

Amy Coady
President
Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador
1-79 Mews Place,
St. John's , NL A1B 4N2

Dear President Coady,

Thank you for your letter and questionnaire addressing matters of importance to local municipal government in our province.

It has long been the belief of our Liberal Government that healthy and prosperous communities are indicative of a healthy and prosperous province. I truly believe that our province thrives when our communities thrive.

Let me also take this moment quickly to offer your Board and staff our heartfelt thanks for the amazing contribution you make, not only to your towns as elected officials, but to the advancement of local government across our province.

Your work is noticed and truly appreciated by your government.

Please see attached the answers to the questions you have posed.

Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

John Hogan

MNL Questions for Election 2025

Q-1 Will your party commit to developing a 10- to 20-year provincial infrastructure strategy focused on innovation, tailored to Newfoundland and Labrador's geography and inclusive of the financial/technical realities of small municipalities?

Changing demographics, the ongoing evolution of priorities and complicated geography, as well as the changing priorities of our federal partners, all have an impact on the provincial infrastructure planning process. Your Liberal government recognizes the need for a longer-term commitment to providing infrastructure development within the sector and we look forward to continuing our work with MNL, and other stakeholders, on developing a positive infrastructure strategy throughout our province.

Q-2 Does your party agree to conduct a comprehensive review of municipal funding tools, recognizing that property tax alone is insufficient to meet modern infrastructure and operational demands?

Your Liberal Government has always supported towns when it comes to their ability to raise local revenue, and we will continue to do so. Our government and our department of Municipal Affairs and Community Engagement remain committed to helping local government find ways to meet their financial obligations. It may well be time to conduct a scan of other jurisdictions as a first step in opening discussions on other revenue sources. This is an area that should be explored following the provincial election.

Q-3 How does your party plan to work with the Federal Government to resolve policing challenges in rural communities?

Even though crime rates have risen, up by approximately 5%, our province remains one of the safest places in Canada to live. We now have 46 police detachments in the province made up of RCMP and RNC policing services.

Budget 2025 included over \$50 million for new initiatives including five new RCMP officers in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and 10 new RNC officers for the Northeast Avalon, and last month we announced the creation of the new RNC Special Constables program, which will increase the RNC's presence on the streets while freeing up front-line officers for core policing functions. The Police Transformation Working Group, established in 2023, continues to evaluate the current provincial policing model and provide ongoing advice to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians receive the most effective and efficient policing services possible.

Last week, we announced our continued commitment to safer communities. This included hiring 90 new RNC officers by 2030 to reach and maintain the Canadian police to population ratio, increasing the new RNC recruit bursary to \$20,000, re-negotiating the contract policing agreement with the RCMP to ensure that they deploy 30 additional officers, implementing the RCMP Auxiliary program for rural detachments, and providing additional funding to municipalities to hire and train additional municipal enforcement officers, and further empower them to enforce by-laws and deter criminal behaviour.

We will continue to work closely with the RNC and RCMP to keep our communities safe!

Q-4 Cellular service has become an indispensable public utility. What is your party's plan for ensuring residents have cellular access in their towns and cities?

Connectivity is incredibly important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. While cellular service is a federal responsibility, we are committed to working with communities, service providers, and the Federal Government to find the best technical solutions and ensure reliable cellular coverage for everyone.

We will continue to advocate to the Federal Government and service providers for more investment in infrastructure, especially on highways, roadways, and in rural and remote communities.

Budget 2025 included another \$16.5 million for connectivity initiatives.

Over the last decade some \$750 million has been invested through our partnership with the federal government and Bell Canada in what, Mark McDonald, the Vice President of Bell called a collaborative partnership designed to deliver much needed connectivity services to rural communities. Last spring \$2 million was allocated to improve services to three rural communities. This funding is part of the agreement for the province-wide radio system that was announced in 2023 with an investment of over \$181 million over 12 years.

While much has been done there is more to do, and our government is committed to getting this work completed.

Q-5 Will your party commit to adopting a formalized regional approach to address shared municipal infrastructure challenges and improve service delivery?

A formal regional structure could provide significant benefits for our residents, however, opposition to the concept forced government to suspend its earlier efforts in this area. The focus today centers on recognizing that not all regions are the same. Modernizing

municipal government and adopting regional structures must be done in collaboration with communities themselves and not be considered a “top down” directive. We look forward to working with MNL on new regional initiatives following the current writ period.

Q-6 To address harassment-related challenges, additional tools and supports are required for the sector, including access to enhanced training, Employee Assistance Programming, and a dedicated anti-harassment campaign. What steps will your party take toward providing this support?

We know there are challenges facing local governments as we move through this decade. Declining population, the aging out of community volunteers, increasing harassment of officials and the weaponization of our new Code of Conduct Act as well as a constant stream of ATIPP requests have all led to a decline in retaining qualified staff and councillors. For example, for the municipal election on Oct 2nd, there are many councils that are acclaimed, many without a full slate of councillors to serve, and a number of towns that will require special elections to fill vacant seats.

Our government is determined to address the issues involved here. We are committed to enhanced training, providing employee assistance, including a new mental health training program that is currently being developed, and we will be looking at the Code of Conduct Act with a view to amending it if necessary. We will seek input from Stakeholders like MNL.

Q-7 Will your party commit to prioritizing the update of the three Cities Acts?

Updating and modernizing the City of Mount Pearl Act and the City of Corner Brook City Act is well underway. When complete, the cities will enjoy more enabling legislation, and we will have designed an Act that allows other growing communities to seek city status as well. The City of St. John’s Act will differ in some ways from the Cities Act when it’s complete, but like the Cities Act, it is actively being worked on. We hope that all three will be completed within the next year.

Q-8 Does your party commit to working with municipalities to ensure employment programs meet their needs?

The simple answer is, yes! We will always work with municipalities on the proper approach to use when it comes to employment programs that are accessed by our local governments. A discussion on this topic should be added as an agenda item when the next quarterly meeting takes place.