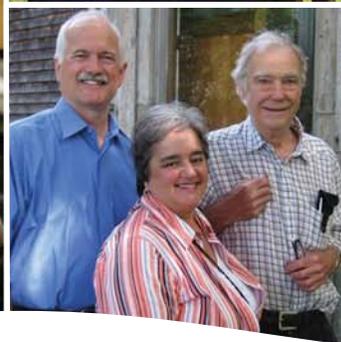


Lorraine Michael

and the Newfoundland
and Labrador TEAM

Bringing your
Voice
to the
House of Assembly



PLATFORM 2007

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Bringing your VOICE to the House of Assembly



This election is about ensuring your voice is heard in the House of Assembly. The NDP will be your voice!

All governments need an opposition that is reasonable, credible, and effective. The New Democratic Party is that effective Opposition.

Over the years we have sacrificed hospitals, schools, roads, rural areas and the future of our young people. Years of neglect have left our communities without adequate health and emergency medical services.

We have been paying down on the province's debt.

As the NDP, we believe there is a bigger debt to pay - the debt to our seniors, to our children, to our health care providers, to people living in or on the edge of poverty, to our rural communities!

We must use our new found wealth to create a fairer and more just Newfoundland and Labrador

Now is the time to pay back the debt to our people.

Every community in this province deserves to share in our common, new found wealth. With our new found wealth, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need and deserve:

- A thorough review of our health care system to restore confidence in testing, deal with wait times, and the hiring of health care workers.



Bringing your VOICE to the House of Assembly

- A universal pharmacare program so that no person in Newfoundland and Labrador has to choose between food and drugs.
- A publicly funded, universal, and quality child care and early learning program.
- Safe, healthy and clean neighbourhood schools for our children.
- A home care and home support program for seniors that works.
- A vibrant rural Newfoundland and Labrador.
- A better energy plan
- Increased funding for women's centres and initiatives.
- A province-wide 911 system.
- Anti-scab legislation.
- Free tuition for public post secondary education.

As Leader of the NDP, I will continue to speak out and stand up for the things that matter to you. This is my commitment to each and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

Give the NDP your vote and we will bring your voice to the House of Assembly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Michael', is placed over a light grey rectangular background.

Lorraine Michael
Leader, New Democratic Party

Health care: a system you can depend on

"Today's announcement is a band-aid over the gaping wound in our health care system."

Lorraine Michael
May 2007

There is a crisis looming in health care in this province.

Years of cuts have placed enormous stress on the system. Nurses, doctors, and staff provide the best service they can in increasingly difficult circumstances.

Incorrect ER/PR testing for breast cancer patients, incorrect radiology exams, improperly cleaned medical instruments, the need for doctors, nurses and other health professionals (especially in rural areas), bed and emergency room closures, and problems with staff shortages and working conditions in emergency medical services in rural areas have caused great concern.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve better.

Now is the time to pay back the debt to people by investing in our health care system.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve a health care system they can depend on.

The NDP will call for:

- An external review of regional health authorities in the province. The regional health boards put in place 10 years ago, and then collapsed into 4 health authorities, have not fixed the problems.

- A universal pharmacare program for all residents, with coverage for equipment and medications.
- A publicly funded and delivered home care and home support system that will provide quality care, fair wages and proper training for home care workers.
- A publicly managed ambulance service across the province with standardized training and fair wages, to ensure that our people have reliable emergency services.
- Extension of 911 services to all areas of the province.
- More doctors, nurses, and front-line health care professionals.
- Additional supports for aboriginal students to pursue medical and nursing careers.
- Enhanced “return for service” bursaries and other incentives for new health-care professionals; assurance that more local rural students will be admitted to the medical school.
- A rural medical services fund to fill vacancies when doctors need relief in rural areas.
- A complete ban on video lottery terminals, and an investigation of Internet bingo.
- A ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides.

Disability should not mean disadvantaged

"There have to be increased supports to enable people with disabilities to participate fully in society."

