

# **Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, CLC**

## *Message from President Rick Clarke*



October 5, 2004

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## **Sunday shopping will hurt the working poor**

There are several interesting observations noted while following the views and comments from both sides of the Sunday Shopping question, which will soon be decided by a plebiscite vote during the upcoming Municipal Elections.

As an observer who is not directly impacted by this issue, other than being a consumer, who like so many others has a fairly busy occupation and life; it would seem this whole matter or debate is about convenience and greed.

I base this view on the appearance that those on or leading the pro side of the issue are not directly involved in the retail sector, in that they would not be required to open shop and/or work in this sector should the decision favour Sunday Shopping.

There are those on the “yes” side of this debate who state that we as Nova Scotians should be treated equally as those from all the other provinces.

Where were these “social conscience” voices when we were attempting to bring our Minimum Wage, Labour Standards and other workplace laws up to the rights and benefits provided to workers in other provinces?

They were either silent or on the “no” side of the question of improving worker rights and benefits in this province to come close to that provided by other jurisdictions.

The question seems to be focused on the one day that we do not have full retail operations rather than looking at the shopping hours currently available for Nova Scotian consumers.

A large percentage, if not the majority of Nova Scotians have fairly ready access to approximately 72 hours per week, based on a 6-day opening with hours from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, something I do not believe readily available elsewhere.

One must question if more shopping hours are really needed especially given that a lot of operations are not awfully busy during this period.

**more...**

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We are also being lead to believe that 7-day shopping will be good for our economy; I don't know about the rest of Nova Scotians but I suspect that they are in the same boat as I am in that I will have the same amount to spend for 7-day shopping as I do for 6-day shopping, no more and hopefully no less.

On the down side of this issue and the economy is the fact the operations that are required to remain open; and no matter what the legislation states, due to competition, some not in favor will be forced to open, adding to their overhead.

Given the weakness of our labour laws the jobs seen will be a continued sharing of low paying part time jobs with little or no benefits.

Most employers in this sector will tell you that they have X- amount of dollars to cover salaries meaning fewer hours for employees if spread over another day.

There may well be a benefit in this for some but at what cost?

There will be those that will gain from Sunday shopping, but generally at the expense of others.

The large box retailers in our central or larger communities will benefit at the expense of our smaller communities and their retail operations.

The large anchor stores at the malls will benefit at the expense of the smaller operations in the mall, which must remain open because of lease agreements or competition.

Large grocery chains will benefit at the expense of our corner or convenience stores, found in most neighborhoods.

And more profits may be seen but at the cost of more working poor.

Clearly this type of operation does not provide equality as being purported, unless you happen to be on the winning side.

The question we will be voting on is about more than Sunday shopping.

It will be about fairness and equality for people and communities.

It will be about the values and benefits we want for ourselves; our children and our communities.

It will be about the kind of province and society we wish to live in.

The gain for some cannot justify the harm to the many; we must each vote with our conscience and not for a convenience.