

Premier's Youth Council

2018-19
Annual Meeting

Discussion Overview



Discussion 1

Food Self-Sufficiency

Our province has a unique geography that presents many challenges from a food production and self-sufficiency perspective. Newfoundland, as an island, relies considerably on a ferry and a container ship service for much of its food supply. In turn, weather and other factors can delay deliveries and drive up food costs, while driving down food quality. Meanwhile, Labrador, as a large northern land mass with many small and remote communities, relies largely on food shipments from the island and, from a climate perspective, faces even more challenges in growing its own food. In a context of changing and extreme weather patterns, the issue of food self-sufficiency is of increasing importance for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The Honourable Gerry Byrne, Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, offered a presentation to the Premier's Youth Council on the history of agriculture in the province, food security as a global issue, and efforts the Provincial Government and its partners are leading through The Way Forward on Agriculture to grow the industry in the province and attract new entrants.

To gain a youth perspective on improving the province's ability to feed itself, Minister Byrne posed the following questions to the Premier's Youth Council:

- How do we attract more young people to enter the agriculture industry in this province?
- As a young person, what do you find attractive about agriculture as a career?
- What would deter you, as a young person, from considering a career in agriculture?
- What can government do better position the agriculture industry with young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?
- Besides agriculture, is there anything else government can be doing to make Newfoundland and Labrador more self-sufficient in terms of food production?

The Premier's Youth Council observed that, in general, not enough young people are aware of opportunities in the agriculture sector and students are often not aware of agriculture-related programs in the school system or at the post-secondary level (e.g., the Agriculture Technician program available at College of the North Atlantic). To address these issues and respond to the questions above, the Premier's Youth Council offered the following ideas and suggestions:

1. Raise the profile and increase the attractiveness of the agriculture industry in the province's post-secondary institutions.

How?

- Create opportunities to market agriculture programs and opportunities to students in engineering programs or interested in things like robotics, machinery and technology, as well as to students studying in areas such as entrepreneurship and human resources. As many engineering students are leaving the province, this approach has the added benefit of giving them an opportunity to stay here.
- Explore creative partnerships with other post-secondary institutions (e.g., Dalhousie University's Agricultural Business degree program) and offer bursaries or incentives to encourage graduates to come back to the province.

2. Start earlier and younger to help shape attitudes about the industry.

How?

- Expand programs like Agriculture in the Classroom and Little Green Thumbs in the school system and profile them at the beginning of each school year.
- Expand the presence of community gardens and hydroponics in schools, with appropriate support systems and funding.
- Offer courses in the school system that focus on agriculture and food self-sufficiency issues.
- Support the development of school-specific agricultural programs and link them to other important objectives, such as healthy eating and supporting local food banks.

3. Invest in knowledge and technology.

How?

- Introduce a program to support lifelong learning for those working in the agriculture sector.
- Support the integration of technology, like in Norway where investments in high technology helped grow the industry, despite environmental conditions that are similar to those in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Determine the various needs of commercial operations (e.g., heating systems) and find opportunities to direct the province's abundant electricity resources to the growth of the sector.
- Explore the potential of indoor farms to support access to province-grown food all year long.

4. Offer financial incentives to support and reward agricultural activities.

How?

- Offer an incentive to encourage people to grow their own food for their families.
- Increase access to funding for people who would like to start a farm, recognizing that the start-up processes and costs for farming present a challenge for many.

Members of the Premier's Youth Council also observed that food self-sufficiency is just one part of the larger issue of food security. Food security also entails having the means and networks to get food to people, ensuring they know what to do with it once they receive it, working with partner organizations such as Food First NL, and educating people about the issue as a whole.

Discussion 2

Youth Entrepreneurship

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to strengthening and diversifying the economy by positioning the province as a strategic place to do business. A key part of this is developing the entrepreneurial pipeline. As outlined in The Way Forward's Business Innovation Agenda, government is leading a number of innovative initiatives to support start-up businesses, including investments in young entrepreneurs.

On behalf of the Honourable Christopher Mitchelmore, Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, Mark Browne, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister, offered a presentation to the Premier's Youth Council on the supports available to entrepreneurs. These include the Provincial Government's partnership with Community Business Development Corporations to deliver small business programming and financial supports to youth through the Kick\$tart and Drive programs.

To gain a youth perspective on creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurs in Newfoundland and Labrador, Parliamentary Secretary Browne posed the following questions to the Premier's Youth Council:

- Do you own a business or have you ever tried to establish a business?
- Have you considered, or would you ever consider, starting a business?
- What are the business opportunities in your region (i.e. service, retail, tech, agriculture etc.)?
- What barriers exist for starting a business in your region?
- What supports do you think are most important for starting a business? Do you think different supports are required for youth?

