

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Income for writers potentially lost through Bill C-32

The Editor

As a writer, my business is words and stories. I welcome the digital age with its prospects for even wider electronic distribution of my work and the work of other Canadian writers. But I also believe in the basic principle that writers must be paid for their

work.

Writers like myself and other creators are part of the cultural fabric of this country; part of a community that tells Canada's stories, reflects our identity as a nation, and informs and entertains. Writers are also a primary producer: an entire industry begins with

FROM THE EDITOR

The Utility and Review Board's decision to allow a Nova Scotia Power biomass project to proceed at the Strait of Canso salvages the future of NewPage Port Hawkesbury.

The relief is supplied not only by Nova Scotia Power Inc's \$208.6 million, but by NSPI's ratepayers, that is, anyone who pays for electricity in Nova Scotia and by all of the Crown Land in the seven eastern counties of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia Power's single largest user of electricity in Nova Scotia is NewPage Port Hawkesbury. NSPI could not afford to lose this market if the pulp mill were to close, and every economic indicator was pointing to the mill's demise. The domino affect would be devastating economically for both the region and the power corporation.

So a \$208.6 million investment in a 60 megawatt biomass generator on a contaminated site beside the NewPage mill was an easy sell to the Utility and Review Board despite the best efforts of the defenders of the public good to persuade the URB otherwise.

The URB decision alleviates the threat of the mill closing and opens the door to NSPI to try to claim that they are moving into green energy production and are on the road to reaching their goals by reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. This, unfortunately, is not the case.

A biomass generator of the type NSPI will be using is tremendously inefficient. By the time the electricity it generates gets to the user, it is estimated it will have an efficiency rate of somewhere between 7% to 15%. And that is not including the millions of litres of fuel the harvesters, chippers and truckers will use to get the biomass to the generator nor the power required to pump the water from the Strait to the boiler for the steam to power the turbines.

Be that as it may be, of more particular interest to those who make their living from the forest resource is how much more of the

resource will now be controlled by a single buyer who pays the least for the resource anywhere in North America.

It should be noted that the proponents of biomass electrical generation express their fuel (our forests) only in terms of weight not by the quality of wood, or even fibre. So, it is difficult to ascertain what 650,000 metric tonnes of biomass represents.

One of the definitions of biomass is: "only harvested wood for which there is no practical higher value use as determined by local market conditions". The unfortunate reality is that there is only one local market and that is pulp and now biomass. In other regions of the province where there is some competition for the forest resource, the prices paid are substantially higher and there are more options for diversified forest products giving a value added importance to the resource and making the case for a quality based resource not one based on quantity.

However the NSPI NewPage project is entirely based on quantity. So much so forest ecologists are concerned there may not be enough biomass to feed such a large appetite sustainably. A substantial portion of the harvesting over the forty year life span of this project will be carried out in Victoria County.

The proponents say that they have historically harvested similar quantities of wood (1.3 million tonnes/year) during the 1980s and 1990s. It was also during this time that unprecedented amounts of high water in the river systems destroyed farm lands, fish habitat and carried hundreds of thousands of tonnes of siltation into the estuaries of the Bras d'Or Lakes.

Since that time, forest harvesting practices have been upgraded and currently NewPage is a world leader in sustainable harvesting with FSC, SFI and CSA standards and is the only forestry company in Canada to have achieved certification in all three of these standards. Our watersheds can only hope that they will be maintained.

the product of imagination and skill. Writers earn on average a mere 10% of the cover price of a book - the other 90% supports a network of publishing, advertising, printing, design, distribution, and bookselling businesses.

Writers are key members of Canada's arts & culture industries, which in 2007 contributed an estimated \$85 billion (over 7% of Canada's GDP). These industries directly employ over 600,000 Canadians. Culture delivers a solid return on investment as well: every \$1 invested directly or indirectly in cultural activities generates over three times that in economic activity. One quarter of Canada's cultural sector workers is self-employed (compared with 16% across all industries). I am one of those "entrepreneurs."

There are many new exemptions in Bill C-32 that propose new uses for which writers will not be paid when their work is used. The most troubling for writers is the extension of "fair dealing" to education. As the Bill is written, anyone who claims to have an educational purpose (from a university professor to a golf instructor) would be entitled to copy substantial parts of our work even though protected by copyright.

