



ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS
OF FIRST NATION CHIEFS SECRETARIAT INC.
www.apcfn.ca

FROM: John Paul, Executive Director
Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs

SUBJECT: Provincial Election Candidate Questionnaire – **First Nation Issues**

On behalf of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations (APC), I am taking this opportunity to provide you with some information about issues of importance to First Nations people for the provincial election campaign.

APC represents over 35,000 First Nation people through its 37 member communities in the region – over 15,000 of those live in Nova Scotia within 13 communities throughout the province. We are non-partisan, and our objective over the next couple of weeks is to determine where the provincial parties and local candidates stand on First Nations issues.

As a candidate, we know that you will agree that First Nations issues are important to voters in your riding. That is why we want to share with you our priority issues and to ask where you stand. Attached is a **briefing note** outlining our priority issues for this campaign, as well as a **Candidates Questionnaire**, which we ask that you take the time to complete and return to us. Completed questionnaires can be faxed to 902.422.2368 or emailed to mboudreau@mtlpr.ca

We are planning a pre-election mailing to members of our community and will ensure they are made aware of your response and willingness to hear our views. We will also be posting all responses on our website, as well as conducting media outreach prior to June 9th.

First Nations communities across the province following the election closely and in sharing your responses with our community, we hope to equip our people with the insight as they head to the polls on June 9th.

We look forward to your response.



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Candidate Questionnaire

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?
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?
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?
4. Would you be willing to improve health care services to our communities by working with First Nations leaders and your federal counterparts to develop meaningful delivery of services and innovative solutions?
5. Would you be willing to work with 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.
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 Nations communities and citizens?

Name of Candidate:

Riding:

Party Affiliation:

Please fax responses to: 902.422.2368 or email to mboudreau@mtlpr.ca

NOVA SCOTIA FIRST NATIONS - BRIEFING NOTE ON PRIORITY ISSUES

First Nations in Nova Scotia have a great outlook for the future of our people. There are 13 communities across the province, from the Fundy Shore to Cape Breton, each of which share common goals for their communities. We feel the foundation of our relationship with the government of Nova Scotia is one of government to government cooperation, and that our long-standing partnership of peace creates a solid framework for today's community development efforts. With particular focus on economic development, housing and infrastructure, and healthcare improvements, our people recognize the necessity for healthy, self-reliant communities, and are ready and eager to achieve these goals. We also want to work with the province to support a more collaborative approach in dealing with the federal government, especially as it relates to access to training and job opportunities. Our priority issues are as follows:

Economic Development

First Nations people across Nova Scotia play an important role in the economic progress of the province. Aboriginals are increasingly educated and offer valuable knowledge, skilled labour and entrepreneurial viewpoints that contribute to the overall economic health of their communities and the province. Our communities have focused significant efforts and resources to enhance economic development priorities. Growing the net worth of our communities; strengthening business ownership, income and unemployment; acquiring skills that attract investment and; tracking economic progress comprise of our top four priorities as we strive to further economic development throughout the province. There are challenges, however. There remains a considerable gap between our communities and the rest of the province in the participation of the economy. Unemployment rates in our communities are at over 13%, which is about 6% above the provincial average. By establishing innovative partnerships within the private sector and the provincial government, and supporting opportunity based businesses and prolonged, sustainable job creation, the strategy aims to bring substantial, long-term growth. Worldwide economic downturn has created an urgent need for provincial investment in First Nations economic development. The first people impacted by a financial crisis are new entrants into the industry, including most aboriginal businesses and their employees. Fewer businesses mean fewer employment opportunities, which will significantly affect the ability for our leaders to stimulate the much needed economic development outlined in our Economy Building Strategy.

Health Services

Raising the quality of healthcare in First Nations communities is of utmost concern for all of our people. Policy neglect has contributed significantly to the state of poverty and sub-standard conditions that persist in our communities, and the overall health of our people has suffered as a result. We believe that

fundamental change in policy, practice and service delivery is required to improve healthcare in our communities, and we have collaborated with the province on many proactive projects to improve these areas. We recognize that income levels and the success our economic plan are directly tied to the health and well-being of individuals and their families. First Nations Chiefs have focused primarily on substance abuse and mental health as the key issues needing improvement in order to ensure our communities are healthy and strong. Last year, First Nations community leaders produced a long-term Atlantic Drug and Mental Health Strategy focused on development and implementation of health care benefits programs, addiction assistance and, comprehensive and sustainable mental health services. Continued government cooperation and substantial provincial investment is required to confront these healthcare challenges and fill service gaps to ensure the lives of all First Nations citizens are protected.

Infrastructure/Housing

First Nations recognize the need for financial resources and a clear legal framework in order to improve infrastructure in their communities. Issues of water quality and waste disposal are of great concern, and our leaders must ensure that all existing and future infrastructure developments meet or surpass all federal policy guidelines. Currently, there is insufficient funding to maintain existing systems, let alone develop future water and waste infrastructure in most communities. The need for safe drinking water and waste disposal systems is paramount and serious actions must be taken to close gaps in such essential services. Without proper infrastructure maintenance and development, the severity of these problems will expand as populations grow and infrastructure systems are placed under increasing duress.

Affordable housing continues to be a pressing need in First Nations communities across Nova Scotia. Last year, reductions in social housing created serious frustration and hardship in many communities. We believe that it is critical that we continue to work with all levels of government to address this issue.