

Bruce W. McCulloch Answers Questions



Bruce McCulloch

(South Cumberland News asked all candidates to complete a series of questions, the following is the response from Bruce W. McCulloch, Green Party candidate in the June 19th by-election)

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

It is a combination of things, but I would say the major cause is that Halifax and other cities have become a magnet for our youth. They go away to college and University, and they do not come back. We need a way to lure them back - especially the entrepreneurial minded - and I think that can be done through a couple of key leverage items that I expand on below.

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

Each community is different. Parrsboro is developing a thriving Arts, Culture and Tourism sector. Springhill and Oxford need to build on the strength of businesses such as Surette, Ropak and Oxford Frozen foods. I would try to develop entrepreneurial programs so that people could become suppliers to these businesses. For instance, it might be possible to develop a small fan manufacturer for the small fans that are in the Granby furnaces. In the Little Forks landfill site we have an opportunity to "harvest" our plastics. For instance, in Chester NS, a company has started to make building materials (cinder blocks) from recycled plastic. I expect there are other opportunities if we look. Sweden, for example, is so good at recycling it is now importing waste! Less than 1% of Sweden's rubbish goes to landfill. My goal would be to have a plan that built on the strengths of each community.

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?

For service outside the centres of Oxford, Springhill and Parrsboro, there is a viable satellite option. NCS Network Consulting Inc. uses dishes and towers and they have established 15Mbps high speed internet in rural parts of Annapolis County, parts of Colchester County and a few more places in rural NS. This is not Fibre-op speeds, but it is sufficient for programs such as Netflix (where 5Mbps is the minimum recommended for HD quality.) I would encourage NCS Network Consulting to establish towers in Cumberland South.

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

In the early days of Canada, land grants were given to settlers willing to start new lives in Western Canada. I think that something similar could be accomplished, by acquiring abandoned, serviced land and giving it (with appropriate conditions) to groups of enterprising young people who want to escape the high costs of the city. The key is to get a group of friends or like-minded individuals to come together at the same time, so that they have a critical mass of kindred people to engage with. There has been an influx of artistic people into Parrsboro over the last few years. I think it could happen in Springhill and Oxford with the focus for employment different in each community. Both communities are close to the highway, so transporting product to market is reasonable. In communities such as Advocate and Joggins, we need to encourage entrepreneurs (such as those at "Cumberland Perfect Sleep Company") that want to live closer to nature.

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?

First of all we need to keep the younger people in the community - through initiatives like the high speed internet, and the economic plan mentioned above. Then I believe volunteerism will happen, as they seek to make the community a better place for their children, themselves, and their parents. Our existing senior volunteers will be excellent role models.

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

One of the strengths of the area is relatively inexpensive housing. Another is that basic services such as shopping are all readily close together. Still, the downtown areas of Springhill and to a lesser extent Oxford could use a facelift, as that would help encourage people to relocate to those communities. I would work to leverage some government money to improve the looks of the main streets. "Pride of Place" is a great way to attract more people to a community.

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?

We need a new approach to road repair. A number of companies such as Miller Group, have Asphalt recycling machines that take-up and lay down asphalt in a single pass. Not only does this re-use the existing tarmac, it also reduces the time that the road is out of service. We need this type of machine in Nova Scotia, and especially in Cumberland South. Another approach is to use recycled plastic for roads. This is being done in the UK and the Netherlands. Roads made from plastic waste take less time to lay as compared to asphalt and last three times as long. Also, the road is 60% stronger than a regular asphalt road. <http://www.theevolving-planet.com/countries-paving-forward-plastic-roads/>

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?

Many services do not have to be done in person. We can use technology to have face to face conversations with people, and scan documents with e-signatures. This will reduce travel costs and people save time as well.

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?

Yes

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?

Yes

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?

As noted above, having a pleasing mainstreet is part of what attracts professionals, as it is their first impression of a community. Residents can also create a team of people, consisting of key members from the community, to meet with and provide help to any prospective medical professional.

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

British Columbia has a very successful "hands-on" recruitment program, where they guide a medical professional through all the paperwork of immigration, driver's licenses and so on - plus they introduce him/her to service professionals such as real estate agents, and many other aspects of getting the person successfully settled. Nova Scotia is not so hands on. I would encourage our provincial government to have the NS recruiting team work more like

the BC recruiters, but I would also develop a team of people from Cumberland South to fill this gap.

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

I have a diverse background in business. I know how to encourage entrepreneurial thinking and I have been a mentor to a number of individuals in my career. I would like to leverage these skills through the MLA office, and the possibilities that are presented by that office, to help the people of Cumberland South.

I am a strong believer in open communication, and I want to engage with the people of Cumberland South and hear their ideas. The people of Cumberland South, and the province of Nova Scotia, need a Green voice in the legislature. Greens are fiscally conservative, socially progressive and look at all issues in the context of environmental sustainability. In summary, my focus will be on a Healthy Economy and a Healthy Community all underpinned with a Healthy Environment.



A "bicycle fix it" unit has been installed beside the former town hall, close to the flower boxes. (Submitted)

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