



# Municipal Candidate Survey

## Halifax-Dartmouth and District Labour Council

HRM MUNICIPAL DISTRICT #: 12 – Downtown Halifax

Name:   Cameron Ells  

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Are you a union member? (Union and local number):   No. Association of Professional Engineers of Nova Scotia (APENS) Member #5571  

**Please complete the following questionnaire, using a separate sheet if necessary.**

**Please return this survey as soon as possible, but no later than 9:00am on Friday September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008 by email to [ttracy@clc-ctc.ca](mailto:ttracy@clc-ctc.ca) or fax 455-9130.**

1. Have you been a candidate in a previous municipal, provincial or federal election? If so, please provide details.

  No.    

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2. Have you ever volunteered in an election campaign and in what capacity?

I think the answer to the spirit of your question is No.

Strictly speaking, the answer is Yes. In the provincial election campaign of 1978 I was a 14 year old volunteer for the NDP on election day to observe and scrutinize the voting procedures, the verification of voter identities, and the accurate counting of ballots. This was arranged as part of my community service in ultimately attaining the Chief Scout's Award through Scouts Canada. (For the NDP, in Truro of all places, in 1978, they were admittedly simpler times.)

Aside from the noted exception, I have never been a volunteer, contributor, or member of any political party.

3. What do you believe are the key issues facing your community?

For Downtown Halifax:

- 1) Development is coming – Let's make sure we get it right
- 2) Encourage residential – commercial – institutional mixed use neighbourhoods
- 3) Encourage more reliance on mass transit when going into and out of Downtown
- 4) Reduce crime in the area, and at the same time, reduce the perception of crime
- 5) Live, love, and laugh through life in a long term, sustainable style
- 6) Encourage the recycling of under used "brownfield" properties, for new purposes.

4. What are your top 5 priorities?

- 1) Contribute to good quality infrastructure decision making by HRM and Halifax Water, and encouraging the broad based application of life cycle asset management in the decision making. Infrastructure is the largest portion of the HRM budget. For HRM in the long term, "Getting it right" with infrastructure will result in better financial options with respect to parks, recreation, and everything else.
- 2) Contribute to the incorporation of climate change adaptation into regular HRM planning and infrastructure decision making.
- 3) Contribute to the completion and closure of the unfinished HRM by Design and Tax Reform activities. That is not an unqualified endorsement of every detail of those processes, but it was originally intended that both processes would now be finished.
- 4) Contribute to increasing economic opportunities for Downtown residents. Encourage the recycling of under used "brownfield" properties, for new purposes, including new housing opportunities. Economic opportunities, housing, and education can influence the long term crime trends in an area.
- 5) Contribute to increasing a sense of pride and fun for the Downtown area. Encourage residential – commercial – institutional mixed use neighbourhoods. Encourage more reliance on mass transit when going into and out of Downtown. Live, love, and laugh through life in a long term, sustainable style.

5. If elected what actions would you take to address sustainability and the environment?

On October 16, 2008 I will be making a presentation to the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers International Symposium (Engineering in a Climate of Change). The title of my presentation is "Placentia NL Case Study Example of Incorporating Climate Change Adaptation into Infrastructure Decision Making."

I would seek to have the methodical inclusion of climate change adaptation into HRM planning and infrastructure decision making.

We cannot do everything, but I believe it is possible to accomplish this particular goal within a four year time period.

Infrastructure is the biggest portion of HRM's budget. Incorporating climate change adaptation into infrastructure decision making would reduce long term risks and uncertainties. We would have a better chance to "get it right the first time" and so have more money available for other purposes, such as recreation and parks.

6. If elected, would you support sourcing the fast ferries here in the Halifax region?

I do not know enough about the "business case" for fast ferries to conclude that they are among the highest priorities for current or short term HRM resources. They may or may not be. There may or may not be currently available information by which one can make a conclusion. However, for me, on this particular day of September 12, 2008, I do not know enough to make that conclusion. That may well soon change.

However, to respond to the spirit of the question, lets assume that one concluded that fast ferries were to be used in HRM, and that sourcing them from the Halifax region would result in ships that meet the applicable technical performance goals of a design specification.

If the total project costs were perceived to be similar or less for ferries sources from Halifax versus another location, then this might not be a question. Locally used concrete from Halifax sources is more cost effective than from a Truro source.

Perhaps the question could be equivalently presented as "Would you support paying a premium price for fast ferries that are sourced from the Halifax region?" Well, that depends on how much of a premium is being paid, and the associated incremental benefits. It is not an automatic yes, nor an automatic no to that question.

Personally I do choose to pay a little more of my own money for some local products.

However, when I am influencing how someone else's money is being used, I try to make the most effective use of available resources, including financial ones, to achieve the desired performance goals of that other person.

How much is the premium pricing?

What are the perceived incremental benefits for that pricing?

What alternative benefits could be achieved with the same financial capacity, if premium pricing was not being used? (ie. a greater expansion of the Metro Link system)

Answering these questions should provide a basis for concluding if fast ferries should be locally sourced or not.

A generation ago, for a variety of reasons, Canada chose to build the current fleet of naval frigates in Canada. While the strongest and most effective of this shipbuilding activity was in Atlantic Canada, a political decision was made to purposely source a portion of this work outside of Atlantic Canada. Did that turn out to be the most effective use of public sector resources? There were more problems (ie. premium pricing to meet a similar result or technical specification) with the work done outside of Atlantic Canada.

In hindsight was that a good example of public sector decision making?