The Premier's Youth Council noted that becoming an entrepreneur takes a lot of work but can be very rewarding. While only one member of the Council owns a business, members generally

agreed with the overall approach and current programs and services available to support entrepreneurs in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Premier's Youth Council offered the following ideas and suggestions to further support entrepreneurship in the province:

1. Offer businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador a competitive advantage to help them in the global market, which can provide similar products at lower cost.

How?

- Position Newfoundland and Labrador as a global hub of natural resources and utilize those resources for the creation and expansion of businesses.
- Capitalize on our tourism success and bring more people to the province by marketing what the province has to offer – unique and authentic experiences.

2. Stimulate an interest in entrepreneurship among youth, starting at a young age.

How?

- Train teachers on entrepreneurship and provide more opportunities for industry speakers to come into the classroom to share their message with students.
- Place more focus on entrepreneurship in the curriculum as well as on cooperative education in the school system so people can gain first-hand experience within businesses.
- Update the entrepreneurship course in high school to maximize its effectiveness.
- Have a broader conversation with youth to enhance their awareness about programs and resources, such as:
 - Youth Ventures
 - SHAD
 - Mentorship programs

3. Place a greater focus on entrepreneurial opportunities in rural areas of the province and address the disconnect between urban and rural.

How?

- Enhance Internet capabilities across the province to better allow businesses to operate online, thus closing the geographical gap and expanding their customer base through online retail.
- Use targeted tourism ads not only to increase the number of people visiting Newfoundland and Labrador, but also to help promote local businesses.
- Connect urban and rural resources – people in urban areas do not always know what opportunities exist in rural areas, and people in rural areas do not always have the same access to resources as those in urban areas.

4. Better promote and expand on current programs and services offerings.

How?

- Increase available funding to make it easier for people to start a business.
- Review financing stacking limits to allow businesses to scale up and expand at faster rates.
- Take advantage of Newfoundland and Labrador's unique and attractive regulatory environment, such as the ability to start a business without being incorporated.
- Create and promote a list of Indigenous-owned businesses in the province to open up partnership and collaboration opportunities.

Discussion 3

Accessibility for Persons Living with Disabilities

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to inclusion for all people, including those living with disabilities. Persons living with disabilities often encounter barriers when accessing a service, program or opportunity, or just taking part in daily life – going to school, finding a job, playing sports, or volunteering. The Provincial Government is working with community organizations, the private sector and stakeholder groups to break down these barriers and make Newfoundland and Labrador an accessible place to work, live and visit. A key step in this process is engaging persons living with disabilities, advocacy groups, businesses and the public on the development of new provincial accessibility legislation.

The Honourable Lisa Dempster, Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, offered a presentation to the Premier's Youth Council on the barriers to accessibility and the work that has been accomplished to date through the 2015-2018 Action Plan: Access. Inclusion. Equality.

To gain a youth perspective on new accessibility legislation for the province, Minister Dempster posed the following questions to the Premier's Youth Council:

- What are the experiences of young people living with disabilities in our province?
- What are some barriers to accessibility you have experienced or witnessed in your respective communities and what do we need to keep in mind as we develop new legislation?
- How does inaccessibility affect the ability of young people to engage and participate in society?
- What are some ways government can receive advice and direction from young people to help inform the development of this new legislation?

The Premier's Youth Council recognized the stigma surrounding persons living with disabilities in the province and expressed the need to eliminate that stigma. Members noted that because

disabilities come in many forms and are not always visually apparent (for example, mental health), it is important that any new legislation encompass non-visible disabilities. The need to increase access to sign language services (e.g., in the House of Assembly and to support access to government programs) was also raised. The Premier's Youth Council also offered the following ideas and suggestions:

1. Increase employment supports for persons living with disabilities.

How?

- Provide more employment opportunities for persons living with disabilities. Training and job experience opportunities are available in St. John's; however, once individuals living with disabilities return to rural and remote communities, opportunities for employment are fewer.
- Increase and diversify job opportunities for persons living with disabilities by offering incentives to employers.
- Educate employers on the assumptions of employing individuals living with disabilities, such as the myth that workplace accommodations require a big or expensive change.
- Create and expand programs that allow persons living with disabilities to integrate the workforce through wage subsidies.

2. Support organizations and events that are working to overcome accessibility barriers.

How?

- Offer financial supports to businesses and non-profit organizations who want to become more accessible.
- Increase funding for advocacy organizations to help them expand their programming across the province and maximize the benefits of their services.
- Model successful partnerships, such as that with the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival, and new technologies to illustrate how events can become more inclusive for persons living with disabilities.

3. Eliminate barriers within the K-12 and post-secondary systems.

How?

