

Atlantic Policy Congress  
Name of Candidate: Stephen McNeil  
Riding: Annapolis  
Party Affiliation: Liberal

### **Question 1**

**Would you be willing to work with Nova Scotia First Nations to support a more collaborative, pro-active approach in dealing with the federal government?**

Absolutely. Government and organizations such as the Atlantic Policy Congress face a common challenge. With finite resources, all parties are being asked to deliver more and to do so efficiently. With provincial government as a partner, collaboration will help turn policy into practice and objectives into positive outcomes.

### **Question 2**

**APC's Aboriginal Economy Building Strategy is key to the success of First Nations communities in Nova Scotia. If elected, would you be willing to meet with leaders in our community to identify opportunities for economic partnerships.**

Yes. A Liberal government if elected would be more than willing to meet with leaders in your community to identify opportunities for economic partnerships. The very foundation of the Liberal plan recognizes that opportunities and solutions must benefit every family, every business and every community in Nova Scotia. Our small business tax reduction of 80% (from 5% to 1%) will support small businesses operated by First Nations people off-reserve throughout Nova Scotia. We also believe that one of the keys to empowering small business is access to capital. Large lending facilities aren't interested in the needs of smaller enterprises because funding requirements are too small. That's why a Liberal government would establish a micro-lending facility through Nova Scotia Business Inc to provide loans of up to \$25000 to small businesses in communities across the province.

### **Question 3**

**Are you willing to work with First Nations leaders in Nova Scotia to continue to support the Tripartite Forum and the KMK negotiation efforts and outcomes?**

Absolutely. Established in 1997 under a Liberal government, the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum is still viewed today as a model of First Nation-Government collaboration across our country. The Tripartite Forum serves as a key vehicle for collaborative efforts in both social and economic sectors and its vision of building a foundation for successful Mi'kmaw communities through partnership, commitment and respect must continue. The Liberal party also supports the Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn negotiation efforts and outcomes. The reconciliation of the respective rights and interests of all Parties through the development of a Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia Accord will continue should a Liberal government be elected.

### **Question 4**

**Would you be willing to improve health care services to our communities by working with First Nation leaders and your federal counterparts to develop meaningful delivery of services and innovative solutions?**

The Liberal Party strongly believes that the improvement of health care services can and will be achieved through support Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum. In fact, the Liberal Party was the lone political party urging the provincial government to reconvene the Tripartite Forum when the tragedies were unfolding in Eskasoni earlier this year. It is our understanding the Department of Health will implement the Aboriginal Health Transition Fund Adaptation Plan funded by Health Canada. Contained in this plan is the development of an Aboriginal Health Policy Framework where mental health and addictions will be the priority policy focus. The Aboriginal Health Policy Framework will require engaging First Nations and Aboriginal partners and communities in its development; a commitment a Liberal government, if elected, will achieve.

## Question 5

**Would you be willing to work with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and other government department officials to develop strategies to ensure that our people have access to better training and job opportunities.**

Unlike other political parties who will be looking for program cuts amounting to at least \$73.5 million, The Liberal Party has, during the course of this election, committed to the continued support of negotiated agreements between all levels of government. As a result, a Liberal government will, if elected, continue to support the Nova Scotia Coordinated Aboriginal Apprenticeship and Trades Strategy negotiated in 2008 for a period of three years. This strategy will help connect more Aboriginal Nova Scotians with our apprenticeship system where they will be able to obtain the training needed to find work in the skilled trades. Nova Scotia will as well be presented with a unique opportunity this summer when the provincial government will completely take over the responsibility of skills training previously delivered by the federal government through both the Labour Market as well as the Labour Market Development Agreement. This will enable the provincial government to deliver targeted programming that will ensure that all Nova Scotians are able to reap the benefit of full participation in the labour force. A Liberal government will ensure that investments made with the money received from these two Labour Market Agreements will provide First Nations people the tools needed to play an important role in Nova Scotia's economy.

## Question 6

### **Would you be willing to continue to support long term gaming agreements and other agreements with First Nations to support stronger economically sustainable First Nation communities and citizens?**

A Liberal government shares your vision for the economic development of all Nova Scotia communities, including our aboriginal communities. A balanced, community development approach based on education and skills training has to be the focus. If the health and well-being of our individuals, our communities and our environment is compromised through economic development, the costs of such activity simply overwhelms any and all economic growth. While gaming revenues are relied upon across the province, there is no denying the significant societal damage caused by or related to our gaming sector. Any and all changes to agreements will require negotiation and approval by both parties. We believe our communities and our people would be better served by economies that develop social benefit, not detriment. Realistically, other sectors of our province must grow and thrive through economic diversification in order for that to happen. In the long-term, our communities will reap the benefit instead of paying the price.

I believe by focusing on the backbone of economy - the entrepreneurial spirit of our small businesses - our province can be in position to take advantage of the opportunities that will present themselves moving forward. One of the keys to empowering small business is access to capital. Large lending facilities aren't interested in the needs of smaller enterprises because the funding requirements are too small. That's why a Liberal government would establish a micro-lending facility through Nova Scotia Business Inc to provide loans of up to \$25,000 to the small businesses in communities across the province.

Regional cooperation is necessary to grow all economies within our province and Atlantic Canada. Every Nova Scotia community is struggling to provide our young people with fulfilling careers and opportunities. Education is where these careers and opportunities can begin to take shape. Rural communities, aboriginal communities and our urban centres all require well educated and trained labour force in technical fields such as economic development, information technology, land and wildlife management, surveying, geology, oceanography, biology, environmental studies, fishing, forestry. More specifically, the green energy sector presents an opportunity to modernize our economy and create new highly skilled jobs. Liberals believe aboriginal peoples have a role to play in the burgeoning renewable energy sector in our province.