Lorraine Michael
May 2007

A person's right to live, travel and work should not be limited by disabilities. Everybody has the right to live with dignity, autonomy and equity.

The challenge of disability can affect anybody at any time. Persons with disabilities have difficulty finding housing and stable employment. Only 41 per cent of working-age Canadians with disabilities have jobs, and disabled persons earn an average of 28 per cent less than the non-disabled population. More than 55 per cent of adults with disabilities live below the low-income cut-off, compared to 19 per cent of adults without disabilities.

Waiting lists for subsidized housing are too long. Too few accessible homes are being built. Many public buildings are inaccessible. Government must work towards a universal design to provide accessible housing for people with disabilities.

We need a comprehensive strategy to eliminate disability-based discrimination and disadvantages in our province.

The NDP will call for:

- Improved employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Legislation to ensure that people with disabilities are accommodated by employers.

- Adequate financial support for people who cannot work because of their disabilities.
- Input from people with disabilities for solutions aimed at eliminating disability-based discrimination.
- Employment programs that let people with disabilities without losing government support payments.
- Building and retrofitting of subsidized housing for people with disabilities.
- Legislation that compels housing developers to provide a base minimum number of accessible homes.
- Amendments to the Building Accessibility Act to require that public buildings existing prior to 1982 are no longer exempt from meeting minimum accessibility requirements.

Economy: working for everyone

"The NDP is committed to implementing a sustainable economy that benefits people, ahead of the interests of big business."

Lorraine Michael
June 2007

Economic development is the primary economic policy issue in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Economic development must be focused on renewing hope for the future of communities, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. We must develop new skills and create decent-paying, long-lasting jobs. We must encourage industries that stimulate secondary processing and manufacturing. We want development that is sustainable, environmentally sound and energy efficient.

The basis for a strong economy is a regional economic development plan that combines industrial growth, a healthy environment, and progressive government social programs.

Real wealth should be measured, not by oil revenues, but by how the lives of people in this province are improved because of influxes of new money. We must look at health care, education, housing, food security, and the environment in which we live to truly measure the wealth of this province.

The NDP plan will call for:

- Retrofitting business premises which saves money through energy savings, makes for a cleaner environment, and creates new sources of employment.

- A public, universal childcare program which assures healthier children enables more parents to work, and offers opportunities.
- A taxation system that eliminates unfair taxes and puts more money into the hands of families and lower-income people. The key to achieving this goal is to reduce or eliminate taxes on the basic necessities of life, and to make the system of income taxation more equitable.
- The NDP promotes:
 - No taxes on all home heating fuels and electricity.
 - No taxes on insurance.
 - No taxes on health-related services such as home care.
 - No taxes on funeral expenses.
 - No taxes on books
 - Added taxes on high-priced luxury items such as luxury vehicles, precious gems and furs.
- Increasing tax rates paid by large, out-of-province corporations conducting business in Newfoundland and Labrador. Since 1993, there has been a steady decline in those tax rates.
- Increasing the numbers of people who **do not pay** income tax by raising the ceiling for taxable income.
- Increasing the rate of taxation for the very wealthiest.

Energy: a better plan

"We have to look at our new-found oil revenues and ask how we can make the money work to maintain our people and our communities."

Lorraine Michael
June 2007

Newfoundland and Labrador is rich in energy resources, and the people of the province should receive benefits from these resources. But electricity and heating oil costs go up every year, while Newfoundland Power's parent company is making big profits at the expense of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The NDP has had an Energy Plan since 2003. Our plan combines Newfoundland Power and NL Hydro into a single corporation with a mandate that includes hydro, oil and gas, alternative energy development and energy efficiency and conservation measures. Our plan also called for an equity share in offshore oil projects and for the province to lobby for the 8.5 per cent federal share in Hibernia.

For years the Conservatives promised an energy plan but the "plan" we finally got is about Churchill Falls and offshore oil and did not include a comprehensive energy efficiency and conservation plan.

