



Tim Bernard, Director of History and Culture at The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq presents the Mi'kmaewey Debert Cultural Centre (MDCC) vision and planning to date while identifying the next steps required and potential timeline to building and opening of the MDCC. This presentation provided the group with an update on the past, present and future plans for the 13,000-year-old Mi'kmaq site. The sites are a national treasure: designated a National Historic Site and protected under the Nova Scotia Special Places Act.



Delegates from across the province participated in The 2009 Celebrating Communities Conference through workshops, awards gala, and cultural celebrations such as the Mi'kmaewey Debert Cultural Centre initiative.



Ron Smith, CORDA's Director of Business Development presents information about the Colchester Park and Debert Air Industrial Park, once home to over 30,000 Canadian Soldiers, now houses the region's largest distribution centres and has over 3,000 acres to build and expand upon.

Questionnaire – Mark Austin

What is the most important issue facing voters in this constituency?

There are many important concerns: our roads, good jobs, and rural livelihoods are just three. More than anything we need fair and smart representation to get things done. It's our right to have a strong voice in Ottawa; not Ottawa's right to impose their voice on us.

Do you think this riding has received or is scheduled to receive its fair share of infrastructure stimulus funding? If not, please explain why you feel that way.

Historically, we have received an acceptable amount of our tax dollars back. But that was then; this is now. Instead of a fair distribution of stimulus funding delivered through a non-partisan plan, we get an irresponsible scheme of political self-service. The New Democrats have been calling for responsible stimulus spending for the past 6 years to ward off the current economic crisis, moving the auto sector toward green production, for example. Instead, we get a massive deficit spending frenzy that is more hype than help, more a re-action than action plan. We can do better.

What will you do to increase the amount of infrastructure stimulus funding throughout the riding?

Since PM Harper is pitting communities against each other, in the short run, we have to *get in the game*, using every means we have to fight for our share. Hard work and collaboration are needed. This has paid off for Halifax and the Eastern Shore with NDP MPs Megan Leslie and Peter Stoffers' leadership. In this minority parliament, being the third party will ensure we are treated more fairly. In the medium term, there are significant funds available that we need to access. These Green Municipal Funds come from the Federal Gas Tax. I will work closely with all our Municipal units to ensure we take advantage of this money to improve our roads and civic infrastructure. In the long run, linking infrastructure funding to the Gas Tax, as first proposed by Jack Layton as President of the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, would be a far more efficient way to proceed than the current hodge podge.

Which projects do you think should be put forward and approved?

We have strong government partnerships here who, along with groups like our Chambers of Commerce and Development Agencies, have put together viable proposals and financing for 'shovel ready' projects. Of course, the Colchester Civic Centre project, including a needed upgrade to Legion Stadium, is at the top of the list in the Truro area. This isn't a federal project. Fact is, all the hard work on the Civic Centre project has been done by local citizens. The Municipality of Colchester, Town of Truro, and the Province have stepped up with 2/3 of the funding already. When the Federal share does come, and we'll make sure it does, the big prop cheque should be have a logo that says "YOUR MONEY" and should be signed by "THE TAXPAYER".

It is important to remember, though, that it is *our* responsibility to build a resilient economy. To develop enterprises that thrive even when government ignores us. We are the ones, with our creative hard work and resources, who will provide for ourselves and our future generations.

If Truro is to maintain its reputation as the "Hub of Nova Scotia" what needs to be done to ensure it benefits from the Atlantic Gateway Initiative?

The term 'Gateway' gets tacked-on to a lot of competing ideas these days. Clearly we need to benefit from the natural geography that

makes us the best 'gateway' between Asia and the United States. Premier Dexter has created a Gateway Secretariat.

The public expenditures proposed as Gateway projects have not been thoroughly costed-out. We simply can't afford to back them all. One of the initiatives that has been well-planned comes from the Colchester Gateway Transportation Committee. They propose a series of upgrades that aims to take advantage of the larger Gateway scheme. In assessing any of these initiatives, we need to ask: Is this the best use of our money given the state of our existing roads? Does this work help build local economy and our own manufacturing that is prepared for climate change and higher energy prices?

Do you support development of a new deepwater container terminal in Melford? If not why? If so, what will you do to help?

