



September 11th, 2013

Halifax Chamber of Commerce
Attention: Aaron MacMullin

Dear Mr. MacMullin:

Thank you for your questionnaire. We are pleased to answer as follows:

Halifax Chamber of Commerce – PC Party Issue Survey Response

Immigration

Nova Scotia is facing a demographic and population crisis. A declining, aging population is putting extra pressure on our existing infrastructure and our already over-taxed working population. The immigration strategy under the NDP has been a failure, with declining immigration numbers to Nova Scotia and a net decline in total population under their leadership. People cannot afford life under the NDP and are choosing to move away or not relocate to Nova Scotia.

A change in direction is needed, and only the PC Party has a detailed plan to increase Nova Scotia's population. We have set a goal of increasing our provincial population to 1 million people by 2025. In order to do this we will need to aggressively increase our immigration levels to Nova Scotia. The best way to achieve this is to make Nova Scotia a better, more affordable place to live. A PC government will accomplish this by:

- Ending wasteful spending in areas such as excessive corporate welfare handouts by eliminating the cabinet controlled slush fund currently in place,
- Reducing wasteful spending in our bloated health and school board bureaucracies by reducing the size of our District Health Authorities and Regional School Boards,
- Reducing the HST back to 13%, while not backing away from our commitment to balance the budget,
- Reducing the small business tax rate to zero while increasing the minimum threshold to \$500,000,



- Providing a five year plan for relief from rising power rates, with future rate increases kept to a minimum.

A PC government will change the way immigration policy and strategies are set in Nova Scotia through the following actions:

- Work with our Federal cousins to negotiate a better deal to raise the Provincial Nominee Program cap from 700 to allow more immigrants into this province,
- Match workers with available jobs and help newcomers get accredited in their fields,
- Strategically identify and target specific immigrants from targeted countries and welcome them to our communities,
- Work closer with our University and Community College system, an excellent source of International students and potential future Nova Scotians.

Education

A modern, 21st century education system is critical to the prosperity of Nova Scotia. Our children must be properly educated to have the skills necessary to compete and thrive in a modern economy. The Dexter NDP has gutted classroom budgets by tens of millions of dollars, while leaving the top heavy bureaucracy in place.

A PC government will modernize the P-12 education system the following ways:

- Reduce the number of school boards to four: Capital, Mainland Rural, Cape Breton, and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, and give them a mandate to invest administrative savings back into classrooms,
- Legislatively guarantee lower class sizes from grades P-6 through a stronger *Education Act*,
- Implement a five year agreement to reinvest in public education, based on supporting teachers to get the best results from students.

Math and science skills are crucial to success in our modern, increasingly technological society. It is critical that students not only learn these valuable skills, but that they take a real interest in them and develop a desire to pursue these subjects both academically and professionally. A change in attitude among students is necessary around these topics, children need to want to study math and science and need to be shown that these fields of study can be interesting and even “cool”.



A PC government will raise our math and science skills through the following initiatives:

- Work with guidance counsellors and parents to help them influence children’s career paths and academic interests towards math and science courses, when aptitude is shown,
- Work with academic officials and industry experts to re-position these subjects as innovative, interesting, challenging, and rewarding careers,
- Ensure that students at all grades are properly educated to reflect the growth of the digital economy, including science and math.

Businesses need to feel confident that government is producing graduates with the necessary and appropriate skills to meet their needs. The existing educational skills mismatch that has developed under the NDP has to be changed. As a chartered accountant and former Credit Union CEO, Jamie Baillie is the only party leader with the experience to understand the educational needs of the business community. In fact, it was Jamie Baillie, while Chief of Staff to Premier John Hamm, that negotiated the initial Memorandum of Understanding with Universities, and he is dismayed with how this important lever has been ignored under the NDP government.

A PC government will work with the business community to ensure students are equipped with the right training for the labour market in the following ways:

- Require universities to provide prospective students with information about graduate employability,
- Establish with the Universities a five year Memorandum of Understanding based on the principles of high quality, affordable post-secondary education, institutional fiscal responsibility, commercialization and population growth,
- Establish with the Nova Scotia Community College a five year agreement that mandates affordable and accessible post-secondary education, job ready skills training, increased focus on the trades, institutional fiscal responsibility, and population growth,

Youth & Talent Retention

As previously mentioned, Nova Scotia is facing a demographic and population crisis. We continue to lose more of our bright, young and talented workers to other jurisdictions because life in Nova Scotia has become too expensive under the NDP. Since the NDP were elected there are almost 7,400 fewer people in Nova Scotia. We have the highest personal and consumption taxes in Canada, the highest power rates in Canada, and our small business owners pay high small business taxes. Change is needed



to reverse this disturbing trend. The best strategy for retaining our youth and talent is to provide them with a prosperous, affordable, high quality lifestyle here in Nova Scotia. Lowering taxes, creating jobs, eliminating government waste, and freezing power rates are ways a PC government will create the right fundamentals to allow our youth and other skilled workers to remain at home. Our party commitments outlined above will make Nova Scotia a more affordable, modern, accommodating place to live and become a viable alternative for those that may otherwise leave our province.

Many of the strategies and initiatives already discussed will be crucial in keeping our youth in Halifax. The right economic conditions must be created to encourage youth and new citizens to remain locally. A PC government will create and maintain a closer working relationship with leaders at the municipal level to ensure that our interests and goals are aligned.

Debt & Taxation

The NDP government broke its 2009 election promise not to raise taxes, instead raising the HST to 15% and placing Nova Scotia among the highest taxation levels in the country. They have also added \$1.7 billion to the provincial debt, or \$1,600 for every Nova Scotian. Nova Scotia cannot afford this government and needs a real change.

The PC party platform (<http://pcparty.ns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/PC-Party-of-Nova-Scotia-Platform.pdf>) clearly shows how we will reduce the provincial debt each year. For example, a PC government will take the following steps to reduce our provincial debt:

- Concentrate on improving the fundamentals,
- Eliminate wasteful spending and use savings to help pay down the debt,
- Eliminate the expensive, cabinet controlled slush fund, freeing up funds for important front line services and debt repayment,
- Re-introducing the *Balanced Budget Act* that was scrapped by the NDP,
- Limit annual government spending to the rate of population growth plus inflation, and directing all surpluses to the province's debt,
- Committing to a balanced budget without hedging.

A PC government will make the following commitments towards decreasing personal income taxes, and making life more affordable for Nova Scotians:



- Reducing the HST from 15% to 13%, while not backing away from committing to balance the budget,
- End “bracket creep” which will let Nova Scotians keep more of their own money instead of paying more income tax each year due to inflation,
- Establish a tax credit to parents and teachers of up to \$200 per child for school supplies,
- Give all Nova Scotians a break on the cost of physical activity by extending the children’s fitness income tax credit to adults,
- Expand the Senior’s Property Tax Rebate program to include all seniors who earn less than \$30,000 per year

Halifax is the economic engine for Nova Scotia, and a strong Halifax economy is vital to the economic success of all of Nova Scotia. While also pursuing strategies to improve the economic fortunes of rural Nova Scotia, a PC government will take the following actions to ensure Halifax has a competitive business environment and a strong entrepreneurial spirit:

- Reducing the small business tax rate to zero, the lowest in Canada, and raising the threshold to \$500,000, on par with most Canadian provinces.

Supporting successful programs to help small businesses grow, through increased access to

Please let us know if you have more questions.

Thank you again,

Progressive Conservative Campaign