

VOTE JONATHAN STARLING

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR BERMUDA

www.votestarling.com

About Jonathan Starling

Jonathan Starling has been **an active** voice in Bermudian politics since 2003 and an online political commentator since 2007 with his Catch-A-Fire blog. A **community activist** in Bermuda, Canada and Scotland, Jonathan has been involved in movements to promote peace, social justice, women's rights, anti-racism and a healthy environment for all.

With a background in biology and anthropology, and Master's degrees in Ecological Economics and Urban and Regional Planning, **Jonathan has the expertise and experience that Bermuda needs** for balancing the competing interests of society, the economy and the environment.

Having worked for the Department of Conservation Services and Forest Research in the UK, he has hands-on experience with Bermuda's environmental problems and knowledge of international best practice on balancing social, economic and environmental issues.

Passionate about social justice, gender and racial equality, participatory democracy and a healthy, safe and green society, Jonathan Starling has the experience, skills and passion to work for you as an independent voice for the island's most pressing issues.

Priorities

Jonathan Starling will work passionately to make issues of social, economic and environmental justice central to decision-making and policy. He believes the environment is much more than corals and trees: the environment is where we live, where we work and where we play.

- **A Just Society**
- **A Safe Society**
- **A Healthy & Green Society**
- **A Democratic Society**

This Platform sets out a number of policies or positions that I will pursue in Parliament.

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A Just Society

We live in a deeply unequal and unjust society. Women find themselves objectified in everyday life, they share an unequal – and unpaid – burden of domestic labour and childcare, experience pay inequity and are subject to gross domestic and sexual violence.

Our society continues to be haunted by the past injustices of slavery and segregation, with wealth and social capital inequalities largely still reflecting our racial divisions.

While government policies and legislation can only do so much, they form a starting place for building a more just society, one that we can be collectively proud about and one that will become a fitting legacy for our future.

Once elected I will work with my fellow MPs and civil society to:

- Make paid parental leave mandatory for both parents for at least 48 weeks, with guaranteed right-of-return to ones' job after. Allow flexibility in how this time is taken from the second trimester to the third birthday; cost to be split equally between Government and the employer.
- Equal gender representation at all levels of Government, including Government boards.
- Amend the Employment Act 2000 to provide new parents with double the current allowed sick days, with the cost equally split between the State and the employer, until child's fifth birthday.
- Enact Workforce Equity legislation to require all workplaces with more than 10 employees to develop a workplace equity review and plan to ensure gender and racial equity in the workplace concerning wages and decision-making. Enable workers to seek compensation for unequal gender or racial pay regimes up until the year 2000.
- Ensure that the Human Rights Act is amended to include sexual orientation.

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- Ensure full reproductive rights and sexual health for all:
 - o Provision of free and confidential morning-after pills available at all pharmacies;
 - o Provision of free condoms at all pharmacies, licensed establishments and post-offices;
 - o Lift the restrictions on abortion and allow their free and confidential provision.
- Require all workplaces with more than ten employees to provide free on-site day-care facilities for staff, and opening them to nearby smaller businesses.
- Facilitate a 'Big Conversation' on sexism, domestic and sexual violence.
- Facilitate the development of workers' cooperatives.
- Institute a mandatory minimum living wage.
- Declare Bermuda's waters and airspace a nuclear and military-free zone.
- Provide incentives to the private sector (BSX listed companies) to adopt published pay scales.
- Government tenders to be preferentially given to unionised workforces, or to companies abiding by existing union pay and work conditions when possible.

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A Safe Society

We all desire to live in a safe society, one where the fear of violence and the nightmares of drug addiction do not loom large in our consciousness. We all desire to raise our families and live in loving and safe neighbourhoods where going to school is something our children look forward to rather than fear, where we can enjoy everyday life without constantly looking over our shoulders.

To develop this safe society, we need to do more than treat the symptoms of crime. We need to ensure that in how we treat those symptoms, we don't make things worse.

One of the key steps towards this is ensuring that we prevent making criminals in the first place, and that those who need help with their addictions receive it rather than be forced to seek relief through criminality. Our current approach to drugs needs a fundamental change of direction away from ineffective prohibition and towards safe regulation.

