



Nova Scotia
Federation
of Labour, CLC

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2011 New Year's Message from Nova Scotia Federation of Labour President Rick Clarke

The holiday season is here again, rich with opportunities to catch up with friends and families, and to celebrate the past year. 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.

We take this time to look back with pride at a busy year knowing we worked hard to make the lives of all Nova Scotians better and that by working together we can make a difference.

In October we had our biennial convention and our theme was: *Proud to be union: Making a difference in our workplaces, our communities and in our province.* The enthusiasm of over 200 delegates in talking about the issues was unprecedented and the incoming Executive has been given an all-encompassing, progressive mandate for the next two years.

There was much well-deserved celebrating of the \$25-billion shipbuilding contract with praise for the **Ships Start Here** campaign in taking the message of pride in our industry across the country, expressed optimism at the opportunities the Irving contract presents for workers, and stressed the importance of a strategy for jobs in our rural communities.

But, as always, delegates also got to the serious business of debating more than 40 important resolutions on everything from mental health and workplace bullying to protecting health care and other public services.

We renewed our commitment to protecting and strengthening Medicare, and to the Citizens' Health Care Network, and our timing could not have better, especially in light of recent developments with the 2014 Health Accord. We were especially pleased to see Premier Dexter reject Ottawa's health funding stance saying it is "profoundly disappointing" that Finance Minister Jim Flaherty issued what amounted to an ultimatum on health funding at a meeting of finance ministers in Victoria, a decision that will hurt smaller provinces like Nova Scotia.

We were given renewed support for the Federation's retirement security campaign, aimed at protecting and strengthening public and private pension plans.

As well, we will continue to push for regulations to deal with workplace bullying, and higher standards for occupational health and safety.

The momentum we will carry into the New Year on many issues is one that will see us intensify our lobbying on municipal, provincial and federal levels.

On the international front, we will continue our call for transparency in the Canada-Europe Trade Negotiations (CETA) and we will oppose all threats this agreement may pose to municipal or provincial powers and to public services.

The urgency to step-up actions and/or activities on federal issues is critical as it is increasingly obvious that families, jobs, communities and our futures do not appear a priority for the Harper Government as they take us down a road of spending cuts which means the loss of jobs and services, not to mention their clear intent to attack and undermine worker and union rights - while at the same time providing huge tax cuts for their corporate friends. Such actions during a recessionary period can and have resulted in deepening or slowing recovery from the recession.

We are in for a struggle and we need to be ready to fight the Conservative government's plans to gut federal spending by \$4 billion, only to hand \$4 billion in tax cuts to corporations. It's time to come together to oppose reckless and dangerous cuts to crucial public services and the devastating impact they will have on workers, families and communities.

In the province we have seen two major crises in the pulp and paper industry with the 'hot idle' of the NewPage plant in Port Hawkesbury and the threat of closure of the Resolute plant in Liverpool.

Our provincial government, by investing millions in Nova Scotia's struggling pulp and paper mills is protecting thousands of rural jobs; breathing new life into the Bowater Mersey mill in Queens County and ensuring the NewPage Port Hawkesbury mill remains resale ready by keeping people working on the mill's supply chain.

The provincial government has been on top of these potential crises and we, as representatives of workers, have been able to work with them and other stakeholders on what we believe to be a collective need to develop a plan or strategy to be able to respond quickly and fully on such threats.

When faced with economic crisis such as these is not a time; nor an issue for political statements or finger pointing - it is a time for collective commitment and action - the well being of thousands of workers, their families, their communities and the provincial economy are directly affected.

If we as a province are to be ready to take on the opportunities and challenges that face us in the coming month and years we must learn to work together in the best interest of our province.

I believe we have great opportunities before us but if we allow petty differences and political rhetoric dominate the agenda we stand to lose much; the nautical cliché 'loose lips sinks ships' sums it well; if we appear to be disjointed, the rest of the country and world will treat us that way.

There is too much to risk, our future and the best interest of Nova Scotia and Nova Scotians is at stake - working together we can make a difference.

We were naturally pleased to see Bill 102 on First Contract Arbitration (FCA) adopted into legislation during the fall setting of the house. Despite all the public 'debate' and fear mongering we believe this legislation will prove to be good for the economy and will go a long way to improve workplace relations.

This type of legislation has been around in one form or another for over 30 years across Canada and is intended to provide fairness and balance should either party for whatever reason is unable or does not want to conclude a collective agreement, forcing a lockout or strike, generally with workers being the collateral damage in the dispute – if you are not one of these people you have nothing to worry about from this legislation.

As the voice of labour in Nova Scotia, we will work together with our affiliates and others to achieve common goals, and build a culture of solidarity that unites and inspires.

Together we can make a difference. I would like to conclude with the words of an incredible political and social leader who we lost this year, Jack Layton, former Federal NDP leader:

*My friends, love is better than anger.
Hope is better than fear.
Optimism is better than despair.
So let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic.
And we'll change the world.*

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 (NSFL)

The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour is an umbrella organization, directly chartered by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) representing over 350 affiliated local unions with a collective membership of approximately 70,000 workers; from every community and every type of workplace across the province.

For more information, please contact Rick Clarke at 434.5612 (h)

CAW Local 4005