

Joanna Killen

She/Her • Saint John-Lancaster • Green Party

Candidate #07

1. Why are you running in this election?

Well, I actually didn't expect to run in this election, but the reason that I wanted to step up, it felt like a natural progression from working on a few issues in Saint John. So I was working with FLIP and I was also working on a project around defunding the police, working on how we can hold our police accountable and transparent in Saint John. And so all this kind of work I've been doing in the community, sitting on boards, et cetera, really led me to want to contribute in a more meaningful way. And the party I'm with really aligns with a lot of my values, not everything perfectly, but a really good chunk. So when the opportunity came up, I just spoke to them and they offered to support me in the run for this riding.

2. Describe how the time living in your riding has informed your qualifications as a candidate.

I've lived in my riding. I was born here. I was raised here. I went to school at St. Pat's and Beaconsfield. And also my family is probably like five generations deep on the West side. So I'm very well connected with the church network. I grew up Catholic, so my family is very well connected and involved with a lot of these people's lives. And it's less about religion now than it is about community. So I grew up going to church breakfasts and things like that, but there was lots of other community events. I also went to the Baptist Bible camp and, you know, different things around the West side. So it's just been like, I've been so attached to it: It's beaches, it's organizations, it's community events, it's people, for as long as I can remember.

3. Describe how your time living in New Brunswick has informed your qualifications as a candidate.

So I've done a lot of work in economic development and ended up working with people across the province for the last seven years. And it's really informed me on just how different and totally different communities are in New Brunswick and how proud folks are to be from all those places. So I think it's like this thing where understanding small businesses and helping them from across the province, I've come to learn that we are a super diverse group of people in many ways. I also camp in Charlotte County, we hang out with lots of folks in the country too, and just know that there's a lot of different issues people face, even if you drive like an hour away. So I feel that's really helped me inform myself on the nuances of dealing with our province as a whole.

4. How does your experience (ie. education, lived experience, workplace) contribute to your qualifications as a candidate?

So I am a typical millennial who until I started my own business was job hopping every year and a half, two years. So in my background, I've worked at T4G, I've worked at the Delta, I've worked at Brunswick Square as a marketing manager, I was a waitress, I helped my ex-husband start four restaurants. I have volunteered for almost my entire life. I started my first business at 19. So I really have tried so many different ways to be super involved, both in my business and personal time with what's going on in Saint John and New Brunswick in general. So I've been able to, because of my work in economic development, be able to go. And in my work experience, travel to conferences, the state of the province, the different sort of things that have been happening around our province for the last 10 years. And I've been able to be like a participant in a lot of that. So I think I'm fortunate that my profession has also led me to have community leadership experience, but I think, you know, no matter what I've been in my own business, we volunteer a lot of our time with high school, middle school kids doing entrepreneurship. I work with Community Loan Fund. I do a lot of work with their Enterprising Women Programs. So I'm trying to have a career that is not just a moneymaker, but one that also is doing things in the community as well.

5. If elected, what will be your top 5 priorities for your riding?

Number one, I feel is tax reform, but as subsection of tax reform, which is figuring out how Saint John can actually receive a hundred percent of the money that goes to Fredericton. To me that one is like the lowest hanging fruit in the tax reform issue list. So after that, I think it is about getting a reassessment done on all of the property tax deals that were made. So I'd say that's number two, tax reform subsection, getting an understanding of what all these exemptions were about. Number three is adequately providing for services in New Brunswick. And in order for that to happen, those first two things have to happen. So it's not that it isn't the first priority. I just understand that those are two things that we can do right now without getting into a lot of stuff with unions. And that to me is like a very long, long, long journey and figuring that particular part of tax reform out. So with those first two things then we're able to properly fund the services we need. So let's talk about in that subsection, access to healthcare. So we obviously do not have adequate enough access to healthcare with Clinic 554 closing, and reg. 84-20 still existing. So we need the funds to properly create an accessible healthcare network. And that to me would be the number three thing.

