

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY *Under embargo until speech begins*

Date: **April 13, 2015 - Charlottetown**

Thank you for coming.

The Liberal Party's key policy themes in this campaign are People, Prosperity and Engagement.

Last week we focused on the "People" theme and ... in particular ... on policy measures that will improve access to quality health care.

This week we are focusing on the theme of "Prosperity" and ... in particular ... jobs and economic growth.

Prince Edward Island has made significant progress in these areas over the past several years.

More Islanders are working than ever before ... and our gross domestic product has grown from 4.6 billion in 2007 to 5.8 billion in 2013.

In spite of this progress ... there is much more that needs to be done.

The Liberal Party believes that in order to create more jobs and economic growth we will work with Islanders on six strategic priorities:

First ... we need to place increased emphasis on our food sector. Our primary industries of farming and fishing are a vital component of our provincial economy.

Second ... we need to pursue additional growth in knowledge-based industries. We will build on the success of sectors such as bioscience, information and communications technologies, and aerospace, plus a growing cluster in marine technologies.

Third ... we need to build a greater culture of entrepreneurship. New entrepreneurs and small businesses will help lead economic growth.

Fourth ... we need to focus on trade, export and prospecting by continuing to close the gap between our imports and exports.

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Leader's Remarks

Fifth ... we need to support growth and specialization in tourism, arts and culture; and

Finally ... we need to develop and implement a clear strategy to build a sustainable population and workforce.

Over the course of this week, and throughout the coming weeks, we will address each of these priorities.

Today I would like to start by speaking about the importance of our food sector, and how we can do more.

The simple fact is ... we produce world-class food.

We always have.

45 years ago Stompin' Tom was singing about Bud the Spud ... and potatoes remain our leading agricultural export today.

But as successful as our potato industry has ... and continues ... to be ... potatoes aren't our only world-class food product.

Our oysters are widely known as well ... and in significant demand.

Prince Edward Island produces the best mussels in the world, and accounts for 80 per cent of Canada's mussel production.

Marketing campaigns such as "Burger Love" and the good work done by those at the PEI Beef Plant have raised the profile of Island beef.

More and more Islanders are growing and buying organic food.

Blueberry production and processing is expanding.

And of course our lobster industry continues to produce an excellent product that remains a significant source of employment across our Province.

When you stop and think about it ... it is truly amazing that such a small Province can produce so much world-quality food.

We really are the "Garden of the Gulf"... and we need to play to our strengths.

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Leader's Remarks

The Liberal Party believes that the quality of our food products is a key strength that distinguishes us from other jurisdictions ... and that we must use that strength to create more jobs for Islanders.

A few weeks ago ... I spoke at the Easter Beef Show about the importance of a food strategy for our Province. Working in co-operation with the Federal Government ... we can do a great deal to expand sales and grow employment in this area.

We can increase the number of new products being developed.

We can leverage technology to further improve productivity.

We can support the launch of new PEI companies focused on food.

We can promote PEI as a destination for culinary tourism.

We can develop, coordinate and market the PEI Food brand and our Province as "Canada's Food Island".

There are thousands of Islanders already employed ... directly and indirectly ... in the production of food.

By placing even more focus on this sector of our economy ... and coordinating our efforts ... we will create even more jobs for Islanders.

A Liberal Government will take a number of other measures designed to strengthen our primary industries and increase employment.

We will extend the Low Interest Loan Program for Island Fishers.

We will support science-backed programs for lobster fishers to improve overall product quality.

We will work with the potato industry and our federal partners to assist growers and processors in acquiring scanning and metal detection equipment.

We will expand the Island's fresh lobster holding capacity through the expansion of existing facilities and ... where required ... the establishment of new facilities.

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Leader's Remarks

We will provide additional investments to support operations at our PEI Beef Plant.

And we will establish new lending programs for PEI beef farmers to launch a new "PEI Lean Beef" initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen ... when it comes to job creation and wealth generation ... we need to play to our strengths.

We have a competitive advantage over most jurisdictions when it comes to food quality ... and we must do all that we can to realize upon that advantage.

By working together, we can build upon the success of our world-class food products and create more jobs for Islanders.

Thank you for coming.

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