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RE: Candidate Survey Response from the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador

Thank you for your correspondence outlining some of the key issues facing the retail sector in our province and elsewhere in the country.

A PC Government will be laser-focused on stimulating the growth of small businesses, including retail business – the backbone of our economy. We want to create the conditions that will enable retailers to get off the ground, get through challenges like COVID-19, grow their operations and generate more jobs.

While detailed answers to your questions are below, I also wish to draw your attention to the following parties of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador. These are just a sampling of what you will find in our election platform as it is rolled out.

- A PC Government will lower taxes and offer new tax credits to stimulate job growth. Business owners and operators say the greatest impediment to small business – the job-creating backbone of our economy – is the excessive burden of tax and red tape.
- A PC Government will slash red tape, freeing businesses from any outdated rules that restrict job growth. We will implement an aggressive Red Tape Reduction Strategy to liberate business owners to spend more time generating new products, attracting customers, and creating jobs.
- A PC Government will adopt a customer service culture. We will set customer service benchmarks and report on our performance. We will put all forms online, and “pre-populate” forms that require annual filing to speed up the process.
- A PC Government will launch a business navigator service to help employers easily find the information they need on regulations that apply to them so they can focus their attention on growing jobs.
- A PC Government will enact a Hiring Tax Credit to allow businesses to hire more people. A PC Government will invest a portion of the income tax paid by new hires back into the business that has hired them.
- A PC Government will do a cost/benefit analysis of all taxes and fees and eliminate any that are ineffective.
- Our new “Buy Local” initiative will promote local products and businesses, encouraging residents to buy local while also showcasing these businesses abroad.
- The public sector under a PC Government will support local business by purchasing goods, services and construction work from Newfoundland and Labrador suppliers wherever possible. We will help our enterprises become bulk suppliers nationally.

All of these policies are designed to stimulate and support retail businesses in our province. We want to work with you and your members to increase sales, hire more people, and get our economy growing.

With respect to your candidate survey, here are our responses. Some are not 'yes' or 'no' responses but qualified responses that more accurately answer the questions you are asking.

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.

Yes.

A PC Government will work with our business community and associations like the Retail Council of Canada to develop and implement a COVID-19 retail recovery economic strategy. We believe in working with our economic partners. We welcome the recommendations of the Retail Council of Canada in helping us identify the challenges retail businesses face and solutions that offer the promise of growing our economy.

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?

Yes.

A PC Government will provide regular, reasonable increases to the minimum wage by linking it to the Consumer Price Index.

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?

Yes.

A PC Government will be focused on growing our economy and creating jobs as a solution to the fiscal challenges facing the province. We do not view increased taxation as a solution. We believe that increasing taxes at a time when businesses are vulnerable would prevent businesses from succeeding. In fact, if taxes were increased in our current circumstances, many businesses would be forced to close.

A PC Government will institute tax reductions and tax credits with the goal of creating more jobs. We have included some of these on the previous page and look forward to working with you to implement them in support of your members.

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

Yes.

In 2016, the Liberal Government attacked businesses in this province when they created and raised over 300 taxes and fees. A recent report commissioned by the government to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 found the government's own red tape and tax burdens were impeding businesses. A PC Government will review every single tax and fee charged by government. We will eliminate the taxes and fees which are ineffective.

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

A PC Government believes in supporting its local retail operations. We also believe in being good stewards of our environment. We look forward to hearing more from the Retail Council of Canada on what a PC Government could do to stimulate local growth and give local companies a level playing field if not a competitive advantage over non-local eCommerce sellers.

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?

A PC Government is always open to good ideas. We look forward to exploring the possibility of refundable tax credits which have been encountered to assist with protecting employees and customers in retail stores. We would also be willing to lobby the federal government to explore federal tax credits to support all Canadian retail businesses.

A PC Government will work with the Government of Canada and others to help address the needs of individuals, families, employers and communities impacted by the pandemic and by the measures the federal and provincial governments and others have taken to deal with COVID-19 and its consequences.

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

It was our party in the House of Assembly that drove the issue of banning single-use plastic bags to protect our environment. We are also rolling out other policies to demonstrate our commitment to environmental stewardship.

A PC Government will work with its municipal partners, including Municipalities NL, to review the current environmental policies that apply to the retail sector. We will work with our regional and municipal partners to streamline policies and regulations so businesses spend less time navigating regulations and more time serving their customers.

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

A PC Government will work with its municipal partners, including Municipalities NL, and our partners in other Atlantic Canadian provinces to review the current solid waste regulations. We will look to see where regulations can be standardized. We know that when a business has multiple locations bound by differing regulations, it creates more red tape for the business owner. We will work to help business owners focus on growing their business instead of navigating regulations.