So, get the money invested into making sure everyone has the suite of services that every city has, even if you're in St. Stephen, even if you're in Campbellton, et cetera.

Number four for me is a socially just economy. So as it stands right now, a lot of small businesses pay a lot of tax and have a big burden on them because the larger companies aren't paying their fair share. So we would need, I think, to look at how we can encourage people to actually be okay to start small businesses right now. I see it as too big of a risk for a ton of people. There's also a lot of nuances in there around EI. So like, if you are someone who wants to start a small business, it's very hard for you to do that because you can't make too much money or else you lose all these benefits. And it's not just the financial benefits, it's the, you know, your Medicare extra benefits, the different things that you get when you're on social

assistance. So we've created a huge barrier there when it comes to "people lifting themselves up by their bootstraps". So I think like actually looking at the economy in a way where it's, how can we make it more just, is something very specific to my background that I think I could really contribute to.

And the fifth thing I think is this concept, knowing my riding, knowing that everyone is really concerned about jobs, is how do we switch over to renewables and in a much more accelerated pace. I went to the wind presentation and they're like, "Oh no, you know, by 2023"...and I understand these things take time, but how do we accelerate renewables being a part of the New Brunswick kind of fabric and how can we make it really easy for folks to switch over from... if you need an upgrade and you're an industry, like what do we need to do to make it? So it's easier for a small business or a company to stop using fossil fuels, et cetera. So I think that'd be number five.

6. LGBTQ+ and reproductive healthcare

As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as a woman, I have gone through our service system as it comes to this and it is not accessible. It is not doctors and nurses, et cetera. People have not gotten the proper kind of empathetic care model that I've seen in other places where they're not understood, they're not well educated on it. We need to actually mandate that that's a thing. So honestly the education piece around healthcare in this respect, I think it will be a big learning curve, for physicians and folks in New Brunswick. So I do think that solutions wise if we're going to transform our healthcare system into one that this stuff is available in every community, we need to make sure that the frontline folks, the ones who are right with our people are well aware of these issues and are able to, you know, actually care for folks who are LGBTQ+ or in a reproductive health situation. So I think we need to focus on that component as a building block, to having accessible healthcare everywhere in New Brunswick.

7. Access to mental health and/or addictions services

So this is a concept that I also can speak to. We run a peer support groups for entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs often do not have any coverage at all for things like therapy or counseling. You have to sort of be connected to the old corporate benefits structure in order to do that. So my idea would be that we would start to look at how we fund nonclinical, nonmedical, mental health care. There's lots of counselors and therapists and folks like Family Plus, different places that could use a program for instance, to be able to expand their capacity. So we are always hearing, we have a hard time finding medical staff, medical people, doctors, et cetera, to move here. So why wouldn't we try to strengthen the capacity of the folks that are having to charge people to stay alive as a nonprofit in order to make sure that we actually have capacity to help people. So I would think we would try and bring those people under some kind of funding umbrella to make it so there is more places that people can go in their own communities to access mental health care. And also, I don't think we should have a cap on the amount of appointments for instance, that someone needs. That's another cultural thing in New Brunswick. And a lot of corporate benefits packages is a three session cap. I think that hopefully a program like I'm dreaming of would fund those folks to be able to bill whatever it is back to the province.

8. Glyphosate use in New Brunswick

So I absolutely think the glyphosate problem here in New Brunswick is one that needs to be eradicated. There's no reason for us to be using such a harsh chemical on forest, that for one, have been monoculture, meaning that they are one type of harvestable lumber. We need to look at mixed use forests. And the fact is the glyphosate is used for a very specific purpose and is not a good contributor to having a forest that is actually natural and mixed in the sense that it is a New Brunswick -led trees, New Brunswick-led forest, trees that were here naturally before we were clear cutting and doing all these drastic things to our forest basically here. So I support a full ban on any kind of pesticide that is going to take out the natural culture of this place.

