

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Buying firewood? Getting what you ordered?

The Editor

Even though there has been extremely hot weather, this summer, the Better Business Bureau serving the Maritime Provinces has noticed a sizeable increase in the number of pre-purchase inquiries concerning firewood vendors. Consumers who heat their homes with wood stoves, combination wood/oil burning furnaces and fireplaces have to rely on the integrity of firewood vendors. In order to take a proactive approach to purchasing firewood, the Better Business Bureau suggests the following:

**Before Purchase:**

- Check with the Better Business Bureau for a report on the company.
- Check with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations for a list of registered firewood vendors.

**During the Purchase:**

- Make sure that you accept the purchase in person so that you are able to stack and measure the wood.

- Make sure that you obtain a receipt. The receipt should include the date, company name, address, telephone number, the price as well as the quantity.

- According to Measurement Canada there are only certain legal units of measurement that companies can use when selling firewood. They are a cord, fractions of a cord, cubic feet, stacked cubic metre and fractions of a stacked cubic metre. Measures such as furnace cord, short cord; bush cord, stove cord and processed cords are illegal units of measurement.

If you did not receive the measure that you thought you should, then do not use the firewood.

- Contact the company that you purchased it from and try to resolve the issue.
- Contact your local office of Measurement Canada.
- File a complaint with the Better Business Bureau.

Better Business Bureau  
of the Maritime Provinces

### Doctors warn against alcohol and pregnancy

The Editor

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day occurred recently and doctors in the province encourage Nova Scotians to learn about the affects alcohol could have on a developing baby.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a term used to describe a full range of physiological and neurological disabilities that may occur as a result of prenatal alcohol exposure.

It's important for women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant to know the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy. Drinking alcohol when you are pregnant can cause brain damage in the developing baby. Children and adults who are affected by FASD may have a hard time learning and controlling their behaviour. For example, they may have trouble adding, subtracting and handling money, thinking things through or reasoning, learning from experience, understanding consequences of actions, remembering things, and getting along with others.

The impact of alcohol on the fetus can range in severity and depends on factors like how much, when and how often the mother drinks, and the mother's and baby's

genetic makeup and overall health. However, this isn't just a women's issue. It's important for women who are pregnant, or expecting to be pregnant, to receive support from their partner and their community.

The Public Health Agency of Canada reports that drinking even small amounts of alcohol at any time while a woman is pregnant can have a negative impact on the developing brain of her unborn baby. Even consuming one or two drinks a week may put a baby at risk.

The Government of Canada recommends that there is no safe time or safe amount of alcohol to drink when pregnant or when planning to become pregnant.

There is no cure for FASD; people affected by the disability live with it their entire lives.

Doctors in Nova Scotia encourage women who are pregnant, or planning to be pregnant, to avoid drinking alcohol. Some women may have a difficult time not drinking during pregnancy and it's important to know that support is available to you. For more information, talk to your doctor or visit [www.gov.ns/hpp/addictions](http://www.gov.ns/hpp/addictions).

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President, Doctors Nova Scotia

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Mail to P.O. Box 629, Baddeck, Nova Scotia B0E 1B0



## The Victoria Standard

The Victoria Standard is published fortnightly by  
Bras d'Or Graphic Marketing Services.

**Editor and General Manager: James Morrow**  
**Copy/Design/Subscriptions: John Johnson**  
**Advertising/Sales: Jim Ryan**

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### Chuck Thompson's "Along the Trail"

## "Earl & me, and NS Power"



Disraeli once said there are three great untruths: 1. Lies 2. Damnable lies. and 3. Statistics. Add a fourth. "You are on our list, Sir."

Hurricane Earl roared through here on Saturday, September 4th, toppling trees, and with them power lines, phone lines, all things electronic. I had (I thought) made preparations. I filled the bath tub, brought in the cat, and carried a can of ham around like it was an autographed NFL football. As the power vanished after the first puff of wind around 2PM, I felt fairly confident I could weather whatever the next day or so brought my way. I had mentally prepared for the storm but not the frustrations that ensued.

