



Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities
Attn.: Councillor Russell Walker, President

September 20th, 2013
Via email: to bmacdonald@unsm.ca

Dear Councillor Walker:

On behalf of Premier Darrell Dexter, Leader of the New Democratic Party, please find attached the NDP response to your questions on issues of importance to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities.

I very much appreciate your taking the time to bring these concerns forward. I can assure you that the NDP values its constructive relationship with the UNSM.

The NDP platform in this election has seven key commitment; I hope that your members can take a moment to review them at <http://nsndp.ca/platform>.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to outline the NDP's positions on these important issues.

Best regards,

Dan O'Connor

Dan O'Connor
Chief of Staff to Premier Darrell Dexter
Leader, Nova Scotia New Democratic Party

Cc: Ms Betty MacDonald, Executive Director, UNSM



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MUNICIPALITIES – PROVINCIAL ELECTION 2013

- 1) **WILL YOUR PARTY SEE MUNICIPALITIES AS A PARTNER IN SERVING COMMUNITIES AND WORK WITH THEM AS ANOTHER ORDER OF GOVERNMENT?**

Yes. The NDP is committed to a collaborative and mutually supportive relationship with municipalities across Nova Scotia.

- 2) **WILL YOUR PARTY WORK WITH THE UNSM TO DEVELOP A LONG TERM STRATEGY FOR MUNICIPALITIES?**

Yes, building on the reports and recommendations of the Towns Task Force, the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy, and other relevant recent initiatives.

- 3) **WILL YOUR PARTY WORK WITH THE UNSM AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO SUPPORT AN INDEPENDENT STUDY ON AN APPROPRIATE MUNICIPAL TAXATION MODEL?**

Like the provincial government, municipalities work hard to find the right balance between taxation and services, and the fairest approach to taxes. Before launching a new study, the NDP will see and hear from Nova Scotians about the final report of the Ivany Commission, and discuss with UNSM the expectations for such a study.

- 4) **WILL YOUR PARTY ENSURE DIRECT NEGOTIATION WITH MUNICIPALITIES WHEN CONTEMPLATING NEW PROVINCIAL REGULATIONS?**

The NDP government will ensure that municipalities are aware and engaged in the development of new regulations that relate to municipal responsibilities.

- 5) **WILL YOUR PARTY ENSURE FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMS ARE FOCUSED ON MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND ADDRESS THE COMMUNITY'S HIGHEST PRIORITIES?**

As you note in your covering letter, 65% of Canadian infrastructure is owned by municipalities. Here in Nova Scotia, the province has significant responsibilities for infrastructure, including roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and other social services. The NDP will work the UNSM and the federal government

to have federal infrastructure funding fit with the scope of municipal and provincial responsibilities in Nova Scotia, so community priorities are addressed.

6) WILL YOUR PARTY BE WILLING TO MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS IN THE LONG TERM INTERESTS OF COMMUNITIES?

The NDP has demonstrated time and again over the past four years that it is willing to approach difficult problems and situations to help build a better future for Nova Scotia families. The NDP has chosen long-term investments to sustain and grow communities even when that may not be popular, and even in difficult times has balanced the budget over a four year period. Unlike the Liberals and Conservatives, the NDP is committed to working with all business and community sectors to support our communities.

7) WILL YOUR PARTY BE WILLING TO CREATE A SEPARATE MUNICIPAL PROGRAM TO TACKLE WASTEWATER REGULATIONS?

The NDP recognizes that federal wastewater regulations are creating a financial burden for many municipalities, and will commit to serious talks with the UNSM about finding a way forward that Nova Scotia taxpayers can afford, urging the federal government to take appropriate responsibility for the costs it is imposing on ratepayers

8) WILL YOUR PARTY BE WILLING TO ELIMINATE OR AT LEAST LIMIT MANDATORY EDUCATION PAYMENTS TO SCHOOL BOARDS, CORRECTIONS, AND HOUSING?

Municipal support of these programs is critical to services in many communities. The NDP will help the UNSM review and identify where particular burdens lie most heavily.

9) WILL YOUR PARTY PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT FOR ROADS WHILE EXPLORING NEW REVENUE SOURCES SUCH AS A MUNICIPAL FUEL TAX?

The NDP will not add a new tax on fuel.

For the past four years, Nova Scotia has seen the largest road-paving budgets ever, even while the NDP restored the province's finances to balance. The NDP has also created and annually updates Nova Scotia's first five-year paving plan. Anyone can go on-line and review the current year's plan here: http://novascotia.ca/tran/highways/5yearplan/2013_14Content.asp. The NDP will now develop a multi-year plan for local roads.

The Liberal Party stopped spending on local roads when last in power, and their Leader has recently asked why the province needs to pave roads. The Conservative platform shows Mr. Baillie would have to deeply cut ongoing capital projects in Nova Scotia in order to fund his platform, jeopardizing spending on roads.

10) WILL YOUR PARTY IMPLEMENT A PROVINCE-WIDE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN?

The NDP government will work with UNSM to determine the need for such a plan.

11) WILL YOUR PARTY UNDERTAKE A REVIEW OF THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT, HALIFAX CHARTER, AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ACT?

The NDP government has already updated portions of these Acts. The NDP will commit to sitting down with the UNSM and identifying particular areas of concern. Again, such initiatives are best considered in the context of the Ivany Commission has submitted its recommendations.

12) WILL YOUR PARTY CREATE A STAND-ALONE MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT?

The NDP has reduced the number of provincial departments and is eliminating duplication, particularly in administration and overhead. Whenever the NDP reorganizes departments, an important consideration is how to most effectively address municipal issues and ensure good municipal relations.