- Fully integrate students who live with disabilities to reduce the stigma and normalize those disabilities, instead of taking them out of the classroom or offering segregated programs.
- Equip schools with the tools necessary for helping all students understand disabilities.
- Provide more training to teachers to help them recognize disabilities and better support all students.
- Make EpiPens universally accessible in schools in the same way defibrillators are, as severe allergies are also a disability.
- Help Memorial University renovate buildings so persons living with disabilities can better navigate the institution.
- Review processes to ensure they do not present challenges for persons living with disabilities. For example, some post-secondary students who are dealing with a mental illness and wish to drop a course often take a failing grade rather than subject themselves to what can be an arduous process.

4. Ensure accessibility is considered in the design of buildings, communities and policies, seeking the perspectives of those with lived experience.

How?

- Facilitate access to recreational activities for persons living with disabilities. Examples offered include more inclusive playground equipment, better snow removal on sidewalks, and broader hunting license eligibility categories for persons living with disabilities.
- Ensure all aspects of building design, even down to small details such as the placement of towel racks, are planned with accessibility in mind.
- Find opportunities to help older buildings, such as schools, that were not constructed with accessibility in mind to become more inclusive of persons living with disabilities.
 - Waterford Valley High and the Paul Reynolds Centre were cited as buildings to emulate.

- Identify where segregation is happening and support inclusive opportunities that connect all members of the public as a way to promote diversity, inclusion and raise awareness on issues of accessibility.
- Engage more frequently with persons living with disabilities who are also women, Indigenous or members of the LGBTQ+ community to understand their perspective as people whose challenges are even more complex.

Discussion 4

Violence Prevention

Violence destroys families, relationships and communities and has devastating long-term effects on its victims. Inequality, power and control are root causes of violence. However, violence is preventable and each of us is responsible for ensuring it does not occur. Working with community partners, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador strives to build a safe and supportive environment where everyone can live free of fear, violence and abuse.

The Honourable Carol Anne Haley, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, offered a presentation to the Premier's Youth Council on the prevalence of violence against women in the province. Her presentation also focused on the efforts the Provincial Government and its partners are leading through The Violence Prevention Initiative to find a long-term solution to the problem of violence against those most at risk in our society.

To inform these efforts from a youth perspective, Minister Haley posed the following questions to the Premier's Youth Council:

- What types of violence are youth experiencing most often? Who is experiencing it and who is perpetrating it?
- Where is this violence occurring?
- What is the best way for us to engage youth who are most impacted by violence?
- How might youth help to prevent and eliminate violence?
- Do you have any suggestions for us, moving forward?

Members of the Premier's Youth Council shared their frustration that incidences of sexual assault and violence against women are still being reported, but praised victims for coming forward more than ever before to help end violence. The Council also noted that violence prevention is not limited to the victim and the perpetrator, but rather is an issue that communities need to address. The Premier's Youth Council offered the following thoughts:

1. Reduce the number of violent re-offenders.

How?

- Increase efforts in the prison system to rehabilitate offenders so they do not continue to commit acts of violence against women after their release.
- Understand the underlying causes of the abuse, which may include mental health and addictions issues.

2. Increase awareness about consent and abuse.

How?

- Start conversations about masculinity and challenge men to deconstruct it in an effort to understand the root causes of violence against women and the rape culture that exists in today's society.
- Educate everyone about the importance of respecting women, starting at an early age both at home and in school.
- Increase awareness and understanding about the differences between rape and consent, recognizing that not everyone is able to differentiate between the two.
- Increase sexual assault education for women, as many women and young girls lack role models for healthy relationships and are therefore unable to distinguish normal relationship behaviour from abusive relationship behaviour or to leave abusive relationships.
- Ensure education goes beyond physical abuse to include emotional abuse and control issues.

- Provide programs and supports to family members of victims so they can better support their loved ones.
- Educate the public about what to do or not to do when they witness an act of violence.

3. Increase awareness about violence prevention measures.

How?

- Increase efforts to promote the Violence Prevention Initiative in schools.
- Develop ad campaigns to highlight the efforts that are being made.
- Emulate programs like the Moose Hide program implemented in some Indigenous communities, where men and boys wear a moose hide to show their commitment to respecting women (<https://www.moosehidecampaign.ca/>).

4. Increase supports for victims and reduce victim shaming.

How?

- Recognize it can be more challenging for abuse victims in rural communities to ask for help and leave an abusive partner, and make more supports available.
 - Council members also noted that because rural communities tend to be small, everyone (including the perpetrators of violence) knows where safe houses are located and therefore it can be easier for abusers to find their partners.
- Increase awareness about existing supports for victims, as many women who have been assaulted, sexually or physically, do not know what to do or where to go for help.
- Eliminate barriers for women who want to come forward, such as victim shaming and the fear of not being able to seek help anonymously or without intimate partners finding out.
 - Council members further noted that cases can be long and costly to resolve, which can leave victims vulnerable while they await the prosecution of their abuser.

