

## Larry Duchesne Answers Questions



Larry Duchesne

(South Cumberland News asked all candidates to complete a series of questions, the following is the response from Larry Duchesne, NDP candidate in the June 19<sup>th</sup> by-election)

### What do you consider is the major causes of slower economic development in Cumberland South electoral area?

I don't think the Liberal government has done enough to ensure there are robust economic industries outside of Halifax. Cumberland South has lots of development potential. We could be building sustainable industries around our forests and farmland, and through developing green energy like geothermal, wind and solar. We could also better support ecotourism and the arts and culture sector in our communities. Our blueberry hills are also being harvested with little benefit to local farmers. We need to work towards a fair price for blueberry producers. Governments have to stop misusing our resources, like has happened with clearcuts near Wentworth, and work to ensure that our potential is developed sustainably, for the benefit of people who live here.

### How will you help implement an Economic Development plan for the constituency?

I will push for the re-opening of the Department of Economic and Rural Development and Tourism, such as the NDP proposed in the last provincial general election. I will work hard with county and town economic development committees on job creation. We have lots of potential in Cumberland South. We need people working full-time to identify and develop environmentally sustainable initiatives. We want greater protection of our wilderness areas, and to support eco-tourism at every opportunity.

Social development is an integral part of job creation. We should be investing in more doctors and other health care workers, and expansion of long-term care facilities for our seniors. Actions such as these will relieve pressure on our hospitals and generate

more jobs in our area - especially for young post-secondary graduates who may otherwise become part of the outmigration trend.

A \$15 minimum wage and higher amounts for those receiving social assistance will also help stimulate the local economy and create jobs.

### Fibre speed internet service is important to the area. How do you propose to solve the problem to increase competitiveness of businesses and provide residents with the service they are demanding?

Many regions of the province have been successful in creating local solutions for high-speed internet using co-operative and other community-drive models. I am committed to supporting communities and municipalities in bringing locally-owned high speed internet to Cumberland South.

The federal government recently committed additional funding for expanding high speed internet in rural areas. I will work to ensure a fair share of these funds find their way here.

### The population of rural communities is decreasing. What programs will you help develop to reverse the trend?

It's hard to convince people to stay in a community where it's hard to find a family doctor and our emergency rooms are regularly closed. By investing in health care and education, we can help more people settle down in our communities.

We also need to better attract and retain young people. Eliminating tuition fees at the Nova Scotia Community College would help young residents of Cumberland County access training and work opportunities here at home. A \$15 minimum wage would make our province more competitive with Alberta, Ontario, and B.C. and help keep more young people working here.

### Volunteers are important to all communities. With an aging population and younger people not as eager to volunteer, what is needed to support volunteerism to make communities more vibrant?

Seniors are the lifeblood of the many important organisations across Cumberland South. Our Volunteer Fire Departments are struggling to find enough able-bodied younger folks to take over, and our Community Halls are being operated almost exclusively by seniors. It is wonderful to have seniors volunteering to run these historically important organisations, but we should look at ways to employ young people to manage their daily operations. We

should be paying people a decent living wage for work that needs doing. This is one way to attract young people back into the community.

### How can you assist to develop a program encouraging people to relocate to the area either as residents or start a home based business?

People will come here and will start businesses if the economic and social conditions are right. Home-based businesses only have a chance of success if people have access to the supports and education they need to be able to put together a business plan and then to follow through on it.

A healthy environment, a well-educated population, good health care services will all help newcomers know the welcome mat is out.

### The entire network of roads and bridges in Cumberland South are in deplorable condition. How would you propose to develop a re-construction and improvement program be implemented?

When the NDP was in government, it brought in a new way of planning and communicating road and bridge capital projects. It involved a 5-year plan for all projects and was available online for everyone to see. Priorities were based on the condition of the road and traffic levels and costs to repair or replace. This was intended to take the politics out of road building, as it should be.

### Cumberland County is a large area with most government services provided from Amherst locations. What ways do you propose to change service delivery so residents do not have to travel long distances from their home community?

Collaborative care models worked under an NDP government and I will work to ensure they work again. It means pushing to make sure the provincial government are prepared to make the investments needed. I will work to protect small rural schools from closure, and to

establish community transit to ensure people can access the services they need.

### Toll Highways: Should tolls on the Cobequid Pass continue with the profits / cash surplus used for highway maintenance on non-100 series highways in Cumberland & Colchester Counties?

It's unfair having highway tolls here and not in other parts of the province. The province has promised that tolls should end and they must follow through with it. There is evidence that P3s (such as the Cobequid Pass) cost the public more than publicly-owned infrastructure projects; for this reason the government should be investing directly in highway maintenance in Cumberland County.

### If tolls are maintained on 100 series highways and toll sections are implemented for "new" highway twinning projects should tolls continue after the debt is repaid providing profits are guaranteed to be used for highway maintenance in rural areas?

Tolls function as geographic and economic barriers for those who need to travel. The NDP does not support using tolls to fund twinning or maintenance of rural high-

ways.

### Frequent closures of daytime and overnight medical service centers is prevalent in the area. What can residents do to promote a "very welcome environment" to encourage medical professionals to relocate to the area?

The Health Authority and the various governments need to be more proactive in recruiting medical professionals. I believe that people do like to live in rural areas. With good schools, transportation, and adequate pay levels, family practitioners will be happy to live here. We should also be opening up more family practice residency positions for rural areas.

### How would you work with community groups undertaking such an initiative and what results will you deliver?

I will work with all community groups trying to attract doctors and will press the provincial government to take necessary steps to bring more doctors into the province.

The Liberals have been far from proactive, as seen in their absence from the recent national meeting of rural doctors in St. John's.

### How would you explain your capabilities and why residents

### should elect you as the next MLA for Cumberland South?

My experience in teaching, journalism and community work have given me an insight into the struggles many people and communities face. The foremost of these is poverty. I am committed to finding an end to poverty in Cumberland South, and to building a more inclusive society.

My party wants to invest in people: for family doctors, for long-term care homes for seniors, for fair pay and for adequate income assistance.

I will stand up for a vision of life in Cumberland South that respects the environment and provides jobs for its people. I believe in the power of green jobs in energy production and resource use. I will work with all levels of government to develop this potential and to promote eco-tourism. Clear-cutting is not my friend and I will fight to reduce it.

I believe good things can be done, and I hope residents of Cumberland South will elect me to help do them. Electing me will send a real message to the Liberals that we in Cumberland South are not happy and we want things done a new way, the NDP way.

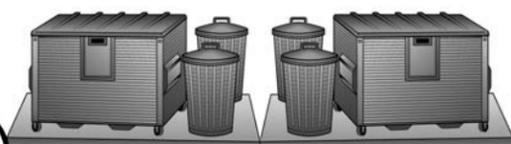


Pictured above the \$350,000 announcement to study the possible affects and solutions to rising sea levels on the Nova Scotia Isthmus joining Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are (L-R): CN's Public Affairs Manager Tiffany Edwards; David Oxner; and Design and Construction Engineer, Alice Thorne and Bill Casey, MP Cumberland Colchester. (Submitted)

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