

Fredericton Chamber of Commerce's Questions That Count for the 2015 Federal Election - Part One

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FREDERICTON, NB – Earlier this fall, the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce provided each of Fredericton's four candidates with our 14 "Questions That Count" for the 2015 federal election. Over the next week, we will be sharing the responses received in three parts - beginning with questions one through five, below.

"We hosted each of Fredericton's candidates in a series of presentations throughout the election period, which has given attendees a sense of the candidate's ability to present their message orally and respond to questions on the spot," said Stephen Hill, chamber President. "Now our Questions That Count series goes a little deeper into the policy issues that matter most to the Fredericton business community."

Subsequent releases are scheduled for Tuesday, October 13, 2015 and Thursday, October 15, 2015.

"All of our candidates should be commended for their willingness to step forward to represent our community in Ottawa," added Krista Ross, chamber CEO. "We appreciate their engagement with the chamber and the business community at large. While we may not always agree on the issues, having our voice heard by the various levels of government is the best way for us to work towards building community prosperity through business."

Questions That Count for the 2015 Federal Election

1. What are the three most important planks of your party's election platform as they relate business, particularly in the Fredericton Region?

Matt DeCoursey (LPC):

Immediate Historic Investment in Public Infrastructure: There are significant infrastructure needs in our community, be it a new arts complex, or modernizing our public works and roads. The Liberal Plan will build the infrastructure we need today by taking advantage of historically low interest rates and at the same time will put our skilled trades persons and others to work. Our major infrastructure investment will almost double the current federal level of \$65 to nearly \$125 billion over ten years, which will be the largest new investment in infrastructure in Canadian history. We will not only significantly increase the scale of federal infrastructure investment, but our plan will provide provinces, territories, and municipalities with an unprecedented level of long-term predictability in funding. With the creation of these new funding mechanisms for public transit, social, and green infrastructure, federal funding will no longer be a roadblock to action. We will prioritize investments in:

- Roads, bridges, transportation corridors, ports, and border gateways;
- Affordable housing and seniors facilities, early learning and child care, and cultural or recreational infrastructure; and

- Local water and wastewater facilities, climate resilient infrastructure, clean energy, and clean-up of contaminated sites to facilitate new construction.

Enhanced Skills Training Support: Fredericton has tremendous research and innovation capacity in our post-secondary institutions, National Research Council, Forestry Centre, and our smart, high-tech business culture. The Liberal platform will focus investment on green technology solutions, smart grid innovations, and renewable and sustainable energy systems. Our professionals in this community are positioned to take the lead in this area.

- We will increase investment in skills training, through a \$750 million annual increase, including a \$500 million annual increase in funding to the Labour Market Development Agreements with provinces.
- A \$200 million annual increase in funding to be delivered by the provinces and territories and focused on training for workers who are not currently eligible for federal training investment.
- A Liberal government will renew and expand funding by \$50 million to the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS).

Renewed Focus on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Liberals recognize that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the Canadian economy, and often face serious barriers to success including red tape, difficulty finding skilled labour, and poor access to capital. A Liberal government will help SMEs grow, secure funding, and innovate, and create an environment that reduces barrier to their success. We believe SMEs are vital to strengthen Canada's economy and stimulate job growth. A Liberal government will reduce EI Premiums from \$2.63 to \$2.31 and follow through on Budget 2015's reduction of the small business tax rate to 9%. We have committed to reinstating the Labour Sponsored Venture Capital Corporation (LSVCC) tax credit, allowing labour funds to make significant investments in small- and medium-sized enterprises which need a steady source of capital to succeed. We will invest \$100 million annually in clean technology producers, many of whom are small and medium sized companies. We will also invest \$500 million in the federal-provincial Labour Market Agreements to help ensure small- and medium-sized business owners have access to a well-trained labour force.

Mary Lou Babineau (GPC):

- I. A federal Venture Capital Fund to support small and medium local businesses, particularly in their start-up phase. This Fund will also support business clusters in cities of all sized in Canada to create the business climate that will entice home-grown entrepreneurs to stay, and others to come, as they attract new businesses seeking the direct and indirect benefits of networking and collaboration.
- II. Reducing the small and medium-sized corporate tax rate from 11% to 9% to alleviate their tax burden and stimulate their creation and growth. The Green Party is also committed to helping to reduce the cost of providing employee benefits by establishing a National Pharmacare program, so that employers and employees do not get stuck with the rising costs of pharmaceuticals (bulk purchasing by a government crown corporation reduced prices substantially and saves billions).

