-19 related store renovations and purchases of PPE in order to protect employees and customers in retail stores?

As outlined in our response to question one above, our government has been committed to supporting the business community and local retailers throughout the pandemic. We have provided millions of dollars in support to the province's businesses where and when they needed it the most. We are open to continued discussions with the Retail Council of Canada and other stakeholders from the business community to make sure we are helping support them through the ongoing pandemic, and we welcome insights related to the unique PPE challenges businesses have been facing.

7. Would your government be prepared to lead on issues related to environmental stewardship so as to avoid a municipal patchwork?

Under the leadership of the Liberal government, Newfoundland and Labrador became just the second province in Canada to implement a plastic bag ban. We believe that protecting the environment is imperative for future generations, and our government will build on the momentum created by the plastic bag ban. We will continue to play a leadership role in identifying and implementing initiatives that are environmentally friendly and reduce the costs of retailers.

The Office of Climate Change and the Department of Environment worked with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) on preparing for the ban. Towns and cities determined early on that a patchwork of

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individual municipalities implementing bans, or worse, not implementing them would lead to the kind of patchwork approach you reference. Our intent is to continue to work with our municipal stakeholders across the province to provide province-wide direction and a uniform course of action on environmental stewardship.

8. Would your government take action to harmonize policies related to solid waste regulations across Atlantic Canada?

Our government has worked closely with the Atlantic provinces and with the federal government to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. We have proven that we have the collaborative approach required with other provinces, and with Ottawa, to make sure we are accomplishing the results that Newfoundland and Labrador deserves. We strongly believe that given our track record in intergovernmental affairs, our ongoing red tape reduction initiative and the environmental leadership momentum we have established, the Liberal Party is best positioned to promote environmental policies and to collaborate with the other Atlantic Premiers, including on the harmonizing of waste regulations across Atlantic Canada.

Last year the Liberal Government undertook a complete review of our solid waste management strategy and came away with a series of recommendations to improve our system; everything from expanded recycling opportunities to landfill operations. The report was completed and presented to Government last year. Work with local regional waste management boards is slated to get underway this spring which will lead to a more efficient and environmentally effective waste disposal strategy for the province and one that is more closely aligned with our partner provinces in Atlantic Canada.

