

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Construction Association concerned by Nova Scotia Government decision on road building

The Editor

The Nova Scotia Government's proposal to get back into the road building business has raised concerns within the construction sector in the province, according to the Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS).

We believe that government has a responsibility to be transparent in its direction of taxpayer dollars. CANS is supportive of responsible fiscal policy that insures Nova Scotia tax payers attain best value for their dollar. The Association, which was pleased to see the release of a 5 Year Highway Improvement Plan, welcomes the opportunity to review the fiscal and budgetary information used to reach the conclusion that provision of these services internally is indeed advantageous to the taxpayers of Nova Scotia on a value for dollars basis. We don't know what circum-

stances or data was used that supports this move.

We believe that the competitive process that has been established safeguards the public interest by providing a transparent bid process for work completed on behalf of Nova Scotia taxpayers in which winning bidders are held to high standards. We don't know at this point if a publicly managed model would be as transparent or held to the same standard. The process needs to be clear.

The 5 Year Highway Improvement Plan commits to investment in the renewal and enhancement of Nova Scotia's roads and highways, which government has stated are essential to the provinces economic growth. If the province chooses to commit resources to such a venture, the department responsible should be compelled to compete for the work with the private sector under the

same standards and conditions that currently exist. We just don't know if this will happen at this point. If work is not tendered competitively or there are flaws in the process leading to poor response from the private sector, this should be looked at first before committing to a potentially unsustainable structure.

In light of the current fiscal climate and already strained budgets for education, healthcare and other essential government delivered services, the decision to allocate scarce resources to such a venture is questionable and needs further consultation, increased transparency and a sound business case, according to the Association. Government privatized these and other services that rightfully belong in a competitive environment because of consistent cost overruns, a diminished value proposition and lack of transparency. Nova Scotia taxpayers cannot afford either scenario and should not be asked to blindly accept the decision as the

right one without an open dialogue and clearly articulated business case that offers a comparative return on investment, costing structure, sustainability plan, industry standard compliance mechanism, competitive value proposition and real transparency. There may be simple solutions that could address government concerns. But, those discussions need to include industry experts.

The Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS) is an industry trade association representing contractors, suppliers and service providers comprising the non-residential construction industry. CANS was founded in 1862 as the Halifax Builders' Society. Since that time, CANS membership has grown to include firms from all over Atlantic Canada as well as other regions of the country. The primary role of CANS is to represent the interests of our 600 member companies.

Duncan Williams, President,
Construction Association of Nova Scotia

The fight against heart disease and stroke continues

The Editor

I am overwhelmed by the support and generosity of volunteers and donors during Heart Month. I have heard many stories from those who canvassed during February as part of the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Heart Month fundraising campaign. The warm reception they received at the doors helped them to forget about the cold weather.

I also spoke with many volunteers who were committed to making personal contact with friends and neighbours and canvassing to support the Foundation's life-saving research and health promotion initiatives.

Because of these remarkable volunteers, we can truly make progress in the fight against heart disease and stroke. Together, we can strive to overcome the many challenges facing Canadians and their families and provide them with information and tools to help them live longer, healthier lives. Together, we can fund the best and brightest researchers. Together, we can save more lives.

With your support, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia has been building healthier hearts and lives in Nova Scotia. We have invested your contributions into initiatives that help us learn how to prevent Nova Scotians from developing cardiovascular disease. Those initiatives include programs and life-saving research to better understand, treat and prevent heart disease and stroke.

Thank you to the thousands of volunteers and donors who gave generously to support the Foundation's activities last month. Every dollar donated and every minute spent volunteering helps us to positively impact the lives of thousands of Nova Scotians affected by heart disease and stroke.

Even though Heart Month is over, I encourage you to be involved in your heart health all year long. Visit the website (www.heartandstroke.ca) to see how you're helping to make a difference.

Menna MacIsaac, CEO
Heart & Stroke Foundation of N.S.

Letters to the Editor Policy

The Victoria Standard welcomes letters of interest to our readers. Letters published do not necessarily reflect the policies or beliefs of the staff of The Victoria Standard. All letters must bear the signature of the writer and include the writer's address and phone number for verification. Addresses and phone numbers will not be printed. The use of any letters submitted is at the discretion of the editor. The editor reserves the right to edit letters to meet space requirements, for clarity, or to avoid obscenity, libel or invasion of privacy.
Mail to P.O. Box 629, Baddeck, Nova Scotia B0E 1B0

Chuck Thompson's "Along the Trail"

Spring is just around the corner



The other night I laid in my bed and watched a mosquito slowly circle around and around the ceiling light. Now, I don't suppose this is of much interest to anyone other than me but I thought 'here is a harbinger of what is to come.' Actually, I hardly ever think the word "harbinger" but this provides a nice excuse to slip in a seldom used word.

As the dim-witted mosquito completed its seemingly aimless circle of the light I realized with a jolt that winter was indeed coming to a close. You can almost see the black flies and Baddeck tourist operators throwing off the blankets of winter and stirring with thirst for the first tourist of the new season. Soon, very soon, we will be in the season of sunburns and singing registers.

By the end of March the first migratory Grackles will be seen huddled against the wind high in the naked hardwoods. One of my sister-in-laws has already reported the first Fox Sparrow of the New Year. It doesn't hurt that she lives in the Valley but she is still first.

Cluster flies are beginning to buzz around the screens at both the back and front door. Every year I wonder where they come from because no matter how many times you come in or out all winter long you never see them but the first warm day they are at the door like a cub scout selling apples.

Middle River has begun to lift with the spring run-off as it has done since time immemorial. Now, with global warming, there is no ice in the river and the snow vanishes before the first blade of green grass. I notice that Kingfishers and Mergansers stay

in the river all winter now. This can't be good news for the much beleaguered small trout and salmon that used to escape under the ice.

The snow banks that pinched in on the roadsides have been pushed back by the relentless plows and the warmth of the sun.

It is a wonder of our Maritime climate that just as we get crazy with the endless falling snow it stops: the drifts melt and bare patches of ground begin to appear. Soon, very soon, we will lather ourselves in sunscreen and fly dope and venture out to plant a garden for the slugs and aphids to enjoy. I will watch the chipmunks steal my fussed over strawberries and blueberries and the crows who I have fed all winter will show their thanks by eating every ripe fruit I can get to grow.

The evenings are long now and even though the wind still bites, I can get out to clean up the yard without an Arctic approved parka. Sadly, there will be no dog dirt when the snow retreats this spring. Maybe because spring is the season of renewal and hope I may finally wander down to the SPCA and look in at a wet nose pressed against the mesh. How do you choose only one?

Spring also means trout rods and golf clubs. One I can use and one is little more than a hoe in my hands. No matter, it is the getting out that matters and each passing year makes me appreciate it more.

I will give thanks for the season renewal when the trout rise again and the warblers and summer birds sing with hearts of joy. I will also sing with joy when the Herring Choker and Highwheeler open again. There is more than one way to celebrate spring and a warm sticky bun is not a bad start!

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