

Another Way Forward in Dealing with a Fiscal Crisis that has been Exposed by the Health Crisis?

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There is a right way and then there is the current way forward. Here are some guiding principles to think about as a process as a better way to move us forward.

1. **Be a leader and be motivated by what is in the best interest of the entire province! Espouse a well-thought-out plan and a clearly articulated vision for the kind of society to which Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should aspire and can afford. This approach should be explicit about the specific programs and policies that are required.**
 - a. Gaining power is a necessary first step in implementing any vision, but it should not be the primary factor in motivating policy development nor should it deteriorate into simple pandering. We need effective leadership! Newfoundland and Labrador deserves effective leadership!
2. **Engage in clear, open, and transparent communications that involve real discussions that clearly identifies both the challenges before us and the evidence that needs to be considered. This should ensure that everyone understands what is at stake, the possible avenues for action, the real trade-offs involved and that there is neither a “free lunch” nor an altruistic saviour coming to save us!**
 - a. Obfuscation and perplexity are never optimal. The time has come for long-run thinking, to implement sustainable solutions, and for the bureaucracy, given their technical expertise, to enable politicians to understand the strengths and weaknesses of various policies. Currently, the bureaucracy appears to be perceived as a mechanism for simply rationalizing political agendas or posturing. Government officials are advisors, they should not be “yes minster” people!
3. **Let science, economics, statistics, and mathematics be your friends and unleash evidence-based decision-making.**
 - a. Regrettably, the existence of political patronage and self-interested opinions are part of the costs of democracy. However, it cannot be the dominant operational strategy utilized for policy development. Let’s think big picture!
4. **To achieve your vision, develop and implement effective and sustainable public policies which are based upon the evidence, not anecdotes and not simply political will.**
 - a. Pretending a problem does not exist (kicking the can down the road) and hoping it will dissipate with time is not a good strategy. In times of crisis, when there is a choice between populism (or pandering) and realism, choose honesty. In times of economic and fiscal crisis, we need leaders, not politicians to tell us what they think we want to hear.