We must also place the concepts of restorative justice at the centre of our justice system. This approach helps victims of crime recover from their trauma, and helps offenders come to terms with the impact of their actions, take responsibility and make amends for what they have done.

Based on these twin concepts of restorative justice and a progressive approach to addiction, once elected I will work to:

- Decriminalise personal possession of marijuana up to one ounce.
- Make medical marijuana available by prescription.
- Expand programs to provide free heroin substitutes to registered heroin addicts; trial the use of supervised medical grade heroin provision for chronic heroin addicts where methadone substitution has failed.
- Ensure a safe, confidential and medically staffed facility for addicts to ensure their health and safety, and those of the community.
- Trial the use of Ibogaine and cocaine vaccines for registered cocaine addicts.

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- Legislate mandatory ignition interlock devices (essentially a breathalyser connected to vehicle ignitions – available for motorbikes too) for all drivers who have been convicted of DUI.
- Investigate incentives for the voluntary adoption of ignition interlock devices for all vehicles.
- Reduce the blood-alcohol limit from 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood to 20 milligrams per 100 litres for 18-20 year olds, and to 50 milligrams per 100 litres for all other drivers.
- Institute a minimum price per unit of alcohol.
- Make drug-awareness education, addiction therapy and general counselling mandatory to all convicts, whether known drug-users or not.
- Expand the potential for alternatives-to-incarceration for non-violent offenders.
- Review the justice system with an intention of making restorative justice central.
- Expand community policing, with dedicated community police per parish, numbers to reflect parish population densities.
- Develop a national anti-bullying strategy for schools, including additional training for teachers for identifying and handling bullying, and mandatory courses for students on bullying and non-violent conflict resolution training.

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A Healthy and Green Society

All of us wish to live in a healthy society, one where we can exercise happily, where we can afford and enjoy nutritious diets, where our children can breathe fresh air and traffic and noise are no longer the stressors that they are today.

A commitment to realising a healthy environment for all is central to the vision of a just and safe society, one where everyday life is oriented towards being able to enjoy life rather than the restricted vision of profit margins and short-term convenience.

Once elected, I will work to develop the following:

Land Use

- Commission a report to critically review current land-use zonings which remain based on segregation-era residential zonings, with an emphasis on protecting open-space and creating a mixed-residential zoning system.
- Institute a Green-Space Equity Act to require every area with a population of 1,000 to develop a strategy to create a minimum of four acres of publicly accessible green-space, including two acres of children's playground area, as well as minimum green-space standards for new developments.
- Require each Parish Council to develop a Local Plan, in conjunction with a 'national' Bermuda Plan, to ensure that local concerns, needs and aspirations are addressed.
- Require both Environmental Impact Assessments and Equality Impact Assessments to be mandatory for all developments and plans (including SDOs), and require all SDOs to be subject to thorough public consultation.
- Develop incentives to encourage and reward land-owners that plant and protect native and endemic plants. Review existing legislation to ensure that they encourage rather than discourage such plantings.

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Housing

- Put an end to the policy of public funding of private home-ownership under the guise of affordable housing and replace it with a social-housing policy where tenants pay a geared-to-income rent for 25 years, after which they pay zero rent up until the tenancy is terminated or transferred to another member of the family.
- Develop a minimum housing standard (in terms of space, energy and water use/access, access to green-space, construction materials and security) and take into public ownership all housing that fails to meet these standards should the landlord fail to bring them up to this standard within eighteen months.
- Facilitate the development of Housing Associations in high-density deprived areas to facilitate redeveloping them to meet minimum housing standards and to prevent gentrification of these areas.
- One third of all new housing developments (condominiums), or every third house built by developers, to be affordable housing (in terms of a cap on rent or sale-price).

- Encourage the development of apartment buildings within the City of Hamilton, including affordable units, to reduce traffic congestion and to make the City a vibrant living city, but ensure that existing residents are not gentrified out.

Food

- Tax junk food to subsidise healthy food. Convene a panel of public health and nutrition specialists to develop respective lists of junk-foods and healthy foods, and set increased duties/taxation for junk-foods with the subsequent revenue being used to directly and proportionally reduce the cost of healthy foods.
- Establish a commission to investigate additional obstacles to healthy eating in Bermuda and review its recommendations for overcoming these obstacles.
- Encourage the consumption of local food through the addition of a carbon tax on imported produce, with the revenue generated used to subsidise the cost of local foodstuffs.