Lack of power is a barrier to resource-based industries in rural and remote areas. We can invest oil revenues in new energy sources—to benefit rural communities. Incentives for locally controlled wind energy will keep profits here and develop our expertise. Conservation programs can free energy for new uses, cut emissions and save money.

Energy resources should benefit all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The NDP will call for:

- A public corporation to deliver energy efficiency and conservation programs.
- A home energy, commercial and institutional retrofit program which would be cost-shared according to income.
- A community-based training program to teach trades people to perform energy audits and retrofits; a youth on-the-job training program to give youth the skills they can use to stay in their communities.
- One hundred per cent replacement of the government fleet with low-emission vehicles; assistance to help non-profit organizations purchase low-emission vehicles.
- Regulations and incentives for commercial and consumer purchase of energy-saving products.
- An endowment fund for local initiatives in energy conservation and energy-saving technologies.
- Regulatory, technical and financial assistance to small-scale, locally-controlled renewable energy projects that generate jobs, skills and profits for communities.
- The provincial government to negotiate for federal investment in new hydro projects, creation of a national east-west power grid and transfer of the federal 8.5 per cent Hibernia share to the province.
- Immediately installing scrubbers and precipitators to reduce emissions from the Holyrood thermal generating station.

Mining: a prosperous, environmentally sustainable industry

"A healthy, prosperous, environmentally sustainable mining industry is crucial to communities throughout Labrador and the island of Newfoundland."

Lorraine Michael
February 2007

The Conservative government has shown little or no leadership in promoting safe mining practices. They have also refused to protect communities and natural habitats. They proved this by allowing dumping of mine tailings into fish-bearing ponds in central Newfoundland. The Conservatives have also done little to train young people for new and existing mining projects, and continue to pay lip service to local hiring.

The NDP is committed to seeing our mining communities prosper, while making the necessary investments to promote prospecting, as well as new mining projects. The NDP will ensure that worker safety is given top priority, and that people in our mining communities and natural areas are protected.

We can have a mining industry that is profitable without damaging environments and communities.

The NDP will call for:

- Proper monitoring of mining companies, so that the industry continues to serve people and communities.
- Rigorous testing of workplaces for unsafe conditions to ensure long-term health of mine workers.

- Restrictions on dumping mine wastes into environmentally sensitive areas of our province.
- Training opportunities for young people, emphasizing skills required for the mining industry; these training programs should be established in areas adjacent to mining activity.
- A Centre for Mining Excellence in Labrador West.
- Local employment and local purchasing initiatives by mining companies.
- Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro increase access to power in rural areas, which will encourage investment and new industries to locate to the province.

Sustainability: using our land well

"We have to put more resources into helping people deal with environmental issues in their own lives."

Lorraine Michael
May 2007

This province needs a provincial land use plan.

New resource industries and urban growth are threatening natural habitats. We must maintain and restore our natural heritage. We need to preserve sensitive and diverse ecosystems in order to sustain our natural environment. The NDP has called for implementation of the Protected Areas Systems Plan, but the Conservative government has been slow to take action.

Urban areas are encroaching on farmland, forests and natural habitats. Private developments have reduced public access to shorelines. Several regions now urgently need land use planning. We need "smart urban growth" that reuses existing urban lands instead of destroying farmland and natural areas.

We must protect agricultural lands which support food security and economic development. Local food production improves our quality of life, creates jobs, and reduces our dependence on outside food supplies.

Forest workers are demanding that industry adopt sustainable harvesting practices. The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union has created a plan for moving from the unsustainable forest management practices of the past to a green industry. The NDP supports this plan.

We must protect our lands and natural areas and use them sustainably.

The NDP will call for:

- A provincial land use plan based on public participation.
- Protection of agricultural lands from commercial, industrial, and residential development; improved strategies for local and food production and agricultural exports, to make optimum use of our agricultural lands.
- “Smart growth” policies in urban development.
- Protection of sensitive ecosystems that foster diversity by implementing the Protected Areas System Plan; remediation programs for streams that flood excessively due to human activity.
- Regional planning boards using an integrated management model (government, arms-length science, and public participation).
- The forestry industry to adopt sustainable harvesting practices as proposed by the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union for a green forest industry.
- Designation of more land tracts specifically for value-added forestry, implementing a value-added wood harvesting strategy.
- Sustainable harvesting practices part of any proposed provincial forest industry plan.
- A provincial waste management and recycling program with better government support by 2010.