III. The Green Party supports the introduction of **Think Small First** legislation. This legislation would require the consideration, and public reporting of how ANY new federal legislation would impact small business. This legislation is based on a similar law that currently exists in the European parliament. This demonstrates a true recognition of how important small and medium-sized businesses are to our economy and communities.

It is also worth noting that the Green Party strongly advocates for a Guaranteed Livable Income for all Canadians in order to eliminate poverty in our country. Leading economists have demonstrated how such an initiative not only saves taxpayers money, it also has a strong “trickle-up” effect that directly benefits local businesses. Eliminating poverty provides people with the means to support the businesses in their community.

Keith Ashfield (CPC):

Our party’s plan for the economy focus around three T’s and three I’s. The three T’s consist of taxes, tariffs, and training; while, the three I’s consist of innovation, infrastructure, and immigration.

Canadians today are experiencing their lowest tax burden in over 50 years. We have lowered taxes across the board both for both individuals, and businesses. For individuals, lower taxes increases their amount of disposable income, allowing them to consume more local goods and services. Our commercial taxes have also been considerably lowered across the board, allowing businesses to reinvest in expansion, more staff, among other things. We will continue with our low-tax plan, as it promotes jobs, growth, and prosperity for all Canadians.

On tariffs, our government understands the need to open new markets to our domestic businesses. We live in an increasingly globalized economy, and we recognize the benefits of freetrade agreements. When CETA comes into effect, Canadian firms will have unprecedented freetrade access to nearly one billion consumers (including countries covered under other trade agreements.) These new export opportunities will continue to solidify Canada’s strong position as a leader in the global economy, and will bring considerable benefits to our domestic economy. Our party’s record on trade agreements is nothing short of impressive: 30 completed compared to 3 from the previous Liberal mandate.

Training remains a strong focus of our government, as it is absolutely essential to our long-term growth and prosperity as a country. Our government has established various programs to assist Canadians in re-training and for the development their skills for the jobs of the future. Several of these measures have already been implemented like the Canada Job Fund Agreements, Canada Job Grant, Training for Older Workers, Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities, among many others. Additionally, our government has been working hard to make vocational training more affordable through grants, loans, EI benefits, and tax credits for Red-Seal and Blue-Seal Trades.

Innovation remains a top priority for our government. The Fredericton Region has become a success story for what happens when innovators and support from both government and investors. Launch36, Planet Hatch, and others have collectively started hundreds of start-ups that have taken the world by

storm. Support for these incubators is critical, and our government has been consistently increasing funding to them.

Infrastructure is absolutely essential for the promotion of private-sector investments. Our government has built on our record of record increases to infrastructure investments that have 2 of 5 made profound impacts on the lives of Canadians in every community. Specifically to Fredericton: I remain committed to the upgrading of service at the Fredericton International Airport, whether by means of a new funding stream, or by transferring the land to the Fredericton International Airport Authority. We will continue to collaborate with all levels of government on various infrastructure initiatives, whether it be the New Building Canada Fund, the Gas Tax Fund, Canada 150 Infrastructure Fund, or the many other initiatives our government has made available so that we can provide stable, predictable funding as we build our communities together.

Our government also has a great record when it comes to immigration. We have reduced red tape for economic immigrants, created new visa classes for entrepreneurs and others, and cracked down on crooked consultants to ensure those who want to immigrate to our country are protected from scams. We have also made considerable advancements with respect to foreign qualification recognition, so that when immigrants come here, they can hit the ground running with their profession. Going forward, we will continue to improve on our immigration record, and ensure that those who wish to come to live in our country are treated with the respect they deserve.

Our approach is based around a comprehensive vision that looks beyond the traditional four-year mandate. By creating the right conditions for businesses to start and operate, we will continue to grow our local economy.

Sharon Scott-Levesque (NDPC):

Tom Mulcair has a plan to strengthen the middle-class, and grow the economy while producing balanced budgets in each year of an NDP mandate to avoid piling more debt on the shoulders of future generations. We will reduce small business taxes from 11% to 9% to support the sector that creates 80 percent of all new private sector jobs in Canada. An NDP government will also support Atlantic Canadian innovators by investing in the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, instead of cutting more job-creating resources as the Conservatives have.

