

February 9, 2009

Hon. David Morse
Minister
Nova Scotia Environment
5151 Terminal Road
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dear Minister Morse,

Given the severity of the global and national downturn in the economy, the Round Table on the Environment and Sustainable Prosperity believes that it is critical to set the stage and provide a sound and sustainable footing to facilitate a timely, and sustainable turnaround. We also believe that it is possible to address a number of challenges simultaneously.

Energy efficiency, job creation and climate change

In keeping with the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act and in maintaining the momentum of the Opportunities for Sustainable Prosperity economic development strategy, the Round Table sees an opportunity to link job creation, retraining, local economic development and climate change by focusing a greater effort on energy efficiency and conservation. We recognize that energy efficiency has been given more profile in Nova Scotia in recent months with the announcement of a new electricity demand side management initiative. The release of the Climate Change Action Plan is also a positive step forward. However we believe that more can be done and it should be done more quickly. The urgency on the matter is imposed both externally and internally. The climate change clock is ticking. Although the specific environmental consequences can be debated, we expect that they will have potentially severe economic and ecological repercussions. Nova Scotia has embraced an ambitious target in EGSPA and we need to not only mitigate but prepare to adapt to a changing climate.

A targeted strategy of energy efficiency and conservation has been identified and is being pursued by a number of jurisdictions across the globe. The United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union and China have all set this as a high priority for stimulus because it can create jobs relatively quickly and result in continuing benefits over the longer term by reducing energy consumption and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The consensus in many studies is that energy efficiency and conservation will deliver more jobs than any other form of energy development, particularly fossil fuel related generation. These jobs will benefit local economies by circulating money within communities. If Nova Scotia does not move quickly, it will miss opportunities to be among the leaders in this field with the cleanest and most sustainable environments.

This is also recognized in a recently released report titled *Building a Green Stimulus Package for Canada* put forward by a national research and extension network somewhat surprisingly known as Sustainable Prosperity. This report rates building retrofits very highly as an effective and appropriate way to put “the economy on a more efficient and sustainable footing”. These programs can target public buildings but assistance to voluntary organizations, homeowners and businesses should not be forgotten. There are opportunities to enhance energy efficiency and conserve electricity and fuel throughout the economy, ensuring that we are preparing for a more efficient and a low-carbon economy in the future.

Adopting a sustainable prosperity jobs strategy

The Round Table believes that Nova Scotia should be developing a sustainable prosperity jobs strategy, otherwise known in other jurisdictions as a green jobs strategy. In addition to energy efficiency and conservation, the strategy should foster support for making the transmission grid smarter and effective in part to allow for greater use of renewable energy, wastewater treatment systems to assist in satisfying Nova Scotia’s own goals under EGSPA but enabling Nova Scotia communities to meet yet more stringent national requirements, and enhanced research and implementation bio-energy projects. Interest in these types of initiatives has been growing and there are positive returns that can be brought to Nova Scotia from these types of investment. We strongly encourage further support for this and other eco-investment programs that both clean the environment and spur employment.

There are a number of recently published reports that could guide the development of a “green jobs strategy”. One is the already mentioned *Building a Green Stimulus Package for Canada*. Other reports include the substantive report by the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Office and the International Association of Employers titled *Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World* and another prepared by Scotland *Going for Green Growth: A green Jobs Strategy for Scotland*. A similar document has been produced for Wales.

The critical elements of a sustainable jobs strategy include:

Education: Currently, our labor force cannot give adequate support to a strong energy efficiency policy. Homeowners are being told they need to wait six months to a year for an energy efficiency rating, and they have trouble finding skilled trades people who are versed in the latest sustainable building technologies and best practices. Given the economic downturn, an opportunity now exists for wise and productive investment in training and education. Programs could be developed and augmented immediately through organizations such as the Nova Scotia Community College which is already taking some action. These programs could target both young people, with the objective of keeping them at home in Nova Scotia, and re-train workers who have recently been laid off. This training should emphasize such practices as installation and servicing of solar hot water systems, wind turbines and photovoltaic solar systems as well as skills required to improve energy conservation and efficiency.

Tax policy & rebates: There are an increasing number of incentives for home and business owners to improve efficiency in their operations and their buildings at both provincial and federal levels of government. However some of these do not appear to be as effective as they might be in attracting applicants. Additional efforts are required to facilitate their adoption, especially by small businesses.

Investment in manufacturing. Because this letter specifically mentions energy efficiency and solid waste resources management, the Round Table notes that renewable energy should also be included in a green jobs strategy. There appears to be a shortage of renewable energy related equipment in the marketplace. Delivery times for some component parts is as much as one or two years. The Province could be attracting manufacturers of such products and components to Nova Scotia and encouraging our current manufacturers to diversify and begin producing renewable energy components. To do so, we will have to ensure that we are offering an attractive fiscal, regulatory as well as educational / training environment for these manufacturers. To attract manufacturers or encourage existing manufacturers, Nova Scotia will have to ensure that there is a long term stable market for these 'green' products, which means making a long term commitment to conservation, efficiency and renewable energy. Wind is a good example, in which manufacturers has gone to jurisdictions that have implemented policies that create long term stable markets for wind energy, not ones that have just made a short term commitment to installing turbines.

Research & development: The Environmental Technology Program of the ecoNova Scotia initiative is yielding strong results. The first year of this program gives us a glimpse into the high level of interest in these types of initiatives and the positive returns that can be brought to Nova Scotia from this type of investment. We strongly encourage further support for this and other eco-investment programs that improve environmental quality, spur employment and create new economic development opportunities.

Regulation: While EGSPA sets a wonderful vision and solid goals for our future, in order to meet these goals, this act will have to be supported by a regulatory framework that fosters the increasing generation and use of renewable energy. Any regulatory framework should be consistent with the *Better Regulation* objectives so as not to unreasonably burden Nova Scotians who wish to become more sustainable in their behaviour.

Building on solid waste resource management success

With the ambitious goal set in the Act of further reducing and diverting solid waste to 300 kilograms per person, the Round Table believes that there are opportunities for research, value-added manufacturing and job creation here as well. Nova Scotia continues to be a leader in solid waste management in part because of its view that these materials should be viewed as resources. This will result in the availability of more resources for remanufacturing and recycling. We have made some progress in research and development and value –added manufacturing but a more substantive effort is required to take full advantage of the opportunities. While the RRFB has been devoting some of its financial and human capital to this effort, additional human and financial

capital should be provided to demonstrate and build upon the economic benefits of this leading edge effort.

Many jurisdictions recognize the importance of using this economic downturn to prepare for a more efficient and sustainable future. It will therefore be very important for the Provincial Government to actively pursue additional measures such as tax policy, research and development, education / training and better regulation that will sustain the activities enhanced by the stimulus package. As indicated earlier, these will provide the sound base for sustainable prosperity.

We are sending this letter with the recommendation that it should be forwarded to the Premier's office as further input to the development of any economic stimulus package that may be included in the new budget. While the Round Table is composed of people from a wide range of organizations and interests, this letter should not be interpreted as endorsement of all aspects by each of the organizations represented. We expect that the Government will be hearing from individual organizations as the budget is formulated.

However it is the sincere expectation of the Round Table that these recommendations related to the environment and sustainable prosperity be given serious consideration in the ongoing deliberations regarding the economic stimulus package and the budget. If there is any further way that we can assist in furthering these proposals, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Raymond Côté". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Raymond Côté
Chair
Round Table on Environment
and Sustainable Prosperity