- Provide basic life skills training to victims of abuse, reflecting the reality that many women become involved in relationships at a young age and may not know what to do when an abusive relationship ends and they suddenly have to cope on their own.

5. Reduce rates of violence in Indigenous and remote communities.

How?

- Focus violence prevention efforts on Indigenous women, who are often marginalized, and ensure those efforts respect their culture and beliefs.
- Improve cellular service in remote areas so that women can call for help when they need it.
- Increase access to supports in Labrador as connectivity is often poor and access to help can be hours away.

Discussion 5

Youth Mental Health and Addictions

Mental illness and addiction issues touch almost everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, either directly or through family, friends or co-workers. In any given year, one in five people will experience a mental illness or addiction. Through Towards Recovery: The Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador, the Provincial Government is committed to transforming the mental health and addictions system into one that starts with the needs of the person and works towards recovery for individuals and their families.

The Honourable John Haggie, Minister of Health and Community Services, offered a presentation to the Premier's Youth Council on Towards Recovery and progress to date in implementing the plan. Given its mandate to examine issues important to youth, the Council was given an update on a youth mental health and addictions questionnaire that was launched in the fall of 2018 and to which over 2,700 individuals responded.

To further gain a youth perspective on improving the state of the mental health and addictions system in Newfoundland and Labrador, Minister Haggie posed the following questions to the Premier's Youth Council:

- The main issues identified in the youth questionnaire are mental health, addictions and education support. Would you agree? Are there others?
- If you were a youth in need of service, what type of services would you like to receive?
- What is the best way to provide service to youth in rural and remote areas of the province?
- What should we do to make sure we successfully engage with youth?

The Premier's Youth Council observed that, in general, a "one-size-fits-all" approach to addressing mental health and addictions issues does not work and treatment needs to be flexible to respond more effectively to individual circumstances. Members also noted that while campaigns like "Bell's Let's Talk Day" have made strides in reducing the stigma surrounding mental health, more needs to be done to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are comfortable seeking help and treatment for mental health and addictions issues. The Premier's Youth Council offered the following ideas and suggestions to address the issues and questions raised by Minister Haggie:

1. Ensure services offered are tailored to the unique needs of individuals suffering from mental health issues.

How?

- Provide quick access to mental health professionals in times of crisis.
- Offer alternatives for diagnosis and treatment, such as care provided by guidance counselors, nurses, pharmacists or via the health line, so people do not always need to see a doctor.
- Leverage the potential of technology, such as an online wait-time tracker, to increase access to services, reduce time spent waiting at hospitals, and smooth out the demand for services.

2. Increase support in schools for people suffering from mental health issues:

How?

- Evaluate options for better training teachers to deal with mental health, addictions and related issues (e.g., attempted suicides) and to take the pressure of guidance counsellors, especially in schools that are in crisis.
- Increase the frequency of school visits from guidance counselors and the duration of their availability, especially in rural and remote areas, to increase access to services and speed up diagnosis.
- Ensure the delivery of mental health services in schools are integrated with those available in the health care system.
- Recognize that there are multiple causes of poor mental health (including bullying and hate speech) and identify solutions for each cause in order to prevent them from perpetuating the cycle of anxiety, which causes further mental health issues.
- Educate parents on mental illness so that they are better prepared to accept and deal with mental health issues instead of feeling shame and not getting their child the help they need.
- Educate youth on the connections between mental health and physical health so that they understand that being physically active can lead to better mental health.

3. Adapt solutions to the unique needs of Indigenous people.

How?

- Offer treatment options that recognize and respect Indigenous cultural values and beliefs, such as treatment at home or in the community.
- Increase the number of psychologists in Labrador and available to Indigenous communities.
- Lead efforts aimed at reducing the number of suicides in Labrador.

4. Use innovative approaches to reach youth on mental health and addictions issues.

How?

- Use social media and e-mail to engage youth and promote programs and services.
- Promote the use of the Health Line over emergency room visits to speed up access to services.
- Offer the services of counsellors and physicians virtually (i.e., video-consultations), especially in rural and remote areas of the province.
- Explore creative ways, such as wellness cafés, to deliver the message to young people.

5. Ensure addictions services meet the needs of those affected by an addiction or at-risk of addiction.

How?

- Develop a program where students learn about addictions from people with a substance use disorder and receive firsthand knowledge about what it means to live with an addiction and why drugs can be dangerous when misused.
- Support pharmacies and their employees to reduce the stigmatization and alienation of people with a substance use disorder by exhibiting a welcoming and positive attitude to people who are seeking treatments such as suboxone and naloxone.
- Model federal addictions programs (e.g., detoxification) to treat and support individuals incarcerated in provincial institutions.
- Identify and implement controlled-use and harm-reduction strategies for addictions.

