

## Candidate Responses from Cumberland-Colchester

- ARCHER, William (People's Party)
- ARMSTRONG, Scott (Conservative)
- BLANCH, Jason (Green Party)
- DUCHESNE, Larry (NDP-New Democratic Party)
- GARVEY, Stephen J (National Citizens Alliance)
- O'BLÉNIS, Jody (VCP)
- RUSHTON, Matthew V. (Independent)
- ZANN, Lenore (Liberal)

1. **Internet/Cellular Connectivity:** Communities need internet and cell service to attract residents and businesses. The federal government committed \$1.7 billion to internet funding in the 2019 budget. While a good start, this is not enough money, and municipal governments can't afford what is needed.

### ***What are you prepared to do to connect Nova Scotia's communities?***

**William Archer, People's Party:** I will work to deregulate the telecom industry to allow more competition while also working with the province and municipalities to get this necessary infrastructure built.

**Jason Blanch, Green Party:** Invest in rural connectivity until we can ensure that all rural communities are equally connected as are their urban neighbors. In the meantime, develop and maintain strong, free, WiFi at all Canada Post locations to help rural Canadians during the transition period.

**Larry Duchesne, NDP:** New Democrats believe that no matter where you live in Canada, you should be able to stay connected – without breaking the bank because of unfair gouging. That's why, until the industry becomes more competitive, we'll put in place a price cap to make sure that Canadians aren't paying more than the global average for their cell phone and internet bills. Expanding cell coverage and delivering reliable, affordable broadband internet to every community in Canada is vital to the economic future of rural Canada and remote communities. But it has been ignored by successive governments for far too long. A New Democrat government will change that by delivering high-speed rural broadband to all communities in Canada without delay and ensuring that reliable cell phone service is expanded to every area of Canada, while keeping rates affordable for families and businesses.

**Lenore Zann, Liberal:** As part of the Liberal government's Innovation and Skills Plan, we are investing \$500 million under the Connect to Innovate program to extend high-speed Internet services to rural and remote communities across the country. Internet access is no longer a luxury; it's now an essential part of everyday life. Faster Internet service will allow rural businesses and families to participate fully in a global and digital world. In addition, to help lower monthly cell phone bills and bring costs in line with what people pay in other countries, we will move forward with cutting the cost of these services by 25 per cent in the next two years by using the government's regulatory powers, saving an average middle class family of four nearly \$1,000 per year. Lastly, the Liberal Government created the department of Rural Economic

Development last year that is laser focused on preserving our rural lifestyle and growing our rural economy, and a female MP from Nova Scotia was appointed the position of Minister of this Department.

2. **Program Design:** The Gas Tax Fund (GTF) is a great federal-municipal partnership. Other federal programs aren't as straightforward, requiring provincial matching funds or administrative approvals.

**Do you support more programs designed like the GTF, to ensure that Nova Scotian municipalities with limited resources are able to partner directly with the federal government to respond to local needs?**

**William Archer, People's Party:** I believe that all levels of government need to work in the best interest of the people that they serve. If we are creating something new that works while eliminating something that doesn't then I am definitely on board.

**Jason Blanch, Green Party:** I believe that there is too often a scope creep where municipalities are expected to provide their citizens more and more services with equal or less money. I believe that there should be more funding available to municipalities, perhaps a certain part of the GST should be directed toward municipalities or another form of transfer. This could be directly tied to specific services or it could be added as general revenue. I would propose a review of the current funding model and suggestions on how municipalities could receive a more equitable source of the national tax dollar.

**Larry Duchesne, NDP:** New Democrats think that the one-time increase to municipalities from the Federal Gas Tax fund is not going to get our communities the modernized transit, climate resilient infrastructure, or affordable housing they need to succeed in the long run. A New Democrat government is committed to be a long-term, stable partner for our municipalities when it comes to infrastructure funding.

**Lenore Zann, Liberal:** Yes. Red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy stifle progress, and we simply can't afford to let that happen.

3. **Infrastructure Funding:** Municipalities own close to 60% of public infrastructure but receive just ten cents of every tax dollar collected. Many federal infrastructure funding programs are available, but applying to them requires staff capacity that many small municipalities lack.

**Would you commit to funding staff and program resources at NSFMC to support small and rural municipalities to access much-needed infrastructure funding?**

**William Archer, People's Party:** I would prefer to make the entire process easier than to grow government larger. There is only so much money available, and hiring more people and growing the bureaucracy would take away money that would be available.

**Jason Blanch, Green Party:** Yes, as I noted in the previous question, municipalities need to be better supported in order to provide the services expected of them. I am currently a town councillor in the town of Amherst, so I understand and care about these issues.

