

From: Guysborough Journal, Oct 2012

## Response to Jim Boudreau on Sheet Harbour Port

By Senator Tom McInnis, Sheet Harbour

When the op-ed by MLA Jim Boudreau appeared in The Journal pertaining to the Halifax Port Authority (HPA) being successful in securing a contract to manage the Sheet Harbour Common User Dock, if the reader was not aware of the truth one would believe that MLA Boudreau and the NDP Government was at the centre of the entire process. You would have nothing but praise for a MLA as a person that finally righted the economy of the Sheet Harbour region.

At the time of the article, I was president of the Sheet Harbour Chamber of Commerce & Civic Affairs (SHCOC). In that position I always made it clear to the membership that there was to be no party politics. So, I remained silent. On Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012 I was sworn in as a Conservative Senator. I now feel obliged to set the record straight.

In that article MLA Boudreau blamed the former Conservative government with Ron Chisholm then MLA as being somewhat irresponsible for not taking control of the Port several years ago.

The facts are as follows:

1. In the mid 1980s the then-MP for our region, the Honourable Elmer MacKay and I, as a provincial cabinet minister & MLA for the Eastern Shore, worked with both of our governments to build the economy of Sheet Harbour and surrounds. Taking advantage of the deep ice-free harbour, a Common User Dock and small industrial park was put in place with a new highway to the facility.

In addition, it was important to have access to a 100 series highway, therefore route 374 was constructed. The total capital costs of the dock, wharf road and 374 amounted to \$50 million, not a small amount back then or now.

2. In 1997 the Liberal Government entered a 15-year contract with Ceres Corp to manage the port for three consecutive five year terms under certain terms and conditions.

3. The SHCOC six years ago, working with the Nova Scotia Business Inc. (NSBI) staff and our MLA Ron Chisholm, did everything possible to terminate the contract. The NSBI senior staff and lawyers could not do so because Ceres Corp. were in compliance with the contract. The law is the law Mr. Boudreau. If you didn't agree, why then did you and your NDP Government not terminate that contract three and one half years ago? I'm betting you never as much as opened a file.

4. Our SHCOC working with NSBI staff put in place a governance committee made up of five local representatives who installed a process leading to a call for Expressions of Interest leading to a Request for Proposals.

That Governance Committee and NSBI officials, after reviewing the respective written proposals and oral presentations, awarded the management contract to the Halifax Port Authority.

Mr. Boudreau, you never as much as met once with the committee to offer insight or support. However, that is not the message your article portrayed. In this respect your op-ed was simply fallacious and misleading to the citizenry. An apt comment was made to me the morning of the open house when you drove onto the wharf: "Jim must have his GPS with him this morning."

5. Your inference that the federal government and Minister MacKay had a responsibility to assist with the paving of route 374 displays a total lack of understanding by you as to the domain of the respective responsibilities or a continued pattern by you to blame another level of government.

This highway, particularly through the Liscomb Game Sanctuary, is in despicable condition. The federal government is not charged with the repaving of the highway network in this province.

Through Prime Strengthening Agreements and infrequent stimulus fund programs, 100 series highways can be put in place with 50/50 cost sharing, such as the twinning of route 104. This project to repaving a road falls squarely to the provincial government to proceed with.

As I tell the citizens, there are no voters living on the Liscomb Game Sanctuary or the road to the wharf. Two years ago Mr. Boudreau, you had a 4 kms blade coat of asphalt put down at the Sheet Harbour end of route 374 where people live, on the part of the highway that was in the best condition, I guess so it would continue to be in the best condition.

Premier Darrel Dexter is a former law partner of mine and has been an acquaintance for decades. I will be complementary of this government if and when it is warranted. However, I will no longer be silent when you Mr. Boudreau misrepresent the facts or for example when you underhandedly attempted to scuttle our Sheet Harbour sidewalk Mainstreet project and then have the audacity to take credit in your brochure for arranging the drainage system beneath the highway, once again when you had absolutely nothing to do with it.

Our SHCOC Board of Directors, all 12e signatories, were compelled to write the premier requesting that you keep your hands off this project. You should have been forced to resign.

There are mounting reasons being discussed as to why Mr. Boudreau should continue to be our MLA. Before we mark our ballot in the next provincial election, we all should question the background and validity of any suggested accomplishment made by him in a brochure or statement for reasons I have highlighted here. His support for open pen salmon farming and lack of meaningful dialogue with the public at large is another.