

**Dustin Rekunyk**  
**Liberal Candidate Colchester North**

**(EDITOR'S NOTE: All candidates in Colchester North were asked to complete a questionnaire unique to the Colchester North. This reply is from Dustin Rekunyk, Liberal Candidate).**



Dustin Rekunyk

*What topic is raised most frequently while campaigning "door to door"?*

Top issues I hear are abandonment, affordability, and healthcare. Rural Nova Scotians feel sold out by Houston. We see this prioritizing rural Nova Scotians lower than those in the HRM with the HRM bridge toll announcement. Why should rural Nova Scotians, who never use these bridges, pay for them. No one has an issue with the tolls except Houston. It has become difficult to live in Nova Scotia, more so in rural Nova Scotia. There is less competition, less opportunities and less capability for people to remote work in some of Nova Scotia's most beautiful scenery. Houston has made no effort to make life more affordable for rural Nova Scotians. Houston promised to fix healthcare, instead he just gave us an app and wiped his hands clean of the issue. 160k Nova Scotians don't have a primary doctor and face significant issues reaching proper health services. This is more acute in rural Nova Scotia as ambulance times continue to increase. This government has failed Nova Scotians and continues to put them last

*The electorate is demanding a higher rate of accountability to their concerns. Nation-wide there is a significant increase of complaints elected officials I staff do not return calls promptly. Do you promise "you personally" or "a senior member of your staff" will return a call to constituent within 24 hours?*

I promise to communicate and talk with my constituents. I have spent my whole life focused on keeping Canadians safe and ensuring they always come first. Open and honest communication with my constituents in a speedy manner is something I will maintain.

*The lack of suitable affordable housing has become a major problem. Remote rural areas face even great challenges with lack of infrastructure such as: conditions of roads, cellphone, acceptable internet and government service. What will you do to ensure infrastructure to these areas is improved to levels consistent with other areas in order to retain current populations or to attract new families to the area?*

People will move to rural areas if we can address their primary concerns. The Liberals have a Better Deal for Nova Scotians. This includes a firm commitment in our platform for rural road maintenance, and something I will enforce and ensure. A Liberal Better Deal includes expanding cell service, and I will also push and advocate for this to include reliable internet access. We live in a digital world, it's time to get rural Nova Scotia the same standard as urban Nova Scotians.

Finally, a Liberal Better Deal will bring collaborative care clinics province wide to connect Nova Scotians to primary care services and women's health. We can attract new families to rural Nova Scotia if they have roads, stable internet and cell service, and know healthcare is close and reliable; something not realized under the Houston government.

*What is the most promising asset / resource to achieve economic growth or population growth for Colchester North?*

Colchester North is an undervalued treasure. Areas like Tatamagouche have seen economic stimulus in the past and we can repeat this. The Liberal Better Deal will reduce small business tax to 1% to help incentivize and support entrepreneur spirit and ambition. In the South, we have some of the most beautiful bodies of water with untapped potential. Finally, there is advocating and moving ScotiaPort while maintaining the history and tourism features of the riding.

*With changes in the labour supply market, there is a visible increase in service sector employees from other countries. How extensive is "racism and bigotry" a basic and systemic problem in Colchester North? How will you help change it?*

Sadly, racism exists everywhere. Canada's Anti Racism Strategy 2024-28 addresses combatting racism and we should look to that for advice. Further steps we can take as a community are to celebrate our diversity and other cultures, act in solidarity, and call out racism and bigotry.

*What steps should be taken and how will you assist in making Colchester North among the "least racist" and "most welcoming" constituency in Nova Scotia?*

The steps identified above we can do now as a community and riding. Taking a stand and calling out racism can be done by everyone. As your MLA, I will promote diversity and work to celebrate other culturally important events. I will also work to highlight the steps the riding takes to address racism and combat it within the riding.

*In which sectors in Colchester North should government prioritize its efforts of leadership and funding assistance to achieve a high rate of economic and population growth?*

ScotiaPort has significant economic potential that will be realized with a Churchill government. Tatamagouche has an incredible history and has seen increased economic significance in the past.

*ScotiaPort projects 4,600 jobs within a 20-year development period. Proponents of the project insist a new Highway 104 / 102 interchange, costing upwards of \$50-million, is essential. How hard will you work to ensure the new interchange is built as soon as possible? How soon might you be able to announce progress on the interchange?*

**Carbon-Free Colchester Update**

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 newly constructed buildings.

Any incentive offered would need to adhere to the Municipal Government Act. At the request of the Committee, staff will research the options, opportunities, and implications of creating an energy efficiency incentive and bring a report and recommendations to Council by the end of this fiscal year.

