



the Tide

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Taxpayers Federation: A Myopic Watchdog?

ANTI-TAX GROUP SETTING UP IN ATLANTIC CANADA, CRITICS SAYS IT'S ALL RHETORIC
By BEN SICHEL

A self-described “taxpayer watchdog” is poised to open an office in Halifax this fall.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) advocates for “lower taxes, less waste, and more accountable government,” according to Kevin Gaudet, the group’s Federal Director.

But Larry Haiven, a management professor at Saint Mary’s University, says CTF’s relentless calls to lower taxes are “the most simplistic garbage.”

“Provinces and the [federal government] have been cutting taxes frenetically, frantically, for the past 25 years... Governments across Canada are taking in about \$250 billion less than they did 15 years ago,” says Haiven.

Erin Weir, an economist with the United Steelworkers’ Union who has published commentary about CTF, says the organization “represents the right-wing fringe of Canadian politics” and “uses issues like... politicians’ salaries—which have almost no effect on... government expenditures...—to foment distrust of public institutions.”

Some of the Harper government’s most expensive recent policy decisions barely figure on CTF’s radar.

Gaudet is reluctant to criticize the federal government’s \$10-billion package of “tough on crime” legislation, even though there is no data to indicate that the new laws will reduce crime.

He also does not question the purchase of new fighter

jets, despite a \$16-billion price tag; although he did say publicly that the contract should have been tendered.

On most issues, CTF is indeed on the far right of the political spectrum: for example, government initiatives to reduce carbon emissions are considered waste because “[w]e don’t believe there’s such thing as man-made climate change,” says Gaudet.

CTF claims 74,000 supporters—a phenomenon Haiven chalks up to Canadians’ financial situations.

“[People are] looking for ways to save money, and one of the easy places to look is taxation,” notes Haiven.

But, he says, anti-tax advocates are barking up the wrong tree.

“The province is getting richer [in terms of GDP]...but working people...they’re poorer. So where is that money going? ... [I]nto the hands of a few,” says Haiven, referring to a recent study he co-authored, which detailed increasing inequalities in wealth.

Christine Saulnier of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) challenges the notion that CTF’s message resonates with many Canadians.

She points to a 2008 CCPA national poll, in which the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that government should take action to reduce poverty, raise minimum wages, and provide affordable housing—even if it meant “higher taxes or cuts in spending in



In an era of low taxes and slashed social services, will Atlantic Canada welcome an anti-tax organization? | Photo by Alan Cleaver

other areas.”

“We’re not talking about the full implications of what it means to lower taxes. If we did, that would be a fairer debate,” says Saulnier.

“We can’t have a discussion on taxation without talking about public services,” she says.

Ben Sichel is a member of the Halifax Media Co-op.

A full version of this article is available at halifax.mediacoop.ca

THIS IS A MARCH, NOT A PARADE

“This Dyke March is very distinctly not a parade. Parades are important... but we also have to remember how we got to where we are today. We didn’t win these victories by parading, did we? We and the activists that came before us won these fights by marching, by chanting, by kicking, by screaming, by challenging the law and often by breaking the law, and our fights aren’t over,”

—*Rebecca Rose, one of the organisers of Halifax’s first Dyke March held on July 23*

NEWSin BRIEF

FARMER’S LOCKOUT: SOUR MILK?

By JUSTIN LING

Members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers union that work for Farmer’s Dairy are back on the job after a six-week labour dispute. The workers went to the picket lines after talks broke down over pension cutbacks and wage issues. Farmer’s maintains the workers went on strike, but the Union argues they were locked out. For the duration of the dispute, the management caused controversy with its use of replacement, or scab, labour. A rally was held in Cornwallis Park on August 18 to protest the move. The workers signed a three-year contract, the details of which have not been released.

SECURITAS EMPLOYEES DEMAND SECURITY

by KALEY KENNEDY

Security workers trying to unionize in Halifax say that Securitas. their employer, is refusing to honour an international agreement they signed to respect the rights of workers to unionize in their workplace. Securitas refuses to meet with local union organisers, says David Bush, with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), who announced on August 26 that they are working with Securitas employees to form a union. Michael Anthony, a Securitas employee,

says high turnover and inadequate training put workers and customers at risk. Last year, Securitas posted \$278 million in profits. Currently, Anthony is paid \$9.85 per hour. In March, he will receive a pin for 30 years of service.

SAVING LONG GUN REGISTRY A LONG SHOT

By JUSTIN LING

A motion to save the long gun registry will be introduced in the House of Commons on September 22, but likely won’t pass unless five of the twelve New Democrats who opposed the registry change their minds. The Public Service Alliance, who organizes the staff of the registry’s New Brunswick headquarters, is putting the pressure on South Shore MP Peter Stoffer, who opposes the registry. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, including Halifax chief Frank Beazley, has also started a campaign to save the program.

NORTH PRESTON RESIDENTS CRY FOUL OVER RACISM

By JUSTIN LING

Construction in August forced North Preston residents to use a dark, semi-paved alternate route to access the nearest highway. Keys to a detour, a privately owned logging road, were given to ten white families. The black homeowners allege that they were denied access because of the colour of their skin. After the North Preston residents set up a blockade in protest, the owners of the road changed the locks and restricted access to emergency vehicles only. The city argues the keys were given out based on proximity to the road, not skin colour.



