



May 21st, 2021

Honourable Dr. Andrew Furey
Premier
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Confederation Building
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J6

Dear Premier Furey,

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour (NLFL) represents 70,000 unionized workers and their families, who live in every single community in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), and work in every sector of our economy.

Working with unions across the province, and our like-minded partners and allies in civil society, we strive on behalf of all workers in our province for a strong, just, resilient and growing economy, and a more equal and fair society.

We have reviewed the content and recommendations prepared by Chair Moya Greene that are laid out in the Premier's Economic Recovery Team Report, "The Big Reset".

Our message is clear and unanimous. We are deeply concerned with the Report and reject its analysis and its conclusions. The recovery team has used unconventional accounting practices and non-standard measures of our provincial debt, to create panic and stoke fear, while ignoring critical information about our assets and available revenue streams.

The recommendations put forward as the only solutions to the province's fiscal challenges have been debunked by 20 years of economic research. Massive cuts to public services, centralization and privatization measures, and the sale of revenue-generating public assets are gratuitous and unnecessary, tantamount to cutting off your leg to heal a sprained ankle. To deal with the debt, we need a strong economy and confidence, not panic and austerity.

- We reject the recommended massive spending cuts, which would result in thousands of jobs lost throughout the economy, especially when our unemployment rate remains at crisis levels;
- We reject the indirect job and wage cuts, and the gutting of services Newfoundland and Labrador residents rely on that would occur through the recommended privatization and contracting-out of the "alternative service delivery" schemes;
- We reject the recommendation of selling off public assets, including assets that generate revenue streams for government; and



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- We reject the total contempt for workers' rights and fair collective bargaining, both of which are enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and have been upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada. Recommending compensation cuts, pension downgrading and legislative measures will only serve to erode rights fairly negotiated by working people.

We fully appreciate the fiscal situation of the province and the challenges we face. However, the responsibility for addressing these challenges cannot be solely borne by the workers who have already sacrificed so much to move this province forward and keep our people safe during the pandemic.

“The Big Reset” failed to discuss the many fair revenue options that the government has open to it - options that together would be more than sufficient to address the structural deficit. The direct and indirect cuts, the asset sales and the worker punishments are not needed in order to address the deficit and debt.

The Premier's Economic Recovery Team has done a grave disservice to working families of Newfoundland and Labrador, by ignoring the crises of chronic unemployment and inequality, and failing to acknowledge our unique demographic context. The Report also fails to propose much needed strategies to prepare the labour market, including a just transition to protect workers as the province moves to green jobs, youth recruitment and retention, investment in public education, and immigration. In addition, the Report missed the mark on effective measures to ensure decent, fair and safe work, fair and progressive taxation, and poverty reduction.

The report fails to set out a full and realistic vision for building a strong economy. The report references the ‘green economy’, but its recommendations in this area are vague, weak, and out of step with what leading jurisdictions are doing. As the world transitions to a green economy, we must ensure that we are also doing all that we can to provide a just and fair transition for workers.

To attract and retain working-age families, we need a concrete plan to create good jobs in energy efficiency, electrification, renewable energy and clean industries. We need communities with robust social infrastructure, supported by a strong public sector and quality public services that enable families, local businesses and communities to thrive and create decent, fair and safe work for all.

The Report clearly demonstrates that the “Recovery Team” is out of touch with the realities facing the vast majority of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This austerity report is little more than an attempt to resuscitate an anti-government ideology that is frankly a faded and discredited relic of the 1980s.



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A more inclusive, transparent and representative team and process would have understood the fact that you can't build back better and leave the majority of the population worse-off. Opting for austerity is misguided and irresponsible when there are better options that would balance the budget and help build an economy that works for everyone.

We welcome your commitment to an open and full consultation process, and implore you to consider and weigh all options as you make decisions that will chart a course for Newfoundland and Labrador in the coming decades.

We are committed to working with you to this end, but we will be equally committed to working against these recommendations if they are enacted. Workers built this province and we have a collective responsibility to look after each other and our land. We have the obligation, the opportunity, and the privilege to do whatever is in our collective power to build our economy and society in a way that leaves no one behind.

Yours truly,

Mary Shortall
President, Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Labour

Jerry Earle
President, NAPE
NLFL Executive V.P. - NAPE

Yvette Coffey
President, RNUNL
NLFL Executive V.P. – RNUNL



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Tracey Pinder
Atlantic Regional Director, CUPE
NLFL Executive V.P. - CUPE

Sherry Hillier
President, CUPE NL
NLFL First V.P.

Colleen Coffey
Regional Executive Vice-President, PSAC Atlantic Region

Mike Furlong
President, USW Local 5795
NLFL Executive V.P. - USW

Jake Lane
Business Manager, IBEW Local 1615
NLFL Affiliate V.P. - IBEW

Bev Burke
V.P. Eastern Provinces Council, UFCW
NLFL Executive V.P., UFCW



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Dr. William Schipper
MUNFA President

Dean Ingram
President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

Linda MacNeil
Unifor Atlantic Regional Director

Gordon Piercey
President, Association of Allied Health Professionals

Keith Sullivan
President, Fish, Food & Allied Workers – Unifor

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