



Nova Scotia
Federation
of Labour, CLC

2009 New Year's Message from Nova Scotia Federation President Rick Clarke

On behalf of the Executive Council and staff of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, it is my pleasure to wish one and all the very best of the Festive Season and to hope all had a very enjoyable period of relaxation and pleasure with family and friends.

It is a bit difficult to believe that another year has passed so quickly; this past one had indeed been a busy and challenging one for Nova Scotians and Canadians, giving much to reflect on as we prepare to embark into a New Year.

As in 2009, the ongoing crisis in the manufacturing and forestry sectors, magnified by the current economic crisis will prove to be one, if not the greatest challenge in the coming months.

We are quite possibly in the midst of (or coming out of) the most widespread economic crisis in several decades. 2009 and beyond could be very challenging for Nova Scotians.

The impact of this recession is too often bad news for workers, their communities and our economy and the natural reaction is to focus inward, tightening belts in the hopes to ride out the storm, but panic will not help the recovery.

This reaction by consumers, who may have lost or are fearful of losing their jobs, is understandable, but the same cannot be said of governments, banks and to a degree, businesses.

This recession is hitting many businesses as hard as it is hitting workers and this is where we see a role and responsibility of Governments and banks. They must find ways to provide support and financial assistance.

This support and assistance should not be for all; some businesses are cutting back, not because they are actually losing money; but rather because their profit margins are not as high as targeted; these operations should be part of the solution by investing and supporting those in need.

Nova Scotia's position is stronger than other provinces due to the make-up of our economy with a strong and vibrant public sector and we should not be thinking about cutbacks or reduced services, but we should rather build on what has proven successful.

We were hoping to see included in Federal and/or Provincial Economic Stimulus plans:

- a launch of a major multi-year public investment program which would create jobs now, focusing on roads, basic municipal infrastructure; health and educational facilities; mass transit; affordable housing; building retrofits; and renewable energy.
- No more P3 projects which have proven to add time and cost to projects.
- A procurement policy to "buy local", supporting local, provincial or national growers, producers and manufacturers.
- Save good manufacturing and forestry jobs.
- A strategy that recognizes the needs of the whole province. A top of mind consideration must be to encourage growth and expansion to all regions of the province and must not be centrally focused.

We are all in this together and together we must focus on finding ways not only to survive this turbulent time, but also to look for opportunities we can begin to plan for and capitalize on as we find ways, to meet the demands of tomorrow.

Although, the current economic crisis will be a major focus of energies and action in the coming months and quite possibly, throughout the year - we cannot relent on our efforts on all fronts and issues important to workers and their families.

We are and will continue to be committed to: strong human rights laws; publicly-funded, owned and operated health care system; expanded and strengthened pharmacare; progressive pay and employment equity laws; better pension legislation; dramatic improvements to Employment Insurance; publicly-funded, not-for-profit, accessible, quality child care; funding for women's advocacy and research organizations; higher minimum wages; greater focus on poverty reduction; improved Occupational Health and Safety protection and enforcement and better Workers' Compensation coverage; educational and employment opportunities for our youth and improved employment standards protection and labour laws.

In the waning weeks of 2009, in the midst of the debate over the use of migrant workers versus unemployed/under-employed Nova Scotians in our Christmas tree industry and other agriculture related sectors; there had been some very unfortunate and unwarranted public statements and attacks made against the unemployed Nova Scotians.

It was simply astonishing to hear from an MP that he believes that if you're unemployed, homeless or just down on your luck, you are categorized as 'being too lazy to work'; among other more negative and personal comments; he should put more effort into helping those who find themselves in dire straits rather than slandering them.

This matter has brought to focus the need for real public discussion, debate or forum on this whole matter of the use of migrant workers versus providing the same opportunities for the unemployed versus real immigration opportunities. The current practice of utilizing migrant workers 'may' provide some economic benefit to the employer but it does little for the long term planning of our province or economy.

Many of these matters received extensive focus during our convention at the end of October where the theme for our convention and our resolve had been "Our province, our future - working together to make it better".

And we are up for the challenge.

On behalf of the Executive, Staff and Affiliates of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, I wish all a safe and happy holiday season with family and friends, as well as a prosperous and Happy New Year.

Rick Clarke, President, Nova Scotia Federation of Labour

CAW Local 4005