Tom Mulcair has outlined plans to build the roads, bridges and vital infrastructure Canadian families and businesses in Fredericton require. We'll start with the equivalent of one additional cent of the existing gas tax— ramping up to an additional \$1.5 billion at the end of a first mandate to reach \$3.7 billion annually in stable, long-term investment in core infrastructure. We will tackle gridlock and cut commute times with Tom Mulcair's Better Transit Plan, developed in partnership with provinces and territories, providing \$1.3 billion annually in predictable, stable and transparent public transit investment over the next 20 years. The NDP will make housing more affordable in our communities by sustaining investment in Canada's affordable housing agreements, and by providing incentives for the construction of 10,000 affordable and market rental housing units. Finally we will respect provincial jurisdiction and local decision-making, simplify application processes and remove funding barriers through direct, stable and transparent transfers to municipalities and provinces for their priorities.

We have a plan to create opportunities for 40,000 young Canadians through NGO and private sector training partnerships. In addition to this \$200 million plan, we will create apprenticeship spaces through federal infrastructure projects, in federally regulated airports or Port Authorities, and with crown corporations, while establishing apprenticeship ratios. An NDP Government will partner with municipalities and Indigenous governments to hire apprentices for infrastructure projects.

2. Do you support the construction of the Energy East Pipeline?

Matt DeCoursey (LPC):

Energy East and other projects have been made, virtually, impossible to achieve because of the policy decisions of the Harper government and its meddling with the National Energy Board. In an effort to fast-track this project; Mr. Harper has caused it stall because Canadians don't trust the process. A Liberal government will modernize and rebuild the National Energy Board. We will ensure it has broad regional representation and sufficient expertise in fields such as environmental science, community development, and Indigenous traditional knowledge. Hearings on the Energy East Pipeline proposal must be a comprehensive, fact and evidence-based approach to the evaluation of this project. Simply put, the Liberal government will ensure there is a process that Canadians can trust.

Moving our resources to market in the safest and most energy efficient way is an economic imperative for New Brunswick. Aging rail lines have proven to be a safety and environmental hazard. I support an assessment process that has the chance to see Energy East proceed, which requires a rejection of Mr. Harpers policies which have virtually guaranteed that the project will not proceed.

Mary Lou Babineau (GPC):

No, I do not.

We are coming to the end of the fossil fuel era, and renewable energy technology is the way of the future. In fact, the transition to a post-fossil fuel economy is considered by many to be the greatest business opportunity in human history. We also know that investment in green energy creates over 7x more jobs per dollar invested when compared to investment in traditional energy sectors. For these reasons, in addition to many others relating to climate change and the environment, the Green Party's position is that we need to immediately begin to heavily invest in renewable energy sources. We need to be prepared for the future.

Keith Ashfield (CPC):

Our government has been very clear on our position on the Energy East Pipeline. Only our party demonstrates unwavering support for projects that involve responsible natural resource development.

In fact, within our last mandate the government, the Conservative majority passed the Pipeline Safety Act, which reinforces our priorities of both protecting the environment while supporting the

economy. In this legislation, which received the support of all parties, we reinforced the notion of polluter pay and increased the liability for pipeline operators significantly in the event of a spill.

Sharon Scott-Levesque (NDPC):

Canada's natural resources are a tremendous gift and, managed properly and sustainably, can be important drivers for our economy. Refining Canadian oil in Canada makes sense – but we need to ensure that a strong environmental review regime is in place to determine if projects like Energy East are safe and sustainable before they can proceed. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have systematically dismantled environmental assessments and limited public input into major project reviews, meaning that a rigorous and credible assessment just isn't possible under these circumstances. An NDP government will strengthen the environmental assessment regime to restore public confidence and ensure that the public interest and our environment are protected. Canadians can trust Tom Mulcair's NDP to grow the economy while protecting our environment.

3. Do you support the development of the proposed Sisson Mine?

Matt DeCoursey (LPC):

The proposed development of the Sisson Mine is exclusively a provincial matter.

That said, Provincial governments could learn a great deal from the failures of the Harper government in addressing environmental approvals. Projects like the Sisson Mine will proceed when there is sufficient trust by all involved. I will support all projects that enhance our local economy which are safe for our communities.

Mary Lou Babineau (GPC):

This Green Party acknowledges the vital importance of the mining industry and supports mining where it does no lasting harm to the environment and the ecosystems that living things rely on, and when full consultation and agreements are reached with First Nations, Inuit and/or Métis communities.

Keith Ashfield (CPC):

As stated above, should the proposed Sisson Mine meet the requirements of our stringent environmental assessment, our government will move forward with the project.

Sharon Scott-Levesque (NDPC):

New Democrats know that the federal government does have responsibilities, particularly those linked to possible impacts on water, fisheries, and in consideration of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples' rights. Many proponents of natural resource projects recognize that adequate and open consultation with affected communities and Indigenous peoples is needed if developments are to achieve a social license to operate. The NDP supports the safe and responsible extraction of our natural energy resources as well as the sustainable development of renewable sources of energy.