I joined my Middle River neighbours trying to look nonchalant while cursing the river roads searching for power crews. Some of these same good neighbours took me in and fed me eggs and tea and cookies. All were items of sustenance except the cookies.

I listened intently to CBC on the car radio for updates. At one point someone came on and said the fridge was good for a day, your freezer for two. The key, of course, was not to open either for obvious reasons.

And I didn't, which made the can of ham doubly important.

By Saturday night crews had been mobilized and were working systematically through the myriad of obstacles. No problem, we rural Cape Bretoners are a patient lot.

Sunday afternoon saw the power restored throughout Margaree and from Baddeck up to Hunter's Mountain. Normality was creeping ever so close. The automated (more about that later) hotline said I would be boiling water by 11 that night. Fair enough. I have nothing but admiration for these good folks who brave the worst of weather and live wires to ensure I get to see "Dancing with the Stars."

As darkness approached on Sunday evening I watched the crews all around me stringing wires and sawing trees. The conclusion was palpably close. Soon, very soon, I would be bathed in light.

Then it happened. At six o'clock the entire area was flooded with light. I could see lights twinkling above me and beside me. Except not me. There was no escape from the gloom at 27 MacLennan's Cross.

Time for a call to N.S. Power to find out what was going on.

I called and got the friendly, but somewhat cold automated answering machine. "If you are reporting a complete loss of power, press 1. If a partial loss of power press 2." My nervous fingers pressed hard down on the 1 key. "There are no reports of widespread power losses in your area. Thank you for calling Nova Scotia Power." A-a-r-g-h! What do I do with that information? I call back. Same thing. Call again and again, finally the machine must have downloaded to idiot mode and a live person came on the line. Somewhere.

"Hi, this is Stephanie, how may I help you?" Stephanie was way too perky to appreciate my dilemma. I explained how all the power had been restored in my area (kudos to the boys!) except me. I had been missed.

Stephanie went on to explain how power was still out all across the province and I needed to be patient. I was on the list. I tried to tell her that the power was back on all round me but I got missed. I was Davy Crockett at the electronic Alamo.

I got nowhere and could feel my frustration rising like the temperature inside my fridge.

Meanwhile old Steph was reading me chapter and verse from the handbook: *Dealing with irate customers during power outages*.

I kept thinking back to the 70s when the local sub-station in Baddeck had enough line men and a live person answering the phone who knew where Gilanders Mountain and the Garry Road were. You might get referred to the boss, Willie "Power" Roberts who would listen patiently and with wisdom. Shortly after there would be a pair of cleats climbing a pole and we would be good to go. Instead now we have "privatizing" and bottom lines rule. If ever there was an argument for not privatizing a power company is one.

By now the blue vein on my forehead was bulging with frustration. The clock continued on the freezer. The fridge was now long gone. Matter of fact, I watched the fridge die right in front of me. As night crept in late Sunday a red liquid began to run down the side of the fridge, gathering in pools on the floor. Down the sides, the front, everywhere a thick red, gooey liquid dripped. Later I was to learn the fridge freezer had given up the ghost and popsicles were melting inside.

Before it got too dark I tucked my can of ham under my arm and followed the line out to the main pole. Eureka! My breaker had tripped and it would be thirty seconds to close it and welcome me back to the real world.

I call. Again!

Armed with this new information I was sure my problem would be fixed momentarily.

This time I didn't get Steph but an equally perky staffer who asks me if I live near Chester. OMG, I am going backwards. I give what I feel is a reasonable explanation and ask, no beg, to have any of the trucks going by to swing in and close my breaker. It is now 19 hours since everyone else here has power. "Sir, we have you on our list." I lose it. I DON'T WANT TO BE ON ANY DAMN LIST, I JUST WANT SOMEONE TO CLOSE THE BREAKER!"

A supervisor swings by, notes my problem and promises me someone will be along.

Six hours later they come down the cross road, close the breaker and my blue vein recedes.

As darkness falls, 24 hours after my neighbours were restored, I head to the basement to spend the evening hours cleaning out the freezer. I'm still not sure if I have to shoot the fridge to put it out of its misery.

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