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- Support moves to encourage local food production through the expanded provision of communal seed-stocks developed for our climate or the support of new lines of food production, such as shell-fish aquaculture.
- Develop legislation to prohibit the importation, distribution and/or sale of genetically modified plants or seeds.
- Encourage further partnerships between local food producers and the hospitality industry.
- Assist neighbourhoods in taking over derelict arable land and converting it into community allotments.
- Assist neighbourhoods in developing local communal composting sites and providing them with small-scale composting units.
- Reinvigorate agricultural apprenticeships to include hands-on agricultural education as part of the school curriculum in order to encourage more individuals to consider agriculture and agronomy as viable career options.

Water

- Require all new buildings to install grey-water systems to recycle water and to use well water (where permissible) for grey-water purposes. Provide a property-tax break for properties which retroactively install these systems.
- Evaluate all existing hill water-catchments and, where needed, ensure their repair. Investigate the potential for dual-use in combination with solar-power panels to produce local clean power and reduce the need for fossil-fuel imports.
- Install sewage treatment plants into the Dockyard, St. Georges and City of Hamilton sewage systems to create grey water and reduce the environmental impact on our marine system.
- Ensure water equity. A minimum amount of water is a human right and water should not be treated as an expensive commodity.

- o Establish a commission to determine the minimum level of water necessary for the average household, and develop policies to ensure this level is available to all. These policies should be geared to income, designed to ensure that the less well-off have secure access to the minimum amount of water.
- o Low-income families are likely to be the least able to install retroactive grey-water systems (be they wells or recycling systems) and should receive assistance to enable their installation.

Energy

- Adopt an existing energy-efficiency labelling system (such as the EU energy labelling scheme) to determine increased taxation/duties on the least efficient appliances, with the revenue generated used to subsidise the most efficient appliances.
- Require all commercial buildings in the City of Hamilton to devote at least 25% of their roof-space to renewable energy production, with incentives to devote more roof-space.

- Implement net-metering so that individuals (residential or commercial) receive credit for excess energy production on their property by renewable energy systems.
- Facilitate the installation of an alternative energy plant, such as the proposed solar plant at the airport finger, and/or the pelamis wave-energy system to further reduce fossil-fuel dependency.
- Make energy equity central to energy policy:
 - o At a minimum, each household should have access to guaranteed power to run a fridge, a tank water-pump, and lighting for one room.
 - o Require all new residential buildings to install renewable energy devices sufficient for these purposes.
 - o Provide zero-interest loans to the lowest socio-economic groups to facilitate the retroactive installation of renewable energy systems for homeowners or an energy credit for tenants.

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Transport

- Repeal the relaxation of car-sizes, returning to compact cars only. Our roads are not designed for SUVs and other oversized cars.
- Phase out conventional fossil-fuelled cars by 2020. Encourage the transition to hybrid then electric cars through a carbon tax on petrol and increased duties on conventional fossil-fuelled cars. Use the resulting revenue to subsidise the cost of alternative vehicles.
- Make commuting by car into the City of Hamilton between 0800 and 0900hrs as the sole occupant a traffic violation to help discourage traffic congestion (Pembroke residents to be exempted).
- Investigate the potential for a total cap on private cars in Bermuda regardless of assessment number possession.
- Maintain an hourly bus-service on the main east and west routes from midnight to 0600hrs.
- Develop dedicated park-and-ride sites serviced by dedicated free shuttle-buses to reduce traffic congestion into the City of Hamilton.
- Investigate the feasibility of operating a ferry service to Flatts village.
- Make equity planning central to public transportation planning, with all existing routes and proposed changes, subject to an equality impact assessment.
- Ensure all bus-shelters are well lit with solar-powered lights to ensure security for passengers.
- Institute a public bicycle system where users can rent a bicycle, by deposit, with bike 'stations' in each Parish.