**2. Additional Climate Staff Capacity**

The Committee has expressed concern about the level of staff capacity dedicated to climate action, noting that, frequently, ideas proposed by the Committee are unable to be undertaken because of staff time limitations. The Committee wishes to communicate to Council the Municipality's climate action work is extremely important, and that if the Municipality hopes to successfully im-

plement the Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) and meet its emissions reduction targets, additional staff capacity will be required to do so.

The Municipality currently has access to several external resources to support staff capacity, which should be fully leveraged before further increasing internal capacity: In April 2024, Colchester joined the Clean Foundation's Community Climate Capacity (CCC) program, which provides the Municipality with a Climate Lead for 30hrs/month and access to a team of climate specialists. The CCC staff have proven in just six months to be an invaluable resource.

Colchester is taking part in the QUEST Net-Zero Communities Accelerator (NCA) program, which will give staff guidance, tools, and access to a community of practice to assist Colchester to implement its CEEP.

Again, the Liberals have a Better Deal for Nova Scotians. Our platform calls for 100 series highway investments. A new 104/102 interchange is long overdue in this area and something I will advocate and push for with Premier Churchill.

*How can you assist all three levels of government to ensure the best decisions will be made regarding expanding the "green energy" footprint and possible production of hydrogen from "wind and emptying landfills sites"?*

Working with Federal and Municipal governments means bridge building and communication. It's about staunchly advocating for the riding while finding solutions to barriers and hurdles at the Federal level and how to streamline at the municipal level.

*What existing provincial government program or planned policy is least beneficial to businesses and general population in Colchester North?*

Houston's plan to double the population to 2 million people. Nova Scotia is currently in the middle of several issues including housing and healthcare. The issues impacting Nova Scotia are exacerbated in rural Nova Scotia. Rural Nova Scotia lacks advocates and voices in government and as your MLA, I will be a strong advocate and ardent defender of your needs and issues.

*Many people are of the opinion the provincial government is directing too much attention to HRM and larger urban areas. What would you do to change the pendulum to place more emphasis on rural Nova Scotia?*

The best method is be an outspoken and vocal advocate for the area. Rural Nova Scotia has been forgotten for too long and it's time an MLA is elected who will change that and be a strong voice for the riding. Voting for me is voting for a fighter, someone who will fight to make sure rural

*Normally MLAs are expected to "toe" the party line. If you are elected on November 26th do you promise to place a higher priority on "constituents wishes / needs" ahead of "party policy" except in "non-confidence" situations?*

The needs, concerns, and issues that matter to constituents of Colchester North will always matter more than a party line. When the needs of the constituents don't match the party line, it's the obligation of the MLA to bridge that gap and be honest.

*If you are elected on November 26th what actions will you immediately undertake to achieve economic growth and lifestyle enhancements for the constituency of Colchester North?*

Advocating for the interchange construction, ensuring the small tax is passed, pushing for a collaborative care clinic, improving ground ambulance care, and addressing the rise in school violence.

ICLEI Canada's Building Adaptive and Resilient Communities program assists municipalities to undertake a community-level climate risk assessment. Colchester may have an opportunity to participate in another ICLEI Canada program that will support municipalities' transitions from climate adaptation planning to implementation.

Because the Municipality is in the early stages of working with the Clean Foundation and QUEST, staff feel that another position is not needed at this time. Staff will reassess needs after one year of participation in the CCC and NCA programs (in summer 2025) and subsequently on an annual basis and recommend staffing changes as needed.

Additionally, before a new full-time position is created, staff would advise that the existing PACE Program Coordinator position, currently a 3-year term, could be made a permanent full-time climate action position. Expanding the scope and timeframe of this position would enable the presently titled PACE Program Coordinator to take on greater responsibility on the sustainability team and better support the Sustainability Planner with her many projects

and initiatives.

*Joanna Burris, Colchester's Sustainability Planner, would like to highlight that climate adaptation work is increasingly important and, due to limits to staff capacity, has received little attention.*

CEEP lays out a pathway to reduce emissions, but effort and funds will also be needed in the coming years to adapt our communities to a changing climate. This might include upgrading infrastructure to withstand expected future climate impacts, supporting homeowners to make their properties resilient to extreme weather and wildfires, improving and expanding emergency response programs, completing a community climate risk assessment, and more. The Municipality's CCC Climate Lead will help staff to get started on specific climate adaptation initiatives.

Staff have also begun planning cross-departmental training on climate change to increase the capacity of staff across the organization to embed climate considerations into their work.

*(The above article was compiled from an Information Item from the November 14th committee meeting media package.)*

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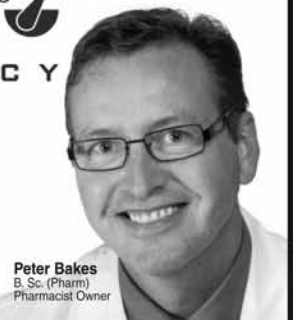
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