A fishery that is sustainable

"The fishing industry continues to be the backbone of our province. It is the backbone of our culture. Historically, it was the backbone of our economy. We need a lot more commitment from government to marketing in this industry."

**Lorraine Michael
December 2006**

Our fishery is in crisis. The moratorium, the sale of FPI, and the loss of thousands of jobs in the industry have all taken their toll on this once vibrant economic sector. While we appreciate the growth of other industries, the fishery remains an integral part of our economy, and we cannot afford to lose more control. It is time to regain control and strengthen our products and markets.

Healthy and sustainable fishing communities need healthy and sustainable marine environments if they are to have long-term stability and prosperity. In the past, social and economic priorities have often won out over the need to sustain the marine environment. The result has been catastrophic for many fishing communities.

We need to look at what made the industry sustainable in the past. We need to protect fish stocks and the undersea environment from destructive fishing technologies, oil development, and pollution, and we need to speed up the recovery of stocks and habitats.

Globalization, the high Canadian dollar and cheap competition from China have had a severe impact on fishing enterprises and local processing operations. While high oil prices have been good news for provincial coffers, the skyrocketing cost of fuel has had an adverse impact on the economics of inshore fishing enterprises.

The lack of a co-ordinated marketing strategy for the province has had an impact on what harvesters are paid for their product and on the province's fish plants.

We can improve the viability of fishing enterprises and increase work in plants through product and market development—products aimed at the high-end market which will reduce our dependence on markets supplied by China.

We can build a sustainable, prosperous fishery.

The NDP will call for:

- A public corporation to identify new markets and products, and assist small and medium-sized companies to develop new value-added products for export.
- Federal early retirement benefits for fisheries workers who have given their working lives to the fishery and their communities, and who deserve to retire with dignity and security.
- A fuel rebate to fishing enterprises to strengthen their economic viability.
- Additional resources for ocean habitat science and the study of the ocean food web in fisheries management, environmental assessment of large-scale aquaculture on coastal marine habitats, assessment of the effects of various fishing gears on marine habitats, and gear replacement strategies where necessary.
- The creation of marine protected areas.

Rural investment: a better plan

"Every year, thousands of people leave the province – some only go for a while, but many take their families and leave for good."

Lorraine Michael
December 2006

Rural communities are under siege and will continue to struggle unless there is the political will to help them survive.

The Conservatives made many promises to rural communities. They promised a rural action plan — they have not delivered. They promised to support small businesses and to create long-term jobs — but businesses still can't get access to capital. They promised to encourage value-added resource industries — but many are not getting start-up support.

Rural areas have been hit hard by the loss of their economic base, but they've also lost important infrastructure through the closure of schools, government offices and hospitals. This also means lost economic activity generated by public sector jobs.

Repeated funding cuts to roads, schools and other public works have led to a crisis that government can no longer ignore. Rural communities need investment in transportation networks to get products to markets. Investments in schools and infrastructure are necessary for community economic development. With more than 200 communities still lacking high-speed Internet service, an enhanced communications network is essential.

Government must pay back the debt to our rural communities.



The NDP will call for:

Investment in infrastructure

- Increased grants to rural municipalities for social and physical infrastructure.
- Re-establishment of government offices and services in rural communities.
- Increased spending on road/highway maintenance and snowclearing.
- An affordable and accessible public transportation network in rural areas (buses, subsidies to private taxis, etc.).
- Extended high-speed Internet service to all communities.
- Investment in rural alternative energy sources.
- A \$250 annual stipend to encourage people to become volunteer firefighters.
- Income replacement and training for those affected by job losses in rural communities. If the largest employer in a community closes, its workers should not be abandoned.
- Strategies to strengthen and promote the shipbuilding industry.