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MEDIA CO-OP EVENTS

Halifax Media Co-op Organising Meeting

Thursday, September 9th, 5 p.m.
Dalhousie Women’s Centre, 6286 South St

Growing Independent Media Part I Journalism Workshop with Bruce Wark

Thursday, September 16th, 5:30 p.m.
Classroom 3, Arts and Administration Building
University of King’s College, 6350 Coburg Rd

Growing Independent Media Part II Journalism Workshop with Bruce Wark

Thursday, September September 23th, 5:30 p.m.
Dalhousie Women’s Centre, 6286 South St

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Rezoning Divides Community

PROPOSAL PUTS FARMLAND AT RISK

By STEVEN WENDLAND

A proposal to rezone 380 acres of active farmland in the hamlet of Greenwich, Kings County, has raised public concern over food security, cultural history, and sustainable community-planning in Nova Scotia’s fertile Annapolis Valley.

“Removing the agricultural district zoning will take away the Greenwich farms that helped build Kings County,” says Tom Cosman, a Greenwich honey farmer who believes the proposal is short-sighted.

In August 2009, five Greenwich landowners submitted an application to Kings Council proposing an amendment to the Kings County Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and Land-Use Bylaw which would allow the involved agricultural lands to be rezoned for residential, commercial or industrial purposes—a Comprehensive Development District (CDD), as the MPS labels it.

The proposal roused an immediate outcry from several Greenwich residents who want to preserve the fertile farmland.

“The proposed development is intended to remove almost 75 per cent of Greenwich’s prime agricultural lands, which the current owners themselves claim to have been farmed for 700 years collectively,” states Marilyn Cameron, a Greenwich resident and active member of No Farms, No Food, a community coalition devoted to the protection and preservation of Nova Scotia farmland.

Three of the five landowners own, operate, and supply three popular farm markets in Greenwich, and their businesses form the core of the community’s identity. No Farms, No Food have accused the landowners of selfishly disregarding their responsibilities to the community and stewardship of the land.

Doug Hennigar, a fruit and vegetable farmer and owner of one of the farm markets, believes those residents are unwilling to accept the reality of his situation. “My soil could be considered prime if we were only talking about Nova Scotia, but globalization has put my land in



No Farms, No Food, a community coalition devoted to the protection and preservation of Nova Scotia farmland is fighting the rezoning proposal. | Image from nofarmsnofood.ca

competition with soils from all over the world. I have to compete with farmers from countries that have better soils, longer growing seasons, cheaper labour, and high government subsidies,” he relates.

In the global competition for Nova Scotians’ food dollar, local farmers are losing out. A report released on July 27 by the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Ecology Action Centre, found that for every dollar spent on food in the province in 2008, Nova Scotian farmers got 13 cents. “The study examined over 60 products and found that, on average, the food products were traveling nearly 4,000 km from farm to

plate,” says Marla MacLeod, co-author of the report entitled *Is Nova Scotia Eating Local?*

This needs to change, says MacLeod, who believes the province should prioritize food security and food sovereignty. “I think it’s important to retain the capacity to grow our own food here,” says MacLeod, who argues that a local agriculture system has environmental, social, economic and health benefits. “It doesn’t make any sense to depend on everyone else in the world to feed us.”

Steven Wendland is a writer, vegetable gardener and filmmaker from Harmony, Nova Scotia

Public Housing Goes Private

SHOULD SOCIAL HOUSING BE BUSINESS AS USUAL?

By SAMANTHA CHOWN

In June 2010, the federal and provincial governments announced \$14 million in funding for affordable housing. The majority of that money will go towards repairing and upgrading existing units, and not to building new units. Only18 new units will be built.

Only 1.2 per cent of housing stock in Nova Scotia is considered affordable housing. Since 1999, 352 self-contained affordable renting units have been added to Halifax’s housing stock. Currently in Halifax, 14,047 applications are on the waitlist for public housing, some for as long as seven years.

Increasingly, partnerships between government or non-profit organisations and private businesses and developers have become the solution to the housing crisis, something housing activists have mixed opinions about.

“The private sector does have a place in providing affordable housing and it’s important to recognize that and work with them,” says John Hartling, Director of Community Initiatives at Community Action on Homelessness (CAH). “Non-profits may not be experts in developing housing but they’re experts in providing social services. The private sector has contributed a wealth of knowledge to support non-profits getting good properties. They’re a very vital link.”

Fiona Traynor, a Community Legal Worker at Dalhousie Legal Aid Service, is sceptical of private sector interest in providing affordable housing. “I think we [need] more critical analysis of what it’s going to look like when we leave it up to business people to provide social services.”

She says these partnerships let government off the hook by not holding the government accountable to provide social services.

The government has partnered with several private developers, where developers agree to rent an allotted number of units at affordable market value for 10 to 15 years.



Vandalized sign, marking the future site of Gottingen Terrace. | Photo by Samantha Chown

Since Nova Scotia has no form of rent control, developers are free to raise rent to whatever price they deem fit when this contract expires. Traynor says this is a raw deal for tenants who could –literally – be left out in the cold.

Creighton/Gerrish Development Association (C/GDA) has been one of the frontrunners in private affordable housing, owning three properties in the Gottingen area. The C/GDA’s Gottingen Terrace Condominiums will have 48 units, with prices starting at \$120,000. The units are intended for low-income earners branching into first time homeownership.

Traynor says these prices are not affordable and are “geared towards people who have enough money to have a down payment, people who have stability of income to be able to get approved for a mortgage, [and] people who have the ability to pay increased taxes.”

“Buying a home is one thing; being able to afford it is another,” she says.

Samantha Chown is a journalism student living in Halifax.



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