**Larry Duchesne, NDP:** New Democrats believe that Canadians should be able to count on the federal government to invest in infrastructure to make a real difference in communities across the country, not to pad the bank accounts of investment firms. Our vision is one where communities can afford to build the infrastructure they need to thrive, from roads and bridges to community centres and childcare centres, and everything in between. These investments will create good jobs in every part of the country. To get there, we will partner with provinces, territories, First Nations, and municipalities to deliver reliable public infrastructure funding that puts people – not profit – first. By using Community Benefit Agreements, we will guarantee that good jobs, training, apprenticeships, and support for local businesses are part of every infrastructure project

**Lenore Zann, Liberal:** This is a good point and I feel it is very important to support NSFM in their work.

4. **Cannabis:** The federal government promised a significant portion of cannabis tax revenues would be shared with municipalities. Despite multiple requests for revenue-sharing arrangements, no long-term commitment has been achieved here in Nova Scotia.

**What will you do to work with municipalities to ensure they are delivered a portion of cannabis-related excise tax?**

**William Archer, People's Party:** I would encourage the provincial government to allow private business into cannabis sales, as they have managed to be the only group to lose money selling it.

**Jason Blanch, Green Party:** Yes, revenue sharing with the municipalities is fair and needs to be clarified in a long-term agreement. Green Party will initiate a federal commission to explore all aspects of the cannabis situation looking at packaging, restrictions on growing outside, chemical use and profitability. Included in this will be revenue sharing with Municipalities.

**Larry Duchesne, NDP:** Years of Conservative cuts and liberal underfunding have left cities struggling to keep up with more and more responsibility on a shorter and shorter budget. Now with cannabis, the Liberals have again downloaded their responsibility. Justin Trudeau has shifted the entire burden of legalization onto the provinces and municipalities, requiring them to assume more responsibility. Regrettably, he did so without resolving key issues like taxation, regulation, safety and investment in research and public education. The Liberals did not have a plan to legalize cannabis and they still do not have one. This shows a great lack of leadership on the part of Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government. Today municipalities have to deal with the consequences of legalization without the support they need. We'll work to reverse the effects that years of downloading have had on municipalities, and we'll work with the provinces and the cities to ensure that everyone has a seat at the table.

**Lenore Zann, Liberal:** I am happy to work with Municipalities on any matter that holds the best interest of the constituents of Cumberland-Colchester in mind.

5. **Affordable Housing:** If elected, what would you and your party do to increase the supply of affordable housing in your communities?

## Would your government honour the commitments made under the \$40-billion National Housing Strategy?

**William Archer, People's Party:** I would have to review the commitment before I would agree to it. History has shown that government intervention has increased housing costs rather than mitigated it. The Peoples party has tax changes that would allow people to keep more of their own money, which would go further in helping with availability.

**Jason Blanch, Green Party:** We would honour the commitments made under the national housing strategy, but we also recognize that this strategy will not move quickly enough to address the problem many communities face today. We would additionally, appoint a Minister of Housing to strengthen the National Housing Strategy so that it meets the needs for affordable housing that are unique to each province, and oversee its implementation in collaboration with provincial ministers. This recognizes that housing is provincial jurisdiction. The target would be 25,000 new and 15,000 rehabilitated units annually for the next 10 years.

**Larry Duchesne, NDP:** New Democrats are committed to a National Housing Strategy and to maintaining and enhancing the \$40 billion commitment to build affordable housing in communities across Canada. We have an ambitious plan that will make a difference in every community in our country – because finding a good, affordable place to live shouldn't be like winning the lottery. It's time to relieve the stress and worry that people feel by choosing to make it easier to rent and buy a home. A major part of the long-term solution to the problem is to ensure that more affordable rental units are built across the country. One in three Canadians is a renter. In many cities, the few affordable apartments available get snapped up quickly, and people end up living in either inadequate housing or forced to spend a huge chunk of their income on rent. A New Democrat government will also create 500,000 units of quality, affordable housing in the next ten years, with half of that done within five years. This will be achieved with the right mix of effective measures that work in partnership with provinces and municipalities, build capacity for social, community, and affordable housing providers and co-ops, and meet environmental energy efficiency goals. This ambitious plan will create thousands of jobs in communities all across the country, and help Canadians get the affordable housing they need. Our federal investment will begin with \$5 billion in additional funding in the first year and a half of a New Democrat government. In order to kick-start the construction of co-ops, social, and non-profit housing, we will set up dedicated fast-start funds to streamline the application process and help communities get the expertise and assistance they need to get projects off the ground today, not years from now. And for Canadians who are open to innovative paths to home ownership, a New Democrat government will provide resources to facilitate co-housing, such as model co-ownership agreements and connections to local resources, and ease access to financing by offering CMHC-backed co-ownership mortgages. Also, to help put an end to speculation that's fueling high housing prices, we'll put in place a Foreign Buyer's tax on the sale of homes to individuals who aren't Canadian citizens or permanent residents. New Democrats will also fight money laundering, which fuels organized crime and drives up housing prices.