9. Access to affordable housing in Saint John

So in my work at the Community Loan Fund, I witnessed the building of a two unit building with \$105,000 to do which was such a good price. They had Catapult working on it. They brought in this whole team of people who should be doing this project. Anyway, it was so hard. It was so hard. It took literally over a year and a half to secure \$105,000. And I know for a fact that the province has made deals, worked out things with Wayne Long, et cetera, to have an affordable housing plan. I see the people actually doing that work, running into barriers left, right, and center. So I know there is enough people who are able to come and build these units here, and the province is literally blocking them from accessing the funding in a meaningful way. So again, the money is there and we need to let the people do the work they need to do. Saint John knows how, what it needs. So we need to take the chains off of these programs that I have seen in the application forms. I've seen how difficult it is to work with program officers. That has to end. That culture thing has to end because there's a ton of folks who are ready to activate and actually create this, create these units and do this kind of work. Like the Teen Resource Center has a huge list of young people who need housing along with community, living along with, you know, Coverdale, et cetera. We know what we need. We have the people who want to build it, but we need to unlock that funding. So I think that's my biggest thing is figuring out why that has yet to be unlocked yet.

10. Police funding in Saint John

So we do not get to see what really the police spend money on, and that is a very deeply concerning thing to me. So I honestly believe that it's a complicated issue with the police commission and how things can get done, et cetera. But in my research around this issue, I realized that New Brunswick is one of the only provinces that does not have a meaningful citizen led sort of oversight committee, group, et cetera. So I think that really has to change. I think that's like another thing like tax reform, like, what is Step One here? So I think Step One is we need to see inside and under the hood, like, what is everyone doing? Why does it take this long for sexual assault cases to be addressed? I have my own personal experiences in dealing with the police where I was not, I don't believe, effectively handled. So I know that these things have happened and we need to know what the deal is, and actually have a system where we can hold people accountable for things that happen. Especially our police, as we do pay \$26 million to them every year. And I think if they are truly community minded, then we'll all be able

to come to the table and try and figure out a better way to actually provide public safety. Because at this point, I don't know how safe people feel, and that should be really the utmost importance of the leading public safety group in this town. So, we need to find a way to talk and understand what their challenges are. So then we can go advocate back to the province for the things that we need and that they think we need.

11. Reporting and investigations of sexual assaults

So we definitely need to have some sort of oversight, accountability, subsection of whatever this might look like, because this one is something that has plagued our city for decades, I think, and honestly it really is something that needs a process around how it is addressed because obviously the way people feel at this point is that no one is feeling supported, and that is a huge red flag for a community, for its' people, not to trust law enforcement. So in order for that to change, they need to admit to it. And again, like I said in my last question, like open up the hood, how do you guys do this? Educate us, tell us how you investigate this kind of thing, let us know as a community, what can we be doing? Like, I think for too long, just the police have felt like they have it all under control and that no one in the community really knows what we're talking about, but that's not the case. There's lots of people who have experience outside of here who understand how other places handle it. You know, there's the Philadelphia model. There's tons there to replicate, but they need to be willing to see the problem first. And that, I think, has been the challenge up to this point in what I see going on. And that has to be a number one thing. Again, you have to admit your mistakes so that you can improve and we need to get the police to the table in order to do that.

12. Municipal and Industrial Tax reform

So we need to reassess this whole beast that's been created what I understand over the past 60 years, there's just been willy-nilly kind of deals made each time there is a new development. So in my time at economic development, I sort of witnessed this play out in some ways with regards to subsidies that would come from ONB or from PEDL for wages, et cetera. It's always sort of an ad-hoc process based on what party is in power that time. So in our majority government history, we've just had people to create these deals. So I think what we need to see, what was the deal made? Why was it? How long was the timeline? You know, why was it made? And then we need to create a process going forward where it's like, okay, here's the things that are applicable for tax exemption. I don't think McCain foods should qualify as a farmer for instance, which makes them exempt from property tax at this time. And there needs to be some kind of two bracket system where sure, if you're a small town farmer, you should absolutely have a tax break because you're trying to feed your local community. But if you're exporting to millions and billions of dollars of our potatoes, that's not the same situation. So for industrial and, you know, tax reform there, we need to look at what is the company, why do they have this deal? And what is the timeline on this property tax break? Because I don't think anyone has that process built and it's missing. That's a huge missing component in our government.

