

NDP PEI Economic Vision
Submission to PEI Economic Partnership Group

The NDP PEI commits to working with the private sector to establish an economic action plan that will help realize this vision and move the Island's economy forward.

The central challenge of our economy is developing and maintaining a labour force that can keep our economy growing into the future. We all know this. Businesses that cannot get the workers they need, know this. People who are working on low wages and struggling to make ends meet, know this. And, people who want to work but cannot afford to get the required skills and education, know this.

If we want a labour force to do the work required for a high performing economy, there are three things we need to do.

1. Higher wages for all workers.
2. A large amount of affordable housing.
3. A massive public investment in technology skills for small businesses and workers.

Prince Edward Island has the lowest weekly wages of all the provinces of Canada. If we are not working vigorously to increase wages for Island workers then we are not being serious about the performance of our economy. Therefore, the NDP PEI is proposing a 15 dollar per hour minimum wage to be put in place immediately for all Island workers.

In order to work, people need decent, affordable housing. We are in a housing crisis on PEI. This is a big threat to the success of our economy as more and more skilled workers move to other places that have higher wages and more affordable housing.

The NDP PEI proposes publicly owned and operated housing with geared-to-income rental rates. Funded by all three levels of government, we can construct the housing we need. The NDP also propose a housing bank to connect those in need with available units.

Our third area of interest is upskilling all small businesses and all workers so we can make the most of the technological opportunities in the modern economy. In the C.D. Howe institute's January 2018 report, *Risk and Readiness; The impact of automation on provincial labour markets*, Prince Edward Island fares just slightly better than Saskatchewan as the province with the highest percentage of employment in occupations that are likely to be automated. In other words, PEI's current growth is in peril. This is a real danger coming our way. We need to head this off through major investments in technological upskilling for all small businesses and all workers. We need to turn this around. And we can.

We can invest in skills to help businesses prosper and afford higher wages for their workers. We can invest in skills for new green jobs. We can invest in skills for our primary industries, including tourism where many workers are so desperately needed. We can invest in skills for all workers and all businesses and organizations in all sectors. We can. And we have to. Or, economic growth on PEI will not be sustained.

If we together pursue these three priorities with real determination, we will have the labour force we need for the sustainable and prosperous economy we all hope for and want to build.

Joe Byrne
Leader
NDP PEI