



A Partnership for Growth – creating a bold economic vision for our province.

Prince Edward Island's general election date has been set. Party platforms are being presented, and voters are thinking about the future of our province. The sheer number of issues being discussed can be overwhelming - health, education, the environment, population, housing, employment, and many others are very legitimate issues that deserve to be discussed in full.

I would like to suggest that voters focus on the one thread that enables us to best address all these issues - the economy. Healthcare and education are often at the top of everyone's list – they are very important - but let us not forget that providing healthcare, education or any other social programs is intimately related to our economic performance. A thriving economy allows us to collectively pay for the things that shape our quality of life. Successful businesses provide jobs and provide governments with the revenue that pays for our social programs, for the benefit of all.

So how do we build on the momentum for our economy and set a bold vision for the future? The business community has some ideas.

Earlier this week, an alliance of more than 20 Prince Edward Island business organizations, and industry associations launched the “Partnership for Growth”. This alliance represents thousands of Island businesses who employ tens of thousands of Islanders. The Partnership is non-partisan and forward looking.

The Partnership for Growth has a shared vision for our economic future, one where P.E.I. is a leader in entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth. It is a vision where P.E.I. is attracting technology, capital and human resources in an economy designed to help businesses – and all Islanders – succeed. Ultimately, we see the potential for our province to be the highest performing economy in Canada. Private sector partners are committed to achieving this vision with aggressive growth targets. Our partnership feels that when our economic outlook is positive, we have a responsibility to prepare for the future in a strategic and fiscally responsible manner.

And so, we are calling on all political parties, as part of their campaign platform, to commit 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. This plan should:

- be developed in partnership with the private sector
- address each of the key priorities as identified by the Partnership
- work with industry sectors as they create specific plans for their future

- be completed within the first six months of the government's mandate
- set clear targets that are monitored and reported on annually.

The Partnership has identified six key priorities that must be considered in achieving a vision that would see our province reach its full potential: people, competitiveness, innovation and investment, infrastructure, alignment, and quality of life.

Neither governments nor business can achieve this vision alone. The private sector drives the economy, through the products and services that are sold around the world and across our province. Government must do its part to create the conditions for businesses to innovate, invest, develop their employees, and generate the revenue that pays for the services Islanders deserve.

We are asking all parties to submit a guest opinion to this publication responding to this call for a committed partnership with the private-sector in developing an economic action plan. We want each party to share its views on how it would work to achieve this vision for sustainable economic growth.

The private sector is ready to do its part. Together we can realize this vision and move the Island forward.

- *Penny Walsh-McGuire is CEO of the Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce and spokesperson for the PEI Partnership for Growth, an alliance of more than 20 Prince Edward Island business organizations and industry associations. For more information visit www.peipartnershipforgrowth.ca*