Smart investment in small businesses and co-operatives

- An investment fund for cultural enterprises (museums, heritage organizations, etc.), small businesses and co-operatives.
- A rural venture capital fund with reduced interest rates for small business.
- Value-added, resource-based enterprises.
- Sustainable fish harvesting.
- Refrigeration facilities for small fruit crops and specialty produce.
- Organic berry harvesting and nutraceutical cultivation and production.
- Sustainable value-added forest products.
- The elimination of taxes on small business insurance.

Investment in community economic development (CED)

- A program to provide resources for a CED process in all areas and communities that want it.
- A CED fund for communities to follow through on CED ideas not covered under other programs.

Housing: providing healthy homes

"Our government has benefited from the construction industry boom and from rising energy costs. It's time to give something back by investing more money into affordable housing."

Lorraine Michael
October 2006

Our province is in the middle of a housing crisis. We are seeing rising rents and housing prices, and a growing number of low-income workers — many of whom are single parents — and a growing population of seniors. We have a serious lack of decent, affordable housing that is affecting people of all ages and situations.

In Labrador the vacancy rate is 0 per cent, and in other parts of the province the vacancy rate is low and housing prices have gone through the roof. People are struggling with rising costs of heat, insurance and property taxes.

Homelessness exists in rural and urban areas, and it is hidden — people are staying with relatives or "couch surfing." Youths are turned away from shelters (where shelters exist) because of a lack of space. People are forced to use food banks because all their money is spent on their monthly housing costs.

We must create decent, affordable housing.



The NDP will call for:

- Investment, through the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC), in more affordable housing units to address the severe lack of affordable housing throughout the province.
- A streamlined process of obtaining social housing.
- Retain and refit all NLHC-owned housing to meet affordable housing needs.
- Adequate shelter housing throughout the province for homeless youth, single adults, families and those escaping family violence.
- Community-based, non-profit housing organizations that can create housing for those not easily accommodated by government agencies.
- A facilitator to help assemble land, funds and expertise for housing projects.
- A residential energy-efficiency program to reduce home energy costs to low-income households.
- Increased funding to the NLHC Rent Supplement Program to help those who cannot access affordable housing in their communities.

Workers: respected by government

"Unions — working people's organizations — are important partners in building a prosperous economy in this province."

Lorraine Michael

June 2007

Newfoundland and Labrador has recently experienced the shock of losing a pulp and paper mill, the sell-off of FPI, and accelerating out-migration. We now have, with the offshore, a chance to make a difference. But government needs stronger skills training and employment policies to ensure that workers gain access to these new jobs.

At 15 per cent, unemployment in this province is the highest in Canada. Rural areas, which account for 45 per cent of our workers, suffer most from out-migration. In this province we have seen the loss of many good-paying jobs and their replacement with low-paid, temporary and part-time jobs. As a result, workers are leaving for better wages elsewhere.

The NDP is committed to protecting workers through strong labour laws, pay equity and employment equity. We support workers' rights to form unions, collectively bargain and exercise their right to strike when necessary, without government interference.

The NDP is also committed to improving the living standards of the province's lowest paid and most vulnerable workers and their families by fighting for a living wage so that no full-time worker earns an income below the poverty line.

The NDP will work to provide a strong voice for workers' issues in this province.

The NDP will call for:

- A minimum wage that brings wages above the poverty line.
- Protection of collective bargaining rights, the right to unionize, and the right to strike; introduction of anti-scab legislation.
- Apprenticeship programs that match provincial needs and provide apprenticeship hours without having to leave the province.
- Income replacement and training for those affected by job losses in rural communities.
- Adequate staffing in the public sector to properly deliver services and ensure workers' needs are being met.
- Improved trade agreements between provinces that protect our workers and improve our economy.
- A Newfoundland and Labrador Workers First policy for all major employment projects in the province; Aboriginal workers must have priority for projects located on their lands.
- Employment equity policies in public and private sectors for women, people with disabilities, newcomers to Canada and others subject to barriers, in order to ensure fairness in hiring, apprenticeship training, wages and promotions.
- Indexed seniors' pensions to guarantee pension protection.
- Publicly-funded child care, home care and pharmacare to benefit working people and create jobs.