- Develop adequate public cycle storage and shower facilities for cyclists in the City of Hamilton.
- Further develop the railway trail as a pedestrian and cyclist route.
- Create bridges suitable for pedestrians and cyclists to reconnect the railway trail from Ferry Reach to Coney Island, across Baileys Bay and over Flatts Inlet.
- End the policy of rental scooters for tourists, to be replaced with Neighbourhood Electric Vehicles.

Waste

- Install in-vessel composting at the Pembroke Dump facility to replace the existing open-air system which is unsightly and prone to spontaneous combustion.

- Initiate a national composting strategy including curb-side collection of non-animal food waste.
- Implement a 'bottle bill' (beverage container deposit legislation) for glass and aluminium beverage containers to encourage a greater rate of recycling and reduce the public health and biodiversity risks of such litter.
- Require all resident or visiting pleasure boats with toilet facilities to dispose of their sewage at marinas connected to sewage treatment plants or one mile off-shore.
- Ban the sale of mylar-based (foil) helium balloons and the use of helium for balloons in general, and prohibit mass balloon releases.
- Expand the fishing lines recycling initiative to install recycling bins at all public docks, with monthly collection and increased education on the initiative.

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Public Education

- Maximum class sizes of no more than 20 students.
- Mandatory instruction in both Portuguese and American Sign Language in all school (make instruction in these languages to be available for all civil servants whose work involves direct interaction with the public, with at least one person per department to be fully qualified in each).
- Extend the school day to 5pm.
- Provide free and nutritious breakfasts and lunches for all students.
- Open all schools facilities, for free, for non-profit learning activities outside of school hours and term times.
- Include awareness classes for students on human diversity as well as learning differences and learning disabilities.
- Establish a commission to select a maximum of ten teaching schools in North America, the Caribbean and the UK to which the Government will pay the costs of study in exchange for a bonded contract to the public education system for at least ten years. This will help establish quality control and standardisation in the public education system over time.

City of Hamilton

- Expand the limits of the City of Hamilton. Pitts Bay Road to form the new western border, St. Johns-Marsh Folly-Palmetto Road forming the new northern border, and Corkscrew Hill-Montpelier-Frog Lane forming the new eastern border. This will allow the entire area to be developed as a cohesive urban area.

- Maintain the cargo docks at their existing location, but construct smaller satellite cargo docks at Dockyard and St. Georges to reduce the pressure on the Hamilton waterfront.
- Redevelop the Front Street car parks into a continuous landscaped green-space with a small waterfront market/al fresco dining complex at the former Number One site.
- Work with the City of Hamilton to pedestrianize Reid Street between Burnaby and Queen Streets. Consider the potential for a similar pedestrianisation of Court Street between Dundonald and Laffan Street.
- Ecologically restore the Pembroke canal into a green park, complete with walking trail (where possible).

- Revisit the 1980s era plan to redevelop the Pembroke Dump site as a central and vibrant community green-space. With the switch to in-vessel composting, the bulk of the site can be freed for redevelopment as parkland, reducing some of the stresses of the surrounding high-density neighbourhoods.

Tourism & International Business

- Replace the current term limits with a nine year term limits system, with the option for further extension based on apprenticing Bermudians, community service and specialist skills.
- Expand initiatives such as the 2012 accounting scholarships to include other highly-skilled occupations currently dominated by expatriate workers (such as engineering, psychologists, and journalism) with the goal of reducing the long-term need for expatriate workers in these fields.
- Refocus tourism away from mass tourism and towards cultural and eco-tourism.

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- Establish the City of Hamilton as a centre for yachting tourism, while maintaining Dockyards as a cruise-ship port. Secure a smaller luxury cruise ship for St. Georges.
- For hotels, focus efforts on developing small luxury hotels and cottage colonies instead of large resorts.
- Focus efforts on constructing a convention centre at Dockyard or Southside.

Seniors & Youth

- Ensure that each Parish has a community centre which provides:
 - Facilities for youth social activities;
 - Facilities for seniors, staffed by nursing aids, to ensure the welfare of seniors, as well as providing for their social interaction, continuing education and the opportunity to share their experiences with the younger generations.