7. If elected, what would you do to address affordable housing issues in the HRM?

The affordability of housing is influenced by the supply of housing, the cost of living, and the relative capacity of residents to make those monthly payments.

An atmosphere that increased the supply of housing in Downtown Halifax could include recycling empty, old commercial and institutional properties into new mixed use residential / light commercial land uses. Brownfield redevelopment has already had a profound influence in Downtown Halifax over the past 10 years, and this trend can continue to increase the supply of housing. I would continue to help this trend.

The cost of living could be improved. As the supply of housing increases faster than demand, the costs will start to decrease. Living in communities where there is a mix of residential and commercial and other land uses, can result in shorter average travel distances for people, a more energy efficient form of living, and a lower cost of living.

For Downtown Halifax, a shift in the collection of HRM municipal revenues from a basis on property taxes to a basis of services provided, should result in the more affordable maintenance of housing. Rising property taxes are paid by both renters through higher rates to landlords, and by property owners.

The relative capacity of residents to afford those monthly payments could be improved with a healthy mix of improved employment opportunities, improved educational opportunities, a better atmosphere for new things to happen (ie. small business, the creative arts), and a safer, healthier, and happier community.

I would support measures that are intended to result in these outcomes.

**Describe your position on the following issues:**

1. Public-Private Partnerships

The usefulness of Public – Private Partnerships (PPP), as a means for achieving certain performance goals through the effective use of available resources, will vary on a case-by-case basis. PPP project structures can bring public and private resources together for a focused purpose. This can be very useful for all of the parties.

The PPP structure can also be used to achieve goals that in hindsight might not have been the right goals. The 1990's schools program in Nova Scotia did build many schools in a short period of time, and was a short term spike in construction activity. However, a steady, regular replacement of schools over a longer time period might have resulted in steadier, sustained increased capacity in the local construction industry.

In hindsight, using a PPP structure as a means to avoid directly accounting for the capital construction costs as NS government debt, but to ultimately pay more through long term "operational" leases may not have been in the best interest of our community. That is not necessarily an indictment of the potential good for using a PPP structure, but it is a criticism of the political goals being achieved by the use of the PPP structure.

2. Contracting-out public services

As a Councilor, success is having HRM activities achieving their desired performance goals (ie. serviceability, functionality, capacity, quality, security, safety, maintenance, consistency, cost) and not so much on the specific means for achieving it.

It could be that the most cost effective way of meeting the performance goals for executing identical municipal services, will be through the public sector in one community, and through the private sector in another. In executing public services, the use of public sector people, or private sector people, or a mix of such people, is not such that one option is always inherently better or preferential to all of the others.

3. Made in Canada purchasing policies

Please refer to my response to the functionally similar question on sourcing fest ferries in Halifax. It is not an automatic yes nor an automatic no to this question.

On a case by case basis, it depends on

- What would be premium pricing?
- What would be the perceived incremental benefits to paying the premium pricing?
- What alternative benefits could HRM receive for using the limited available financial resources for other purposes?

I think most of us in our personal life will, at times, chose pay a premium price with our own money for a local product, but not at any price. On municipal council, the

decisions relate to spending other people's money, so the case for choosing to pay premium pricing should be pretty compelling. That will vary on a case by case basis.

4. Pay equity and employment equity

HRM employees - regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, an unfortunate affinity for the Boston Bruins, etc. - providing work of equal value, merit equal pay. Calculating the value of contributions being made may also be influenced by changes in the supply and demand for a particular group of skills and experience.

Suppose in 2001 HRM hired three graduating engineers – one with a civil background, one with a mechanical background, and one with an electrical background. Suppose the upcoming construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility in Nova Scotia resulted in a huge demand for mechanical engineers (and other trades). What would happen to HRM as an employer if it restricted itself to paying the same rate for the three original engineers, who now each have 8 years of experience? They would probably have a staffing shortage of mechanical people as they lost them to higher paying alternatives, or they would end up paying them more to reflect the market rate of the value being provided by these people. .

5. Transit issues (Buses, ferries, rail, etc)

The relatively new Metro Link program is self evidently successful. Strengthening this system would seem to be the most effective use of public sector resources on "Transit issues." This includes not just busses and routes, but also the associated infrastructure of staff, organization, shelters, garages, and more.

Do you have any other comments?

For Downtown Halifax infrastructure construction projects, it is possible that workers come into repeated contact with fill materials containing concentrations of metals, polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's) and other compounds typically associated with contaminated sites. At one time ash from an old incinerator was being regularly used as fill materials in Downtown Halifax. We could make sure that these potential exposures are being taken into account for HRM employees, workers for contractors employed by HRM, and for workers employed by utilities and others working on HRM properties. This could be accomplished through project health and safety plans, additional material safety data sheets (MSDS) where appropriate, and possibly some additional contract language.

I found that the short time frame you provided made answering this questionnaire a bit of a rushed effort. If you thought it might be useful later on, I would be happy to share a little table talk and a cup of coffee at your office, or at some other location.

CANDIDATE NAME: Cameron Ells

DISTRICT #: 12 – Downtown Halifax



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**Email to: [ttracy@clc-ctc.ca](mailto:ttracy@clc-ctc.ca)**

**Fax surveys to: 902-455-9130**

**Or, optionally, drop completed survey off to:**

**Halifax-Dartmouth & District Labour Council  
c/o Canadian Labour Congress  
220 – 3700 Kempt Road  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 4X8**

**For more information please contact:**

**Tony Tracy  
Representative – Atlantic Region  
Canadian Labour Congress  
Office: 902-455-2965 / Cell: 902-223-9489**