Poverty: a better plan

"Too often, poverty is accepted as inevitable. It is not. We, as a society, have a choice."

Lorraine Michael
June 2007

In Newfoundland and Labrador 66,000 people live in poverty. All too often, many of our fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are forced to make difficult choices – every day and in every community.

Our province has the third highest rate of child poverty in Canada, at 15.5 per cent. Nearly 30,000 people depend on food banks – 5.5 per cent of our population. We also have the highest rural poverty rate in Canada.

These numbers are completely unacceptable. Yet successive Liberal and Conservative governments have done little to combat poverty. The Conservative poverty reduction strategy contained a few positive measures, but much more needs to be done.

We can decide whether a child will go hungry because the parents are too poor to buy food. We can decide whether a senior will go without dentures. We can decide whether a working person should choose between buying cancer drugs and paying the rent.

Eliminating poverty will not be an easy job, but it must be the top long-term priority for government. A detailed action plan should be developed and implemented.

The best way to eliminate poverty is to put more money in the hands of people.



The NDP will call for:

- An increase in the minimum wage to \$10.00/hr.
- A commitment to eliminate poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Adequate funding for social service recipients to pay for their basic needs and the elimination of claw-backs to social service payments for recipients who obtain low income employment.
- Pharmacare so that every person will have access to the medicine they need.
- Publicly-funded home care for seniors and others who require it.
- A publicly-funded child care program and universal school lunch program for children.
- Elimination of the provincial sales tax on home heating fuel and electricity.
- Free tuition for post-secondary education.
- Increased funding for safe housing for homeless women, particularly in rural areas of the province.
- Income replacement and training for those affected by job losses in rural communities.
- Implementation of strategies for promoting literacy.
- Indexing public service pensions to the rate of inflation.

Paying our debt to seniors

"Seniors made sacrifices in the hard times; they deserve to live with dignity in the better times."

Lorraine Michael
July 2007

For many years, seniors have sacrificed to build this province. Now they should share in our offshore prosperity. Instead, most seniors face serious financial challenges and inadequate support services.

Seniors in this province have the lowest average income in Canada. The provincial seniors' benefit was recently increased and their taxes marginally reduced. But the reforms are inadequate. The spending power of seniors on fixed incomes is still only half what it was 15 years ago. The rising costs of drugs, home heating, home insurance and other services are heavy burdens. Seniors also face inadequate housing, home care and long term care.

We do not have a public home care system. The system we have does not provide enough hours, and staff are often poorly paid and trained. A public home care system would allow seniors to stay in their own homes, a lower-cost alternative for governments which would also provide a better life.

Our seniors deserve better.***The NDP will call for:***

- More tax fee exemptions and reductions; increase the Seniors' Benefit and make it available to more people.

- Indexing public service pensions to the cost of living; provision of lump-sum compensation for lost income due to previous lack of indexing.
- One hundred per cent coverage of seniors' medical expenses not otherwise covered by government or private insurance.
- Additional mental health services for seniors and training for home care and institutional workers.
- Increased respite care and support services for unpaid caregivers, including mental health services.
- A publicly-funded and administered home care system.
- Better services in existing long term care facilities; construction of new facilities for seniors requiring lower levels of care.
- Accessible, affordable seniors' housing; expansion of the NLHC Rent Supplement Program for seniors; increased Provincial Home Repair Program funding for seniors.
- A province-wide, community-delivered program of home services such as yard maintenance, home repairs.
- A seniors' council to provide information, services, advocacy, and networking.

Committed to women's equality

"Our government has not recognized at all that women are the poorest of our society, and the reason they are poor is because they do not earn enough money."