- Ensure that all buses and bus-shelters on main routes are wheelchair accessible.
- Remove the compulsory retirement age for public service workers (there is no compulsory retirement age for the private sector) and replace it with the introduction of a more flexible working arrangement, such as phased retirement or flexible hours.
- Support moves to amend the Defence Act to abolish conscription.
- Continue 'free' Bermuda College education for all students provided they attend:
 - Bi-weekly training in post-hurricane recovery;
 - Monthly weekend training camps in post-hurricane recovery and ecological restoration programmes;
 - Emergency post-hurricane operations.

A Democratic Society

We are fortunate enough to live in one of the most democratic societies in the world, one which has made great strides in expanding democracy over the last century. We should be proud of these achievements.

There is still much to be done however, and the dream of creating a more perfect democracy and of greater popular participation in decision-making must be kept alive and expanded by each generation.

Our current democratic institutions, although superior to those that preceded it, are still a far cry from a truly participatory democracy. A truly participatory democracy requires more than voting infrequently for a representative.

While we strive to develop a more truly participatory democracy, there are reforms that we can make to our existing institutions to improve their limitations.

Once elected, I will work to realise the following initiatives:

- Fixed term elections, every five years, with a specific published date that is well-known to the public and is inalterable, unless it falls on a public holiday or due to a natural disaster.
- Formation of a single-chamber legislature composed of 18 single-seat constituencies elected by the existing system (first-past-the-post), and with nine MPs elected by proportional representation through a second party list vote.
- Require any MP defecting from one Party to another (or to the position of an Independent) to contest a by-election six months after their defection, with the subsequent winner to serve the remainder of the fixed parliamentary tenure. In the event of a list MP, the defecting MP's replacement should be selected by the respective Party.
- Increase the pay of non-Ministerial MPs to the national median wage; all MPs to be full-time.
- Ensure that parliament sits three days a week, 9am to 6pm, with committee meetings in the morning and parliamentary debate in the afternoon, with all votes to take place between 5pm and 6pm.

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- Commission a Green Paper on campaign financing to investigate the pros and cons of placing caps on campaign financing or the abolition of private campaign financing, replacing it with set and equitable public financing for all candidates.
- Reform parliament from an oppositional one (where the Government and Opposition face each other on opposing seating rows) to a semi-circular sitting arrangement, encouraging a more consensual and less confrontational politics.
- Replace the unelected Parish Councils with elected Parish Councils with seats and budgets allocated according to population size for each Parish, and devolved responsibilities for Parish community centres and informing local plans.
- Encourage the participation in school-related decision-making by students at all levels, so as to embed democratic principles and responsibility at the earliest ages.
- Commission a report to investigate the pros and cons of reducing the age at which one is able to vote (currently 18 years of age) and run for parliament (currently 21 years of age) to 16 years of age, as well as consulting with the public on additional options to encourage greater youth participation in the democratic process.

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A Vision for the Future

This document is not meant to be a final blueprint for magical change. Some of the policies suggested may change slightly through thorough consultation with voters and in working with fellow parliamentarians. Nonetheless, they serve as a foundation for building a better Bermuda.

I have the experience, expertise, ideas and confidence to represent you in Parliament. I believe that together we can build a better society for us all, and that I can help build that society, with you, by being an independent voice in parliament.

I left Bermuda in 2008 in order to pursue further studies and gain experience in fields which I felt were increasingly important for Bermuda. I left with the intention of coming back and giving back to our island. I see this election as an opportunity for me to start giving back.

I have put together this platform and committed myself to running for parliament now simply because I think these policies are good for Bermuda and that this is one way that I can start giving back.

Once elected I will serve the country through working with all members of parliament and civil society to help develop these policies, to shape others, and develop new ones as they are required.

There are good ideas and good people in both the main parties and amongst the Independent candidates and it will be my honour to work with all sides while continuing to provide an independent voice in parliament.

As we collectively build a better Bermuda, I will remain committed to putting social, economic and environmental justice at the centre of my decision-making, along with consensus building.

All too often, the two-party system leads to tunnel-vision and to the sidelining of important issues and voices, all under the name of democratic centralism and party loyalty. Too often, this leads to decisions being made on the basis of special interests or by electoral calculations, instead of doing what's right for our people and our island home

I will work to remain a strong and independent voice for Bermuda, ensuring that social, economic and environmental justice issues are not silenced in our decision-making.

Vote Starling, an Independent voice for Bermuda!