**Lenore Zann, Liberal:** All Canadians deserve a safe and affordable place to call home. A home makes Canadians feel more secure, making it easier to raise healthy children, pursue an education, and gain employment. Affordable housing has meant all the difference for families and people of all ages and all walks of life. For ten years, Conservatives like Stephen Harper and Andrew Scheer did nothing to address housing affordability— pushing home ownership

further out of reach and putting household debt on the rise. The Liberal plan for the first-ever National Housing Strategy is a blueprint for:

- Reducing chronic homelessness by 50%.
- Removing more than 530,000 households out of housing need.
- Creating 100,000 new housing units: four times more than what the previous government did during the last 10 years.
- Repairing and renewing more than 300,000 housing units: three times more than what the previous government did during the last 10 years.
- Protecting an additional 385,000 households from losing an affordable place to live.

The new National Housing Strategy is re-establishing the federal government's leadership role in housing. The primary focus of the NHS will be meeting the needs of Canadians, including seniors; women and children fleeing family violence; Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities; those dealing with mental health and addiction issues; veterans; and young adults. A key part of the NHS is the Canada Housing Benefit. The Liberal government will work with provinces and territories to develop a \$4 billion Canada Housing Benefit to be launched in 2020 to respond to local housing needs and priorities. Once fully implemented, the Canada Housing Benefit will: assist at least 300,000 families; provide an estimated average of \$2,500 per year to each household recipient; and be delivered directly to households. The NHS includes a \$13.2 billion Co-Investment Fund that will create and repair affordable housing across Canada for those with the greatest need, to help Canadians have a safe place to call home. In closing, the Liberal plan will create a new generation of housing in Canada. It will promote diverse communities and will build housing that is sustainable, accessible, mixed-income and mixed-use that will be located close to transit, work and public services. But we know many middle class families are struggling in expensive housing markets. That's why in 2019, we launched the new First-Time Home Buyer Incentive to help middle class Canadians take their first steps towards home ownership. The Incentive will make home ownership more affordable for first-time buyers by allowing them to lower their monthly mortgage payments without increasing their down payment.

6. **Immigration:** Immigration must play a key part in helping our communities remain viable, but numbers show that many immigrants to Nova Scotia forge westward in search of healthier economies.

**What will you and your party do to help Nova Scotian communities, especially rural communities, attract - and more importantly, retain - immigrants?**

**William Archer, People's Party:** We will need to address why the immigrants leave, as there are multiple reasons involved. I will work to double the number of economic immigrants and see if we can find ways to entice them to come to our communities.

**Jason Blanch, Green Party:** Green Party policy proposes a number of universal programs that will improve the quality of life for many marginalized people in our society that would certainly include many recent immigrants; Universal Pharmacare, Free Tuition, Universal Basic Income, Universal Childcare and \$15 per hour minimum wage will all allow new immigrants to feel safer in more rural parts of the country where it may take them longer to get established. Additionally, A Green Government would: Allocate much greater funding for training in official languages (ESL and FSL) for new immigrants through earmarked transfers to the provinces for primary and secondary public school and free night school programs. • Work with municipalities and provinces to improve the integration of new Canadians into the multicultural fabric of our country. • Support multicultural communities by assisting cultural organizations to obtain charitable status.

**Larry Duchesne, NDP:** New Democrats believe that immigration makes Canada stronger, welcoming new Canadians from around the world builds our communities and boosts our economy. Our immigration system should be accountable to Canadians and rooted in the values of fairness, respect, and dignity. A New Democrat government will make sure that our immigration policies and levels meet Canada's labour force needs and recognize people's experiences, contributions, and ties to Canada. We will work with the provinces to address gaps in settlement services and improve foreign credentials recognition.

**Lenore Zann, Liberal:** Nova Scotia is currently enjoying a record high population. The highest ever recorded, and this is largely due to immigration! At the same time, Nova Scotia is also experiencing a record low (lowest ever recorded!) unemployment rate. The economy is strong. I am committed to responsible immigration practices and working hard on your behalf to grow our rural economy.

7. **Climate Change:** The aftermath of Hurricane Dorian has exposed Nova Scotians to the costs of new weather extremes. Federal representatives from all parties need to commit to long-term tools that will empower our municipal leaders to protect Canadians from these changing conditions.