**Lorraine Michael,
May 2007**

The NDP supports the full participation of women in decision-making. Women know what their communities need and have creative ideas of how best to meet those needs. The diversity of women and the compounding disadvantages that women experience due to class, age, race, sexual orientation, disability and ethnicity will always be taken into account in NDP policies.

As an important part of our commitment to women's involvement in communities, we will provide the funding needed to expand the communication networks between women's groups and to extend their equality-seeking, anti-violence work to all areas of the province.

The NDP is committed to ensuring that women's voices will be heard.

The NDP will call for:

- An increase to, and guarantee of, the core funding to Women's Centres for the next five years so that each centre can employ an executive director, an office administrator and an outreach worker.
- Funding to establish new Women's Centres in currently under-serviced areas.
- Increased funding to the Violence Prevention Initiative in all regions.

- Increased, stable, core funding for the shelters and safe houses for women and children fleeing abuse.
- Increased funding for creating safe housing, both temporary and permanent for homeless women.
- Increased funding to the Sexual Health Centre; the Sexual Assault Centre; Victim Services; the AIDS Committee; and the Seniors Resource Centre.
- Funding to establish sexual assault response teams throughout the province.
- A fund administered by the Women's Policy Office to support equality-seeking community projects.
- A legislated employment equity act so that women can benefit from all the economic opportunities in the province.
- A minimum wage that brings all workers above the poverty line.
- Education programs and legislation focused on establishing harassment-free workplaces.
- Equal representation of women in all public agencies, boards, commissions, and institutions.
- Establishment of a select committee of the House of Assembly to study the issue of the representation of women and report on ways to achieve gender equity in the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly.

Child care: a program that cares for our children

"If we are really serious about helping parents and helping women, in particular, to be able to work, and if we are really serious about taking care of children, then we really do have to have a public child care system ... a system that allows parents to be able to work knowing that their children are being taken care of in safety and in security."

Lorraine Michael
May 2007

Our children's early years are their foundation for lifelong development. Unfortunately, in Newfoundland and Labrador we have a child care system with underpaid workers, high fees, small subsidies and a patchwork of spaces. There are only enough regulated child care spaces for 15 per cent of children under age 12. Thus many families with young children, especially those in rural areas, have no access to regulated child care and early learning programs.

The lack of affordable, accessible, high-quality child care is not just a problem for parents. It means that too many of our children are unable to participate in beneficial early learning programs.

The Conservative government has a three-year "plan" which will create only a few hundred child care spaces of the thousands needed. Child care, like primary education, must be publicly funded so that early learning programs are available to all children.

High quality child care supports children, their families, their communities and the economy. It is an important support that helps working families lead healthy lives and remain in this province.

Newfoundland and Labrador families deserve a high quality child care and early learning system.



The NDP will call for:

- A publicly-administered provincial child care and early learning system developed in consultation with parents and early childhood education experts.
- Investment in new funding for public and not-for-profit child care and early learning programs to ensure they are available throughout the province.
- Funding for more family resource centres in all areas of the province to offer parents and caregivers an opportunity to meet and share information, with safe places for children.
- Child care workers who have salaries that match their training and considerable responsibilities, so that we do not continue losing them to other occupations and provinces.

Education: providing a healthy and high quality system

"Ultimately, we all know that when it comes to the teaching of our children, the number one thing is their access to teachers."

Lorraine Michael
May 2007

Our children's education is something that should not be under-funded, under-staffed or under-appreciated. At present, we have more than 30 students to each teacher, so a student can easily be overlooked. We still have multi-grade classrooms in many of our rural schools. Students with special needs often fall through the cracks.

While the Conservatives have taken some of our suggestions, such as eliminating school fees, the government is allowing other problems to fester. Schools are not properly maintained and are unsafe or unhealthy. In the past year several have tested positive for mould and have had to close for as much as an entire school year. Desperately-needed schools are being closed for good. And our province is losing large numbers of capable teachers.

Our children's education is not something we can ignore.

The NDP will call for:

- More teachers and assistants in the classroom.
- Classrooms that are not over-crowded, so students can get help when they need it.
- Needs-based teacher allocation process other than the current outdated formula.