4. What jurisdiction that has gone from a weak to a strong economy, do you see as a blueprint for New Brunswick?

Matt DeCoursey (LPC):

The blueprint for a strong economy in New Brunswick will rest with a strong middle class and our small and medium sized enterprises that are the heart of our economic future. The Liberal platform makes immediate investments in these two key areas and is the starting point for turning around our province.

Key priorities for middle class families are as follows:

- **The Canada Child Benefit:** a family earning \$90,000 per year will receive an additional \$2,500;
- **Middle Class Tax Cuts:** will reduce the current 22% rate to 20.5%.

Key priorities for small and medium sized enterprises are as follows:

- **Reduction to EI Premiums:** from \$2.63 to \$2.31;
- **Reduction to Tax Rate:** to 9%.
- **Annual Investment of:** \$100 million for clean technology producers, many of whom are small and medium sized companies.
- **Investment of:** \$500 million in the federal-provincial Labour Market Agreements to help ensure small- and medium-sized business owners have access to a well-trained labour force.

Justin Trudeau also recently announced a Liberal government provide unprecedented new investments in public transit, social infrastructure, and green infrastructure. We will nearly double federal infrastructure investment to \$125 billion – from the current \$65 billion – over the next decade.

We will make an immediate down payment on this plan to kick start job creation and economic growth. For each of the next two fiscal years, a Liberal government will double current federal infrastructure investment to \$10 billion per year from \$5 billion.

There is a clear choice between smart investments that create jobs and growth, or austerity and cuts that will slow our economy further.

Mary Lou Babineau (GPC):

Uruguay. This country, although larger and more populated than New Brunswick, also has a natural-resource based economy, and it has received a great deal of attention in recent years for its remarkable economic recovery and development after a devastating economic crisis in 2002. This has been achieved by diversifying the economy and broadening markets, enhancing the transparency and efficiency of governance, and reducing poverty/strengthening the middle class.

Keith Ashfield (CPC):

Turning around an economy does not happen overnight. Traditionally, New Brunswick has 3 of 5 focused on resource extraction as a way of generating wealth. The fundamental problem with this, is that the export of raw natural resources leads to value-added processes happening outside of our jurisdiction. As for a jurisdiction we should consider as a blueprint, I feel we can look at a variety of places around the world for inspiration, each for different reasons.

Of the many jurisdictions we can take inspiration from, I feel that Saskatchewan has been an incredible domestic example of how an economy can be turned around with discipline, hard work and openness to new ideas. The incredible potash reserves of this province have caused a very steady level of growth, and they produce a product that is used around the world for a variety of purposes. The revenues generated from the development of this natural resource has significantly decreased the level of unemployment, and has turned Saskatchewan from a have-not to a have province.

Sharon Scott-Levesque (NDPC):

Tom Mulcair understands that to put New Brunswick – and Canada - on track, and for middle class families to thrive, we need to take concrete steps to diversify Canada’s economy. This means ensuring the strength of traditional sectors like resource extraction and manufacturing, while seizing new opportunities to innovate and grow.

5. If your party were to form government after the October election, do you expect to receive a cabinet portfolio?

Matt DeCoursey (LPC):

My only priority is to earn the trust of this community and become its MP. Should the Liberals form government, I have made a commitment to this community to work with all my colleagues to move our local agenda forward whether in Cabinet or otherwise.

Mary Lou Babineau (GPC):

We do not expect the Green Party to form government. All elected Green Party MPs are committed to working across party lines to advance bills and policies that will have a positive impact on their constituencies.

Keith Ashfield (CPC):

I served as a Cabinet Minister for five years at the federal level. I stepped down to take care of my health, and have since made a full recovery. The decision to appoint Members of Parliament to

cabinet rests in the hands of the sitting Prime Minister, and I would welcome the opportunity to serve again, should the Prime Minister select me to serve my country.

Sharon Scott-Levesque (NDPC):

This election is about change. The NDP's priority is to replace Stephen Harper's Conservatives and bring the change that Frederictonians want. In Parliament, I will be a strong voice for all Frederictonians.

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*With more than 950 members, representing 27,000 employees the **Fredericton Chamber of Commerce** is one of Atlantic Canada's largest chambers of commerce. A dynamic business organization, the vision of the Fredericton Chamber of Commerce is community prosperity through business and is actively engaged in policy development that affects the competitiveness of our members and of the Canadian business environment.*

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