



## Riding Report

December, 2011

Dear Friends,

This is our final e-newsletter of the year - I just wanted to briefly highlight a few issues as we head into the holidays.

The Legislature rose last Thursday, after sitting for 32 days.

The bill that dominated the fall session was Bill 102, a labour bill in which the NDP brought in **First Contract Arbitration (FCA)**. The essence of the bill is that when a newly-certified union local is seeking its first contract from an employer, either party can ask for an arbitrator.

While many provinces across the country have some form of FCA, only Manitoba has the particular form the NDP has forced through here. This form does not require the party asking for an arbitrator to prove that there has been bad faith bargaining by the other party.

On this particular issue, businesses spoke with a single voice. Every single business and business association that contacted us or spoke before law amendments made it clear: they did not want a third party making decisions that would affect their ability to run their companies. Companies as diverse as Sobeys and Michelin were blunt: this bill would be factored into their future decisions in this province.

The NDP did not make the case that the province needed FCA. Nor did they indicate why they chose this particular form of it -- arguably the type that is most punitive to business.

The Premier of this province continued to maintain that Michelin had not warned him against FCA, even when the president of Michelin Canada directly contradicted him. Nor did he take the advice of his Labour Management Review Committee, which his government created last year to advise on labour matters.

The Liberal Opposition proposed several amendments to this bill as proposed by businesses that appeared before the Law Amendments Committee. Our concern, of course, was to mitigate the damage caused by the bill, and the Chronicle Herald termed our amendments "sensible". Interestingly, Conservatives refused to vote for them (even though they were opposed to the bill) and have indicated they would not repeal the bill in future. (They later said they'd study the matter.)

In the end, the NDP used its majority to pass the bill. All concerns about the fragile state of our recession-battered economy were brushed aside.

Late in the session, the government introduced a bill that would allow the Municipality of Queens to give favourable tax terms to the company that owns the Resolute plant, which most of us know as Bowater. The NDP chose to include political language in the bill that would mean our approval of the bill indicated our approval of this bailout plan - even though the bill simply gave approval to Queens to make a tax change. The political language was unnecessary because the bailout agreement between the province and Bowater (which will cost up to \$90 million) had already been signed by the province and did not require our approval.

We feel strongly that, with this Bowater deal, Nova Scotian taxpayers are being asked to sacrifice - by paying for the bailout and by paying for higher power rates. Bowater workers are being asked to sacrifice; the workforce at the plant has been decimated. But there is no indication what the company is sacrificing in return. We feel it is wrong that the province received no job guarantees from Bowater in return for the bailout. We feel it is wrong that the NDP has given Bowater reduced power rates - because you and I, and all the other businesses in Nova Scotia, will pay higher power rates as a result. And we feel it's wrong that we have no indication of the future viability of the pulp and paper industry because the province has refused to release a report into the issue.

I also want to mention briefly a couple of local issues I raised in the House this session.

**Upcoming Information Session:** On Thursday, January 19, 2011 at 7:00pm, I will host an information session on personal budgeting and finances. This event will be a great opportunity to learn how to make a budget and—stick to it. Guest speakers will include Tamara Kelly, Director of Education at Credit Counselling Services of Atlantic Canada, and Jennifer Cleator, Certified Counsellor with Credit Counselling Services of Atlantic Canada. The event will be in the cafeteria at Charles P. Allen High School on 670 Rocky Lake Drive.

**Replacement CPA:** I wrote to the Minister of Education in November about concerns that have been raised in connection with the construction of the new high school, and asked questions ([http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/C81/house\\_11dec15/#HPage5524](http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/C81/house_11dec15/#HPage5524)) about it in the House. I will now get regular briefings on the progress of the construction (which is what I asked for when this whole process began).


**Lyme Disease:** Although we had consistently warm weather this fall, the government failed to warn people about tick activity into December. New Brunswick warned its citizens on November 9<sup>th</sup>. It took our government more than a month after that to do so, and they only did once I questioned them about their failure. ([http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/C81/house\\_11dec07/#HPage4957](http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/C81/house_11dec07/#HPage4957)) So keep an eye out for ticks until it's consistently below 0 Celsius.

My office will be closed from December 23 - January 2 inclusive. Our email and telephone messages will be checked daily during that time, so please do contact us if you have an urgent issue. All non-emergency issues will be responded to after the break.

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to read this newsletter. I hope you enjoy the season and get to spend your holidays with those most important to you -

Sincerely,

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