The Melford Terminal proposal, primarily a private venture in Guysborough, would certainly create construction jobs, a positive, of course. But many factors need to be looked at. First, the existing Halifax Port

is operating at only half-capacity. Increased traffic at any Nova Scotia port should benefit our riding because of our location. Secondly, large projects in Churchill Manitoba, the Pacific Coast, and work on the Panama Canal all aim for the same customers that Melford targets. Let's be sure of customers to avoid a white elephant.

Again, the big-picture questions: Are we just flow-through or can we benefit more fully? Would the money be better spent on sustainable transportation, like improved rail services? Is new mega-construction and heavy road traffic the best route to sustainable environment and community economy development?

Would you encourage MP's from Atlantic Canada to join together to become strong advocates encouraging immediate government action to assist small businesses in their battle to ensure no significant increase is approved in the percentage fee for interact and credit card purchases? If so, how?

Absolutely yes. The shameful money-grab by cell-phone giants, banks, and credit card companies has to stop. That's why the NDP is pushing for legislation to end abusive fees charged to both consumers and retailers. Our bill has been supported by all Parties except the Conservatives. We introduced Bill C-426 to cap credit card rates at 5% above prime. I encourage readers to ask Mr. Harper's candidate here why he does not want to stop this harmful gouging that is hurting small business and ordinary Canadians in debt.

What changes are needed to help the agriculture and forest industry become sustainable and profitable?

This urgent need should be addressed at far greater length than what is afforded here. Decades of Conservative and Liberal agricultural policy has failed our farm and forestry families. These policies have placed all the burden on farmers (like me) and foresters to cut costs, learn new production methods, diversify, add value to their products, and monitor environmental impacts — all worthy things. But the crisis isn't about our farmers and foresters not being good enough at what they do; it's about fair pricing and access to markets. We are being undermined by cheap unfair imports, concentration of ownership, and lack of product support. We need to re-claim our domestic markets (produce local, buy local!) to get back to being able to feed ourselves and build with local materials.

What talents do you have which could be used to assist farmers to develop a "Fuel Pellets from Grass" industry in Nova Scotia with this riding being the leader? How would you help?

I'm glad this question refers to fuel pellets rather than liquid fuel. I have researched this subject over the past two years. Switch grass for thermal generation offers one of the most viable sources of renewable energy. However, it needs to be developed within a land-use policy framework that prioritizes using the best land we have for food production. We need to maximize economic and environmental benefits right here, for our own farmers, foresters, and businesses. I have extensive experience working with all the necessary partners in business and government to move this forward and will act quickly on it.

What will you do to improve the delivery of health care to encourage more doctors and health professionals to re-locate to remote rural areas of this riding?

The NDP is the party of medicare. We are committed to defending our public health care system, making it more efficient, and expanding it to cover all Canadian needs. When I went through a year of cancer treatment a few years back, mixed in with the prayers was a *thank you* to Tommy Douglas for medicare. We will increase the number of doctors and nurses trained in Canada by 50%. We will forgive student loans of health professionals who commit the first ten years of their careers to family medicine in areas that need them the most. This program will give Canada up to 28,000 additional nurses, doctors, and other health professionals to care for our families. We will work with the Provinces to expand the use of nurse practitioners and multi-disciplinary clinics, to take the strain off other parts of the health care system. These measures will go a long way to cut waiting times.

Which will rate higher with you? Following party policy at all times or consulting with the electorate and voting in accordance with their wishes? Explain how you will handle these situations.

My number one priority is serving the needs of my employers: the citizens of this riding! Let's listen to each other and unite around what is best for our community and our world. That consensus is what will guide me, as it did Bill Casey. Fortunately, the New Democrats have a long history of actually listening to their members when they speak for their communities. I will do the right thing for us and never compromise. I promise.

Why should voters support you in this election?

I have a long record of working to improve the lives of others professionally and as a volunteer. As a business owner, I've made strong contributions to our economy by attracting dozens of film productions to the Province. I understand law and government through experience and education. The job of an MP is to help people solve problems and to provide leadership to build stronger community. That is my mission. I'm not in this for a career change or to feel important; I truly believe the time is right to fight for what is right for our people. *Let's get 'er done!*



Mark Austin, NDP



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