**How will your government ensure municipalities are helped to make their communities more resilient and to green our economies?**

**William Archer, People's Party:** I will help by allowing the communities to let me know what they need rather than dictating something from Ottawa. They know what they need more than someone in Ottawa.

**Jason Blanch, Green Party:** This is one of the key priority areas for the Green Party of Canada, addressing the Climate Crisis by upgrading our entire nations infrastructure. We will work with all levels of government and across party lines to succeed in this unprecedented transition. We understand that infrastructure that is redesigned and renovated to mitigate climate change is also better able to adapt to climate change. A better insulated house or building uses less energy therefore releasing less emissions, but it is also better able to withstand the threats from extreme heat or cold or driving winds. For these reasons, upgrading infrastructure across the country is a crucial aspect of dealing with climate change.

Specifically, a Green Government would:

-Launch a massive energy efficiency retrofit of residential, commercial and institutional buildings. To make a renewable energy transition possible, we have to eliminate energy waste. According to trade union research, this will create over four million jobs.

-Finance building retrofits and installation of renewable energy technologies such as solar and heat pumps through direct grants, zero-interest loans and repayments based on energy/cost savings.

**Larry Duchesne, NDP:** As the impacts of climate change are felt across the country, New Democrats believe that all levels of government have to step-up to help communities cope with the impacts of extreme weather. That's why a New Democrat government will expand federal funding to respond to disasters and support communities in proactively adapting their

infrastructure to withstand floods, forest fires, and other extreme weather events. We will also partner with Canadians and communities to make serious investments in making buildings more energy efficient to help families save money and fight climate change. Canada has huge untapped renewable energy potential. With the right leadership, we can protect good, family-sustaining jobs across the country and broaden our economy while making the shift to electricity that meets our emissions targets. New Democrats will set a target to power Canada with net carbon-free electricity by 2030 and move to 100% non-emitting electricity by 2050. To drive this progress, we will establish a new Canadian Climate Bank. This bank will help boost investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and low carbon technology across the country. It will also provide support for interested provinces to inter-connect power grids and introduce smart grid technology to bolster Canada's energy security and distribute clean power across the country. The Climate Bank will also support made-in-Canada manufacturing of renewable energy components and technologies, and help scale up Canada's clean energy industry. Meeting this carbon-free electricity goal in a way that respects local communities and creates good jobs is essential. We'll support investments in innovative community-owned and operated clean energy projects to keep jobs and expertise local, work in partnership with Indigenous and northern communities to move off diesel, improve energy security, and cut emissions and air pollution.

One thing we won't do is continue down the path that Liberal and Conservative governments have chosen when it comes to spending public money on oil and gas subsidies. Canada currently spends \$3.3 billion per year, more per capita than any other G7 country, on oil and gas subsidies. And on top of that, Justin Trudeau purchased the Kinder Morgan oil pipeline for a staggering \$4.5 billion and gave another \$1.6 billion in handouts to the oil patch. New Democrats know that public funds are best spent supporting the transition to renewable energy rather than on profitable oil and gas companies. We will fulfill Canada's G-20 commitment to eliminate these fossil fuel subsidies and redirect these funds to low carbon initiatives.

**Lenore Zann, Liberal:** Climate Action Can't Wait. There is no issue more important to our future than fighting climate change. That's why Justin Trudeau and the Liberal team have a strong plan to protect a clean environment and grow the economy, and it's working for Canadians. Pollution is no longer free, and Canadians have created more than 1.1 million new jobs since 2015. With our plan, we are taking real action to fight climate change, the economy will continue to grow, and the vast majority of Canadian families will be better off. The Liberal government is taking action to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change across all sectors—from industry, to buildings, transportation and agriculture. This means using clean electricity to power our homes, workplaces, vehicles and industries, and using energy more efficiently. It also means more resilient infrastructure and ecosystems that can better withstand changes to the climate, and it means expanding protected areas and parks with a whole host of important new conservation measures.

Here are some examples of the Liberal government's progress on protecting our environment:

- Putting a price on pollution, to fight climate change and put money back in the pockets of Canadians families
- Launching the Oceans Protection Plan, which is the single-largest investment in Canadian history to protect our oceans (at \$1.5 billion)
- Taking real action to ban harmful single-use plastics by 2021.
- Investing in better public transit in communities across Canada
- Supporting renewable energy, and investing in energy efficient buildings
- Declaring a national climate emergency

-Phasing out coal

These investments have continued in Budget 2019, including a new rebate for electric vehicles to help families get around in a cleaner, cheaper, and faster way, and new investments for communities to be more energy efficient.