- Properly maintained schools to ensure a safe, healthy environment for our children.
- A universal school lunch and nutrition program to provide all students with access healthy, nourishing meals they need to learn properly.
- More student assistants for students with special needs so they have an equal opportunity to perform to the best of their abilities.
- A review of the Pathways program and allocation of appropriate resources so that students who cannot meet the regular requirements for graduation can graduate based on their own abilities.
- Increased school resource budgets to give teachers the resources they need; schools should not have to fundraise for essential items; teachers should not have to pay for supplies from their own pockets.
- A review of the structure of school boards to ensure adequate input and representation from parents and funding for schools.

A post-secondary system that prepares our students for the future

"An advocate, free tuition, and needs based grants — these are practical actions that government can do to help students."

Lorraine Michael
February 2007

For years, our post-secondary education system has suffered from government funding cutbacks, a decrease in trained instructors and professors, and inadequate facilities and housing. Our post-secondary education system must address the needs of students and teaching professionals.

In the past decade, government cuts to the post-secondary budget caused tuition fees to double, placing a heavy burden on students. Although recently there has been a tuition freeze in this province, about 24 per cent of all post-secondary students in Newfoundland and Labrador accumulate more than \$25,000 in debt prior to graduation. Students from lower-income families are less likely to attend a post-secondary institution than richer students. Post-secondary education should be financially accessible to all, and should not force our youth to incur massive debts.

Students deserve a post-secondary education system they can depend on.

The NDP will call for:

- A special advocate to deal with student debt repayment issues in Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that the debt our students accumulate can be repaid fairly.

- Free tuition for public post-secondary students. Post-secondary education is increasingly a requirement and should be a right, and youth should not be forced into debt.
- Needs-based grants for all so that the opportunity to learn is there for all students, not just those from higher-income families.
- Reduced interest rates on student loans as a step toward implementing a comprehensive debt forgiveness program.
- Increased provincial government funding of post-secondary education to counter federal cuts, along with a demand that the federal government increase education spending to pay its share for our post-secondary system.

Literacy: lifelong learning sustains communities

"There's a shortage of skilled workers, and at the same time people are marginalized because of low literacy skills."

Lorraine Michael
October 2006

Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the highest rates of people with low literacy skills in Canada. One-half of our residents have literacy skills below what is needed to function in our modern world. More than 40 per cent of youth have low literacy skills.

People with higher literacy skills are more likely to be employed and generally earn better wages. Higher literacy is also good for the economy: a 1 per cent rise in literacy scores corresponds to a 2.5 per cent rise in labour productivity and a 15 per cent rise in Gross Domestic Product. But few employers in this province invest in workplace literacy which would give workers access to the training they need to upgrade their job skills.

Lifelong learning is important for higher living standards and healthier communities. Our communities need more basic literacy training opportunities. Too many young people are leaving school without basic literacy skills.

The federal government cut community and workplace literacy programs, and the provincial government has not filled the gap. They have taken an ad hoc approach to literacy despite their promise of a new literacy plan. An effective plan must consider early learning, K-12 and adult learning as a continuum.

The NDP supports a comprehensive, lifelong learning plan which includes a strategy for improving literacy.

The NDP will call for:

- A provincial lifelong learning plan to increase literacy levels and provide more adult learning opportunities.
- Additional resources for adult literacy programs in communities, colleges and workplaces.
- A province-wide early childhood education system.
- Affordable, accessible lifelong learning opportunities at public colleges, libraries and schools.
- Maintain community access centres and expand high-speed Internet to the entire province.
- A provincial workplace learning and skills program co-ordinated in partnership with employers and unions.
- A vocational qualification system that allows for prior learning recognition so that adults can access employment opportunities for which they have the skills but not the formal credentials.
- The development of “community schools,” where existing K-12 schools are used as resources for the whole community (i.e., used for seniors, youth and early learning programs in partnership with community based organizations.).
- The elimination of federal taxes on books.

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Authorized by the Chief Financial Officer for the NDP Campaign

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