Under the current Copyright Act, Ministries of Education and educational institutions pay for "collective licenses" so that teachers and students can legally copy materials. This is a good balance: educators save

considerable expense and creators are compensated because their works are used.

If C-32 becomes law I will lose most of my income from these collective licenses. Publishers will also lose this income and thus threaten an industry that already operates on thin margins.

Those who support this exemption point justify it as a savings for education. But licenses represent less than 1% of the cost of education in this country. Educational institutions pay suppliers for the cost of desks & computers and pay salaries to administrators, teachers, and maintenance staff. How can we support full value for those expenses but not support full value for the content that is being taught in the classrooms? Why would Canada's writers be asked to work free?

Protection of my intellectual property allows me to continue to write and publish in this country and be a part of what could be a burgeoning sector of our economy in a post-industrial era. Bill C-32 must be amended so I can continue to make a contribution to the cultural and economic fabric of this country.

As creators we are the drivers of the knowledge economy. We earn a living from the content we produce and that content needs to be valued and paid for.

Let your MP know how you feel on this issue. They all have their own websites.

Douglas Arthur Brown, Ross Ferry,
2nd Vice-Chair, Writers' Union of Canada

NDP come through for vision treatment

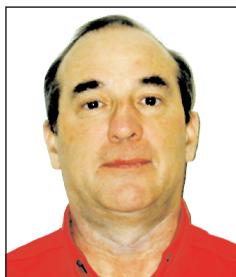
The Editor

I am one of thousands of fortunate people in this province to have full use of my vision, and for that I am thankful. I am also thankful that the Dexter government made the decision to finally fund treatment of macular degeneration disease with Lucentis and

Avastin.

The NDP called for this coverage while in opposition. It's nice to see that now as government, they haven't lost their sense of what is right.

Anne Peters,
S.W. Margaree

*Chuck Thompson's "Along the Trail"***"Meat Darts...?"**

As the car swung onto MacLennan's Cross, I saw the big sign with the words hung upon it, "Meat Darts", 7-10 pm, everyone welcome.

I backed up to make sure I had read that right "Meat Darts." Yes, I was correct; it was "Meat Darts." That, of course, led me to ask the obvious question "what in the name of time is "Meat Darts?"

I knew what "Darts" meant. I mean, I had been known to take in a match or two on the tube deep in the winter. Two things always strike me about these telecasts from the UK: first, the skill of these bald-headed, pot bellied warriors; and second, the fact that these dart matches are attended by up to ten thousand beer swilling patrons watching the flight of the dart on jumbo screens scattered throughout the arena.

I was under no such illusion that these scenes would be played out in the Middle River Hall but one can not be too careful. My daughter kept asking me to go and try it. I was not anxious to make a fool of myself reasoning that watching darts on TV would not translate into anything tangible. "If you want me to go, drive up to the hall and scout it out, I commanded her." I needed to know if this was serious darts or not. I was not all that sure of just what serious darts would consist.

Wanting to take part in the games she reluctantly gave in to my neurosis and checked it out, reporting back in short order

that it was not serious, mostly seniors and a large lunch could be seen on the stage. The call of lunch overcame my lingering doubts.

Well the evening went without a hitch. I kept trying to remember how the TV "athletes" presented themselves to the board as my darts clanged off metal or caromed off in all directions. I could not duplicate the fluid efforts of the TV stars. They may be portly but I had new respect for their talent. The only thing we had in common was "portly."

As I scanned the room for "Dart Warriors" I noticed that some had brought their own Darts. Matter of fact, I soon realized I was the only one there who had NOT brought his own darts. There would have to be an upgrading of my equipment before there would be a return to the floor of the Middle River Hall.

A quick glance sideways revealed that not only did people bring their own missiles; some had made wooden cradles for their darts. Now I knew they were closet serious 'darters'. I felt fooled by the lure of the cheese and crackers.

Of course, it turned out that it was all in good fun. There was a lot of laughter, a few pops, and of course, lunch. I think that although our team never won a game, not even close if the truth be told, that we had the best record when it came to lunch. We kept pace with anyone approaching the sandwich tray or coffee pot. We took a back seat to no one. And the next time I will return with my own darts, in their own case. The intimidation factor alone should be enough for a game or two.

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