

**\*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY\*** *Under embargo until speech begins*

*Date:* **April 8, 2015 - Souris**

Good morning.

It's a real pleasure for me to be here in Souris today with Tommy ... Russ ... and all of you.

Yesterday in Hunter River I made an announcement on the subject of timely access to quality health care.

Today I want to continue on that theme and to speak in particular on issues of importance to Eastern Kings and rural Prince Edward Island.

I have followed the efforts of local community groups advocating for improved health care services in this part of the Province. I want to commend these individuals for working on behalf of their community.

I believe Eastern Kings is uniquely positioned to be a leader in a more innovative and collaborative approach to healthcare. The initiatives I announced yesterday – investing in our frontline services – will help accomplish this.

By ensuring our highly skilled and dedicated healthcare professionals have the tools they need, Islanders will have better access to the care they need, when they need it. This approach will help treatment ailments before they become more severe and free up physicians to focus on more serious illnesses.

For example, we will build on the success of pharmacists delivering flu shots and treating minor ailments by expanding the number of vaccinations they can deliver and the ailments that they can treat.

Similarly, we will double the number of nurse practitioners in our healthcare system and expand their role so that they can provide a full range of healthcare services in collaboration with family physicians.

And we will continue to recruit family physicians to rural communities. I will take a moment now to speak to the physician complement here in Souris.

A Liberal Government will maintain four family doctors in Souris.

Some concerns have been expressed about the complement being reduced from four to three. I assure you that this is not the case. We will continue to invest in our frontline services here in Souris.

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Yesterday I spoke about paramedics and indicated that I would have more to say on this subject today.

We can be very proud of the services provided by our paramedics. They have played a key role in our healthcare system and have the skills to do more.

At the present time paramedics spend most of their day waiting for ... and responding to ... emergency calls.

Instead of being limited to stabilizing and transporting Islanders to hospitals, we believe that paramedics can also play an important role in non-emergency situations.

For these reasons, I am pleased to announce that a Liberal Government will invest \$1 million dollars to establish a Community Paramedicine Program on PEI.

Under this Program, paramedics with appropriate training will visit seniors and others in their homes to assist with less-urgent and non-urgent medical issues.

Paramedics will also play a role in supporting the Province's current homecare services. Studies show that most Islanders want to remain in their homes. Supporting this wish is good for Islanders, good for our communities and good for our health care budget.

Having paramedics go into Island homes will decrease pressure on our emergency rooms, resulting in more efficient and timely service for other Islanders.

This Program will start in Eastern Kings with the intention of expanding it to other parts of rural Prince Edward Island.

The Community Paramedicine Program is not intended to replace any existing health service. On the contrary, the intention is to add this Program to the services currently offered.

In fact, the Liberal Party recognizes that Eastern Kings has experienced some struggles when it comes to timely ambulance response times. This is a particular challenge given the large geographical area that needs to be covered.

I am very happy to announce that a Liberal government will fund an additional ambulance for the Eastern Kings fleet. This additional ambulance will help alleviate some of these challenges.

Many of our paramedics are trained here in Prince Edward Island through Holland College's increasingly-recognized program for Advanced Care Paramedics. This program has seen many graduates stay and work here in our province.

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## Leader's Remarks

A Liberal Government will pursue discussions on the introduction of a Bachelor of Science in Paramedicine here on Prince Edward Island.

These initiatives will ensure Islanders receive more timely access to care.

I also want to speak to you on the issue of Health PEI. This community has made its views very clear – you want more opportunity for input into decisions made by the Board of Health PEI.

The Liberal Party supports this position. Our Party believes that it is essential for Islanders from all parts of the Province to have meaningful input into the decisions made by Health PEI.

It is for this reason that I am announcing the establishment of Advisory Councils for each of Kings, Queens and Prince County. These councils will be composed of interested Islanders from each of the Counties who will provide input and advice to the Board of Health PEI.

Ladies and gentlemen ... the continued delivery of timely and quality health care has never been more challenging or important. The Liberal Party is committed to making meaningful improvements in our healthcare system.

By maintaining the current complement of family doctors, introducing the Community Paramedicine Program and establishing Health Advisory Councils ... we can make significant improvements in the quality of care in Eastern Kings.

Thank you for coming.

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