13. Access to public transit in Saint John

Well, honestly, I'm appalled at the way public transit has been eroded, at least even over the course of my lifetime. And they've made it so difficult and made it such a fight within Saint John to access and have a good transit service that is fundamentally funded as a utility. It should not be something that needs to create enough revenue in order for it to survive. It is not some sort of limousine as in the old song. Like you say as everyone thinks, it's something that's going to facilitate people getting around as well as actually reducing carbon emissions overall. So if anything, we need to strengthen our transit system and create one that's even more accessible, because of the fact that Saint John, Fredericton, and Moncton, inside of Saint John city limits, we have a huge area. We need to service everybody. So if that takes, you know, petitioning the federal government to make it so people can get to the hospital on a bus, then that's what we should be doing.

14. Access to affordable childcare in Saint John

Much like the story I told earlier, my partner went through this with trying to access daycare subsidies here in this province. So right now they've made it so it's really difficult. Her two kids had two different program officers, tons of forms, tons of scans, tons of things she had to send in like proof of how much she made, which is fine. We can do those things, sure. But the system, as it's set up currently, makes it almost completely impossible for someone who doesn't have access to a computer or who doesn't have the wherewithal to fill out so many forms, et cetera. So they've made it completely where they have daycare facilities, but they make it almost impossible and they make you want to quit. So this is another thing where we need to have universal access to childcare for kids, not just when they're zero to school age, but for afterschool, it needs to be afterschool program, universal health care programs. And when I lived in Denmark, they were pretty much built into every institution that I could find. So even if you were a corporation, you had a childcare facility and in the first floor that was funded by the government. So I think that in order to be a part of a society where people have to work and you wanted to have children as well in order to perpetuate that said society, then you need to have a built-in childcare if you want people to work because it's a mortgage payment right now for folks to pay for daycare. If you make \$55,000 or above, it's \$1,480 for a month for two kids in daycare, that is, it's more than a lot of people's rent. So, you know, it's unacceptable that we live in a country, in a province as rich as this is and aren't able to take care of the precious few that are left here in that even in that age bracket, it's something we've heard for years is that there's not going to be enough kids to take care of, you know, this society that is coming and yet we don't want to fund them. So that to me has never made good sense. And honestly, the people in there are frontline workers for people who have to go back to work and that's just unfair across so many reasons.

15. Media Ownership in New Brunswick

New Brunswick as it stands now, and far as I can tell, is basically, I took Atlantic Canadian history in university and... It's a feudal system. So basically we have certain Lords and they may be in government, or they may be as head of a corporation or head of a rich family, but there's this culture of people not being allowed to speak out because they're scared of what the Lords are going to do. And Irving has made it another level, more impossible with owning every single

news outlet in this province practically, besides the ones that are coming up now that are grassroots and trying to combat this. They make it so headlines are twisted. They make it so information is left out. It is like a completely propaganda based situation we have here in New Brunswick. And we, as citizens, have watched them buy up every single little tiny newspaper. And I've heard really wild stories about how they would try and bankrupt some of these ones in central New Brunswick as well, the little sort of more rural newspapers. It was a complete corporate takeover that unfolded over many years. And unfortunately, as a society, we have to make the decision on whether we are okay with that or not. And so I've seen it said that we have to sort of trust bust, this kind of thing, as much as I see in their explanation of how it's not all one company, it's still all one family. And that to me is a huge problem with New Brunswick and having to serve a family because you cannot truly speak out. You cannot truly speak your mind because A. It might not get published or B. They will completely turn it around on you. So I've watched that happen to a lot of my very smart activist friends, and this kind of thing will only happen in the vacuum that it is here because we don't have anyone big enough to challenge them back. So I think trust busting would be my favorite idea when it comes to media ownership.