

Scott Lockhart Answers Questions



Scott Lockhart

(South Cumberland News asked all candidates to complete a series of questions, the following is the response from Scott Lockhart, Liberal candidate in the June 19th by-election)

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

Population decline. The 2016 census shows most of our communities lost residents, ranging from 7% to 12% in just 5 short years between 2011 and 2016. This includes declines in Springhill of 12.4% and Parrsboro of 7.7%. We must turn the tide of outmigration by encouraging and offering opportunities for our young people to stay here at home. Our region has so much to offer and we must welcome new residents to our communities with open arms.

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

Internet services must be improved, and upgraded to higher speeds. Many people would love to move to our little piece of paradise, but if they can't operate a home

business or video call their kids/grandkids, they won't stay for long. Our roads also require a lot of attention, and I'm committed to pushing for upgrades if I am elected. We also need to continue to develop our tourism industry. I am committed to being a partner and facilitator in a collaborative strategy, working with stakeholders, the municipality, my good friend Bill Casey, and anyone that needs to be at the table to make sure we get it done.

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?

This is critical. I'm pleased to see our Provincial Liberal Government recently announced a \$120 million contribution towards high speed internet, to connect more homes and upgrade the speed of others. If I'm elected, I will ensure Cumberland South taps into this funding to upgrade internet speeds. I've heard loud and clear from residents, particularly down the shore, that this needs to be a top priority.

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

A government program won't help reverse this decline. I believe that it is the role of government to set the stage by investing in things like high speed internet connectivity, quality healthcare and education, as well as making strategic investments that will make a real difference in communities. It is then our collective responsibility to speak positively about our communities, be welcoming to new-

comers, and take pride in where we live. For too long, negativity has been the name of the political game in Cumberland South. I will focus on our successes, fight for investments, and get things done for Cumberland South.

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?

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our communities. Just last week, I visited Ottawa House with Premier Stephen McNeil and was amazed by the work that has been done by volunteers. The countless number of hours that have been invested is truly remarkable. As MLA, it will be my goal to help our community group's access government services and funding.

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

First and foremost, I believe that we need to end the negativity. We live in a beautiful place, with amazing people. For the last number of years, all we've heard from our MLA is negativity. The sky is not falling in Cumberland South, and while there are issues that we need to work to address, complaining and offering no solutions is not going to get us anywhere. I'm prepared to listen, work hard, and ensure we get things moving here in Cumberland South. That starts with working with partners and stakeholders to develop a regional marketing strategy to promote

and showcase all that Cumberland South has to offer.

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?

I'll be blunt. We have a majority Liberal government in Nova Scotia for at least 3 more years. I am the only candidate in this race that will meet weekly with the Minister of Transportation. And for that matter, all the other Minister's and the Premier. If the other candidates say they will get the roads fixed, they simply aren't telling the truth. It will be my priority to bring your road concerns directly to the Minister of Transportation. I was happy to see the tender released for the demolition of the Rainbow Bridge, and was pleased to work with Minister Hines on moving that file forward.

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

We need to be realistic. No Government, of any political stripe, is going to open additional services in every area people want. As your MLA, I will focus on maintaining existing government services, and ensuring vacant positions that exist now (such as our healthcare professionals) are filled in a timely manner so there is no interruption in service.

Toll Highways: Should tolls on the Cobequid Pass continue with the profits / cash surplus used for highway maintenance on non-100 series high-

ways in Cumberland & Colchester Counties?

No. The government has announced, and I fully support, that the tolls will come off the Cobequid Pass in 2019 for Nova Scotians. The bonds sold to pay for the Cobequid Pass will be fully repaid in 2019, about 7 years earlier than the original 2026 date. Let me be clear, there will no longer be a toll for Nova Scotia residents traveling on the Cobequid Pass by the end of 2019. As for non-100 series roads in Cumberland County, we should not look to tolls to pay for upgrades. As an MLA on the Government side, I will fight for our communities.

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?

Our Liberal government ran in the 2017 election on a promise to twin new sections of 100 series highways in Nova Scotia, without the use of tolls. We are fulfilling our promise and twinning projects on the 101, 103, and 104 are in development - all without the use of tolls. With three balanced budgets in a row and strong fiscal management by our Premier and Finance Minister Casey, we can make these types of investments in our roads, bridges, schools (like the new school announced for Springhill), and more.

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?

We need to attract and retain Doctors, Nurse Practitioners,

Family Practice Nurses, RNs, LPNs, Technicians and other healthcare professionals, as they are all part of an integrated healthcare system. But we also need to create an environment where they want to live, work, play, and raise a family. This truly requires a community pulling together and working as one to ensure we are an attractive area for healthcare professionals.

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

There are great examples of community groups from different areas of the province who have had success in similar situations. I would propose we travel to these areas and meet with those community groups to exchange ideas and best practices. Every community is different, but by sharing, learning, and listening, we can achieve our goal of recruitment and retention.

How would you explain your capabilities and why residents should elect you as the next MLA for Cumberland South?

I will get things done for Cumberland South. That's my commitment. I'm proud of where I live, and want to work every day to make it even better. For too long, Cumberland South has been on the outside looking in at government. I will change that. And for too long, we have had negative politics from our former MLA. I will change that.

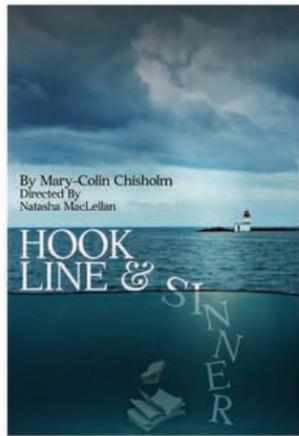
One thing that all candidates in this campaign can agree on is that no matter the result of this by-election, there will still be a Liberal Majority government for the next three years. I ask you to send me to the government benches on June 19th to get things done for Cumberland South.

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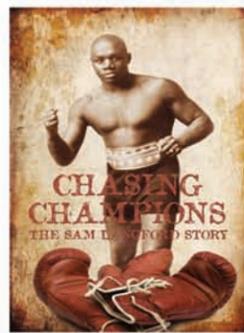
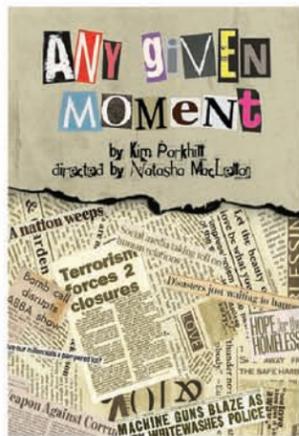
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